



CHINOOK COUNTRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

May/June, 2005

Calgary's Own Carnegie Library

2005
Alberta Centennial

The Calgary and District
Chapter
of the Historical Society
of Alberta

Office:
#311, 223 12 Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta
T2R 0G9

Website:
www.albertahistory.org/Chinook

The Vision of the Society:
"to promote a greater
understanding of Canadian and
Alberta history in Chinook
Country for people of all
ages."

Chinook boundaries
are from Olds to Nanton,
from the B.C. to the
Saskatchewan borders.

A bronze plaque in Calgary's Memorial Park Library commemorates one of the city's foremost cultural pioneers, Mrs. Annie Davidson.

It was under the leadership of this energetic 80-year-old widow that the Calgary Women's Literary Club was founded, and it was members of this club who initiated the building of Calgary's first public library. A century later, the club and the library continue their close relationship.

On February 9, 1906, Mrs. Davidson invited a small group of like-minded ladies to meet in the parlor of her home on Thirteenth Avenue West to form a reading club. Her guests were all well-educated women who had traveled West with favorite books packed among their settlers' effects. Now Mrs. Davidson urged them to share their literary interests, not only with each other, but with their new community.

Before the afternoon was over bylaws had been drawn up, officers elected and program topics chosen. Mrs. Davidson was made honorary president, and Mrs. George MacDonald occupied the president's chair. The next week the group met in the Ladies' Parlor of the Methodist Church to commence study of Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

At first, the format was eclectic. On May 30 the minutes recorded: "The Rev. Dr. McRae of Western Canada College gave a most interesting lecture on architecture." (Mrs. McRae was a charter member of the club, and her husband was one of several male mentors.)

On May 29 the minutes stated: "Mr. Walker,



M.A., of Western Canada College gave a scholarly address on the plot and literature of *Richard II*." On June 5: "The Club held its last meeting of this term in Mrs. Sisley's parlor. It was decided to continue next year the study of Shakespeare's plays."

The secretary-treasurer was instructed to order multiple copies of *Henry IV, Parts One and Two* at 25 cents apiece, so that each member would have her own copy for the next year's study. Sessions were to be led by the second vice-president, Mrs. Clark.

Minutes of this era never reveal the first names of the club ladies, but we do know that Mrs. Clark was the wife of Rev. John Clark, minister of Knox Presbyterian Church, and that her husband preached a sermon in support of the new Alberta government's "Act to Provide for the Establishment of Public Libraries." With a population of some 12,000 the booming pioneer city was becoming aware of its need for cultural institutions. Similar municipalities throughout North America had received grants

—continued on page 3

New Life for a Resolute Landmark



Standing resolute against wind and weather for 130 years, the McDougall Mission Church at Morley is a symbol of the great story of early Alberta.

Built in 1875, the church was the first Protestant church in southern Alberta, and the village that built up around it, called Morleyville, was the first community in the south. Begun as a Methodist Mission, it grew to be a major centre in the years before the railway. It was the site of the first cattle ranch, one of the first farming initiatives, and a welcome stopping place for early explorers and travelers to the area. A school and orphanage near the church offered loving support to the Stoney people.

Over the years, the church has been maintained by the McDougall Stoney Mission Society. In 2004, the United Church of Canada released the title to the church property and surrounding 43.9 acres to the non-profit society. Now improvement to the site can proceed, including church restoration and development of visitor facilities and interpretive trails, to enhance the enjoyment and education of visitors, including school groups.

A Friend and Fundraising event will be held on June 3, at the beautifully restored Loughheed House, 707-13 Avenue S.W. in Calgary. The evening will include historic sketches, displays of photographs and writings of the early days at Morley, and an opportunity to support the restoration project through live and silent auctions.

Be a part of the rebirth of this significant, provincially designated historic site. For tickets, call Ann McDougall, 282-3044. CCHS

—Submitted by *Ralphine Locke*

From the President

Our 2005 AGM was held at the historic Ranchmen's Club where we experienced our largest turnout ever for this event.

This year, Peter Bate, Sheila Grogan, and Linda Many Guns have agreed to join the Board of CCHS. They will be welcome additions to the Board, and I know they will bring fresh ideas to our many projects. I look forward to working with them.

Due to other commitments, Ruth Manning is leaving us after serving two years on the Board. We would like to thank Ruth for all her work and support, and to wish her all the best in her new endeavors.

Ruth plans to continue with the cemetery tours during the summer. This is a huge commitment for Ruth, and she would appreciate hearing from anyone who would be willing to train with her as a tour guide for some of the Sundays during the summer months when she won't be available.

Our guest speaker for the AGM was Pat McCann, manager of the Ranchmen's Club. Pat entertained us with stories from clubs he has managed over the years, and excerpts of the minutes of the early years of the Ranchmen's Club.

We were treated to an excellent meal with wine supplied by Pat. Our thanks to Pat for being such a gracious host.

Thank you to our AGM Committee Chairman Henry Murzyn for organizing another successful AGM and silent auction again this year, and to Helene Murzyn, Ruth Manning, Bev and Ken MacKenzie, and Vivian Sampson for all their help on the desk.

The Silent Auction was a great success. By the end of the evening, the tables laden with goods for auction were empty. We are indebted to all those generous people who gave items for the auction. Your added support to the Chinook Country Historical Society is truly appreciated.

As summer approaches, our energies turn

to planning another Historic Calgary Week. Volunteers are needed for the many jobs that go along with staging an event of this size. If you would like to help on the HCW committee, or in the hosting of the events, please call Joan Davis at 251-4915.

Historic Calgary Week is attended by thousands of Calgarians and visitors every year. It is the annual event where the Chinook Country Historical Society is able to reach out and bring the history of Calgary to Calgarians. CCHS

—*Diana Ringstrom*



Correction

There is a small error in ... references to the first residents of Calgary, reported in [the] March-April newsletter.

Mr. Isaac Freeze was not accompanied by his wife, Evelyn, when he arrived in Calgary in the spring of 1883. He was accompanied by two of his friends from New Brunswick, John Gerow Van Wart and Howard Graves. These three gentlemen came by horse and buggy from near Swift Current, which was the head of steel at the time. CCHS

—Submitted by *John L. Hutchings, C.A.*

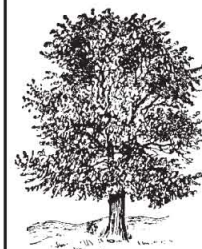
Share Calgary's History

Lead interesting, informative tours through the Union Cemetery

Sundays at 2:00 P.M.
Mid June to Mid September
(Full training provided as needed.)

REPLY TO:

albear@telusplanet.net
or phone 249-3144



Calgary's Carnegie Library (cont'd from page 1)

from multi-millionaire Andrew Carnegie to fund library construction. Mrs. Davidson and her friends wondered, why not Calgary?

Carnegie, who had been born in a humble weaver's cottage in Scotland, had made a fortune of 500 million untaxed dollars in the steel industry in the United States. Because reading had been the basis of his own education he elected to fund the building of libraries. But being a shrewd businessman he attached conditions to his philanthropy: the municipality concerned must provide the site, books, equipment and maintenance for the new facility.

Under the Alberta Libraries Act a city council was empowered to fulfill Carnegie's conditions "upon receipt of a petition praying for the establishment of a public library under this Act, and signed by a least one tenth of the electors of the municipality." Mrs. Davidson and her friends no longer wondered. They volunteered to go door-to-door to gather signatures on a library petition.

Things did not go smoothly, and although on June 18, 1907 the Literary Club minutes offered "thanks to Mrs. Davidson and Mr. Clark for efforts toward a public library," on October 28 Mrs. Davidson had to start a second petition because the first had failed to garner sufficient signatures. Of course all the resident electors were men (women had no vote) and some of them refused to sign on the grounds that Carnegie was a robber baron who had exploited his workers.

The Literary Club ladies were back out in November to finish their door-to-door canvass. They delivered the completed petition to the civic authorities, who undertook negotiations with the Carnegie Corporation that resulted in a grant of \$50,000. On May 18, 1908, City Council passed a bylaw establishing Calgary's first Library Board. Dr. Clark was appointed Chairman.

Of course, the other members of the Library Board were all men: Mayor Cameron, Alderman Samis, R.B. Bennett (later Prime Minister) and E.L. Hill (a high school teacher who became first librarian of the Edmonton Public Library). The Board's first task was to select a site for the proposed building. Citizens clamored to sell them land, and the matter had to be settled by plebiscite. In the end voters chose a parcel that had been acquired by the municipality in 1889. This became today's Central Memorial Park.

Plans for the new building were supplied by a Boston architectural firm recommended by the Carnegie Corporation, and the construction contract was awarded to a local builder. His impressive Paskapoo sandstone structure stands today at the east end of Memorial Park and is now a small but important branch of the city-wide library system. The interior still features wood paneling and marble floors, while large windows in the rear façade supply ample light to a modern computer room.

Like many construction projects Calgary's Carnegie Library ran over estimate, and Carnegie was asked to provide an additional \$30,000. The city's contribution was \$20,000, and the provincial government gave \$10,000 toward the purchase of books.

With their petition successful, the Literary Club members turned back to their study of Shakespeare. They also sponsored a series of public lectures to raise money for the new library reading room. On November 16, 1908, the minutes noted that Rev. Clark, Judge Stuart and Dr. McRae "had been more than kind in giving their services to the Club," and these gentlemen were pronounced honorary members. -CCHS

—Submitted by Shelagh Nolan Lester

Calgary Architecture & Design Week June 24 - July 1



CALGARY ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN WEEK is a gathering of design community to celebrate successes, discuss issues and promote high standards for Calgary's design future. The public is encouraged to observe and interact to develop an awareness and appreciation for the complexity of city-building.

There will be history-related events during this week, including a book launch by Harry Sanders on Wednesday, June 29, at the Memorial Park Library from 7:00 - 8:30 pm. He will introduce his newest book, *Historic Walks of Calgary*. Call 221-2006 for more information.

David Down on Modern Buildings will be held in the downtown area on the weekend of June 25th and 26th. -CCHS



"Firsts" of the Calgary Stampede

First Calgary Stampede:
September 2, 1912

First and only Victory Stampede: 1919

First Calgary Exhibition and Stampede:
Monday, July 9, 1923

First Stampede Dream Home: 1961

First Stampede Pot o' Gold: 1962
(with a prize of \$50,000) -CCHS

—Submitted by Susan Warrender

Edith Horton's Romance



Editor's Note: The article in the March/April newsletter on Calgary's First Residents sparked a lively discussion about pioneers in the Calgary area. Starting with this issue, we begin a series on the men and women who settled in Southern Alberta.

Edith Horton, born on 19 November 1866, was sixteen years old when she left London, England in 1883 on her 40-day trip to Calgary, North-West Territories Canada. She was ill. She had been told by her doctor that she suffered from uncontrollable asthma and that she must leave the climate of England. Even though she was in poor health she undertook the journey. The urgent advice from her physician was that she should make her way to a dry climate "the ultra dry climate of the North West Territories of Canada where you may escape an early death".

So it was that she embarked on a sailing ship which would take three weeks time to reach Canada. Luckily the boredom of the trip lessened when she became acquainted with another passenger, Mr. Harold Morton Henderson, who was her junior by less than one year. Their attraction for each other grew and would result in marriage eight years later. Unfortunately, when the ship reached Canada, their paths went in different directions.

Miss Horton headed west to her destination, Calgary, by train, and Mr. Henderson also by train, but to Victoria,

British Columbia. We will let Harold find his own way and follow Edith on the train which took her ten days to reach Medicine Hat, then the end of the rail.

Then next part of her journey was by flat-bottomed barge on the Saskatchewan River and Old Man River to Lethbridge, and finally a four day ride by stage-coach by way of Fort Macleod to Calgary. Here she met her employer who had built a cabin on property where the Jubilee Auditorium was later built. We do not know much about her activities as a governess but she seems to have enjoyed her life with walks along the Bow River and picking strawberries there. Friends had suggested she buy some land at one

dollar an acre but she chose to buy pretty things for herself.

Harold by now was in Donald, British Columbia, but the last spike was not driven until 7 November 1885 so travel between them was difficult.

However in the words of her grandson, in the fall of 1890 "dressed in her Sunday best, Edith gracefully boarded the train for Donald Station" west of Golden, B.C. They were married in the small Anglican Church, "in the gambling, fighting, drinking town of Donald. This was the building which moved to Windermere, B.C. and became the Lost Church".

—Submitted by Clarence Davis

Board Members

President
Diana Ringstrom
dianarin@telus.net
240-9828

Vice President
Susan Turner
elreimer@telusplanet.net
256-9652

Secretary
Frank Miklos
fame@spots.ca
289-7845

Treasurer
Carrol Jaques
cjaques@telusplanet.net
286-5955

Past President
Vivian Sampson
277-1013

George Milne,
Program Committee
253-5469

Tom Hamp, Membership
TomHamp@PrairieLighting.org
874-7375

Henry Murzyn, AGM
hmurzyn@searsconnect.ca
652-1323

Haifa Selo, HCW
haifa_selo@msn.com
808-1225

Brenda Everitt,
Program Committee
beveritt@shaw.ca
251-7366

Peter Bate
Director at Large
253-3998

Sheila Grogan
Director at Large

Linda Many Guns
Director at Large
275-0656

Legal Advisor, Brad Pierce
232-9605

Editor, Ruth Kerr
rakerr2@telus.net

Newsletter Submissions: The deadline for the July/August issue is June 24/05. Please send your article to Ruth Kerr at rakerr2@telus.net.

Membership

Please check the address label on your envelope and note when your subscription expires.

Membership cheques are payable to:

The Historical Society of Alberta, PO Box 4035, Station "C", Calgary, AB T2T 5M9

Individual membership \$15.00
Annual subscription \$25.00
Total \$40.00
Purchased together \$35.00

Family membership \$25.00
Annual subscription \$25.00
Total \$50.00
Purchased together \$45.00

Affiliate membership \$55.00
(school, museum, library, historical society)
Associate membership \$120.00