

**Chaps
and
Chinooks**

A HISTORY WEST OF CALGARY



Preface by Evelyn Buckley

The reason we recall pleasant memories or return to familiar landmarks is to try and keep in contact with our roots. It gives us a sense of continuity, a sense of belonging. By looking back, we can see our achievements more clearly, learn from our mistakes and sort out the future.

It is often said about a great man or remarkable event: 'the world will never forget'. However, the world does forget. In compiling this book we hope to keep the memories of these communities alive. This history includes the area east of the Morley Reserve, south of the Bow River, north of the Sarcee Reserve and west of Calgary. When the town of Calgary was incorporated in 1884 it had a population of 506 and the west boundary was 14 street. We have included the rural settlers on the fringe of Calgary. As it grew our boundaries for the book have moved to the west. 1901 was a turning point, as Albertans were returning from the Boer War, and the original fort site began its massive growth. In 1907 the city expanded west to 24 street. In 1910 the boundaries moved to 37 street. Of course 1911 was the beginning of the large land boom. Fortunes were made and lost hourly, bits and pieces of Calgary and surrounding environs were sold in America and Europe, and immigrants poured in.

The boundary remained static until 1954 when Calgary expanded west to 45 street taking in the districts of Rosscarrock, Glendale, Wildwood and Glamorgan, Sarsedale and Holmpatrick. In 1957 the boundary was drawn at 69 street taking in Westgate and Strathcona Heights where it remains today.

The other areas included were not actual districts, with boundaries, but communities close enough for people to socialize. The communities west of Calgary around the Elbow River were known as Elbow Valley and Sarcee Vale. Further west, from the artist's viewpoint or Stony Hill, to the Edge Hill was known as Springbank. Along this ridge running north and south from Cochrane to where the Gardner Bridge now crosses the Elbow is known as Brushy Ridge. To the west was Jumping Pound. The area south of the Elbow to the Sarcee Indian Reserve took its name from the Pimez Creek.

It is a diverse area, from the rocky escarpment on the west edge of Calgary, through the fertile Springbank Valley to the rolling ranch country of Jumping Pound. The people who settled these areas were also different, depending on what they were looking for. The Pimez Creek, Brushy Ridge and Jumping Pound lands were more suitable for ranching, and the more easterly land for mixed farming and dairying. Settlers came to the land that appealed to them, to have the kind of life they wanted, and was most like their homeland. It is not particularly unique, it was just an area that was settled by a group of hard working pioneers

who knew they wanted a change. They did not write their own history, for they were too busy making it.

Canadians have been and are a successful people. These remarkable ones that settled the prairies in the late 1800's and early 1900's are those we would like to tell you about. They were not only notable just because they pioneered or what they accomplished, but also because of their modesty and the quiet way they did it. They fought blizzards, fire, drought, insects, poverty and illness; and loneliness, especially loneliness. Some succeeded; they remained here and many of their descendants are still here. These are the stories of people who triumphed over adversity, and also of some who found this life wasn't for them. The tragedy, the comic mistake, the day to day struggle to just exist projects a spirit of joy and a sense of great accomplishment. They seemed to know that the happiness was experienced during the journey of life, not just in the planned arrivals. If life in only worth living when there is a challenge, then they had the best lives.

These were peaceful communities establishing churches, schools and community centers for social gatherings. They do not have a history of gunfights, or uprisings. It just seems downright impossible to have a gunfight wearing a heavy coat two sets of underwear, sheepskin boots, and heavy mittens.

This was the land of the trapper, hunter, farmer, and rancher and their families. Perhaps it was the ability to take whatever came into their stride, that was the big secret. When the Boer War, W.W. I and W.W. II came, the young men joined the rest of the country in the defense of something they believed in. Many came from the rural communities, like this one, where they had learned to hunt and ride and stand on their own two feet.

The majority of the settlers came from the United Kingdom, Ontario and the Maritimes. What a shock it must have been to the English couple, used to the manicured garden, to be dumped off the train into this vast unkempt country. With all their worldly possessions on their backs they proceeded West to their 'Homestead'.

There was no doubt they were fortunate, in where they had chosen to settle, for the land was fertile, water was plentiful, and they did not have to clear acres of trees before they could find land to till and pasture their cattle. As a side benefit, it happens to be one of the most beautiful areas in the world, the area where the prairies meet the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Oldtimers recall travelling through a very hard country, until they reached the valley occupied by Fort Calgary. The hills were covered with wild flowers and beautiful green grass, ducks and wild fowl abounded.

Like many districts, we have waited too long, for

the memories of some have not endured. It is with regret that there was a lack of response by some families. However, we cannot be held responsible for these omissions nor the discrepancies within the histories. It is also unfortunate that space did not permit including all manuscripts in their entirety.

We know it is only natural that the old Timers recall the "good old days". For memories like wine, are things that improve and mellow with age. This book is "dedicated to all those who lived the history of this community", and have shared their memories with us. We hope that everyone will enjoy reading of them.

