



The Historical Society of
Medicine Hat & District

SMOKE SIGNALS

Volume 41. No. 1
September 27, 2012
Editor: Jeanie Gartly

September History Programme

The Historical Society of Medicine Hat & District's general meeting will be held
Thursday, September 27, 2012 at 7:30 p.m., in the **Studio Theatre** at the
Esplanade.

Topic:

Early History of Redcliff

Guest Speaker:

Cliff Dacre, well-known Redcliff resident and historian
Accompanied by Vi Rieger, Curator, Redcliff Museum

Refreshments to follow

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE HAT & DISTRICT

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<http://histsocmh.wordpress.com>

*Annual membership is \$10 per person (\$20/couple) and includes 5 editions of the
Smoke Signals.*

President's Message

Welcome to the 2012-2013 season of the Historical Society of Medicine Hat & District! I hope you all had a really memorable summer spending time at home or vacationing away. After our successful AGM meeting in May at Medalta, it is with much anticipation that the Board looks forward to planning an experiential year ahead and all of this in celebration of the ever continuing historical work that the Society invests in as our way of preserving and sharing history with others.

As has been the case for several years now, Allan has spent a great deal of time, energy and enthusiasm in preparing the years programme for us all to all enjoy. The first General Meeting on Thursday, September 27 will provide a unique opportunity for us to share in celebrating with our close neighbor (and what I am sure was home for many growing up) of Redcliff as they celebrate their 100th Anniversary this year. The opportunity to build on the presentation will be even more realized with a trip to their museum on Saturday, September 29, 2012. Read in the issue of the other great programme's and hopefully a bus tour next spring.

As I have bi-monthly this past year I want to again extend the invitation to any member that if you have ideas for the Society, be it programme or other, then feel free to contact me at 403-527-3790. I would love to hear about them and share with the Board so we can continue the great work the Society has done all these years. One other thing I'd be interested in hearing from you on is any articles of historical interest that you'd have to contribute to the newsletter or that you think would be of value for the Board to seek out. Thank you again for placing your trust in me as President this next year. I look forward to meeting more of you along the way and hopefully some new people that find our work of interest.

**All the best this month,
Jeanie Gartly**

Plan now for the Historical Society's Christmas Party!

Date: **Tuesday evening, December 11, 2012**
Where: **Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club**
What: **A Fantastic Turkey Dinner with "all the trimmings"!**
Entertainment: **Trevor Moore (stage magic: comedy)**
RSVP Sign-Up: **September and November General Meetings**
Looking forward to seeing you there!

Historical Society of Medicine Hat & District Programme Schedule for 2012 - 2013

September 2012

About this Month's Topic:

The Town of Redcliff just celebrated its centennial this past July. Celebrated as the 'greenhouse capital of the prairies', the town has faced many challenges during the course of 100 years, including two world wars, natural disasters, the Great Depression and loss of industry for various reasons. Vision, strength and determination of its people helped Redcliff sustain itself when many other communities became ghost towns. Redcliff has had a fascinating past; along with the many challenges and hard times, there have been lots of good times and great joy and accomplishments. You will find its story full of wonder and intrigue!

About the Speaker:

Cliff Dacre was born in Redcliff and has resided there most of his life. Past employment has included work with Dominion Glass, Purity Floor Mills, the Canadian Western Power and Fuel Company, CHAT Television in Redcliff and also the Shortgrass Library System. While living in Redcliff, Cliff has been involved in many organizations, clubs and groups. In addition, he was on the Town Council in the 1970's. He was instrumental in the development of the Redcliff Historical and Museum Society in 1980, holding the position of secretary for some 25 years. In 1988, the Redcliff Lions Club selected him as the Volunteer Citizen of the Year. In Redcliff's centennial celebrations this year, Cliff researched the material for a special brochure showing a number of heritage homes and home styles in Redcliff that were built when the town was at its peak between 1910 and 1915. Come and enjoy this fascinating speaker!

Book your calendar for the follow-up to this programme:

A Tour of the Redcliff Museum: Saturday, September 29, 2012; 10:00am.

Upcoming Programme's

- November General Meeting:** Canadian History & Heritage: British Connections
Wednesday, November 28, 2012 at 7:30pm, Esplanade
Speaker: Bill Cocks
- January General Meeting:** Growing Up in Saratoga Park
Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 7:30pm, Esplanade
Speaker: Daily Legere
- March General Meeting:** The Pipe Organ: King of Instruments
Wednesday, March 27, 2013 at 7:30pm, Esplanade
Speaker: Tom Hamp
- May AGM/General Meeting:** Photographing our Heritage
Thursday, May 30, 2013 at 7:30pm, Esplanade
Speaker: TBD

We look forward to seeing you at this year's programme's! Watch for details and associated articles in future Smoke Signals!

Allan Jensen, Coordinator

Historic Reesor Ranch

This great ranch, thrown into a valley that sweeps up and into the cypress hills, is a historic homestead with a view as expansive and as wide as the eye and mind can take in. Herds of cattle are spread out and dot the vista. Taking in the view, we observe an amazing biosphere with diverse grasslands and the healthiest domestic animals to be found on a ranch anywhere. The roaming territory is marked with an occasional fence tracking into the horizon of the rolling prairies. This is true-blue cattle country. It's as "country" as can be found anywhere in Canada. Here Jeanie and I stand by the barn, overlooking the land, and enjoy the fresh winds that blow over us.



Figure 1, Reesor Historic Ranch Homestead

We arrive at Historic Reesor Ranch by way of a short tour of the prairies, navigating more than a thousand kilometers of mostly straight prairie gravel roads to get here. Our travels have taken us to Swift Current, and then south to Val Marie where our holiday abode was a cozy B&B Convent that also offers a history rich, deep and enchanting, but we will save that story for another time.

Today, we are at one of Saskatchewan's most historic ranches, its origins date back to a time David Reesor (1823), one of Canada's first Senators had children where the boy William D. Reesor ("W.D. Reesor, or W.D") of the Markham area in Ontario, came west (1900) and became the manager of the Markham Cattle Company. A devastating winter (1903) wiped out the Markham livestock and the prospects of the ranch itself. In 1905 W.D. Reesor took what livestock he had brought out from Ontario for his own family, and started the Reesor Ranch in its present location. And those historical events, led to the generations of family member ranchers that would follow.

After settling in, a small gathering forms on the front porch of the main ranch house. I get a fleeting sense that the ghosts of wranglers past are nearby.

This is the Reesor family home, with all of the artifacts of family history for its guests to enjoy. The history is steeped in ... well, more history. Old photos and endless articles, books and pictures adorn both the mantels of the main house, and they inform the imaginations of its guests. Mostly the home is a shrine of Canadiana, and the eras that have gone before, with the styling's that tell of the trials and life challenges that amaze the guests that consider these times of the past. The conveniences of modern times are not evident in any of the historical accounts or pictures. It's a time of man and horse, Winchester lever-action rifles, Colt pistols, of trappers and ranchers and native Indians living in elements of nature so harsh they are hardly measurable by any standard today.

The images of ranch-hands and cowboys illustrate an honest, hearty, kind and hard-working people. History is prominently on display at the Reesor main ranch house, a house that is also a bed and breakfast. This is a home where other guests meander and join cordially for tasty breakfasts' and now a chat on the porch.

A guitar arrives and happy conversations make way for acoustic guitar and voice songs by songwriter and performer Albert Coulee (middle initial "A" thank-you), my performing alter-ego has found an outdoor stage. One particular verse of a song I penned about Canada lingers, where "Shades of the maple leaf, in a many colored way. I am Canadian ... I am Canadian" the refrain goes on. I sing country style and Scott Reesor grins, enjoys, and readies in his mind some of his own poems that's he's going to share with the folks on the porch.

This is an inspiring place, one where songsters and poets can gather and create. It's a place where families gather and people that are otherwise strangers come together and have conversations. It creates a sense of a widening family amongst all of the guests. They tell me it's been that way for over a century now.



Figure 2, Original Main Ranch House

Historic Reesor Ranch has new head-wranglers now. Scott and Theresa Reesor are kind and always available hosts whom can be found attending to horseback riding and tours in the local hillsides and country. They also serve out a tasty and hearty breakfast for the guests of the main B&B house. When not catering to the guests, they can be found doing farm chores and making the rounds, where Scott is often citing impressive poems that he has penned. Scott and his family are warm and friendly hosts, and they make all of the guests feel the comfort and wholesomeness of over 100 years of farm and ranch life. They are like custodians of a gateway, where guests can enter a harmonious co-existence with nature during their visit.

There are cabins and a large barn that can house many families and couples at a time, and when not throwing horseshoes or riding the happy animals that wear such things, then one can walk on the property that stretches into the wild blue yonder and onwards to space and the starry skies at night. In these hills true history lurks.

Chief Sitting Bull made regular visits to this territory, and the nearby historic Fort Walsh attests to this area being as genuine in Cowboy and Indian lore as can be found anywhere. The summer breeze is warm, almost hot, and the scent is sweet and grassy. The flora of the prairies comes from a diverse and precious biodiversity where the visual beauty can hardly be captured in a painting or picture. It's a diverse natural landscape, one that needs to be preserved. These are ancient lands that came about in prehistoric times, after a shallow sea evaporated and drained. Eons followed before the land gave way to a time of the old and Wild West, where the old wagons and their steel and wooden wheels attest to the technologies of the day.



Figure 3, Historic Gear of times past

The Wild West, its riders, and the wranglers of Reesor past are now history, but there remains a deposit into the fortunes of Canada's rich heritage. This historical wealth is not sanctioned off for only the well-to-do; they can be found and enjoyed at Historic Reesor Ranch, thanks to its generous hosts Scott and Theresa Reesor, the Reesor family of today,

and yes ... of yesterday gone. Gone but not forgotten as the story goes.

I lower my quill, and the sun drops with fiery reds and oranges, creating a sunset cape overhead. The evening gives way to the saw-blade song of the coyotes, and the cows bawl for their calves by twilight. As the lunar light rises overhead, just as it did many, many moons ago, I imagine the cowboys, the wranglers, the fireside songs, and the cattle drives of yesterday gone. I slumber off, waiting for a new day and the smell of fresh coffee brewing, hash-browns and the hickory of bacon sizzling, and another day to visit this ranch and its historical accounts.

Albert A. Coulee

*Abert A. Coulee is the *nom-de-plume* and performing identity of David Watts of Medicine Hat, Alberta. albertcoulee@live.com

Please call me anytime at 403-527-3790 or email me at jgartly@shaw.ca with any articles or stories you'd like to share with others in future Smoke Signals issues. Even if its some history you'd like to hear more about then we may be able to research and come up with some members who have those stories to tell and/or we'll find a way to get some information on that topic and share it with the membership.

The Reesor Ranch story above was one that I was excited to share with you all after David's and my vacation to the ranch this summer and I appreciate that he graciously offered to tell our story. He's article is representative of how unique of an experience we had unexpectedly on our 'local' vacation this year. It's always nice to find such 'gems' in our back yard and ultimately I see as a part of the Society's region of history.

I want to take this opportunity to also thank Angela Stubbs for her many hears of hard work on the Smoke Signals. For this year, I'll look forward to hearing from you on your ideas! Jeanie Gartly, Smoke Signals Editor for 2012-2013 season.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE HAT AND DISTRICT
Minutes of General Meeting, May 30, 2012
Esplanade Cutbanks Room

1. Call to order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by President Jeanie Gartly. Jeanie welcomed all members and guests.

2. Minutes:

The minutes of the March 29, 2012 general meeting were printed in the Smoke Signals Newsletter. Moved by Tony Giesinger, seconded by George Wilcocks; all in favour; motion carried.

3. Reports:

(a) Finance:

Lorine provided an overview of the report. A single-sided printed copy was provided to members. The Royal Bank of Canada GIC's were re-invested at the end of April until April 2014.

Motion to approve the finance report made by Ethel Currie, seconded by Phyllis McLaughlin, all in favour; motion carried.

(b) Membership Committee:

To date we have 109+ members. There is room to increase membership by promoting the Society.

(c) Program:

Allan reported that the AGM program will include guest speaker James Marshall. The Board has received some program ideas for next year. Ideas include observing Redcliff's anniversary, a church hop including 3 churches with pipe organs, and a tour of a grain elevator. If you have any program suggestions please see Allan.

(d) Publicity & Publications

An update will be provided during the AGM.

(e) Newsletter:

No update.

(f) Preservation & Research:

Jeanie Gartly provided an update on the recent work of the Heritage Resources Committee. The unveiling ceremony for the St. John's Presbyterian Church plaque was a great success. An unveiling ceremony for the Finlay Bridge plaque will be held in summer. The Ewart Duggan Heritage Garden has transformed recently. Volunteers created paths and prepared the ground to plant a variety of authentic heritage perennials. Donations are still being accepted. The picket fence for the front yard will be installed this summer.

- (g) **Casino:**
Mitch is looking for volunteers to cover off a couple of the last two-hour shift as a Counter. The Casino is on Friday, August 24, 2012 and Saturday, August 25, 2012. Anyone interested is to contact Mitch with availability.
- (h) **Altaglass Project:**
An update will be provided during the AGM.
- (i) **Arts & Heritage Advisory Board:**
An update will be provided during the AGM.
Moved acceptance of these reports by Phyllis McLaughlin, seconded by Judy Morris, all in favour; motion carried.

4. Old Business:

(a) **Living History Project:**

Tom Hamp reported that all interviews have been completed and they are in the final phases of material preparation and submission. Tom thanked Allen Jensen for his extraordinary efforts to ensure things ran smoothly while dealing with frequent and unexpected changes to interviewees' availability and schedule. Tom also thanked Barry Finkelman & Ron Mason of Medalta Potteries for their initial guidance and support, and Stream Media (Barbara Watson and Jesse Mitchell, Pat Cook) for doing the videography. There were a total of 10 interviews under the Society's 2012 project, with a previous 2 interviews funded by the Historical Society of Alberta as a pilot project. We wish to thank the following interviewees and their interviewers:

<u>INTERVIEWEE</u>	<u>INTERVIEWER</u>
<u>Joint Project with Historical Society of Alberta</u>	
David Carter	Tom Hamp
Ethel Currie	Tom Hamp
<u>Historical Society of Medicine Hat & District 2012</u>	
Adele Armstrong	Shirley Rose
Donna MacLean	Lorine Marshall
Frank Webber	Angela Stubbs
Reiny Lehr	Laurel Schlat
Evelyn Stall	Dr. Ken Sauer
Nancy-Ruth & Malcolm Sissons	Malcolm Sissons
Ron Miller	Karen Cunningham
Cliff Wright	Tom Hamp
Cathryne Cooney	Pat Auger-Iannatone
Lane Linden	Tom Hamp

All videotape and digital files are currently with Stream Media. Tom is in the process of finalizing the scanning of memorabilia and photographs for inclusion in the final product. Stream Media will produce 5 copies of DVD's for each interview with 1 copy to

interviewee, 1 copy to Esplanade Archives, 1 copy to Provincial Archives, and 1 copy to our funding agency – the Community Initiative Program. Esplanade Archives will also receive all tapes and a hard drive archive of the material. All material will be in the Esplanade Archives sometime in July; it should be available for public access shortly thereafter.

Tom will also be preparing a final report to Community Initiative Program, who provided \$5260, or just over 80%, of the approximate total project cost of \$6500. In addition to our cash costs, our project budget included 270 volunteer hours. In the coming years, we anticipate volunteer participation in the transcription of the interviews to text to facilitate searching for excerpts by the Archives.

A follow-up application to the Community Initiative Program is anticipated to be made this Fall for a second round of interviews in 2013.

Tom thanked the Board of the Historical Society of Medicine Hat & District, and all of the volunteers involved on this project, and credit them for making the project a great success.

(b) Special Project Funding Presentation:

On behalf of the Historical Society, Jeanie presented a \$2,000.00 cheque to Barry Finkelman, General Manager at Medalta Potteries for the Caboose/Box Car project.

Motion to adjourn at 7:20 pm by Peter Barth.

**Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Eden, Secretary**

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE HAT & DISTRICT

Please Print: Name.....Tel. No.....
Address.....
.....
Postal Code.....Email.....
Date.....
Fees attached for.....person(s) @ \$10 each person.....

Please return to: Historical Society of Medicine Hat & District
401 First Street SE, Medicine Hat, AB, T1A 8W2

The Esplanade Archives is a proud partner of the Historical Society of Medicine Hat & District in persevering and promoting our rich past. Visit the Esplanade for Archives research services, exhibitions and an insightful experience.
