



Discover

AMAZING ALBERTA

Text: Faye Reineberg Holt

Photos: W.H. Holt & F. Holt



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by

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i. PREHISTORY: LAND, REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Some areas of Alberta became hunting grounds for old bones. The bones proved fascinating. By the 1870s, surveyors had found fossils. Areas such as Drumheller, Cypress Hills, Belly River and Milk River were of special interest. In these badlands, shale and sandstone eroded revealing the long- buried remains of ancient animals. By 1884, working with the Geographical Survey of Canada, Joseph Tyrrell discovered the skull for a dinosaur named *Albertosaurus*.

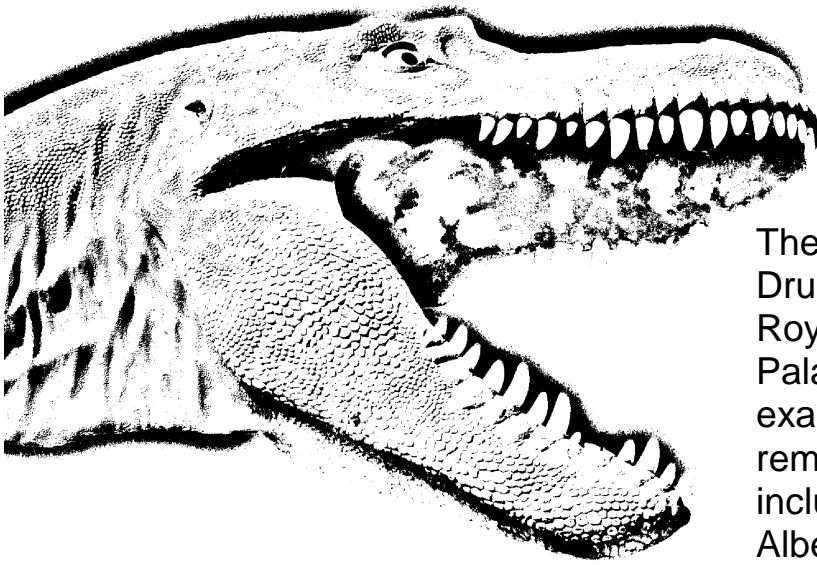
By the early 1900s, C.H. Sternberg and sons hunted fossils in western Canada. The first bones they found were sent to museums in the United States. Later, they worked for the Geological Survey of Canada and Canadian government.



The job was difficult, but they found more fossils. The bones were carefully removed. They were weighed, photographed, boxed and shipped for further study.

Fossils included early relatives of modern rhinoceros, pigs, deer and crocodiles. Those discoveries near Drumheller proved some of the best in the world.

For this scene, the sculpture of the baby is camouflaged within rock surroundings. The baby would be lighter in colour than the adult.



These sculptures in Drumheller are near the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology. They are examples of important fossil remains. Unearthed fossils include Tyrannosaurus rex, Albertosaurus, Stegosaurus, Triceratops & Edmontonia.



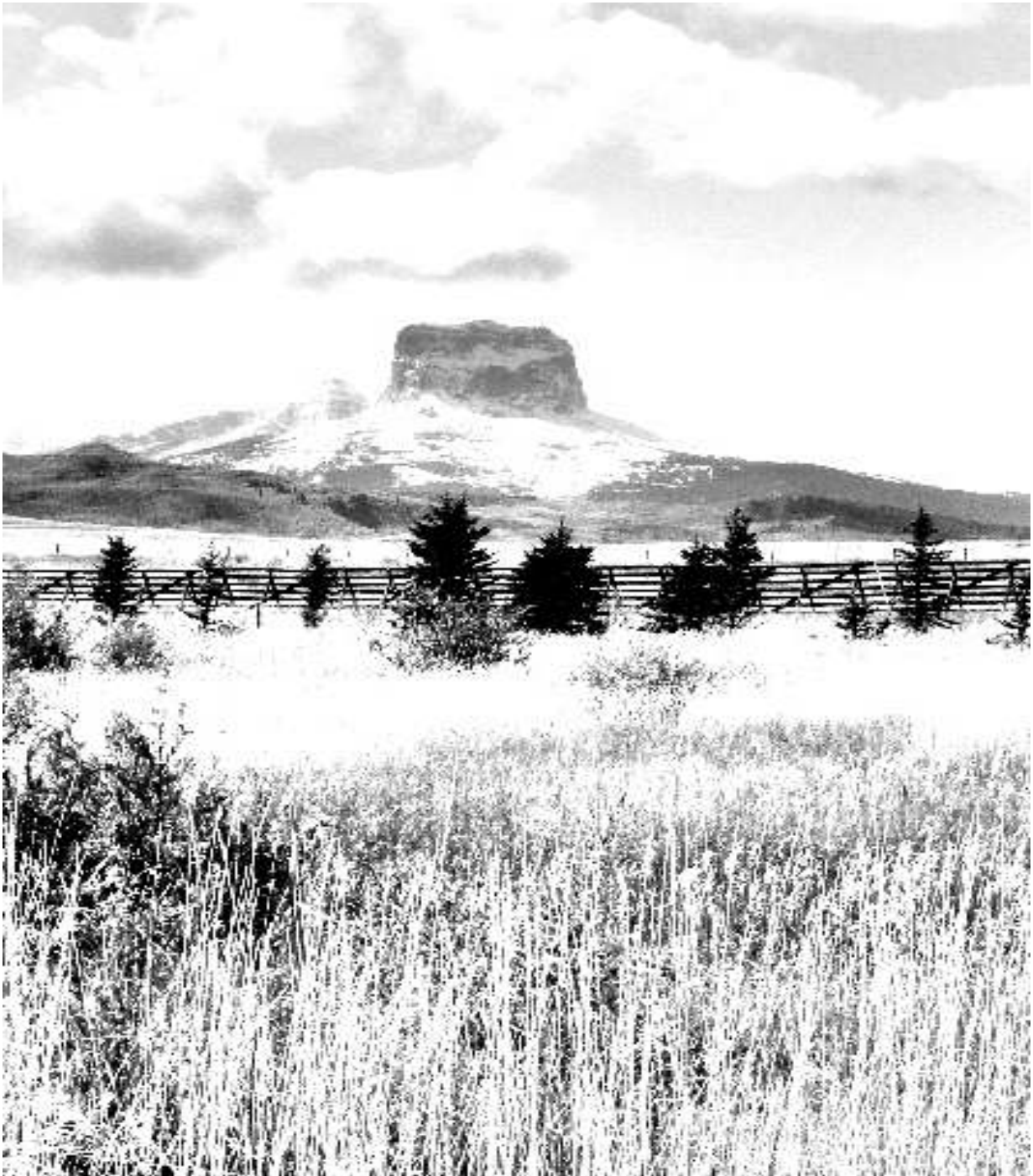
II. The LAND: Mountains, Forests, Plains, LAKES & RIVERS

Northern Alberta is a land of forests, marshes and lakes. The central area of the province has lakes, hills and parkland. It is excellent for farming. In the southern area, relatively flat, dry prairie extends to the horizons. The north is bounded by the 60th parallel and the south by the 49th parallel.

To the east, the 110 meridian divides Alberta and Saskatchewan. The west is bounded by the Rocky Mountains. There, the landscapes around Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper and Waterton have become world famous for their beauty. Thousands of tourists are drawn to these areas every year.



Cameron Lake is in Waterton International Peace Park. This is one of the few peace parks in the world and speaks to the friendship between Canada and the United States. In 1932, Waterton Lakes National Park was joined with Glacier National Park (U.S.A.) to create the world's first international park. The park straddles this international border. Here, too, prairie and foothills meet the mountains.



This mountain near the southern border of Alberta is named Chief Mountain because of its shape. That shape suggests a First Nation's face surrounded by a huge headdress. Natural prairie grasses are in the foreground.

III. Animal S, pl antS, BIRDS & INSECTS

The province spans a vast area. The ecosystems and weather are variable. As a result, the flora, fauna, birds, fish and insect life are extremely diverse. Species that flourish in the mountains or northern forests might never survive on the dryland prairies or even in the parkland. Similarly, some reptiles, such as rattlesnakes, are at home in hot, dry areas. They could not survive in the cold, northern areas. As well as the diversity of plants and animals, there is diversity in insects and birds. However, some insects, such as mosquitos, can survive and thrive throughout the province.



The flower, commonly known as brown-eyed susan (officially *rudbeckia hirta*) provides pollen for insects such as this yellow and brown butterfly.



Wild red clover is one of many sources of pollen for bumble bees. Bees are important to nature, gardening, agriculture and honey production. Wild clover colours range from dark red to purple.



The colour of Alberta's western wood lily can be from bright orange to yellow. It is native to many areas of North America.



The official name for this animal is bison. In the U.S.A. and many areas of the world, including in Canada, the animal is commonly called a buffalo. At one time, thousands of these animals roamed in herds across the prairie. They were the source of food, clothing, teepee covers and bone tools for First Nations of the plains. The newcomers hunted them to near extinction because buffalo robes were desirable for western clothing, carriage robes and industrial uses. Today, some bison live in national parks and on farms. They are various shades of brown.



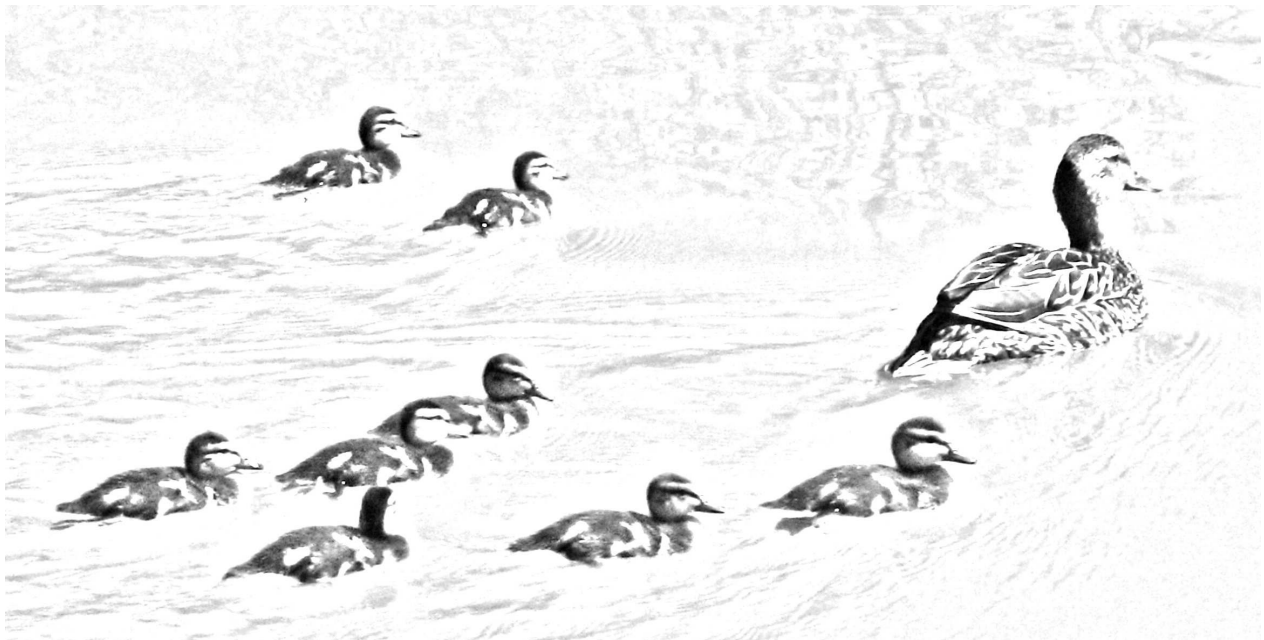
Wild sheep and goats are different. Goats have long hair. In the fall, the male sheep have big horns curling around their ears. Wild sheep became the animal symbol of Alberta.



Common Alberta birds include Canada geese, robins, crows, magpies, wrens, gulls, pigeons, finches, sparrows, owls and chick-a-dees. Less common are eagles and falcons.

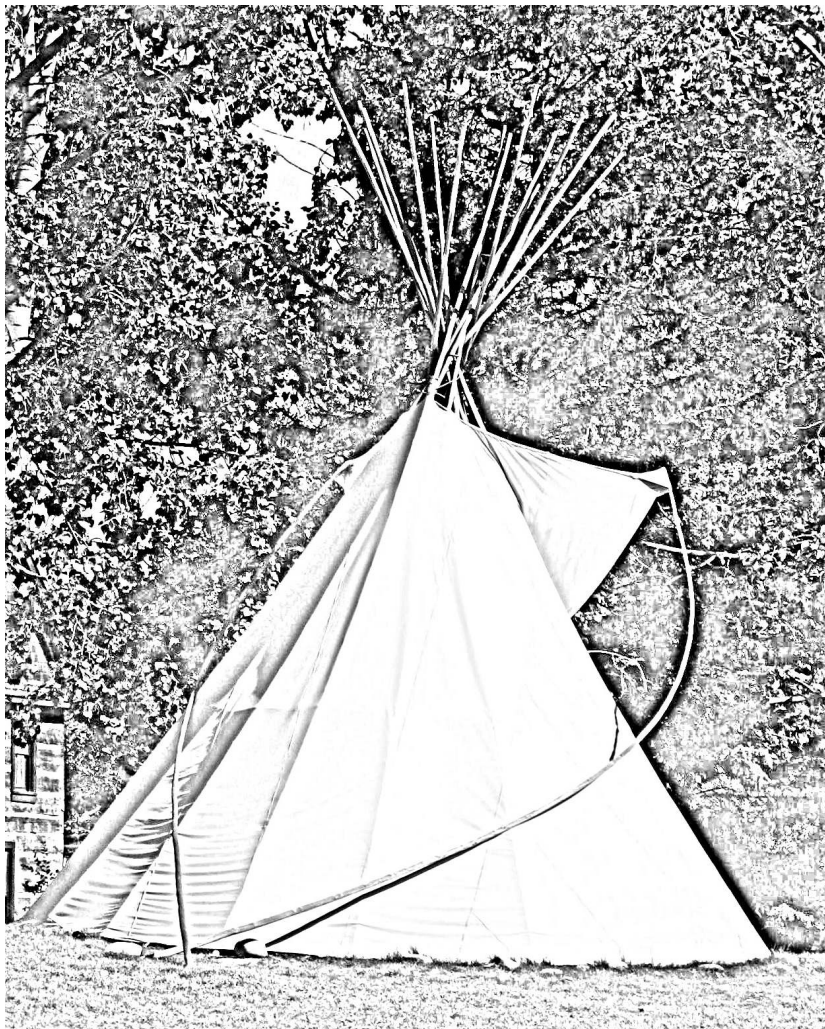


Given varying winter conditions and ecological diversity within in the province, various birds make their homes in each region throughout the year.



IV. EARLY DAYS: FIRST NATIONS, METIS & TRADERS

Alberta's first people are from many tribal groups. Some First Nations include Cree, Stoney, Blood, Piikani, Blackfoot, Siksika, Tsuu T'ina, Dene, Chipewan and Beaver. Each has its own special history. Many have been part of larger groups such as the Blackfoot Confederacy. Historically, some names have changed. Piikani was once called Peigan by newcomers. Each band successfully adapted to its environment. Fish, game and plants, such as roots and berries, provided essentials for a healthy diet.



For First Nations, material was readily available for lodgings. Tanned teepee covers were made from the hide of bison or other large mammals. Poles were from trees. Stones were used to stabilize the structures. Today, teepee rings reveal where lodges once stood. Some rings are ancient. Inside the lodges, hides of animals created warm floors. Family designs on teepee covers were passed from generation to

V. LURE OF THE LAND

The First Nations explored and knew their lands on foot, on horseback and by canoe. Eventually others were drawn to explore the land, too. Often, those first explorers used the river systems as their highways. Alberta has many rivers and their tributaries. Early explorers followed the MacKenzie and Athabasca Rivers. Another important system, that of the north and south Saskatchewan rivers, derived its name from the First Nations' word *kisiskatchewan* meaning "the river that flows swiftly." Additional waterways include the Battle, Bow, Belly, Old Man, Red Deer, Clear Water, Peace and Big Horn. The rivers served the transportation needs of First Nations, explorers, traders, missionaries, surveyors, adventurers, settlers and outdoor enthusiasts.



Waterfalls and rapids, whether large or small, were challenging for those using the rivers for transportation. This waterfall is on the Bighorn River near Nordegg. Today, Alberta's lakes and rivers attract those who enjoy such sports as canoeing, kayaking and fishing. They are also attractions for tourists, hikers, artists and photographers.

VI. TRADERS, PROBLEMS, LAW & ORDER

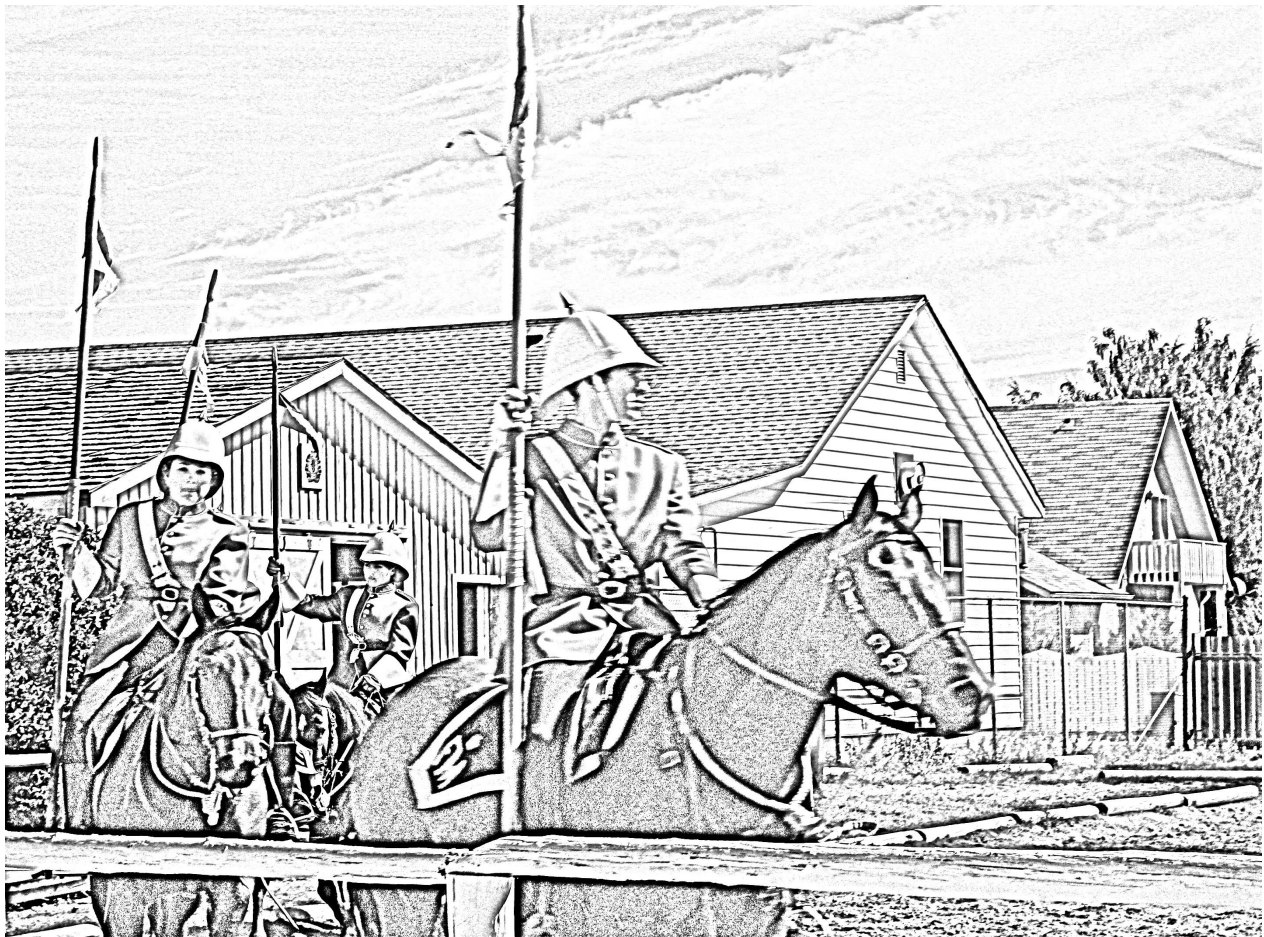
Early in Alberta's history, people from other countries and regions wanted animal pelts for clothing and industrial uses. Soon, fur and other traders sought these pelts from First Nations hunters and trappers. The Hudson's Bay Company (H.B.C.) sent out traders. For the most part, they traded well with the First Nations. Some others, mostly independent traders, created problems. Also, land use came into question. First Nations and Metis saw their lifestyles being threatened. The Riel Rebellion spread to Alberta. Other hostilities arose, too.



This is a display of a trade post. The packing boxes indicate that coyote hides are inside. The animal pelt displayed is not coyote but lynx. Cougars, sometimes called mountain lions, are also native to areas of Alberta.

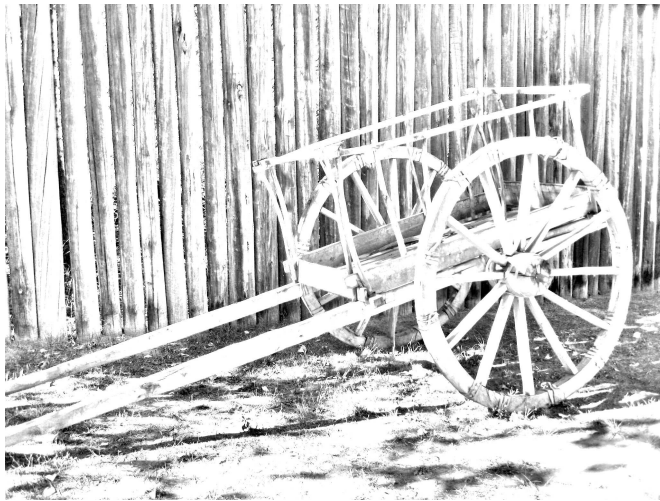
vii. North west mounted police

During the Riel Rebellion, differences among Metis, First Nations and newcomers created problems. Also, the Canadian government wanted to establish the 49th parallel as the West's southern border. To address issues, the North West Mounted Police (today's Royal Canadian Mounted Police) was organized. The new police force marched west to establish law and order. The original ride from Manitoba to Alberta is often re-enacted (as below) at forts and special events. This Musical Ride acknowledges the accomplishment of the force. During this march west, N.W.M.P. faced tremendous difficulties. Arriving in Alberta, they built Fort Macleod and Fort Calgary, as well as other forts.



VIII. Transportation: Waterways, Wagons, Trails & Rails

Western Canada was so vast, transportation was both a challenge and a key to settlement.



Countless types of wagons were used on trails in the early days. Metis carts, such as this, were efficient but squeaked loudly. Together, they created a racket, when one after another, they moved along trails through the plains.





Early transportation was along waterways. If a lake or river was deep, paddle wheelers were used. Otherwise, water travel was by canoe or various types of boats. Also, ferries helped land travellers cross rivers.



To settle western territories, the federal government offered the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) land in exchange for building a railway. Eventually, other railway companies received similar contracts.

ix. SETTLERS & PIONEERS

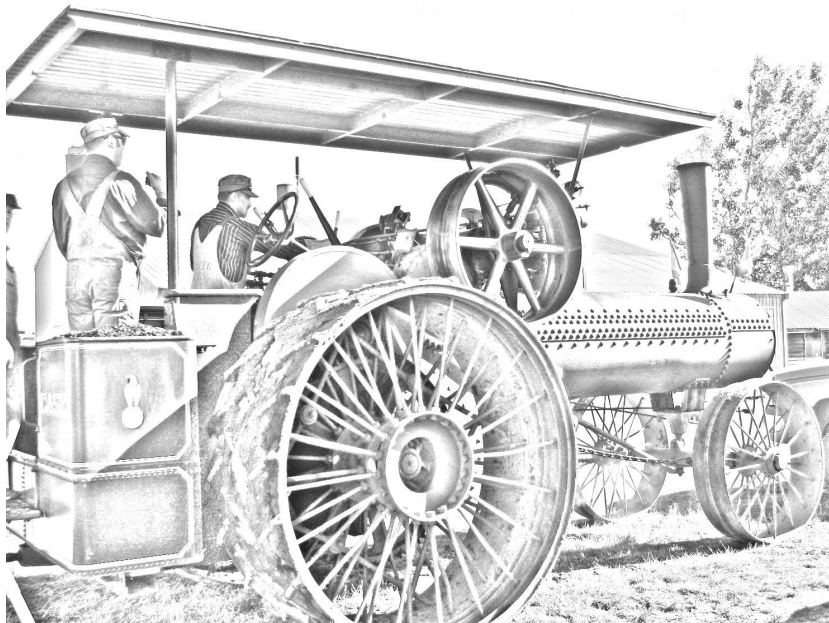
Some pioneers arrived with the fur trade. Others, who built railways, stayed. To lure more people to the western territories, the Canadian government passed the Homestead Act. This granted a free quarter section of land to men and single women if, within they “proved” their land. This meant if they had to pay \$10, built a dwelling and live there six months a year and cultivate land. They could also buy land from the C.P.R. or other railways, land agencies or others.



Thousands of women, their husbands and families came to Canada to farm. Mary (left) was American. The woman on the right portrays a Ukrainian newcomer. She is an interpreter in a house at Ukrainian Village east of Edmonton.

x. RANCHES & FARMS

Many early settlers were ranch and farm families. For ranchers, ample range land could be purchased or leased. Livestock became big business, too. Agriculture—including ranching, mixed farming and grain farming—became central to the development of Alberta.



Grain farmers grew wheat, oats, barley and eventually crops such as sugar beets, corn and canola. Originally, they farmed with horses. When technology and finances improved, pioneer farmers bought tractors, threshing machines and other large equipment.



Horses had long been used by First Nations, Metis, traders and the Mounted Police.

Eventually, large herds were trailed into Alberta. They were essential to both farmers and business people.



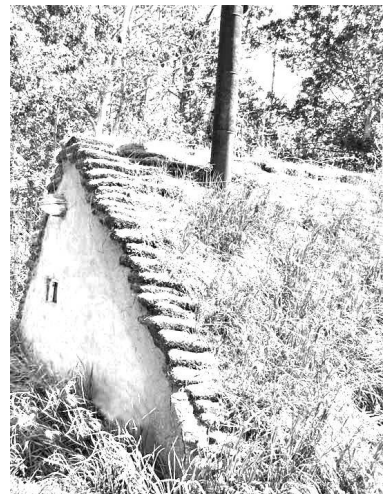
Herds of cattle were trailed to Alberta. Some were long horns such as this one.

Other popular beef cattle were Angus and Herford.

Commonly, dairy farms had smaller herds of Holsteins. Today, various other breeds are raised on farms.

xi. EARLY HOMES

Early homes were built from available materials or those transported to the site. Before railways and trucks, with few trees on the southern prairies, settlers build soddies. Usually small, they were built by stacking squares of sod to form outside walls. Lumber was best for roof rafters, but sod was placed above these. The houses could be mudded and whitewashed. Such homes were warm in winter and cool in summer. Soaking rain was a bigger problem. Those settling near rivers or after the railway brought materials were more fortunate. They could build larger homes.



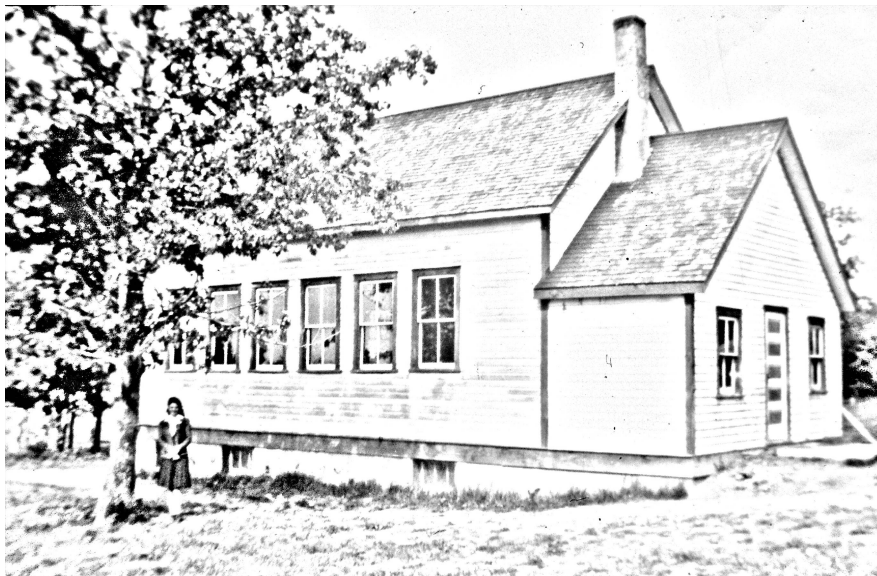
Top: Eastern European style roof; Left: Edmonton home of Alberta's 1st premier; Right: sod roof

Xii. BUILDING BUSINESSES & COMMUNITY

To serve the thousands of settlers, business people soon offered endless and diverse supplies for everyday and special needs. Professional people arrived as well. These included doctors, nurses, dentists, teachers, journalists and countless others. The University of Alberta in Edmonton (1908) eventually educated professional people, too. Business and trades people gained practical skills and expanded expertise in many ways including at colleges and vocational schools.



Owners often lived behind grocery stores, hardware stores and laundries. Stables, liverys and cafes were a few of the other important small businesses.



In early Alberta, children attended one-room schools. There, teachers taught all grades. Sometimes, these served as schools through the week and churches on Sundays. These were an important part of the community.



Grain elevators were much more than places to store grain before it was transported. Located along the railway for efficiently loading grain and its transportation, they were often known as sentinels of the prairies. Many elevator companies might line the railway. As well as announcing the name of the elevator company, usually, at least one would display the name of the town.

XIii. BECOMING A PROVINCE

Before the 1900s, today's Alberta and Saskatchewan were part of the North-West Territories. Both regions became provinces in 1905. Today's Alberta included the earlier District of Alberta (in the south) and the District of Athabasca (in the north). Edmonton was named Alberta's capital city. Eventually, the province established an official emblem, coat of arms and flag. The official motto became *Strong and Free*. Symbolic colours were gold and blue. The stone chosen was petrified wood. The cloth was the Alberta tartan.

As well, plant and animal symbols were established. The fish selected as symbolic of the province was the bull trout. The tree to represent Alberta was the lodgepole pine. The symbolic bird was the horned owl, and Rocky Mountain big horn sheep became the official animal symbol. For the flower, the wild rose was chosen. For years, license plates and signs proclaimed Alberta was wild rose country.

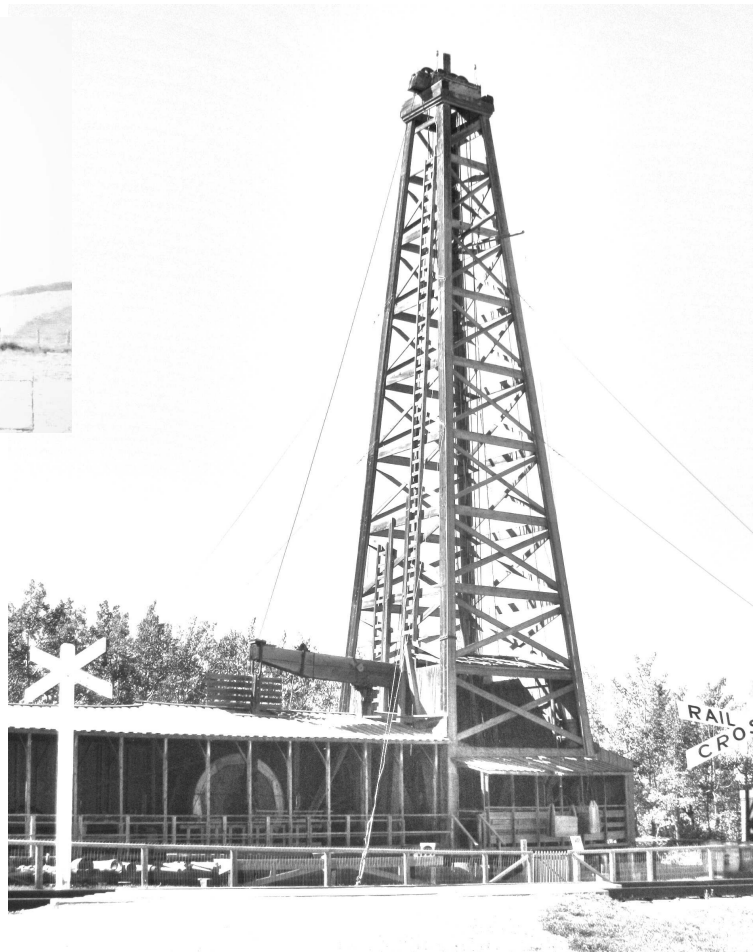


XIV. INDUSTRIES & RESOURCES

Resources such as lumber, petroleum and coal soon offered jobs to many people and helped build the province. As well as drilling for oil and gas, people were needed to drill for water. Gravel and stone resources helped build cities and roads. Rivers were dammed for power and water supplies. Also, manufacturing became important. For instance, the clay industries of Medicine Hat made bricks and pottery. All served the needs of Albertans.



The oil sands was one type of industrial development. In other areas, once an individual site had been drilled and a petroleum deposit found, pumps were put in place. Sometimes called rocking pumps or pump jacks, they have long been part of the oil and gas industry. These dot the Alberta landscape.



xv. HARD TIMES & GOOD TIMES

Boom and bust has been part of the story of Alberta. Success lead to boom times when finances were good for most people. Then, changes in the world, such as the economic depression of the 1930s or failing demand and prices for products such as petroleum, meant economies went bust. Businesses or industries collapsed, and people moved away. Eventually, another round of boom times came along. Personal, business and provincial economies improved. The good times were back—until another cycle of boom and bust.



XVI. Ourself ves & our neighbours

A strong and vibrant province, Alberta continues to grow and celebrate its history and landscape. It builds and changes. It weathers challenges and looks to the future. It possesses unsurpassed beauty, great cities and friendly towns. As well, Alberta maintains strong partnerships with its neighbours and within Canadian confederation.





Discover Alberta's history. Explore its natural world. Enjoy the sketches or colour them. Whether as an adult, youth or child, you will find much to astonish you.

