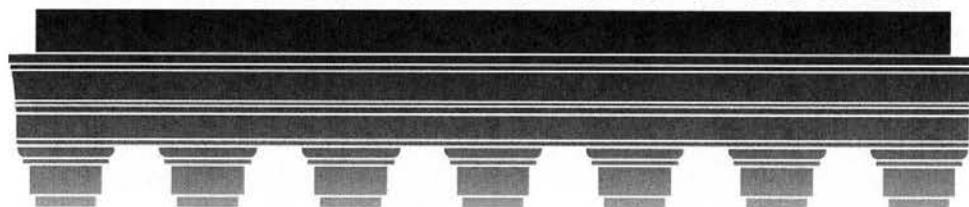


# *Historic Context Paper*

The City of  
**MEDICINE HAT  
HISTORIC RESOURCES**



## Historic Context Paper

### FIRST NATIONS IN MEDICINE HAT

Medicine Hat and the surrounding land has a deep and rich history spanning more than 10,000 years. First Nations settlement and interaction in this area, particularly along the cliffs and banks of the South Saskatchewan River, has made an indelible impression on the landscape. Traditionally, Plains First Nations occupied the area for seasonal habitation and food gathering, primarily bison. The cliffs of the river were important landscapes for the Plains groups, and people would convene there for communal bison hunts, for ceremonial purposes or to trade.

During the Pleistocene, the environment and land surrounding Medicine Hat was a harsh, frigid, arid environment - dramatically different from the landscape of today. Medicine Hat is situated in what was an ice-free corridor extending from present day Alaska to northern Montana during the late Pleistocene period. Located between the Cordilleran and Laurentide ice

sheets, this corridor provided early Paleo-Indian cultures a means of travelling from Siberia to North America via the Beringia land-bridge into North America, and then south through the ice-free corridor. A number of early archaeological sites near Medicine Hat attest to the presence of this transportation corridor including Wally's Beach (11,000-11300 BP), currently submerged by St. Mary's Reservoir. A more recent archaeological site situated on the South Saskatchewan River, in close proximity to Medicine Hat, is the Cactus Flower Site. This site contains multiple layers of occupation some dating to between 4,215 to 3,525 years BP indicating the site was repeatedly occupied for hundreds of years. The Cactus Flower site area would have provided easy access to water and was an ideal ambush point for bison coming to both drink and cross the river. Artifacts recovered from this site indicate that the inhabitants practiced a mobile lifestyle - typical of Plains groups.

A Cree native and his tipi at Medicine Hat



Jarvis, Samuel.  
Cree Indians Camp, Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-025060.

At the point of European contact, Medicine Hat was in the traditional territory of the nomadic Blackfoot people. These people focused their subsistence practices on hunting and gathering, taking advantage of the rich and diverse locally available flora and fauna. The bison fulfilled both food and material needs of the Blackfoot with the meat and marrow providing food and the skins, bone, and sinews used for clothing, housing, and household items. As the Blackfoot followed the bison across the Plains, they utilized dogs to aid in the transportation of their goods. Horses were introduced to Plains groups in the early seventeenth century by Europeans. Blackfoot lived primarily in small groups; however, they would congregate into larger groups to conduct organized hunting events using jumps and pounds and for ceremonial purposes. Archaeological evidence of large village sites has not been found; but, sites typical of Blackfoot nomadic lifestyle such as teepee rings, Sundance locations, and medicine wheels are common on the plains. Medicine wheels are found only in the northwestern Plains and are focused primarily in southern Alberta. The function of medicine wheels is multi-fold: memorials to warrior chiefs, religious ceremonies, and event place markers.

In 1877 at Blackfoot Crossing, located 200 kilometres northwest of Medicine Hat, Treaty 7, a treaty between the Canadian Government and the Southern Alberta Blackfoot Indians, was signed. Treaty 7 was the last of a series of treaties instituted to transfer control of the Blackfoot territory to the Crown. The treaty ceded Blackfoot territory in Rupert's Land to the government and established reserves as well as financial compensation to the Blackfoot. This treaty ensured the land would be 'safe' for early ranchers and settlers moving into the area within the next decade.

Medicine Hat's name intrinsically links the place with its first inhabitants. The name Medicine Hat translates to the word 'Saamis' in Blackfoot. The Blackfoot history associated with the naming of Medicine Hat involves a young man and his wife, who were asked by Council elders during a great winter famine to go on a quest to the 'breathing hole' to ask the river serpent for aid. The couple reached the 'breathing hole' and the serpent required the man to sacrifice his wife in exchange for a 'Saamis', which would grant him special powers. In an attempt to trick the serpent, the man threw his dog into the river; but, the serpent would not be fooled and the man then threw his wife into the river. The serpent instructed the man to spend the night and the next morning he would find his 'Saamis' at the base of the nearby cliffs. The man found the Medicine Hat and through its use, located abundant game to feed his starving people.

For a period of time in 1910, the name of the then town was almost changed to better reflect its prosperous economic position and to stop the ridicule directed at the city by fellow Canadians and Americans. The decision to change Medicine Hat's name was put to a vote and through the aid of letters written by famous author, Rudyard Kipling, who encouraged the city to keep the name, residents voted to continue calling the city Medicine Hat.





## OASIS IN THE PRAIRIE: SETTLING MEDICINE HAT

Settlement in Medicine Hat was spurred by the abundance of natural resources, including gas and clay among others, and the longest frost-free growing period in the province. Coupled with its strategic positioning on the Canadian Pacific Railway, Medicine Hat emerged as a unique settlement destination in Alberta. Waves of immigrants and settlers through time to the present day, have greatly impacted the architecture and layout of the City. The multiple waves of early immigration impacted the landscape of Medicine Hat as immigrants clustered together in ethnic groups creating distinctive neighbourhood enclaves.

Prior to the arrival of the railway in 1883, First Nations and a few intrepid pioneer explorers occupied the area. Early settlers lived off the land, interacting with First Nations to exchange goods. The first influx of people into Medicine Hat occurred shortly before the arrival of the railway. Surveyors for the CPR reached the banks

of the South Saskatchewan River in the early spring of 1883 and began preparations for the coming railway. There, an early tent town of railway workers, engineers, and management was established. The first businesses, such as William Cousins' mercantile store, opened that same year and catered to the needs of the railway and its workers. As people settled in Medicine Hat, many lived in tents, sod houses, or boxcars until they could afford to construct a home.

In the late 1870s, prior to the construction of the railway, the Canadian government campaigned eastern provinces, the United States, and Europe in an attempt to entice immigrants to move west. The 1871 *Homestead Act* legally permitted the division and ownership of prairie land. By the 1880s, a mass movement of immigrants westward was underway. The CPR was the ignition that kick-started the settlement of the west. Medicine Hat experienced multiple waves of immigration as boosters

The Medicine Hat Immigration Hall



Immigration Hall [Court House] Medicine Hat, Alberta.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-046342.



Coal mining operations near Medicine Hat in 1884

Weston, T.C.  
Saskatchewan Coal Mine near Medicine Hat, Alta., looking  
down slope.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-050829.



trumpeted the potential of the land and wealth of available natural resources to the rest of Canada and the world. The majority of immigrants settling in Medicine Hat were from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Quebec, and Ontario. By the late 1880s and early 1890s, a subsequent wave of immigrants primarily of American, Scandinavian, and German descent settled in Medicine Hat. A small population of Chinese, escaping economic hardships in Guangdong, China, were present in Medicine Hat by 1887. In 1889, German speakers, primarily from two villages in eastern Galicia, formed the largest immigrant group in Medicine Hat. Statistics document 29 different nationalities in Medicine Hat by 1912.

Additional waves of immigrants settled in the area following each of the World Wars.

Medicine Hat was highly transformed by the Canadian Government's land program granting land to returning First World War and Second World War military personnel. In response to the waves of returning soldiers, the federal government established soldier resettlement programs, whereby the government would provide land and a loan for stock, equipment, and buildings. These programs characterized subsequent waves for settlement in the prairies.

## MANAGING GROWTH IN MEDICINE HAT

Medicine Hat's establishment and early growth is intrinsically linked to the CPR and their presence and significantly influenced the initial layout of the then town. The later development of manufacturing and production industries expanded the city's boundaries and resulted in the establishment of worker community enclaves with their own unique plan. Medicine Hat's geography, environment, commercial and industrial developments, transportation corridors, and quality of life continue to attract families to area.

The CPR and the surrounding geography dictated the early plans for Medicine Hat. The arrival of the CPR surveyors in the early spring of 1883 initiated the city's layout, specifically through the placement of the railway trestle, siding, and station. The CPR's placement of its station and land grants for hotels and civic buildings, structured the spatial growth of the city. Businesses and residences radiated out from the railway station; however, unlike the disordered chaos of other early railway towns, Medicine Hat's early settlement was structured and well thought-out. The railway station and sidings formed the spine from which the early commercial core radiated outwards in similar plan both north and south of the main line. South and North Railway Streets, running parallel to the railway, constituted the commercial core of Medicine Hat and by 1885, the then village included churches, a school, and doctors, carpenters, and lawyers offices. The local geography also managed the city's early development with a number of residences constructed in close proximity to the South Saskatchewan River. The plans, blocks, and lots laid out in Medicine Hat's early years were expanded upon in the Edwardian era of the early 1900s.

Medicine Hat's downtown core was laid out on a grid plan with the earliest portion of the city being slightly off its north south axis. As the city expanded, new roads were laid out in a true north south grid. The shift of the city's grid became problematic with regards to the naming of streets. In 1912, the first 'seeds' of the city's Planning Commission took root. The focus of the commission was to address the confusion of street names in Medicine Hat. Originally streets were named after cities in Canada, the United States, England, as well as prominent local families. The naming of streets was not regulated and, as the city grew, streets of different names ran into one another. A proposition was put forth, the Strathcona Plan, which recommended the changing of 'named' streets to numbered ones. The changing of the street names was agreed to in 1914. Divisional Avenue, formerly West Road Allowance, became the east-west boundary in the early 1900s.

Many of the early subdivisions were named after noted dignitaries, early landowners, and local geography such as the Yuill, Cousins and Sissons, Kipling Park, and the River Flats. Later subdivisions possessed more curvilinear roads and traffic calming measures to manage traffic and increase privacy for the residents. The size of the residential lot varied greatly over time, with lots in Medicine Hat's earlier neighbourhoods being substantially larger than those in later developments.

The years between the mid-1890s and the First World War were formative for Medicine Hat and Canada in general. Rapid population growth and increased economic activity played off one another initiating a boom-like atmosphere. Although other areas of Canada experienced a depression prior to and during the First World War,



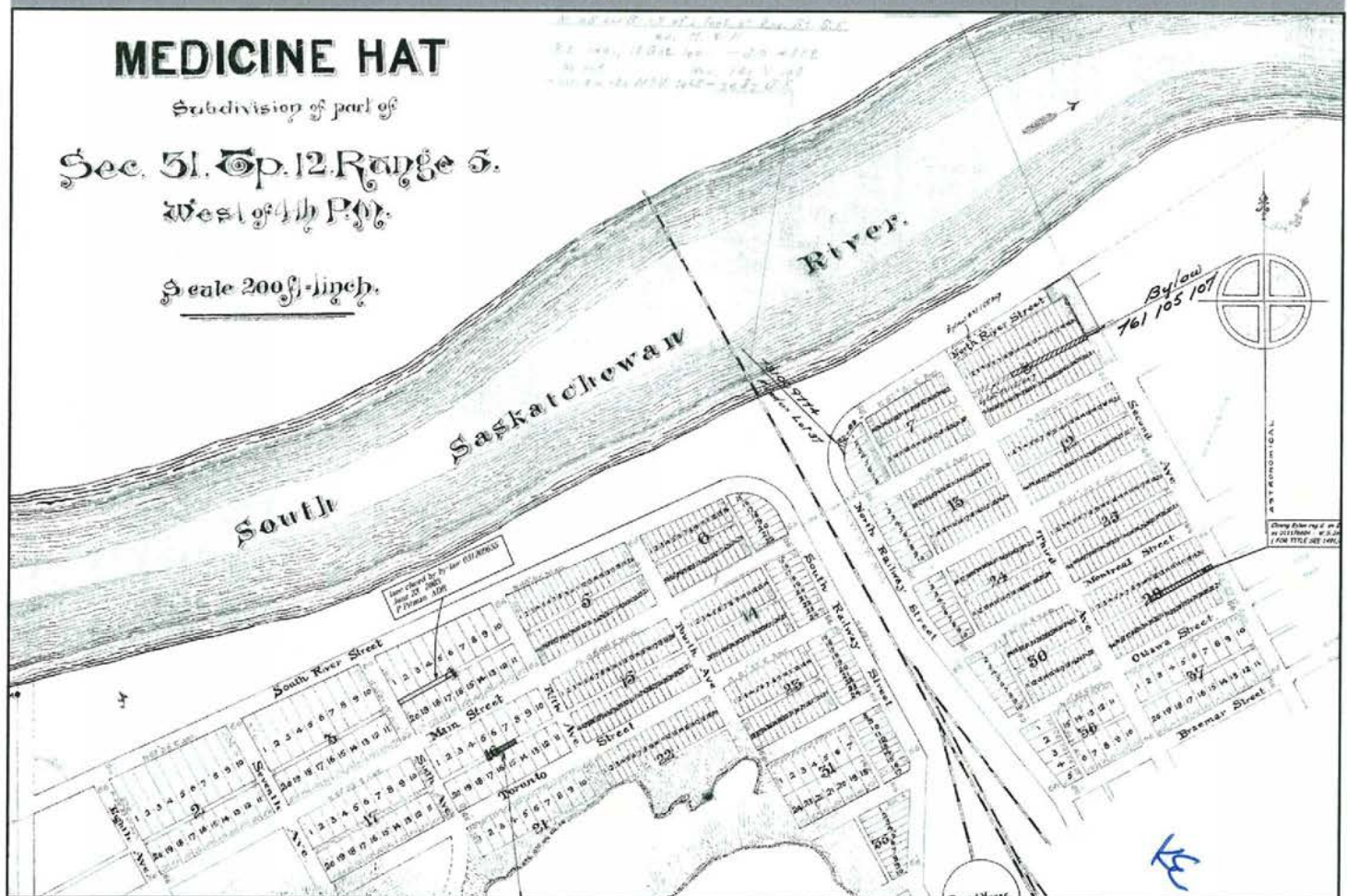


Medicine Hat's economy remained relatively stable. In 1911, Medicine Hat lead Canada in the total percentage of building permits issued and the following year, the city experienced a 281% increase in buildings permits. Industrial, commercial, and civic buildings were constructed during this period. Medicine Hat's high rate of growth was such that the city's Industrial

Bureau, recognizing that new industries being established would attract more immigrants, lobbied neighbouring towns and provinces for builders to aid in the housing shortage.

Subdivision survey plan for the original townsite of Medicine Hat. Surveyed in 1883 by D.A. Hamilton, Dominion Land Surveyor

Service Alberta. Plan 1491.





Medicine Hat, in the 1910s, underwent a shift in the configuration of subdivisions. As new industries established themselves, particularly in the River Flats area, two unique changes occurred to the layout of subdivisions. The labour force required to operate the new factories, settled in close proximity to their workplace and this resulted in an industrial-neighbourhood plan. The workers were frequently new to the area and did not possess significant financial assets, which resulted in the construction of small, vernacular style 'worker's cottages.' Many of these residences are still present and stand in stark contrast to the later affluent homes of their neighbours. The second shift was the integration of commercial business into residential neighbourhoods. F. Scudder Grocery (1920) and the McKenzie-Sharland Grocery (1912) are two examples of this practice. Previously, such businesses were situated in the commercial core of Medicine Hat; however, as the city grew out from the downtown core and the

demand by residents to access amenities locally increased, retail businesses were integrated into neighbourhoods. The boom years prior to the First World War eventually came to an end and the city, as with the rest of Canada, experienced a economic downturn. The war's effect would continue to be felt long after the end of the First World War and throughout the 1920s during which a reduction in construction and development in Medicine Hat occurred and persisted until the start of the Second World War. The economic recession of the early 1930s and prolonged drought resulted in a substantial exodus of people from the prairies. The downturn experienced in Medicine Hat was buffered when compared to the rest of the country due to its strong, but fluid, manufacturing base, railway positioning, and affordable natural resources.

View of the historic Medicine Hat City Hall in 1910, demolished in the early 1980s. For a time, it also housed the City's Fire Department

Rumsey & Co. City Hall, Medicine Hat, Alta., Canada.  
Peel's Prairie Province's  
Prairie Postcard Collection. PC004371.



Medicine Hat continued to grow in the second half of the twentieth century, but not at the same scale and pace previously experienced. Following the Second World War, development continued to focus beyond Medicine Hat's downtown core. As the automobile culture continued to grow, neighbourhoods could be situated further from local amenities. The most recent shift is the development of a large commercial centre outside the downtown core. The development of destination 'supercentres' outside the historic centre of a community dramatically shifts the communities' focus and economy. A once thriving downtown core becomes a ghost town of vacant buildings. To combat this situation, the city has established a *Downtown Development Incentive Program*, which provides a variety of avenues of financial assistance to downtown property owners as they restore their property to attract businesses and tenants.

### Governance

Fifteen years after the first settlement was established, Medicine Hat was incorporated as a town in 1898. That same year the first Town Council was elected with W.B. Marshall elected Mayor. The first task of the newly elected Council was the formation of a fire department. The previous year a large fire had destroyed Medicine Hat's government building, and identifying the need to protect the buildings and citizens, a volunteer fire brigade was established. A Public Waterworks was established in 1901 and through its presence, Medicine Hat's first Volunteer Fire Department emerged. The Medicine Hat Fire department continues to protect the residents of Medicine Hat, over a century after its creation.

In 1906, the town became an incorporated city. That same year the first City Council was elected and William Cousins was elected Mayor. Medicine Hat public servants have a strong history of long-standing public service. Medicine Hat serves as the local and regional centre for civic and government services. The city's first courthouse was constructed in 1899 and served the judiciary needs of the city, until it was replaced by the Provincial designated Beaux-Arts style courthouse in 1920. Prior to the creation of the Province of Alberta in 1905, Medicine Hat served as the judicial seat for the District of Assiniboia and continues to be a key judicial centre for the province.

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## RANCHING AND FARMING IN MEDICINE HAT

Ranching and later agriculture were defining characteristics leading to the development of many Alberta communities including Medicine Hat. The geography and climate enticed early settlers to the area in the late 1800s and, in conjunction with the railway, led to the development of numerous business and social networks to support early ranchers and farmers.

The city is situated in the western portion of an area known as the Palliser Triangle. The Palliser Triangle, named after John Palliser who surveyed the area in 1857-1859, is a semi-arid steppe region devoid of trees. The short grass prairie contained nutrient rich soil; however, Palliser deemed the area a 'wasteland' unfit for agriculture due to its arid environment. A few years after Palliser's survey, John Macoun, an Irish-born naturalist surveying the area with Sir Sanford Fleming for the proposed Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), deemed the area suitable for the farming of wheat. His conclusion significantly influenced the

future route of the railway and contributed to the immigration of settlers to the area. Unfortunately, Macoun's survey occurred during a period of high precipitation and did not truly reflect the typical arid environment of the region. Medicine Hat boasts the longest frost-free growing season in the Province and receives annually over 2,500 hours of sunshine – attractive qualities for early settlers. The city rests upon the Belly River Formation in the Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin and is composed of fine-grain sandstone and shales with horizons of coal and Cretaceous dinosaur beds.

As the settling of the west grew to become a 'national policy' and migration of people into the rich agricultural land of the west began in earnest, Medicine Hat became a focal point of westward expansion. Ranching was the first activity to be conducted in the area. By 1875, small herds of cattle established by local traders existed. The climate and geography of the

A horse ranch near Medicine Hat



Topley Studio. Horse Ranching, Cypress Hills.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-011480.



Palliser triangle was suitable for cattle; however, they competed with the buffalo for the nutrient rich short grasses abundant around Medicine Hat. Once the buffalo disappeared, cattle grazed the land freely. The earliest ranch in the area was James F. Sanderson's (1882) who was contracted to procure meat for the North West Mounted Police (NWMP). Cattle were typically brought from Montana, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, and by 1892 it was estimated that there were 200,000 head of cattle in the area. The first large-scale ranch in the district was started by William T. Finlay, John Ewart, and Thomas Tweed and was situated southwest of the city at Seven Person Creek. Large-scale ranches filled the government's need to feed the NWMP and also attracted British capital. Ranching was a vital industry in Southern Alberta with the area's expansive grasslands serving as open ranges for Canadian ranchers; however, by 1912 the majority of the land had been fenced. Medicine Hat served as the main railhead for the ranches and provided an immediate economic development for the city and goods for the railway. Ranching continued to be the primary economy in Southern Alberta until the turn of the century.

By the late 1890s, a gradual shift began to occur in Southern Alberta with agriculture establishing a greater role in the area's economy. Medicine Hat's Agricultural Society, organized in 1886, provided a forum for farmers to exchange information, knowledge, and socialize. The arid climate in the area was not entirely conducive to farming and many early 'sodbusters' faced significant challenges. Farming conditions were more suitable to the west where greater occurrences of moisture existed. The first dry-land farmer in Medicine Hat was James Porter who immigrated

from Ireland, first to Ontario, and then to Medicine Hat in 1883. The creation of the Crow Rate in 1897, further aided the development of agriculture in the area by providing a reduced rail rate for farmers to ship their grain east to the lakehead and markets beyond.

By 1912, the majority of the land in Southern Alberta had been overgrazed and coupled with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, dramatically altered the ranching and farming landscape. However, the demand for agricultural goods and beef to feed the fighting men and stricken Allied countries was high. Many Medicine Hat men enlisted to fight for Britain, which resulted in a labour shortage on farms and ranches.

The crash of 1929 and subsequent Great Depression altered the farming landscape of the area. Canada's primary based economy of forestry, mining, and farming were severely impacted. Grain prices collapsed. The use of mechanized farm equipment rose; thus, the labour required to plant, tend, and harvest crops was no longer necessary. In an attempt to compensate for lower grain prices, farmers broke more land; however, this started a vicious-cycle that continued to drive grain prices downward. Medicine Hat was buffered to a certain extent by its diverse economies; however, many farms were abandoned during this difficult economic period.

### **Mills**

In the early 1900s, Medicine Hat was the leading mill centre in Western Canada. Its rail connection, tax structure, and natural gas resources made the location ideal for the industry. The mills were concentrated in the south end of the River Flats neighbourhood with railway access.

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At its peak, Medicine Hat had five mills in operation including Lake of the Woods Milling Co. (1916), Hedley Shaw Mill owned by Maple Leaf Milling Company Ltd. (1914), Puffed Wheat Mill (early 1900s), Ogilvie Flour Mills Co. (1912), and the Alberta Linseed Company (1911). When operating at full capacity, the flour mills were capable of producing over 2,000 barrels of flour per

day. A few of the mills were owned by local families such as the Yuills and Dederers and employed thousands of local residents. The construction of these colossal brick and concrete monoliths was completed at an unprecedented rate with the Hedley Shaw, Ogilvie, and Lake of the Woods (second mill) mills taking less than six months to complete. The mills were built just prior to

The Ogilvie Flour Mill, built in 1912

Donald Luxton & Associates  
April 2013



or during the First World War; a period of time when new construction projects were not common as the country refocused its attention to Europe. While the First World War had a depressing effect on Western Canada, Medicine Hat mills did benefit during the war through large flour contracts with France and England. Over time the milling industry in Medicine Hat has declined with just a one of the original five mill sites still in operation.

### **Irrigation**

Farming in Medicine Hat was always a challenging task and the presence of an irrigation system benefited area farmers greatly. An early attempt by Sir John Lister-Kaye to irrigate the land using a horse-drawn sprinkler system in 1885 was short-lived and proved to be cost prohibitive. The attempt to raise private funds for the development of an irrigation system was unsuccessful and the Government needed to be persuaded to fund such a project. In 1935, the *Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act* provided free engineering services to farmers for the development of small-scale irrigation projects. The Federal government undertook the construction of large reservoirs and connecting canals, with the provincial government managing the distribution of the water. One such local project was St. Mary's Reservoir. A dam at Spring Coulee was constructed and the associated water management project irrigated land between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.



## MADE IN MEDICINE HAT

The steady settlement of Medicine Hat that occurred in the late 1800s, continued into the early 1900s as waves of immigrants arrived from Europe, the United States, and eastern Canada. These immigrants brought with them trades, skills, and knowledge, which contributed to the establishment of many early industries in Medicine Hat. The development of large scale industries then, as it does now, resulted in the emergence of numerous smaller industries to support the growing economy and local work force.

The growth of Medicine Hat's economy can be attributed to its multi-faceted strong industrial base. Industries that developed a strong base in Medicine Hat were ones that required excessive amounts of natural resources for production of their products. Medicine Hat had both large quantities of inexpensive local natural gas and tax incentives to entice industries to the city. Combined with its direct access to national transportation routes via rail and road, forged Medicine Hat as an epicentre for industrial development. Ranching, farming, natural resource extraction, clay industry, glass industry, greenhouses, and industrial manufacturing contributed to Medicine Hat's early and ongoing growth. Medicine Hat's economy experienced boom and bust years; however, its diverse economy, natural gas resources, and advantageous tax structure buffered the city's economy. The city experienced booms in the early 1890s, 1909-1914, and late-1950s that significantly shaped Medicine Hat's development. As the city grew, smaller industries and businesses emerged to support the developing community. In 1910, the Wall Street Journal lists Medicine Hat's compliment of business to include: four banks, a flour mill, two planning mills, four lumber yards, and three brick-making plants with anticipation of further growth and development. By 1913,

Medicine Hat had 36 industries with 10 or more employees and an annual payroll of nearly \$4,000,000. In the latter half of the twentieth century, and through to the present, Medicine Hat's resources, climate, transportation positioning, and skilled workforce continue to attract companies to the city.

### Ranching and Farming

Settlers were attracted to the area for its wealth of natural resources, geography, and climate. The earliest economy in the area focused on ranching. The nutrient rich short-grasses and coulees provided ranchers with an ideal environment for raising cattle. Ranching also provided immediate economic development in the newly acquired Rupert's Land for the Canadian Government. The arrival of the railway in 1883 supplied the means with which to transfer product eastward in exchange for incoming goods and people. Ranching dominated the economic landscape of southern Alberta until the mid-1890s, when a transitional shift to agriculture began to occur. Agricultural based farming dominated southern Alberta's economy during the late-1890s and early 1900s. The conditions in Medicine Hat for agriculture were always tenuous; however, the city developed as a regional milling centre due to its positioning on the railway. John McNeely built the Medicine Hat Milling Co. in 1902, to profit from this economy. By 1912 Medicine Hat was the milling capital of western Canada with four flour mills and one linseed mill in operation.

### Natural Resources Extraction

An economy based on natural resource extraction established itself early in Medicine Hat's history. The first coal company was established by John Baylis,



Medicine Hat  
The Gas City

DONALD LUXTON  
AND ASSOCIATES INC



Municipal Heritage  
Partnership Program



John Lamb, S. Mattenson Baylis, J.J. Tolfree, and George Samuel Wait in 1883 at Stair Ranch. Also at this time, the Galt Coal Company shipped coal by steamer from their Lethbridge coal seams to Medicine Hat. In 1885, the North West Coal & Navigation Company (NWC&NC) constructed a narrow gauge line from their coalfields to Medicine Hat. Local resident, Ben McCord, extracted coal to use in his brick plant. In 1895, McCord's seam became the Crockford Brothers Coal Mine and in 1908, the mine was expanded. Crockford sold the mine to J.J. Swan in 1918 and it was renamed the Swan Coal Mine and continued to be operated for the next 30 years until it was sold to J. Oliphant, who renamed it the Ajax Coal Mine. The use of coal as a fuel source declined following the discovery of natural gas.

In 1883, while drilling for water, the CPR struck a natural gas pocket near Alderson, formerly Langevin. The first discovery

of its kind in the area, the CPR used the gas to heat their section-house. In 1891, Sir William Van Horne, president of the CPR, suspecting that coal may lay beneath Medicine Hat, recommended the then town drill for coal. A rig was borrowed from the CPR and funds were raised from local businesses to cover its operation. Drilling began near the location of Medicine Hat's first hospital and at 200 meters, instead of coal, natural gas was struck. The gas from the first well was too wet, and a subsequent well was drilled and dry gas found. Medicine Hat's first independent driller was Charles Coulter, who in 1899 drilled a well in his backyard and, with his own-patented furnace, used the gas to heat his house. Coulter also ran lines across the street to his neighbours – initiating the use of this resource to heat private homes. A private company attempted to purchase the gas fields; however, councillors choose to maintain the gas as a public utility – which has continued to the present day. By 1903, all Medicine Hat homes were furnished with gas. Inconsistencies in the delivery of natural gas spurred the city to drill a new well; however, after reaching 305 meters, no gas had been found. The decision was made to continue drilling, even though the budget for the work had been spent, and at 308 meters, natural gas was found. The well was greater than any other previously found. In the late 1910s, natural gas was considered so plentiful that 'blowing off' a well was a form of entertainment. It was this activity that noted English author Rudyard Kipling, witnessed in 1907 that spawned his famous quote that Medicine Hat had "all hell for a basement." Medicine Hat's natural gas fields provided the city with an ongoing source of revenue. The availability of natural gas attracted then, as it does now, numerous manufacturing industries to Medicine Hat. Its discovery

Drilling for natural gas at Medicine Hat  
in 1931



Walt, E.H. City of Medicine Hat, Alta. Gas  
Well #56, Drilling. Library and Archives  
Canada. PA-014496.

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dramatically shaped the lives of the city's residents as well as the local economy.

In 1959, an aquifer was discovered and developed as a municipal utility. The aquifer could produce approximately 75,708,000 million liters of water per day. This provided not only a viable drinking source for the community, but also water for the use in local manufacturing industries.

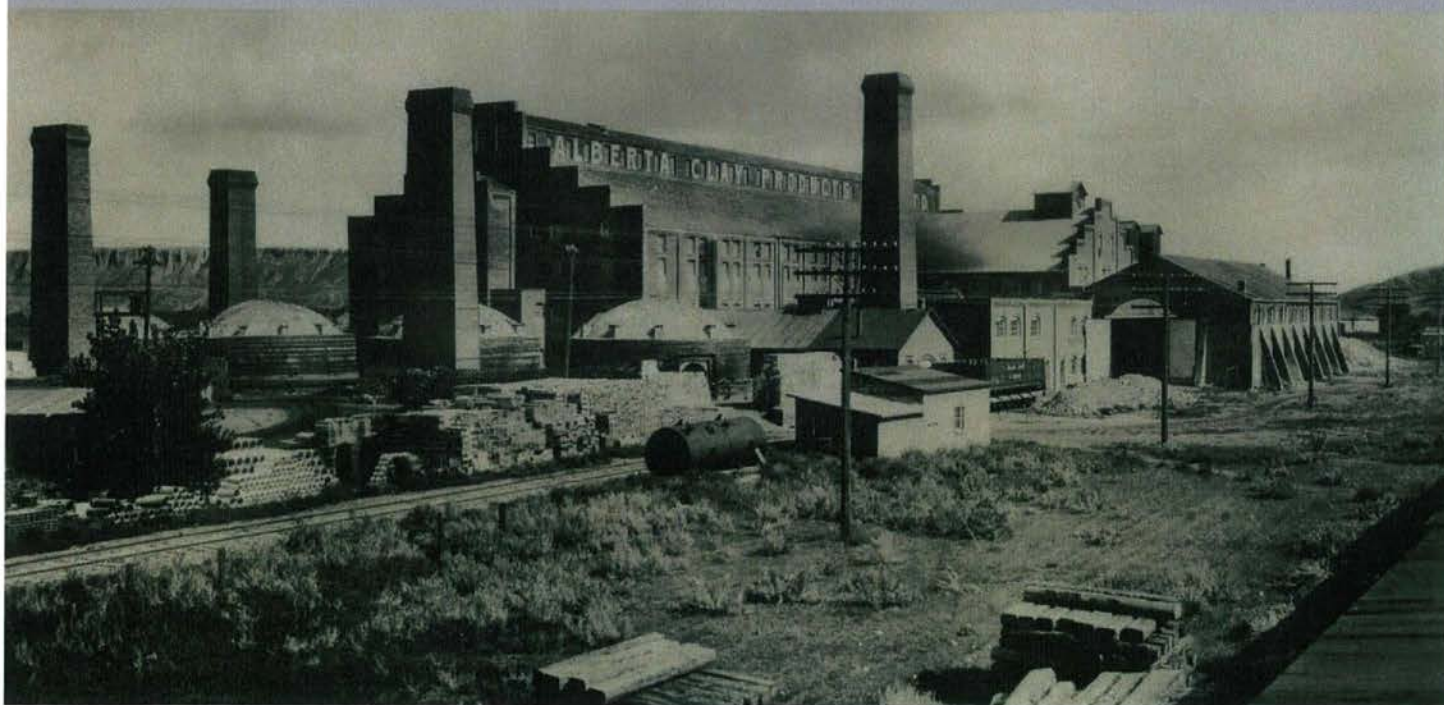
### Clay Products

The abundance of natural gas and local clay deposits resulted in a clay products industry with deep historical connection to Medicine Hat and Redcliff. Siting

along the railway permitted distribution of southern Alberta clay products across Canada. Despite labour shortages, economic instability, and changing product demand, the clay products industry survived and thrived in Medicine Hat since first established in 1885. This industry contributed significantly to Medicine Hat's early development and carried the city through difficult economic periods. From 1912 to 1960, Medicine Hat was the centre of the clay products industry in Canada. The industry was primarily centralized in the River Flats neighbourhood of Medicine Hat. Medicine Hat's diverse clay industry provides a unique intact industrial interpretive aspect which attracts artists and tourists to the city.

The Alberta Clay Products plant. Sold to Medicine Hat Brick and Tile in 1960, and burnt down the following year

Valentine Edy Co. Ltd. Alberta Clay Products Plant, Medicine Hat, Alberta. Postcards of the Past, Calgary Public Library, Calgary, Alberta. pc\_532.





Clay pipes sitting at the former I-XL Industries brick and tile plant

Donald Luxton & Associates  
August 2012



### Brick Plants

The history of Medicine Hat's brick industry is complex with long-standing connections to community members. Ben McCord established the first brickyard in 1885 and his bricks were used to build the first brick building in Medicine Hat, the Ewart and Tweed Warehouse. A decade later, the Purmal family, whose brick factory was situated at the present location of I-XL Industries, purchased McCord's plant. The Briars Brick Plant, located in Redcliff, was also one of the earliest brick plants established in 1897. By 1908, three plants were in operation: Purmal's Brick Company Ltd., Redcliff Brick Company Ltd., and Canadian Brick Company Ltd. Starting in 1911, the Purmal's Brick Company changed ownership and names several times before becoming the Gas City Brick Company Ltd. in 1915. During the First World War, numerous brick companies halted production due to labour shortages and lack of demand. Destroyed by fire in 1925, the Gas City Brick Company was rebuilt

and in 1929, became a part of the Medicine Hat Brick and Tile Company Ltd., which in turn was purchased by the Redcliff Pressed Brick Company that same year.

The establishment of the Redcliff Pressed Brick Company by Herbert Sissons, James Mitchell, and James Hargrave in 1912 initiated Redcliff's brick industry. The company's only manufactured product was pressed red bricks. At the time, it was one of five brick plants in the area. The Redcliff Brick and Coal Company and Redcliff Clay Products Company Ltd. were two operations employing hundreds of local residents. The latter company purchased Medicine Hat Brick and Tile Company in 1929 and relocated their head office to Medicine Hat. Redcliff Pressed Brick Company was eventually absorbed into I-XL Group of Companies, which continued manufacturing brick as I-XL Industries Ltd. in Medicine Hat until 2010, when a flood severely damaged the recently modernized factory.

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A brickyard in Medicine Hat in 1910



Ries, R. Brickyard at base of Cliff, Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-040052.

The Alberta Clay Products' substantial factory was opened in 1909. Built using brick manufactured on-site, the factory was the largest of its kind at the time possessing 14 kilns. In addition to bricks, the company manufactured clay tile and pipes of 2, 4, 6, 8, and 12-inches. The plant's manufacturing capabilities were unprecedented with one contract filling 500 boxcars. In 1918, the plant was purchased by Harry Yuill and John Dixon and the plant continued manufacturing clay products until its closure in 1962.

### Potteries

Medicine Hat's pottery industry history is complex and has undergone numerous transformations overtime. John A. McIntyre established the first pottery, Medicine Hat Pottery Company Limited, in 1912. Two years later the Medicine Hat Pottery Company went into receivership and was purchased by local businessmen Charles Pratt, William Creer, and Ulysses S. Grant who formed the Medalta

Stoneware Company in December of 1915. The company manufactured a variety of stoneware household items including crocks, jugs, and bowls. Over the next decade the size and scale of the company and necessary workforce increased substantially. In 1924, Medalta Stoneware Company restructured and became Medalta Potteries Limited. Over the next four decades the plant continued to expand eventually dominating the industry through its superior manufacturing processes, high quality products, and evolving product lines. In the late-1930s, Medalta commenced production of the first semi-porcelain clay wares with all materials being of Canadian origin. Medalta produced semi-porcelain wares for the CPR, CNR, RCAF, and numerous hotels in western Canada. In 1958, Medalta potteries, then named New Medalta Ceramics, went bankrupt, although attempts to keep the company operating at a reduced capacity continued until its permanent closure in 1966.

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Situated in close proximity to Medalta's plant was the short-lived Gas City Pottery Limited. Operating from 1916 to 1922 as the Gas City Pottery Limited and from 1922 to 1924 as Canada Pottery, both companies manufactured dishes, teapots, and jugs. As Medalta expanded their product line, the company was unable to compete and closed in 1924.

Alberta Potteries Limited was established by Jesse Wyatt, Medalta Potteries Ltd. plant superintendent from 1924 to 1930, in a Redcliff automobile garage in 1931. Wyatt and his sons operated the factory producing wares similar to Medalta Potteries' most popular lines. In 1936, Jesse Wyatt sold Alberta Potteries Limited to Martin Perry and Shorty Matuska, who continued to run the company until the economic effects of the Depression proved too difficult and the company was closed in 1938. After sitting idle for a brief period of time, the factory was reopened and operated as Provincial Industrial Enterprises in 1939. Two years later, J. Harlan Yuill bought the plant and re-opened the factory as Alberta Potteries Limited. Yuill's factory initially produced mixing bowls before expanding their manufacturing to include household items. By the mid-1960s, Yuill was no longer affiliated with the company and in 1966 Shorty Matuska leased the company and established the Medalta Potteries (1966) Limited. This incarnation of the factory operated briefly before a fire destroyed the factory, leaving only two of its beehive kilns unscathed. The factory was rebuilt and struggled financially for a number of years. Medalta (1966) produced wares similar to those of Medalta Potteries Ltd. as Matuska had acquired the company's moulds. It continued to operate until 1989.

In 1938, Medicine Hat Potteries, a division of H. Yuill's Alberta Clay Products Company Limited, was opened in Medicine Hat. Yuill's highly modernized company attracted many of Medalta Potteries' skilled employees. The company produced a wide range of household stoneware. In the early 1940s, Medicine Hat Potteries began a line of semi-porcelain dinnerware. Over the next two decades, Medicine Hat Potteries expanded the line, creating decorative household items and art-ware. Medicine Hat Potteries never achieved the same success as Medalta and in 1955 the company was sold. Marwell Construction, who renamed the factory Hycroft China Limited, operated it briefly before selling it to Harry Veiner. Under the guidance of Veiner, Hycroft produced household items and dinnerware and became known for their Stetson ashtrays, decorative plates, and their commemorative items. Hycroft China Limited remained in operation until 1989.

In 1947, the National Porcelain Company, manufacturer of porcelain insulators, was established in Medicine Hat. The company was sold to Winnipeg's Motor Coach Industries, then to Greyhound Lines, and finally to I-XL Industries Ltd.

Medicine Hat's clay industries became a National Historic Site in 2009. The concentration of factories, the largest west of Ontario, is attributed to the city's siting on the railway and industrial spur line, locally available clay, and abundant natural gas. The Site is composed of Medalta, the Alberta Clay Products factory, National Porcelain Company, I-XL property, and a railway spur line.

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### Glass Industries

Medicine Hat's abundant, high quality, cheaply priced natural gas made the city the ideal location for glass manufacturing. Companies were frequently enticed to build in Medicine Hat by the offering of free gas – ideal for an industry requiring high temperatures for manufacturing. Medicine Hat's connection with multiple transportation routes, permitted the transportation of glass making materials - silica from Manitoba and potash from Saskatchewan. Companies such as the Hartley Bottling Works (1909), Alberta Glass Co. (1912), Alta-Glass, and Dominion Glass Company of Redcliff all set up factories in the area. The glass-making industry also drew immigrants from eastern European countries, skilled in the art of glass making, and further diversified the city's demography.

### Greenhouses

Medicine Hat's climate and natural gas also made the area ideal for greenhouses. The city receives over 2,500 hours of

sunshine a year and the readily available natural gas heats the greenhouses during colder months. At its peak, the city had over eight hectares under glass – second only to Brampton, Ontario. The city's first large-scale greenhouse to be established was Edward Ueberrhein's Rosery Flower Co. A florist in Germany, Ueberrhein established a 930 square metre greenhouse in 1907. By 1909, the Rosery had grown to cover over 3.6 hectares. The Rosery was the largest rose producer in western North America and one of the largest greenhouses in Canada until its closure in 1928. Canadian Greenhouses (1926), River View Greenhouses (1940), and Power House Greenhouses Ltd. (1940) were also established in Medicine Hat and contributed to the city's economic development during the first half of the twentieth century. Medicine Hat's greenhouse industry produced flowers and vegetables that were shipped across Canada. It continues to flourish and the city is currently the largest producer of mint in North America.

Interior of a greenhouse operated by Edward Ueberrhein's Rosery Flower Co.

"The Rosery", Medicine Hat, Alta.

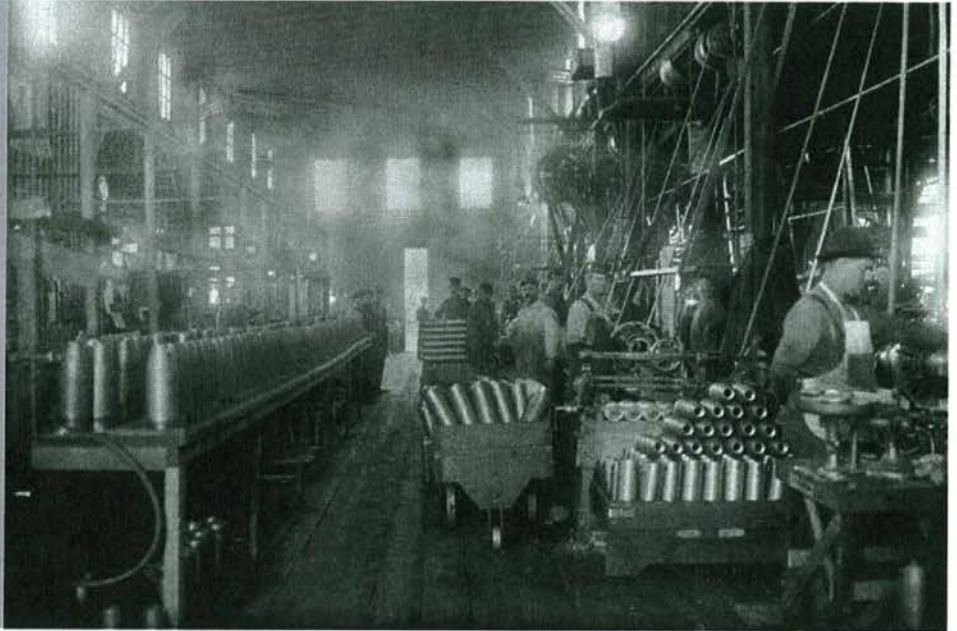


Rumsey & Co. "The Rosery", Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Peel's Prairie Province's  
Prairie Postcard Collection. PC004421.



Workers producing ordnance at the Medicine Hat Pump and Brass Manufacturing plant in circa 1918

Shell Shop, Medicine Hat Pump & Brass Mfg. Co. Ltd., Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-024605.



### **Additional Manufacturing Industries**

Additional manufacturing industries were attracted to Medicine Hat during the first decades of the twentieth century. The presence of the railway, tax incentives, energy and land incentives, and the then town's growing population attracted companies to establish factories in Medicine Hat. In addition to those previously discussed, the diversity of Medicine Hat's industries matched that of large cities in the east. The Alberta Foundry and Machine Company (1911), Medicine Hat Crayon Co. (1912), J. H. Tabor Candy Company (1914), the Kaiser Cigar Co. (1912), a chalk company (1912), Medicine Hat Brewing Company (1914), Saskatchewan Bridge and Iron Co. (1914), Malcolm Canneries (1916), Alberta Rolling Mills (1918), and the Paragon Soap Company (1921) are a few of the companies that established factories in Medicine Hat. By 1913, Medicine Hat had over 29 industries established within its limits, with five more under construction

and an additional 11 with the intention of establishing businesses the following year. These companies provided both employment and goods for the locals as well as goods for export across Canada.

It was not until the late 1950s to early 1960s, that Medicine Hat again experienced a significant period of commercial growth. Medicine Hat's city-owned gas utility, power plant, regional transportation centre, and climate were again principal factors that attracted companies to the city. Major industries have included Northwest Nitro-Chemicals (1955), Goodyear tire and rubber plant (1965), natural resource production companies, foundries, greenhouses, and, more recently, manufacturing companies associated with the production of military equipment. Medicine Hat's diverse industrial base has provided stability and permitted the city to continue to grow and prosper during fluctuating economic periods.

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### CITY DEVELOPMENT IN MEDICINE HAT

The early development of Medicine Hat progressed at steady pace from the time the railway crossed the South Saskatchewan River. The influx of capital enabled the rapid development of the city. The start of the twentieth century, witnessed a large influx of people from eastern Canada, the United States, and especially Europe seeking a new life in the west. British investors, recognizing the city's potential due to its diverse economic base of ranching, farming, the railway, natural resources, and manufacturing industries, backed much of the early development in Medicine Hat. As the city grew, businesses and facilities were established to meet the city's growing needs. Some of the earliest businesses established included a butcher, lumberyard, brewery, mercantile, livery stable, and hotels. Commercial buildings, in close proximity to the railway station, began to be constructed in the 1900s to service the expanding suite of businesses being established in the then town. On May 28, 1900, the Medicine Hat & District

Chamber of Commerce was founded by a group of businessmen to promote the city and continue to build upon its solid economic foundation.

The establishment of Medicine Hat as a divisional point on the mainline and western headquarters for the Canadian Pacific Railway guaranteed its future. In addition to the railway and station, a repair shop, roundhouse, and stockyards were constructed. The establishment of these railway services resulted in the need of skilled labour, thus adding to Medicine Hat's growing workforce. In 1932, the CPR employed more people than any other industry in Medicine Hat.

Since it was first established, Medicine Hat has served as a regional centre for commerce for the surrounding district. Its positioning on the railway, natural resources, mills, industries, and later placement on the Trans-Canada Highway solidified its place as a regional trade centre.

Aerial view of the city in circa 1945



Medicine Hat, Alberta.  
Peel's Prairie Province's  
Prairie Postcard Collection. PC004251.



### Hotels

Hotels were one of the earliest buildings constructed in newly established railway towns. Strategically placed in close proximity to the railway, they were the first stopping point when residents arrived. The first hotel, the Brunswick Hotel erected in 1883, was built in Medicine Hat on what became the site of Maple Leaf Milling

Company's offices. The American Hotel was also erected in 1883, as was the Lansdown Hotel, which was later replaced by the Cosmopolitan. The Cosmopolitan played a significant role in Medicine Hat's early years. The hotel was expanded in 1918 to accommodate the rising population travelling and settling in Medicine Hat. Eventually, Medicine Hat possessed five

The Corona Hotel, built in 1912

Donald Luxton & Associates  
September 2012

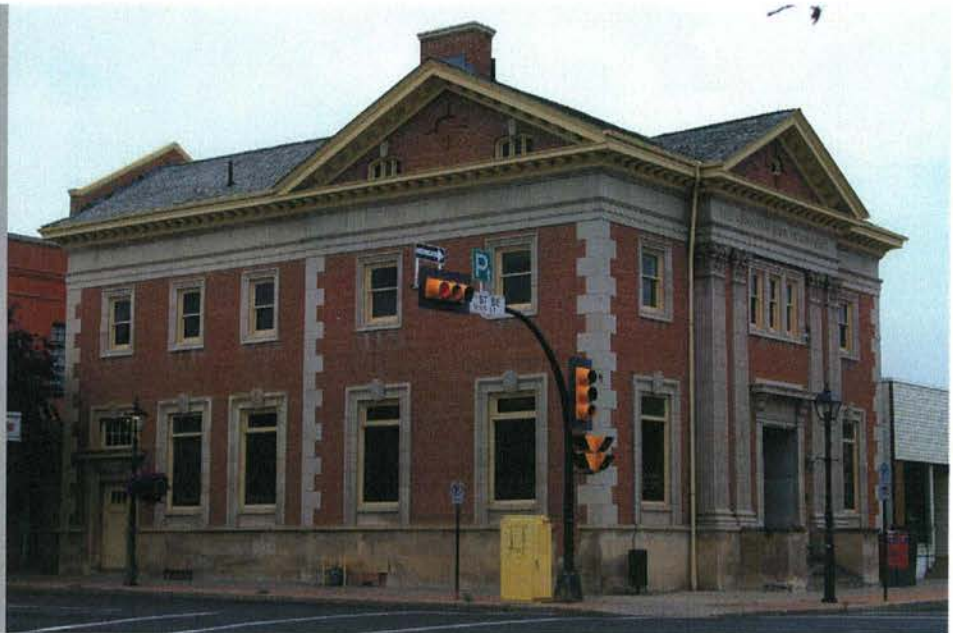


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The Bank of Commerce, built in 1908

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September 2012



major hotels including the Cosmopolitan and Assiniboia and later hotels such as the Corona, the Royal, and the Cecil, all built to accommodate the needs of newcomers.

### Banks

One of the most important facilities to a developing city is their financial institutions - providing financial services to early settlers. Banking institutions were usually one of the first commercial building constructed in a community and several were built shortly after the railway was completed in 1883. The Merchants Bank of Canada was one of the earliest banks to open a branch in Medicine Hat in April 1898. The bank first occupied temporary quarters until a permanent location was constructed on Second Street SE, formerly Main Street, in 1899. In 1910, the Merchants Bank elected to construct a more stately building to reflect its substantial presence in the city. The second representation of the Merchants Bank has since been torn down;

however, the original bank is still standing in Medicine Hat's downtown core. The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce opened their first branch in Medicine Hat in July 1902. Similar to the Merchants Bank, The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce occupied temporary quarters until a Classical Revival style bank was constructed in 1908. The Imperial Bank of Canada opened their Medicine Hat branch in 1913. The early establishment of these financial institutions reflected the city's buoyant economy in the 1890s and early 1900s.

### Commercial Development

The arrival of the CPR's transcontinental line, the Crow's Nest Pass railway, and CNR, established Medicine Hat as an important regional centre and shipping point for agricultural and commercial goods. The population boom of the early twentieth century is reflected in the rapid period of construction of Medicine Hat's commercial core. Commercial buildings



holding a variety of business to served the financial, material, health and welfare, educational, and professional needs of Medicine Hat's citizens were constructed in rapid succession. The Walton Block and Hargrave Sissons Block were constructed at the turn of the twentieth century with the Porter Block, Beveridge Block, Hutchinson Block, Central Block, and Hull Block constructed the following decade. The flurry of commercial construction solidified the city's permanency and physically conveyed to newcomers and potential investors Medicine Hat's prosperity. Early commercial blocks were situated in close proximity to the railway station frequently facing the station or on a nearby side street. Over time, commercial development extended beyond the downtown core with localized commercial developments being established in residential neighbourhoods.

The decades following the Second World War are characterised by the construction of low-rise office buildings, malls, and, in recent times, large retail destination centres beyond Medicine Hat's traditional commercial core.

Commercial development on 2nd Street SE,  
circa 1928

Photogelatine Engravings Co. Ltd.  
Second St. - Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Souvenir of Medicine Hat, Alberta, Glenbow Library, Calgary,  
Alberta.



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## TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION CROSSROADS

Medicine Hat's strategic location in southwest Alberta established it as a central transportation hub for the area. This position contributed to early settlement and development of businesses to support those travelling through the region. The Canadian Pacific Railway's decision to route the trans-continental railway through Medicine Hat resulted in the city's establishment and aided in its early and continued growth. The later routing of the Trans-Canada highway through Medicine Hat in the 1960s, solidified the city as a regional centre for the transportation and distribution of goods, both imported and manufactured locally.

### Trails

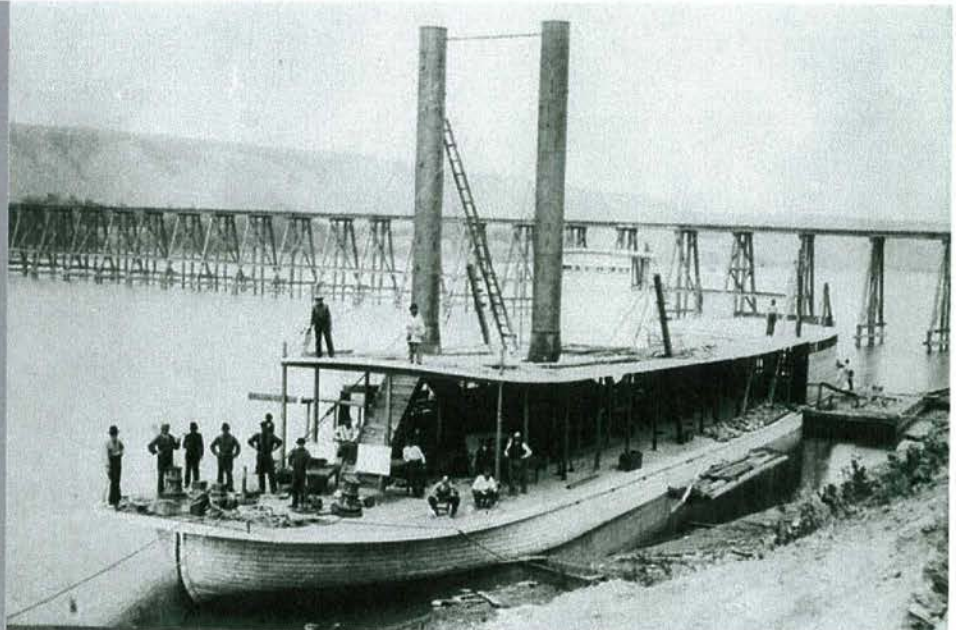
Trails formed the earliest means for inhabitants to transverse southern Alberta. These natural transportation corridors, often created by wildlife and First Nations, frequently became the routes chosen during the later construction of railways, roads, and highways. The location of early

settlements were often situated near ideal river crossings and sheltered areas. The Medicine Hat area is associated with three trails: Bow Trail, Bull Trail, and Macleod Trail. The trails criss-crossed southern Alberta providing transportation routes for the area's early inhabitants. Macleod Trail extending from Fort Macleod north to Calgary, with tributaries east and west, was a major thoroughfare for the transportation of people and goods prior to the construction of the railway.

### Waterways

The South Saskatchewan River and its tributaries provided a means of transportation throughout the seasons for early settlers. Boats such as the Minnow and the steamboat, the Baroness, were used to transport goods and people along the river prior to the construction of the railway and associated bridges. The river was primarily used for transportation until Captain Horatio Hamilton Ross recognized the resource could be used for pleasure

Steamboat belonging to the North West Coal and Navigation Co. along the South Saskatchewan River in Medicine Hat



The North West Coal and Navigation Company's steamship. Library and Archives Canada. PA-040689.



trips. Captain Ross built the Assiniboia I (1898), Assiniboia II (1903), and finally SS City of Medicine Hat (1907), the latter two being paddle wheelers, to travel the South Saskatchewan River. For a period of time, the SS City of Medicine Hat was used also to transport goods. In June of 1908, while transporting freight to Saskatoon the paddle wheeler hit a cable spanning the river and struck a bridge pier and sank, thus ending the career of the SS City of Medicine Hat. The construction of the railway created a decisive shift away from using boats for transportation. Currently, the South Saskatchewan River and its tributaries are used primarily for pleasure and sporting activities by the residents of Medicine Hat.

### **Railways**

The construction of the transcontinental railway, a promise made to British Columbia when they joined Confederation in 1871, was instrumental in the settlement and development of the west. As construction commenced on Canada's first transcontinental route, its routing through Medicine Hat did not exist. Sir Sandford Fleming had plotted a route that bypassed southern Alberta in its entirety. Had this route not been altered, the development of the Alberta landscape would have varied dramatically from the one known today. The CPR challenged Fleming's route, proposing a more southerly one, crossing the Rockies at Roger's Pass. Construction of the transcontinental railway stalled in Moose Jaw until the Government received assurances of the validity of the southerly route. The southerly route for the railway was also chosen to maintain Canada's boarded and protect against American expansion. The re-routing of the railway through Southern Alberta and the decision to cross the South Saskatchewan River in the area that became Medicine Hat, ensured the development of the settlement.

In early 1883, men sent to Medicine Hat ahead of the railway began to layout the work and section camps and make preparations for work to commence on the railway in the spring. By the end of April 1883, the railway was east of Walsh and arrived in Medicine Hat at the end of May. A temporary wooden trestle spanning the South Saskatchewan River was erected that same year and utilized until a steel swing bridge was completed in 1884. The first railway station, a two-storey wooden frame building, was built at the foot of Third Street and contained accommodations for the Station Master on the second floor. A roundhouse was constructed in 1903 and the decision to make Medicine Hat a divisional point ensured a greater number of associated jobs for the inhabitants. MacDiarmid's of Winnipeg built the present train station, located on the east side of the tracks, using the CPR Station Plan Chateau-style, in 1906. The railway was instrumental to the settling of the Prairies, bringing people and supplies west and transporting crops and livestock to the rest of the country.

In addition to CPR's transcontinental line, Medicine Hat had several other rail lines that were also strategic to the city's development. The North West Coal & Navigation Company (NWC&NC) constructed a narrow gauge line from their coalfields to Medicine Hat in 1885. Approval to construct and operate the line was conditional on the supply of coal for CPR's locomotives. In 1897, the CPR purchased the NWC&NC Dunmore to Lethbridge railway. The railway became the start of the Crow's Nest route, which was opened in 1898. The Alberta Railway & Coal Company, owned by the Galt family, constructed a narrow gauge line from Medicine Hat to the United States border

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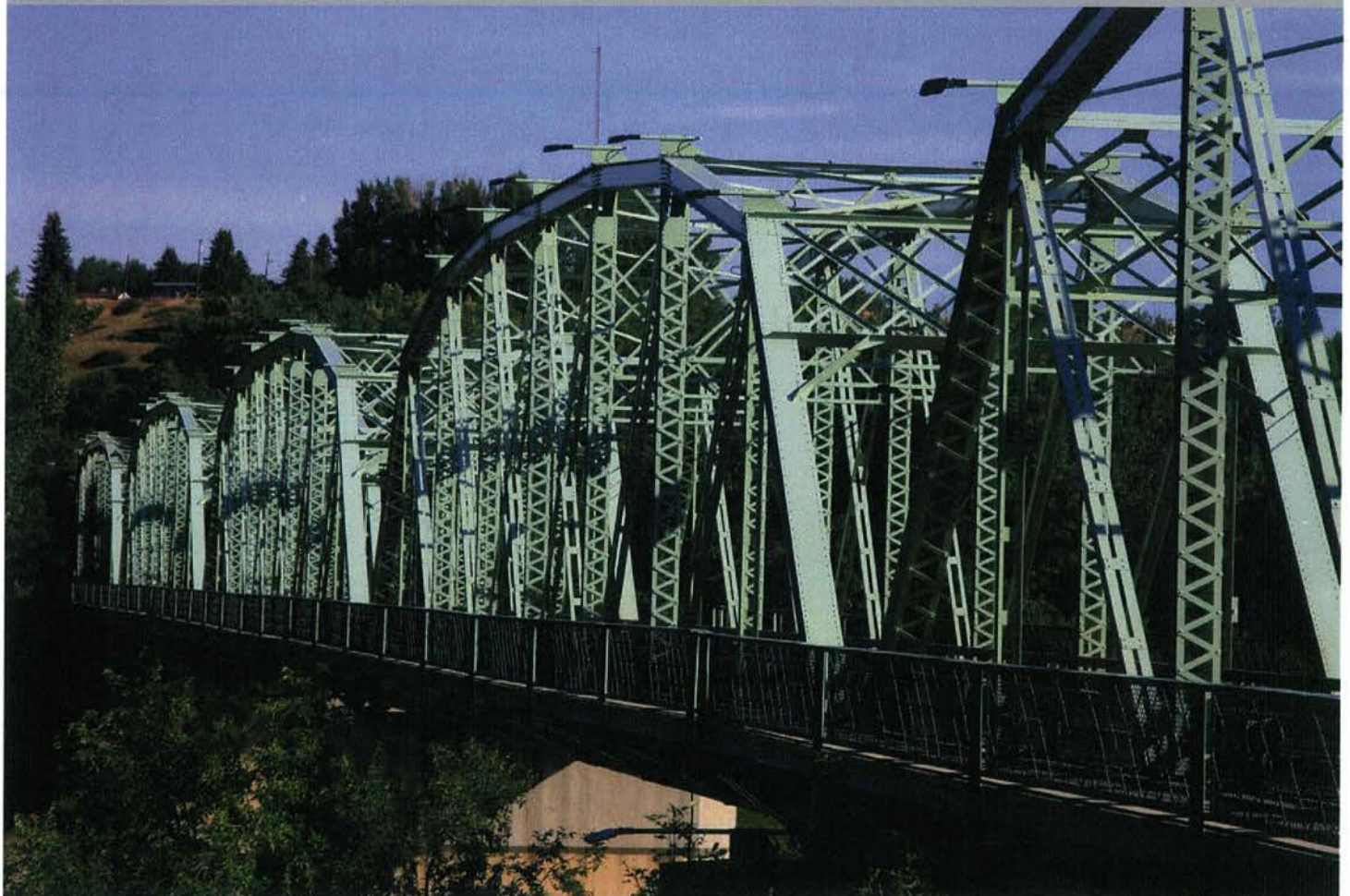
in 1889; thus providing a seamless link to transport goods between Medicine Hat and the United States market.

#### Roads

From the time the railway crossed the South Saskatchewan River, Medicine Hat transformed into a major centre for transportation in southwestern Alberta. The city's proximity to Saskatchewan and the border with the United States has made it a key transportation corridor bringing a continuous source of economic enterprise

The Finlay Bridge, built in 1908

Donald Luxton & Associates  
August 2012





to the community. In 1912, a proposal for the first transcontinental highway was put forth. The route connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific was surveyed through Medicine Hat, connecting with Lethbridge to the west. This road connected Southern Alberta and British Columbia and provided manufactures and merchants with an alternate means for transporting goods between the provinces. The Canadian National Highway provided a main vehicular thoroughfare for the transportation of people and goods across southwestern Alberta in the early decades of the twentieth century. Fifty years later, a second transcontinental highway was constructed, the Trans-Canada Highway, connecting Medicine Hat with Calgary and Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Opened in 1962, the Trans-Canada Highway provides a transportation corridor across Canada, linking Medicine Hat to the rest of the country and further solidifying its position as a regional centre in southern Alberta. Due to its positioning on the South Saskatchewan River, bridges played a crucial role in the development of Medicine Hat. Prior to the construction of Finlay Bridge, a traffic and foot bridge constructed of concrete, steel, and wood which opened on May 14, 1908, inhabitants used the CPR railway trestle or ferry boats to travel between the north (Riverside) and the south (Downtown) side of Medicine Hat. At the time of its completion, Finlay Bridge was the longest of its kind in Alberta and served as a means to safely transport people and goods across the South Saskatchewan River - significantly aiding in the expansion of the city. Due to its unique construction, vital role in Medicine Hat's development, and link to noteworthy resident William Thomas Finlay, Minister of Agriculture, MLA, and mayor of Medicine Hat, the Finlay Bridge was designated as a Municipal Heritage Resource by the city in 2012.

### **Airport**

Medicine Hat's Regional Airport is situated to the southwest of the city. The airport first opened in 1912 with a single dirt runway. During the Second World War, the airport was used as a part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, No. 34 Service Flying Training School. The flight school operated from April 8, 1941 to November 17, 1944. The Department of National Defence selected Medicine Hat for the establishment of a Commonwealth training facility - the Royal Air Force Station #34 Service Flying Training School. Medicine Hat's mild and sunny weather conditions, topography, and railway position provided an ideal location to establish a training school. The school operated under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) and the Empire Training Plan and trained men from Commonwealth countries to become pilots and aircrew. In 1947, the ownership of the airport was transferred to the City of Medicine Hat. The expansion and renovation of the airport in the 1960s and then again in the 1980s ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community.

### **Communication**

One of the first businesses established in a new city is a local newspaper. Ontarians Thomas Braden and Andrew Armour founded the *Medicine Hat Times* on October 29, 1885. The exact location of the newspaper offices is unknown; however, speculation that it was housed in a surplus boxcar near the railway station or possibly in a shack on First Street exist. In 1894, the name of the *Medicine Hat Times* changed to the *Medicine Hat Daily News* and the following year offices were established on South Railway Street. A decade later, a purpose-built facility was constructed for the *Medicine Hat Daily*

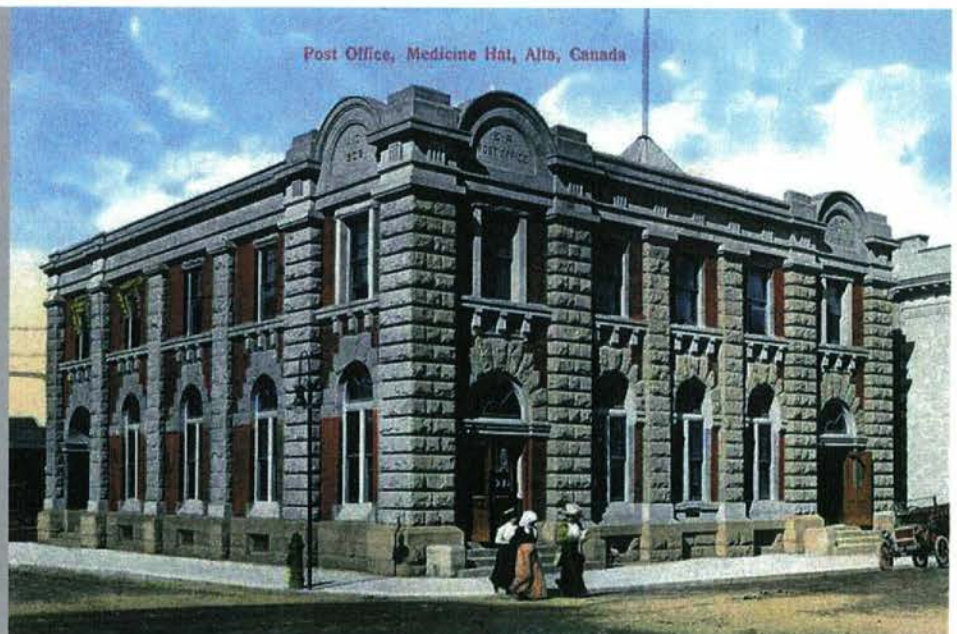
News on 6th Avenue, facing Riverside Park. The building's design, ventilation system, and finishes were ahead of its time, and the basement, with four-meter clearance, held the newspaper's three-deck press. *The Times* was the pioneering newspaper of southeastern Alberta, informing residents of the events of the city, territory, and country. Two other newspapers were established in 1915-1916: *The Morning Call* and *The Morning Time*. Both of these newspapers lasted only a year. In November of 2010, the *Medicine Hat Daily News* celebrated its 125th anniversary. The newspaper continues to convey the news to the community and is one of the longest, continuously published periodicals in the province.

The first telephone line arrived in Medicine Hat in 1890 and connected the NWMP

barracks with the CPR station. A second line was installed shortly thereafter connecting the hospital with the residence of Dr. Oliver. In 1902, the city's first telephone exchange was proposed. As with other municipal systems, citizens proposed a co-op for the exchange. The Bell Telephone Company opposed the plan and after many debates, Bell established their exchange in B.F. Souch's drugstore on Third Street, formerly Ontario Street. Medicine Hat also has the distinction of having Alberta's first barbwire telephone system, which ran from the CPR station to 76 Ranching Company's Stair Ranch. The system permitted the ranch manager to call the station and confirm train times and collect 76 Ranching Company associates when they arrived in Medicine Hat.

The Medicine Hat Post Office

Rumsey & Co. Post Office, Medicine Hat, Alta., Canada.  
Wish You Were Here,  
Saskatchewan Postcard Collections. 32816.





### CENTRE FOR DEFENCE, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

The Second World War brought a large military presence to Alberta. Medicine Hat's men, women, and local industries contributed significantly to Canada's war effort. Medicine Hat was an ideal location to establish military installations due to its topography, climate, existing manufacturing industries, available workforce, and natural resources. Medicine Hat and its inhabitants played key roles in both World Wars through the training of military personnel and the manufacturing of war goods. Medicine Hat continues to possess a strong military. This theme specifically reviews Medicine Hat's history in relation to industries associated with the military.

Medicine Hat provided multiple contributions to the war effort during the two World Wars. War bonds, Victory Gardens, crop and livestock diversification, women occupying non-traditional work roles, and the use of Prisoner of War labour to fill the gaps in Medicine Hat's labour force were a few of the ways in which

the community contributed to the war. Medicine Hat's local industries also played a crucial role. Similar to events of the First World War, munitions contracts were awarded to local foundries. Medicine Hat operated one of only two munitions plants in Alberta during the Second World War.

The Department of National Defence selected Medicine Hat for the establishment of a Commonwealth training facility - the Royal Air Force Station #34 Service Flying Training School. Medicine Hat was chosen because of its mild and sunny weather conditions; thus, providing an ideal training environment. The school was situated at the current location of Medicine Hat's Regional airport and operated from February 26, 1941 to November 17, 1944. The training school operated under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) and the Empire Training Plan and trained men from Commonwealth countries to become pilots and aircrew - 3,000 of which would go on to fight in the Second World War.

The logo for British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS)



CFB Suffield, Forces.gc.ca

The nature of modern warfare associated with the Second World War brought another opportunity to the city. In 1941, a station to provide training facilities for chemical warfare experimentation was established at Suffield by the British Army. The land, currently over 2,500 square kilometres, for England's Experimental Station Suffield was purchased from the Hudson Bay Company and Canadian Pacific Railway. The facility was used by the British and Canadians to train in chemical warfare and conduct chemical and artillery research. Five years after its establishment, the base was handed over to the Canadian Army. It was renamed in 1967, the Defence Research Establishment Suffield (DRES), and again in 2000, the Defence Research

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and Development Canada – Suffield (DRDC). The DRDC focuses research towards the Canadian Forces' scientific and technological needs and houses the military's Chemical and Biological Defence research laboratory. The facilities continue to serve as a research centre and training facility for Canada and Britain.

A unique result of the presence of DRDC Suffield is the development of a micro-industry related to the testing and manufacturing of products of war. Medicine

Hat's use of science and engineering to transform and grow military defense technology has attracted scientists and engineers from around the world. Companies such as Cancarb, manufacturer of thermal carbon black for use on spaceships, and Meggitt Training Systems Canada, manufacturer of unmanned vehicle and military related software platforms, established their businesses in Medicine Hat as a direct result of DRDC Suffield. These business, in addition to DRDC Suffield, contribute to the military cultural landscape in the Medicine Hat area.

Canadian Forces Base Suffield, 45 kilometres northwest of Medicine Hat

Donald Luxton & Associates  
May 2013





### OUTPOST ON THE PRAIRIES: LAW AND PROTECTION IN MEDICINE HAT

Prior to the Canadian Government purchasing land that would become present day Alberta, formerly called Rupert's Land, Hudson Bay Company representatives were the only form of law in the area. In the 1870s, the state of Rupert's Land, particularly along the United States border, deteriorated significantly. Boot legging, lack of legal authority, and infiltration of Americans, pushed the Canadian Government to recognize the need for a police force in the west. The events of the Cypress Hills massacre of 1873 reiterated the need for a police force. At the same time, the opinion of the west was also changing from a wasteland fit only for the fur trade, to an unspoiled wilderness with great potential. The government recognized the need to provide a security force to protect individuals moving westward as well as Canada's own interests. An appeal was made to the Minister of the Interior on May 2, 1873, for the establishment of a police force, the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), to address the growing problems in the west. The NWMP were established and in June 1874 a detachment left Winnipeg for the Cypress Hills, arriving in Fort McLeod and establishing what would become the southern headquarters for the police. The following year the McLeod detachment broke into two forces, one of which was sent to patrol the Cypress Hills. When the path of the transcontinental railway was rerouted to the south, approximately 100 NWMP relocated to Medicine Hat from Cypress Hills. The NWMP constructed their barracks on a peninsula at a bend in the South Saskatchewan River. The location would become known as Police Point. The arrival of the NWMP in Medicine Hat was timely; in March of 1885, voices of rebellion were heard on the prairies once again. The Metis, disenchanted with the

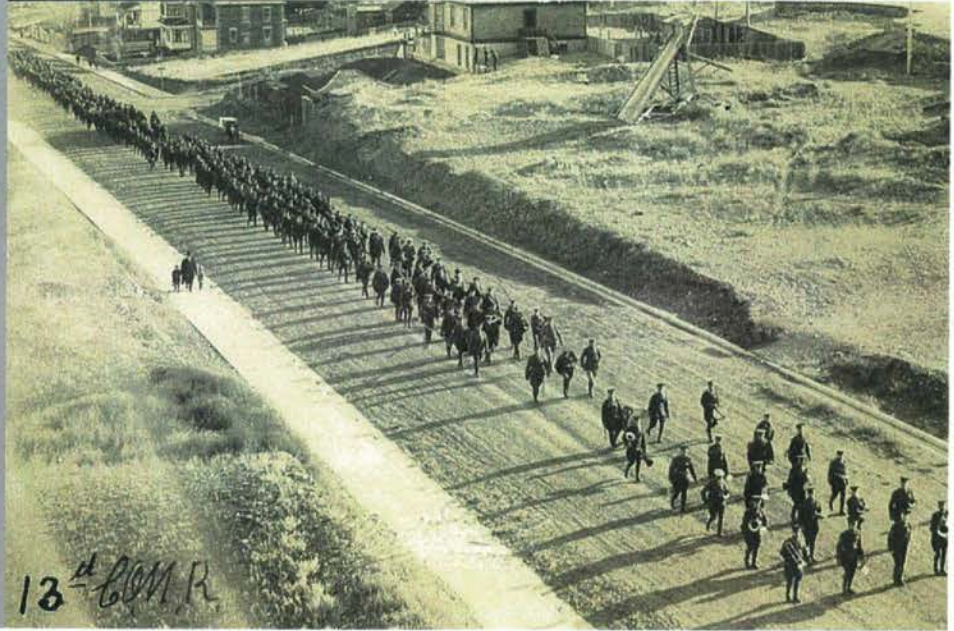
Canadian government and its handling of western settlement, were again led by Louis Riel in an armed rebellion. Although centred in Saskatchewan, the rebellion had rippling effects in Alberta. Locals, afraid the rebellion might spread, volunteered with the local militia, sending out scouts to patrol the surrounding landscape and stationing guards throughout the area. This would not be the last time the militia would be mustered. For a brief period of time during the First World War a Home Guard was formed; however, the Militia Department refused to recognize the Home Guard and given a regiment was soon to be stationed in the city, it was disbanded in November of 1915.

As tension increased in Europe between the Germany, Austria-Hungary and their surrounding countries, a request was put forth to Britain's Commonwealth countries to raise men, money, and supplies and prepare for the potential war. Medicine Hat raised a mounted regiment, the Tenth Canadian Mounted Rifles, of approximately 552 a month after war was declared in 1914. These men were encamped and drilled at the Medicine Hat Fair Grounds, at the present day airport, and by September 1914 were ready for battle. Two years later, the Minister of Defence commissioned Medicine Hat to raise a battalion, the 31st Battalion, which would eventually become part of the 21st Reserve. The men of Medicine Hat saw service in Ypres, Vimy, the Somme, and Passchendaele. In 1939, when the clouds of war loomed again, Medicine Hat's men and women responded. Enlistments were higher than average and the city was inundated with men from the surrounding area wanting to sign up. Many of the men who enlisted in Medicine Hat served in Normandy, France on June 6, 1944. Currently, the South

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The 13th Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles, during a parade through the streets of Medicine Hat in circa 1915



13th C.M.R.  
Peel's Prairie Province's  
Prairie Postcard Collection. PC004400.

13th C.M.R.

Alberta Light Horse, an army reserve unit with its roots dating back to the time of the North-West Rebellion, is based in Medicine Hat.

During the Second World War, Medicine Hat was chosen by the Department of National Defence to be the location of a large German Prisoner of War Camp. It was one of two large-scale camps in the province; the second camp was situated in Lethbridge. Camp #132 was the fourth of five camps created in the Alberta and housed prisoners from January 1, 1943, until the end of July 1946. The purpose-built camp was constructed on the grounds of the current day Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede and housed officers and infantry of the Afrika Korps and prisoners captured during the Normandy invasion. At its peak, the camp held 12,500 prisoners. The prisoners were permitted to self-govern, with the Veteran's Guard of Canada securing the perimeter of the camp. Camp #132 was completely self-contained and

divided into multiple sections, each of which contained barracks, a kitchen, and administration facilities. The camp also had a 125-bed hospital, dental facilities, workshop, and two large halls used as athletic and theatrical facilities. To alleviate labour shortages, select prisoners were allowed to work at forestry and farming labour camps around the province and in Medicine Hat's clay products industries. The camp was officially closed at the end of July in 1946, with freed prisoners returning to Germany and, in some instances immigrating to Canada, specifically Medicine Hat, in the years following the war.

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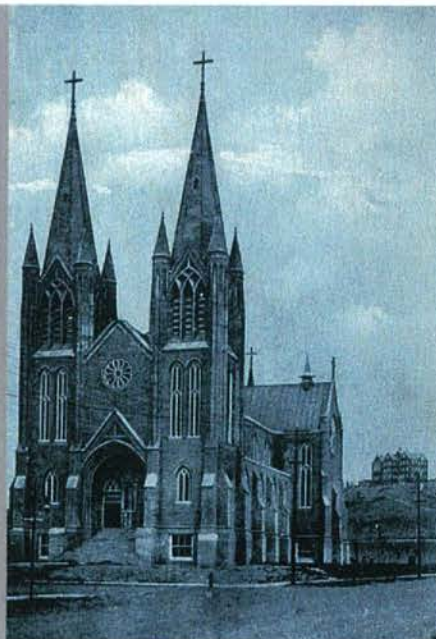


## SPIRITUAL LIFE

Medicine Hat is rooted by a strong religious foundation with services held shortly after the railway crossed the South Saskatchewan River. The city's first church service was held in a tent in June 1883 and conducted by Reverend Angus Robertson, a Presbyterian traveling to Calgary. Prior to this service, missionaries had been documented traveling in the area of Medicine Hat working amongst the local First Nations since the mid-1800s. Catholic Church services were first held in the home of the CPR Superintendent Shields, prior to building their first church, St. Patrick's, at Third Street and Fifth Avenue in 1887. Similar to the Catholics, the Methodists held their first services in the CPR depot with observers sitting on planks nailed to kegs in 1883. After the arrival of Reverend Wellington Bridgman that same year, a board was established and fundraising efforts ensued for the erection of the first Methodist church in Medicine Hat at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Third Street in 1883. The Presbyterians continued to

hold services in a tent until they erected a church in June 1884. The first incarnation for St. Barnabas Anglican Church was constructed in 1886; however, practicing parishioners were present in Medicine Hat in early 1884. These denominations were the first to develop during Medicine Hat's formative years. The Baptist first established themselves in 1889 or 1890 and their first services were held in a building located on the site of the present day Canadian Legion. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Medicine Hat underwent a church building boom with the construction of seven new churches. It was at this time that the Lutheran congregation was established. Services were first held in homes until a church was erected in 1912. In 1910, the Jewish community began holding their first services in members' homes and it was not until 1930 that the Jewish Ladies Aid purchased land for the construction of the Sons of Abraham Synagogue. Congregations ebbed and flowed over the years with new churches constructed and others amalgamated – frequently mirroring periods of population change in Medicine Hat. Multiple denominations established themselves early in Medicine Hat's history and continue to possess long-standing parishes with significant ties to the local community. As the city expanded outwards from its original centralized core, so too did the churches with new buildings constructed in developing neighbourhoods. The city is characterised by a diversity of denominations including Mormons, Mennonite, Chinese Temple, Hindu, and others, which reflects the diverse composition of the city's inhabitants that continues to endure to this day. This diversity is physically reflected in the construction, and re-use of existing religious spaces, as multi-faith spaces.

St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church and St. Theresa's Academy in the background, circa 1927



Photogelatine Engraving Co. St. Patrick's Church and Academy in background, Medicine Hat, Alta. Peel's Prairie Province's Prairie Postcard Collection. PC004290.

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## EDUCATION IN MEDICINE HAT

As the population of Medicine Hat grew, so did the city's need for the development of educational facilities. Many farmers, businessmen and early settlers brought families with them, resulting in the need for educational facilities.

The first school was established in a church in 1884 at St. John's Presbyterian Church. In the fall of 1886, after the formation of School District #76, and subsequent establishment of the public school board, taxes were collected to cover school operational costs. Medicine Hat's first school, the Toronto Street School, was constructed at Fourth Avenue and Third Street in 1888. The school underwent a number of expansions and served as the city's only school until the completion of the Montreal Street School in 1904. Before the First World War, Medicine Hat underwent a period of growth and economic prosperity, resulting in a progressive school construction program. During this period the Alexandra School

(1909), Elm Street School (1911), Connaught School (1912), Elizabeth Street School (1913), and six 'cottage' schools (1915) were constructed. This school building phase ended with the construction of Earl Kitchener School in 1916 and Riverside School in 1917.

The St. Louis Separate School District No. 21 was established in Medicine Hat in 1911. In June of that year, land for the first separate school was purchased. The first classes taught at St. Louis School began in 1913. Two years later, St. Theresa's Academy (1915-1957), originally a private institution that became an integral component of the Separate School District, was established and through a unique partnership with the University of Ottawa, granted degrees to students. Medicine Hat's growing population in the 1950s and 1960s facilitated the need for additional separate schools as evidenced by the opening of St. Patrick's School (1952), St. Mary's School (1957), McCoy High School (1961), St.

Elizabeth Street School, built in 1913



Donald Luxton & Associates  
April 2013



St. Louis School, built in 1912, was the first separate school in the city

Rumsey & Co. St. Louis School, Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Peel's Prairie Province's  
Prairie Postcard Collection. PC004305.



Francis Xavier (1963), St. Thomas Aquinas School (1963), and St. Michael's School (1966).

The Southern Alberta Business College, established in 1910, provided young women of Medicine Hat the opportunity to pursue a non-traditional vocation. The school occupied offices in the Cousins and Sissons Block and students were taught shorthand, typewriting, correspondence, and office practices under the guidance of Ms. Myrtle Purdy. In 1914, the school amalgamated with the Medicine Hat Business College to become the Southern Alberta Business College Limited. The college relocated to the Becker Block and additional courses in bookkeeping, commercial law, and business arithmetic were available for students. The institution provided the first professional development classes in Medicine Hat.

The post-Second World War period resulted in a boom of public school construction in Medicine Hat, with the renovation of many

existing schools and the construction of eight new schools to relieve overcrowded classrooms. Unfortunately, also during this period of expansion, Medicine Hat's first school - Toronto Street School - was demolished in June of 1960.

Medicine Hat College was established during this growth period and provided post-secondary students the opportunity to continue their education. The development, planning, and construction of the college had taken seven years from the time it was first discussed by the School District's Board of Trustees. In 1965, the college first offered courses in temporary facilities until a formalized school campus was constructed. Federal funding grants aided in the development and construction of the college and on October 3, 1971, a landmark date in Medicine Hat's education history, the Medicine Hat College campus opened. The school continues to offer southern Alberta students post-secondary education at a local institution.

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## MEDICINE HAT HEALTH AND WELL BEING

During Medicine Hat's formative years, residents struggled to find local doctors and adequate health care. As the population of Medicine Hat grew, so too did the need for the establishment of a hospital. At the time, no hospital existed west of Winnipeg. In 1888, acknowledging the city's need for health care facilities, CPR Divisional Superintendent John Niblock, and other city forefathers, petitioned the North West Territories' Legislative Assembly to incorporate a hospital. In August of 1889, Medicine Hat General Hospital was opened by Reverend Jas Herald and was the only facility of its kind between Winnipeg and Vancouver. The building housed 24 patients and North West Mounted Police's Medical Officer, Dr. Bullock, oversaw their care. The Lady Aberdeen Women's Hospital was constructed on hospital property in 1895 to serve the special needs of Medicine Hat's maternity cases. The hospital was named after the wife of then Governor General of Canada, Sir John Campbell Hamilton Gordon. The hospital primarily served the needs of those in the then Town of Medicine Hat. Doctors continued to make house calls both within the province and to southeastern Saskatchewan. Clinics were established during epidemics to control the spread of an illness. In 1918, the Montreal Street School was re-purposed as a temporary medical clinic during the 'flu epidemic'. The Medicine Hat General Hospital operated for 64 years until it was condemned in 1953 and demolished.

Alberta's first training school for nurses was established in Medicine Hat in 1894. Under the direction of Grace Louise Reynolds, the school produced trained nursing staff for Medicine Hat's hospital and surrounding 'cottage' hospitals. For the first 10 years, nurses in training lived on the top floor of the hospital. Growing

numbers of applicants, coupled with the requirement that the students reside on site, necessitated the construction of a separate residence. The Women's Hospital Aid Society raised funds for the residence and in 1904 the two-storey brick Nurses' Home was opened. The residence was renamed the Victoria Nurses' Home in 1901 in honour of Queen Victoria. The facility was quickly outgrown and additions were made to the home in 1912, 1919, and 1930. In the 1940s, students were relocated to the Maternity hospital and then for a brief period of time to a house affiliated with the new hospital. Nurses continue to be trained at Medicine Hat College under a partnership program with the University of Calgary.

In 1955, construction of the present day hospital commenced and the following year construction on a new nurses' residence began. On November 27, 1957, Medicine Hat's new General Hospital and Nurses' Residence were officially opened. The 200-bed hospital and 100-bed residence immediately filled the needs of Medicine Hat's growing population. In 1980, the hospital underwent a substantial expansion including a new wing, parkade, ambulance facilities, and infrastructure buildings.





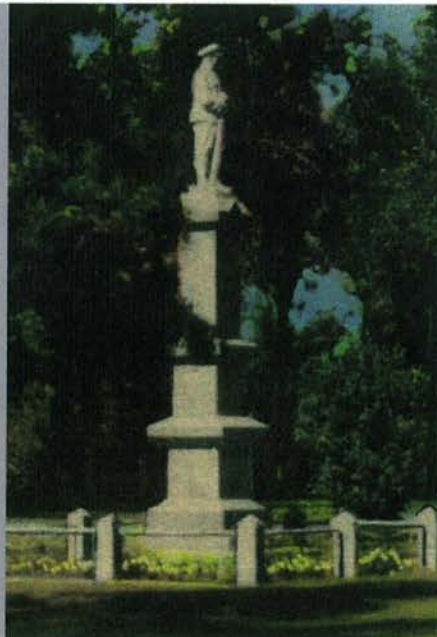
### CLUBS, COMMUNITY GROUPS, AND COMMEMORATION

Medicine Hat retains a diverse and long-standing association with numerous clubs and community groups. The rich community focus initiated in the beginning by agricultural pursuits, flourished to include professional groups, religious affiliations, as well as fraternal and women's organizations; many of these associations constructed halls and other buildings to hold their meetings. The earliest community groups in Medicine Hat were the Masons (1885), the Orangeman (1885), the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (1889), the Salvation Army (1899), and Ladies Aid (1899). These groups were crucial to the development of Medicine Hat, frequently performing civic duties that would later fall under the purview of the city. The Cypress Club, chartered in 1903, provided then, as it does now, a forum for rural and urban men to exchange ideas and form economic bonds and partnerships. The Cypress Club is the oldest private club in Alberta. The first few decades of the twentieth century witnessed the formation

of a number of community service clubs for businessmen and professionals including: the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 17 (1917), which aided returning soldiers and veterans; the Rotary Club (1918), aiding the community's economic, educational, recreational welfare; the Kiwanis (1924), providing for the community's healthcare, young, recreational needs, financial support, and aid for the disabled. The Rotary Club and Kiwanis developed public sporting facilities and parks for the community. The Legion's Ladies Auxiliary was the first chartered in the province of Alberta. Clubs established to educate and assist the community's youth include the Young Men's Christian Association (1912), the Young Women's Christian Association (1913), the Boy Scouts (1911), Girl Guides, and the 4 H; the latter three still exist in the community today. Caring for Medicine Hat's past, the Medicine Hat District Historical Society was established in 1948 for the preservation of artifacts and Medicine Hat's history. Medicine Hat's breadth of community organizations reflects the diversity of its inhabitants and their strong ties to the community and its well-being. Many aspects determine a city's success or failure, and clubs and community groups are critical for support and momentum to achieve city initiatives.

The Cenotaph located at Riverside  
Veterans' Memorial Park

Photogelatine Engravings Co. Ltd.  
Cenotaph, Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada.  
Postcards of the Past, Calgary Public Library,  
Calgary, Alberta. pc\_1781a.





## ROCKS, PARKS, PUCKS, AND BUCKS: SPORTS AND LEISURE IN MEDICINE HAT

Sports, recreation, and social gatherings were important to Medicine Hat's early settlers and to those that continue to live in the city today. The community possesses a rich history of social events and sporting activities that encourage community interaction and aid in Medicine Hat's development and permanency. The South Saskatchewan River supplied a water venue for earlier settlers throughout the year. When the river flowed it served not only as a means of transportation, but also as a location for fishing, pleasure water trips, and for swimming. In the winter months the frozen river provided an ice surface for curling, skating, and hockey. Curling was the first organized winter sport documented in Medicine Hat with matches first occurring on the river in 1884, prior to moving to a rink near the site of the city's first hospital in 1901. Medicine Hat continues to boast an active curling community with numerous leagues and bonspiels occurring throughout the winter. Prior to the construction of the first

hockey rink in 1901, teams played matches on the frozen South Saskatchewan and its tributaries. Early teams had enigmatic names such as the Pucksters and Creek Rats. Throughout its history Medicine Hat has had midget, junior, intermediate, and senior hockey teams with long-standing rivalries with surrounding communities. The Medicine Hat Monarchs were one such early senior men's team, competing in the Alberta Seniors Playoffs in the mid-1910s and early-1930s, before disbanding in the 1960s. The Medicine Hat Tigers, a junior hockey team in the Western Hockey League, was established in 1970. In addition to the South Saskatchewan River and public-built ice rinks, local families often built their own outdoor rinks and opened them up to their neighbours and the city. The Gray family constructed Gray's rink, also known as the Crystal Park rink, in the 1930s, and with the aid of local businesses, the rink was fitted with lights and music. Gray's rink was the birthplace of many early Medicine Hat hockey teams and

Rotary Park



Photogelatine Engravings Co. Ltd.  
Rotary Park, Medicine Hat, Alberta. Postcards of the Past,  
Calgary Public Library, Calgary, Alberta. pc\_1781f.



Canadian Pacific Railway Park and gardens

Stedman Bros., Ltd. C.P.R. Park, Medicine Hat, Alta., Canada.  
Wish You Were Here,  
Saskatchewan Postcard Collections. 32807.



a testament to residents' desire to improve the social quality of Medicine Hat.

Summer sporting activities such as horse racing, lawn bowling, tennis, lacrosse, softball, and baseball were also popular pastimes for Medicine Hat early residents. The first baseball grounds and racetrack were established opposite the CPR Railway Station. Medicine Hat's first baseball league was established in 1909 in the Western Canada Professional League, a period of baseball boom prior to the First World War. Local businesses or clubs often sponsored early teams such as the Carsons, Assiniboias, Five Roses, and Medaltas. As a result of the Second World War and the loss of men to the fight in Europe, Medicine Hat established an all women's softball team. The Medicine Hat Monarchs, are a double AA team in the American Legion Baseball league. The team name was later altered to the Medicine Hat Moose Monarchs. The Moose Monarchs continue to provide residents with summer sporting

events, while maintaining Medicine Hat's long standing baseball tradition.

Public parks situated within a community, particularly when located in a residential neighbourhood, provide a space that serves both the recreational and social needs of a community. Medicine Hat's multi-functioning parks are sites of sporting activities, social picnics, and community events. Some of the city's earliest parks were established in the communities' oldest neighbourhoods. The CPR Garden, situated to the south of the CPR station, was laid out in 1888 under the stewardship of CPR Superintendent John Niblock and was constructed to provide 'pretty views' for passing trains. Medicine Hat's CPR garden was unique in comparison to others, for passengers were permitted access to the gardens to explore the diverse flora of Southern Alberta and for the presence of the grizzly bear 'Nancy'. Nancy was penned in the garden and served to amuse passengers and locals, until an unfortunate



incident that required the bear to be put down. During the First World War, CPR gardens were converted to vegetable gardens as part of the war effort. Medicine Hat's CPR garden, similar to others across Canada, gradually disappeared following the Second World War. The CPR garden also served to encourage Medicine Hat citizens to appreciate the cultivation of trees, flowering plants, and vegetables, while giving a sense of permanency to the early city.

Two other early parks that contributed significantly to the shaping of Medicine Hat social landscape are Police Point Park and Riverside Veterans' Memorial Park, formerly

Riverside Park. Police Point Park, formerly the location of the NWMP barracks, was granted to Medicine Hat in 1911 for use as a park site. The park, the first large-scale park for the city, was a popular location for picnics and camping. Riverside Veterans' Memorial Park is a formal park containing war memorials for the First and Second World Wars, and monuments to the development of Medicine Hat. The park's early life was that of an athletic field and served as a meeting place for public speaking and social events.

Medicine Hat's rodeo was also an integral component of the community. Rodeos provided early settlers the opportunity

The Gyro swimming pool

Photogelatine Engravings Co. Ltd.  
Gyro Swimming Pool, Medicine Hat, Alberta. Postcards of the  
Past, Calgary Public Library, Calgary, Alberta. pc\_1781h.

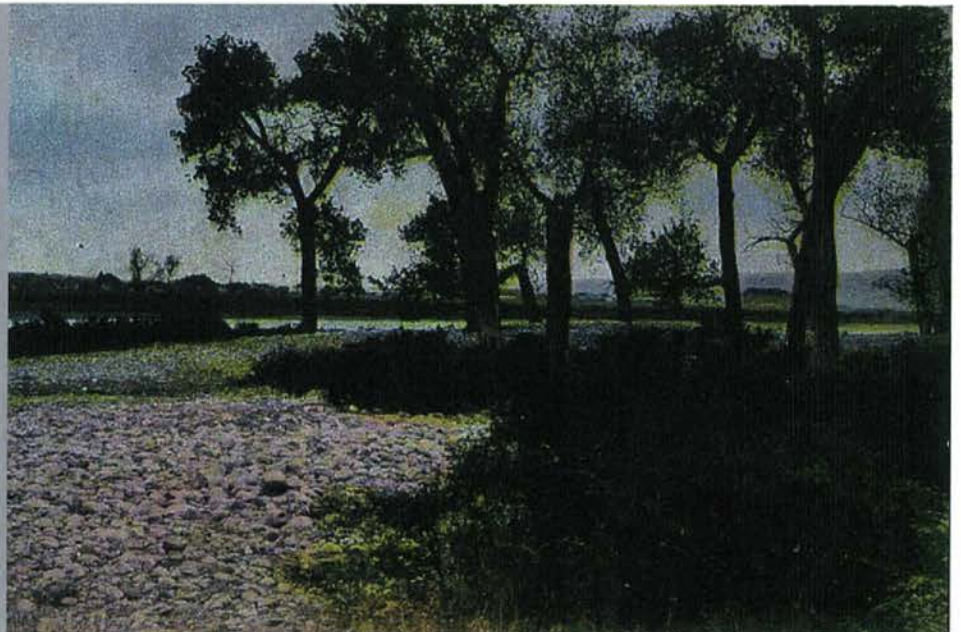




to show off their skill and stock. The Medicine Hat Stampede, a regional fair, was established in 1936 with its beginnings in 1887; however, it was not until 1917 that the event became known as the Medicine Hat Exhibition & Stampede. Prior to its establishment, small-scale stampedes were held at local ranches and at the CPR stockyards. The Exhibition & Stampede afforded Medicine Hat's rural and urban residents the opportunity to interact, exchange ideas, discuss business opportunities, and showcase their skill. Over the years the stampede went through boom and bust periods and was held at multiple locations. In April 1936, when City Council was petitioned for the creation of fair grounds, the stampede was revived and established as an annual event. The new stampede grounds were located at the present day airport. Within a few years of being established, the world was at war again and the Federal Government's Department of National Defence purchased the fair grounds to

establish the British Commonwealth Service Flying Training School #34. It was not until after the Second World War, when the city purchased the former POW Camp land from the Federal Government and leased the land to the newly formed Stampede Company that the Medicine Hat Exhibition & Stampede took on the recognizable form it is today. The Exhibition & Stampede is one of the oldest of its kind in the province and a highlight on the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association circuit.

Police Point Park



Warwick Bros & Rutter, Ltd. Police point, Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Peel's Prairie Province's  
Prairie Postcard Collection. PC004431.

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### ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE

Medicine Hat has traditionally possessed a deep theatrical and musical history resulting in the development of numerous venues, companies, and societies to support the arts. The early theatres in Medicine Hat, such as the Empress Theatre, showed vaudeville productions, hosted travelling performers, as well as local musical and theatrical troupes. The local operatic society, symphony, and theatrical groups contributed to the growth of Medicine Hat's cultural landscape and lent to the appearance of the city's maturity and sophistication. Cinemas such as the Astra, Roxy/Dreamland, and Towne provided residents with facilities to view 'moving pictures' and escape from the labours of the day. Medicine Hat's Monarch Theatre, built in 1911, is possibly the province's first purpose-built movie theatre still in operation. Medicine Hat's numerous musical, theatrical, and art societies fostered the arts in children, as well as adults. The City of Medicine Hat Band (1910), the Medicine Hat Pipe Band (circa

1912), and Medicine Hat Conservatory of Music (1914) comprised the city's earliest organized musical groups and school. Of these, only the Medicine Hat Pipe Band, now named the Southern Alberta Pipes and Drums, is still in existence and continues to play to the ongoing enjoyment of the community over 100 years after its establishment.

The Empress Theatre, circa 1912

Empress Theatre, Medicine Hat, Alta. Postcards of the Past, Calgary Public Library, Calgary, Alberta. pc\_1342.





**BUILT IN MEDICINE HAT**

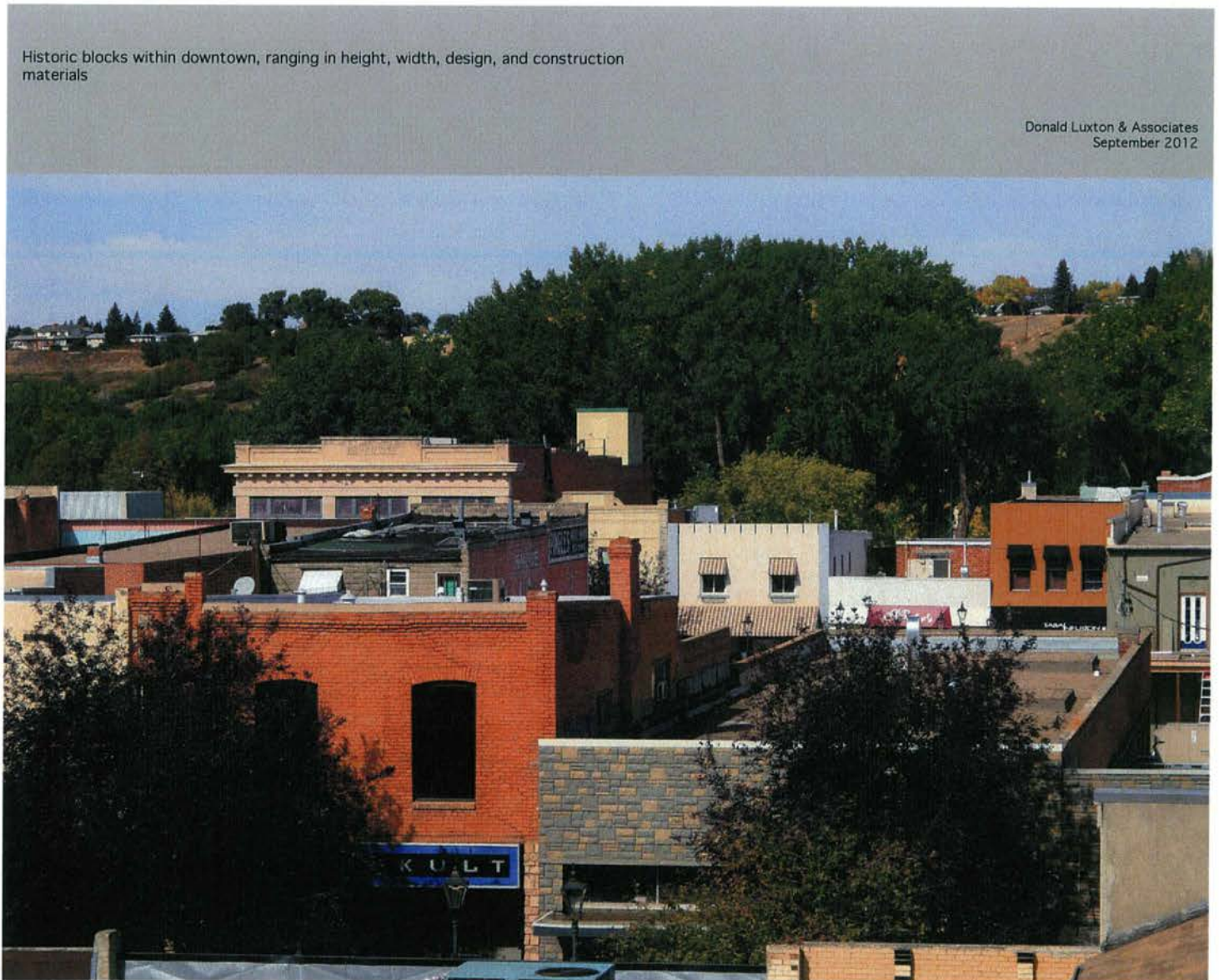
Medicine Hat has an eclectic, but structured architectural style that is evident in its early residential, institutional, and commercial buildings. The availability of local high-quality brick, skilled architects from around the world, and competent builders and trades has resulted in a highly diverse intact collection of buildings - many of which have endured for over a century.

Its placement on the South Saskatchewan River and transcontinental railway ensured its rapid early development that resulted in a wealth of architectural resources.

The city's first structures were those associated with the construction of the railway – a town of tents. As the city grew, the tents used for businesses gave way

Historic blocks within downtown, ranging in height, width, design, and construction materials

Donald Luxton & Associates  
September 2012



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Medicine Hat, before the turn of the century

Bridge and town of Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-066549.



to commercial wooden buildings, some of which encapsulated the original tent, with false front façades with exaggerated parapets elevating their visibility on the streetscape. With the establishment of the first brickyard in 1886, and subsequent yards in the mid-1890s, brick replaced wood as the construction material of choice due to its availability and durability. Perhaps, the most beneficial aspect of building with brick is Medicine Hat avoided the fiery fate of so many early prairie towns. The result, a rich compliment of intact historic resources located throughout Medicine Hat.

The majority of the buildings situated in Medicine Hat's historic downtown core display Classic Revival style elements, typical of the Edwardian era and reflective of the eastern architectural influence of the CPR. Commonly used in the construction of civic buildings due to its ability of convey a sense of strength and permanency, the Classic Revival style

lends itself well for commercial buildings. Commercial buildings of this style exhibit sophisticated detailing with ornamented parapets, decorative cornices, columns, pediments, and decorative storefronts. Many of Medicine Hat's early commercial buildings possess a structured façade arranged in multiple levels; a first floor of large storefront fenestrations with transoms and recessed entry; a second floor of multi-pane windows with transoms, and identifying business signbands; and a top floor with a large parapet and decorative cornice. The interior of commercial buildings frequently contained high ceilings with pressed tin ceilings, wooden floors and detailing. Depending upon their intended use, the upper storeys contained businesses or apartments.

Medicine Hat's early civic buildings express a variety of architectural styles. Financial institutions possessed elements of the Classical Revival style. Medicine Hat's early schools were designed in architectural



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styles such as Tudor Revival, Arts & Crafts, Beaux Arts, as well as Classical Revival with some reflecting multiple architectural styles on the same building. The city's early churches were typically wood framed, gabled, vernacular structures that were replaced with later grand buildings of Gothic Revival and Arts & Crafts architecture.

The most diverse architecture in Medicine Hat is present in its residences. The city possesses homes of Victorian, Arts & Crafts, Queen Anne Revival, Tudor Revival, pattern book, art deco, and vernacular architectural styles both high in quality and with unusually well preserved historic streetscapes. The diversity of residential architecture represents the evolving development of Medicine Hat and the influence of the CPR and immigrants from eastern Canada, Europe, and the United States. The geographical arrangement of different architectural styles is associated with the economic positioning of

Medicine Hat's neighbourhoods. Small cottages of vernacular style dominate the neighbourhoods surrounding Medicine Hat's early industries and were likely owned by factory workers. Large residences constructed in Tudor Revival, Queen Anne Revival, Victorian, and Arts & Crafts architectural styles are present throughout the community; however, a concentration of such residence exists in the area surrounding Medicine Hat's downtown core. The city also possesses a number of bungalows associated with the post-Second World War construction period and contemporary ranchers of the 1960s and 1970s. All of these buildings contribute to the eclectic architecture of Medicine Hat.

Medicine Hat's diverse architecture, from vernacular residences, to utilitarian industrial sites, to Classical Revival schools



Medicine Hat, Alta.  
Library and Archives Canada. PA-046140.

## SPRIT OF MEDICINE HAT

Over its history Medicine Hat has been 'branded' with numerous monikers 'Pittsburgh of the West', 'Chicago of the West', 'the town that was born luck', 'Minneapolis of Canada' and 'Little Pittsburgh', all alluding to Medicine Hat's economic development and prosperity. However, it is the people and their spirit and philosophy that made the city an early success and continue to drive Medicine Hat forward. Medicine Hat's stable development from railway tent settlement to town to city has continued even during periods of economic instability. The city's permanency can be attributed

to its economic diversity, local ingenuity, and calculated risk takers that comprise Medicine Hat's inhabitants.

Residents of Medicine Hat are community-minded with a strong volunteer spirit, reflected by the variety and depth of community organizations, groups, and societies. They exhibit the best aspects of a 'small town mindset' but are not encumbered or limited by it. Their progressive attitude has made them repeatedly a city of 'firsts' and carries them forward today through the city's ongoing growth and development.

What was once a tent town, is now the sixth most populated city in Alberta

Donald Luxton & Associates  
September 2012

