



# Central Alberta Historical Society Newsletter

Central Alberta  
Historical Society  
Newsletter  
Spring 2010

Layout &  
Edited by  
Shirley Dye

## Inside This Issue:

CAHS Board	1
Presidents Message	2
Sheila's Bio	3
Report March/April	4
CAHS at the Market	5
Helen Hunley	6
Storytelling	7
Gabreil Dumont	8
Dumont	9
Our Precious Heritage	10

## Central Alberta Historical Society 2010 Board of Directors



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Dr. Robert Lampard, Rod Trentham,  
Dr. Lu Piening—secretary, Dr. Bill Baergen.  
Front row: Faye Hughes, Darlo Albrecht,  
Dr. Don Hepburn - past president,  
Sheila Bannerman - president, Marguerite Watson,  
Marion Hives.

## President's Note. June 2010

### Hello!

**It is with great pleasure that the CAHS congratulates Don Hepburn, past president, on being awarded an Honorary Lifetime Membership in the Historical Society of Alberta. Don received this recognition at the HSA Annual General Meeting, in recognition of his significant dedication and contribution to the historical community and the education of the public. Congratulations, Don!**

As this program year draws to a close, I have just completed a trip with my husband and youngest daughter that constituted five days across Canada on the train, Vancouver to Halifax, three days in Halifax, and another week driving back. In all of it, I was made aware that our histories, whether personal or national, geographic or physical, human or natural, are so much a part of what we do and who we are that, most of the time, we are not even aware of how we have each personally assimilated public histories into the tapestries that are our lives.

The train itself, of course, forms an integral part of our national history. It is also a part of my personal history as my family did this same trip, in the same accommodation (then called a "drawing room") in 1967, to Expo in Montreal. From Vancouver to Toronto, the train was exactly as I remembered; efficiently designed and very comfortable. A stop in Winnipeg afforded us four hours for exploring. In The Forks Park, a magnificent monument to the cultural history of Winnipeg incorporated sculpture and memorial in a circle of pillars from the old railway yards, not a new construction like our own Arches sculpture, but not entirely dissimilar, either. Nearby, teens rollerbladed and skateboarded in a fabulous skate park, a juxtaposition of past and present that reminded us of the historical continuum.

The Louis Riel museum on the other side of the Red River, and across the relatively new and beautiful pedestrian bridge houses both historical and historically macabre information and items relating to the history of Louis Riel, and the west. Our West.

In Northern Ontario, our train skimmed through a forest fire, reminding us of the fragile nature of much that we take for granted. All along the way, too, the train passed through the older parts of towns and cities, and much varied and beautiful wilderness, prairie and farmland.

On the train, I had the good fortune to meet a historian who specializes in the history of both the Navy League and the railway. Here, travelling a very old route in semi-old railway cars, while learning new things about old things, we were creating new experiences that will become an integral part of who we are. History, and what it means, is never static. letter presses, that materials and equipment tell stories.

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### President's note

In Halifax, we attended my daughter's graduation from the oldest art school in Canada, in which she attended classes that have been held in the same buildings since 1858. There, she learned on century old looms and two hundred year old In Halifax, too, we felt the ghosts of men and women embarking on ships to fight in three wars, toured a navy frigate from the Second World War, learned more about the tragedies of the Titanic and the Halifax explosion, and walked old, old streets.

**Continued on page 3 ..... see president**

## President....

Driving home, we stopped to visit a friend in Montreal who fed us a breakfast of local bread, eggs and jam, while sitting outside in the sun, enjoying the old neighbourhood along Rue Bari, near Mont Royale.

In Ottawa, we toured the Parliament Buildings, and the National Army Museum, and walked the streets that every prime minister has walked. On the east side of the parliament buildings is a delicious bronze sculpture of the Famous Five, each an appropriately larger than life sculpture engaged in a representative activity. Charming, and at the same time, powerful.

Driving towards Toronto, we passed many old stone farm-houses and barns with older stone foundations. This area had personal meaning for me, too, as my mother's family had farmed here after emigrating from Scotland in the 1850s.

Here, I have to admit, we decided to detour around the south side of the Great Lakes, and through the United States, rather than back through Northern Ontario. On the way southwest, we stopped for a picnic lunch in the town square of Woodstock, Ontario, where we spent a great hour in the local museum, and I made connections with a local historian.

Coming back up from the United States just south of Winnipeg, we toured through downtown Winnipeg by car. I have been to Winnipeg a number of times and wanted my husband and daughter to have a feel for it, too. We drove past the Legislature, and other areas of interest, but what I found to be particularly interesting were the various histories that we each knew that the others didn't. My daughter was aware of Winnipeg's fashion design core, and some of the locally famous shops and studios ensconced in historic building. My husband was interested in the Winnipeg music scene and remembered the names of several places, only one of which we could find, that were a part of Winnipeg as the birthplace of Canadian rock and roll.

Many miles, not much stopping, and we were home, feeling both intellectually and emotionally more attached to our country and its various histories, and, personally, much, much richer.

I hope you all have summers as richly endowed with new experiences that add depth and understanding to old experiences. Happy Reflecting!

We begin again on Wednesday September 15 in the Snell Auditorium of the Red Deer Public Library. Watch for more details early in September!

## A BIOGRAPHY OF SHEILA BANNERMAN



I grew up in Vancouver, BC, in a very English/Scottish family in the same house that my father had been raised in. On my mother's side, I have deep roots in Canadian farming and ranching communities in both Ontario and Alberta. My long term interests in my growing up years included piano and swimming, Girl Guides, reading, singing, and family camping

trips around BC and Alberta. In 1967, my parents indulged their love of train travel by taking me and my brother and sister to Expo '67 in Montreal by train. This resulted in the development of my own lifelong love of train travel.

I attended the same elementary and high schools as my father had, and even shared the same Grade 12 literature teacher, 35 years apart. I completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of British Columbia, with a major in English literature.

In 1978, I married Torben Andersen, and after living in Seattle, Kamloops and Vernon, we moved to Red Deer in 1982, where we raised our family of three. I have grown to love Alberta, and the parkland/prairie landscape, finding the contradictions of soft warm summer mornings and blindingly bright and cold winter mornings to be both inspirational and very, very compelling.

As our children grew, we found ourselves immersed in prairie hockey culture, as our son and two daughters all played through their childhood and teen years. I became a Girl Guide leader, focusing on camping and the outdoors. In 1990 we moved to a house with a large garden with tremendous scope, and I became an avid gardener. As the children grew, we also enjoyed summer camping trips in the Badlands and the Parkland, and a few (short) train trips thrown in for good measure. My husband and I continue to camp each summer, enjoying as much of the outdoors as possible during our very short season.

Upon returning to school in the 1990s, I found I also loved to study history. As a result, I finished a Master's degree in history at the University of Lethbridge in 2005. My thesis topic was English volunteer soldiers during the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902. I have continued to study history and have recently developed an interest in Canadian cowboy mythologies.

**Continued on page 4 see Sheila's Bio**

## March Meeting

### Alberta Volunteers In The Boer-Anglo-War

Sheila Bannerman spoke at the March meeting on her research exploring the connection between Alberta soldiers in the Anglo-Boer War (1899 – 1902) and the widely accepted myth of southern Alberta ranchers and NWMP as rootin' tootin' pistol shootin' American style cowboys.

Combining the results of research with photographs and newspaper articles, Ms. Bannerman traced the changing attitudes in Canada and abroad as successive contingents of Canadian volunteer soldiers became less the English style soldier with helmet and puttees, and more the western Canadian outdoorsman, complete with horse and Stetson. These latter contingents were widely celebrated in the British press as examples of rugged manliness, in direct contrast to the much maligned poor physical condition of the British regular.

During the war, the Canadians performed adequately to admirably, and were lionized and idealized in the press. Every battle that they participated in was reported, as was every casualty and every death.

On returning home, the western Canadian contingents left behind an image of tall men on tall horses, clad in hard wearing clothing and Stetson hats. They were the only soldiers in the war to carry pistols, and the only soldiers to achieve a distinctly inflated reputation based on initiative, daring, and skill, but within a solid framework of idealized romanticism.

Europe was completely familiar with travelling American wild west shows and it seemed that here was a Canadian equivalent. Ms. Bannerman believes that it was due to publicity related to the Boer War, that the mythology of the Canadian cowboy was born.

## April meeting Catalogue Homes

The presentation this evening was a combined effort of the CAHS, the Red Deer and District Archives, and the Heritage Preservation Committee. A self-guided tour of catalogue homes in the Central Alberta area is being developed, and the presentation discussed the results of research to date.



A true catalogue home is one ordered from a catalogue company, such as the T. Eaton Company, and which is shipped by rail in boxes to the nearest railway station to where the house would be built. The lumber was numbered, and the houses often erected in work bees. A number of companies sold such homes, and the fact that catalogue plans were often copied makes identification difficult. Some local examples were shown, and their various characteristics discussed. The evening finished with a Buster Keaton comedy on the pitfalls of erecting a catalogue home.

This project is ongoing, as catalogue homes are not always easy to distinguish from copies. It was pointed out that in the case of lack of documentary evidence, the only way to distinguish a catalogue home is to check for numbers on exposed joists in the basement or attic. The CAHS invites anyone with knowledge of catalogue homes in the Central Alberta area, to contact Sheila Bannerman, at [s.bannerman@hotmail.com](mailto:s.bannerman@hotmail.com), or at 403-347-7873.

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## Sheila's Bio

I love doing research, and enjoy the critical assessment of peers so have continued to present my work at academic conferences in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Vancouver.

My commitment to the Historical Society began as a desire to be connected to other lovers of history in a more regular manner, envisioning perhaps some low-key committee work. Before long, however, the interesting people I met, and projects I became interested in, resulted in my developing a much deeper commitment to this organization. As time went on, I also become involved as a volunteer with the Red Deer Heritage Preservation Committee, the Museum and Art Gallery, and the Library.

## CENTRAL ALBERTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT THE MARKET

SATURDAY JUNE 12  
8 AM TO NOON

Please come and visit us at the Red Deer Public Market

- \* You'll have the opportunity to view the first of the Historic Arches plaques, and provide your feedback on content and design.
- \* You can provide input to help us in planning events and projects for the Red Deer 2013 Centennial
- \* You'll also have the opportunity to chat with us about your interest in history and heritage, and the directions you would like the CAHS to take in the future.

Memberships available!

**A note for fall** - Starting with our first speaker in the fall, our September meeting will start at 7PM instead of 7:30. We must be out of the Library by 9 PM and we found an hour and a half is not quite enough to give people time to ask our speakers questions.

## Helen Hunley - Renaissance Woman



I would like to tell you, the reader, of a woman whose contribution to our Alberta Heritage is monumental. I have visited Helen Hunley on many occasions and always come away with new knowledge and perspective on this amazing Albertan.

Helen Hunley is a true Renaissance woman. Wilma Helen Hunley was born on September 6, 1920, at Acme, Alberta. Born of pioneer stock Helen Hunley recalls early on walking across the railroad trestle at Rocky Mountain House with her mom to sell the poultry they raised. Down to earth and homespun, she is clearly fond of people and the history of the surrounding area. She remembers vividly growing up in the Crimson lake area and of her schooling, most of which was done at home. She remembers that the first book she ever read was "*Mrs Wiggs in the Cabbage Patch.*"

Hunley at first wanted to become a nurse but pneumonia postponed that and she accepted a position with the telephone company, working three week stretches with only one night off. She worked as a telephone operator in Carstairs, Acme, and Calgary. To save money to send home she slept in the telephone office. Helen Hunley has a tremendous memory and can still recall the phone numbers from those days.

When Marion McEwan arrived in rough-hewn Rocky Mountain House to begin work as a nurse several years ago she remembers well a conversation with Helen Hunley. This was in the days before Hunley would achieve great political success. Her well known wit however was very much present when Ms. McEwan asked her where she could find a house with three rooms and a bath. Helen replied "*Around here dear- the best we can do is three rooms and a path!*"

When the Second World War broke out Hunley immediately enlisted in the Canadian Women's Army Corps and served overseas from 1943 to 1945. She was discharged with the rank of Lieutenant. After her discharge, she returned to her mother's farm which she helped operate for one year. She then became an International Harvester Dealer and Insurance agent that eventually led to her owning her own insurance agency. Helen also served on the Board of Directors of the Implement Dealers of Alberta, a largely male bastion, although she is quick to point out she was always treated fairly and equally. She was the first woman to hold an International Harvester dealership in North America. She is very proud of her Journeyman's Certificate as a "Partsman."

She purchased these businesses in 1957 and held the International Harvester franchise in Rocky Mountain House until 1968. She owned and managed Helen Hunley Agencies Limited, an insurance agency, from 1968-71.

Looking back on her fascinating life, Helen Hunley does recall those events that shaped her life. She doesn't forget being paid partly in Scrip, the "*funny money*" of the Social Credit Government. She could never readily convert the Scrip to "good money" and remembers arranging for her mom to use it where it was honoured, at Killicks store in Rocky Mountain House. It was the economic difficulties during these depression times that helped mold the political opinions that eventually would lead her to the Progressive Conservative Party.

Her political career after the war was meteoric. In a few short years Helen Hunley would serve as Town Councillor, Mayor of Rocky Mountain House and eventually a member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, becoming the first woman to hold a cabinet portfolio serving as Solicitor General, Minister of Health and Welfare and Minister of Social Services. In June, 1980, she was appointed Chairman of the Alberta Mental Health Advisory Council. The same year, she also served on the Alberta Seventy-fifth Anniversary Commission and helped form the Alberta Citizens' Coalition. This coalition was organized to inform other Canadians regarding Alberta's position during the negotiations between the Alberta and Canadian governments over constitutional and energy-related issues. In 1984, she served as President of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta.

In 1986 Helen Hunley was further honoured by becoming Alberta's first woman Lieutenant Governor.

W. Helen Hunley is a Dame of Grace of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (1985) and she received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Alberta in 1985.

W. Helen Hunley has been active in community affairs and volunteer agencies, particularly the Red Cross, Boy Scouts, and Rocky Mountain House Memorial Public Library. As well, she served in various executive positions in the Rocky Mountain House Badminton Club, Arts and Crafts Association, and Recreation Board.

Helen Hunley today is still unpretentious, interested in people, and one would not readily suspect the accomplishments of this remarkable woman at first. What does come through however is her compassion and love of people and the history that has unfolded here. Helen Hunley has not been a mere bystander to that history.

Submitted by Pat McDonald

## Storytelling at its Best

This story, written by Mustafar Eric, was first printed in the Stettler Independent on Friday, February 19 2010

Bob Willis has many hats: He is manager of the Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions, he is the secretary of the East Central Heritage Society and he is an admired storyteller, one who does it right.

Willis has been telling the story of Métis leader Gabriel Dumont for almost two decades, and he has done it mostly on the trips organized by the Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions.

What is fantastic in Willis' storytelling is his dedication to the authenticity and loyalty to the history as it happened, including his costumes. His skill and talent has attracted so much attention that he has inspired a whole new concept under a regional tourism project which is still under development.

Willis says his involvement with storytelling goes as far back as a quarter of a century ago. "I was working with a fellow by the name of Bill Baergen, Dr. Bill Baergen, and he was producing the trail of Louis Riel for the Rotary Club of Stettler," he says as to how he started his journey which acquainted him with the legendary Métis leader Gabriel Dumont. "He (Baergen) negotiated and got the rights to do that from Regina.

"That play really was a rework of the transcripts of the trail and he had asked me to assist with the costume design and the set for the theatre" Willis said the plan was to stage the play in Stettler. Rotary was planning to produce the play at the Court House at the museum.

"In the course of my research to assist Baergen, I kept coming across the name Gabriel Dumont," Willis recalls. And he also remembers how difficult it was to do research and find information under the circumstances of the period.

"I started digging up but there was very little written; I went into archives and every library I went into I looked at manuscripts." Only when he finally pieced together the main story had he realized what a great individual he was trying to investigate about. "This is a huge western Canadian figure, if he was in the United States, this is Davy

Crockett, this is Daniel Boone, but nobody had ever heard of the guy" he says his excitement still showing on his face. "This is partly because in Canada, our history was written in Ontario primarily, and they are not terribly fond of the folks that ran this part of the world for a significant period of time." Willis says in reference to the Métis. "They had the best of both worlds, they had the natural smarts of the Aboriginals and the drive of the Europeans."

"Overtime I got a pretty good handle on who he was and what he did and then I heard the argument at times that the northwest rebellion, called the Riel rebellion should not be called the Riel rebellion, in fact it should be called Gabriel's rebellion." As time went by, both Baergen and Willis matured in telling their stories. Baergen did Riel's address to the jury in the trial and I did the story of the rebellion and the story of the Métis," says Willis. They travelled together to many places to stage the play. "I have done it all over western Canada," said Willis.

As he began to speak to people and provide answers to their questions he says he has slowly expanded the story. "I have never written anything down but the story changes, according to the interest of the people, depending on circumstances, interruptions, etc."

But the interesting thing is all the stories he kept telling remained true to the historical "I go with the intention of doing it (the same) but as I read the audience I change it" he said. "They were still based on the facts I only change the interpretation."

Willis says he doesn't often do story telling on the railway excursions any more because the train trips have got substantially shorter. But as Boomtown Trail project continues to progress, Bob Willis and hopefully other storytellers will have many opportunities to recite the history for all those interested.



Submitted by Dr. Bill Baergen

## Who was Gabriel Dumont? (1837-1906)

Submitted by Bill Baergen

Gabriel Dumont has become one of the most influential Métis in Canadian history and is a hero to many Métis today. He was a leader through much of his life: as chief of the bison hunt, as President of the St. Laurent Council (which included Batoche), and finally as Louis Riel's Adjutant General (military leader) during the 1885 resistance.

Gabriel was born in December, 1837, to Isidore Dumont and Louise Laframboise, at Red River (now Manitoba) where he spent his formative years along with older brother Isidore, and older sister Pelagie, as well as younger siblings Joseph, Isabella, Edouard and Elie.

Gabriel's character and skills were shaped by Red River society, particularly the bison hunts. By age ten, he broke-in his own horse, learned to hunt with a bow and how to track with cunning. At fourteen he worked like a man in the bison hunt: looked after Red River carts, swam horses across rivers, shot small game and helped skin bison.

Being nominally a Roman Catholic, Dumont learned his faith from Roman Catholic priests who taught the Gospel during hunts. He spoke six First Nations languages besides his first language—Michif-French. However, he spoke no English and could not write.

Gabriel's first military experience came in July 13-15 at the Battle of the Grand Couteau. A large party of Yankton (Nakota) Sioux attacked 300 Métis bison hunters, so the Métis formed a defensive ring with their Red River carts and successfully defeated the Sioux from their rifle pits, suffering only one casualty.

Gabriel was a family man. In 1858 he married Madeleine Wilkie, (born 1840 in what is now Pembina, North Dakota.) She was a hardworking, resourceful woman who had a reputation for being compassionate to the less fortunate, a character trait that Gabriel sought in a mate to match his own generous spirit. The young couple spent the early part of their marriage on the plains, hunting bison—always making sure that the less fortunate hunters and their families were fed before they took any meat for themselves. In 1863, they adopted Annie, a Métis girl from Red River

who eventually married an American named William Allen Hamilton.

In the 1860s, Gabriel was the chief of the Métis bison hunters and commanded approximately 200 hunters. He was an excellent guide: a non-aboriginal hunter once claimed that Gabriel knew the prairies so well he could go anywhere blindfolded.



Unfortunately, due to over-hunting, the number of Plains bison rapidly dwindled, so that fewer Métis could make a living from hunting. As a result, in 1872 Gabriel opened up a ferry service called "Gabriel's Crossing" and also operated a general store on the South Saskatchewan River about ten kilometers upstream from where Francois-Xavier Letendre dit Batoche had his ferry.

Gabriel built his first home in 1873 from logs, plastered with clay and white-washed. He had stables for four horses and a large semi-underground icehouse. In the next decade, he broke 20 acres of land where he grew potatoes and barley, mowed hay for his horses, and continued to hunt.

Dumont started his political career in 1873 when he was elected President of the St. Laurent Council. He chose a governing council of eight to assist him. Enforcement of the Council's provisions was similar to the "Law of the Hunt" and was carried out by "captains" and "soldiers". The Council created laws to cover criminal offences, land ownership and labour relations, among others..

Gabriel was re-elected in 1874, but a few months later the Council was disbanded because several Métis had been fined for ignoring the "Law of the Hunt."

With the bison dwindling, Gabriel realized the Métis needed government assistance to survive, so he chaired meetings in 1877-78 to draw up petitions to the government asking for representation on the North-West Territories Council so they could confirm Métis ownership of already-occupied lands and to ask for farming assistance, schools, and new land grants. In 1880, he led a successful protest against paying a fee on wood cut on crown land. Later he petitioned for land grants and Scrip.

Continued on page 7 .... See Dumont

## Dumont



Statue of Dumont in Saskatoon, Sask.

The Métis grievances were ignored by Ottawa. In 1884, frustrated by federal govt. inaction, Gabriel called a meeting to suggest bringing Louis Riel to Batoche from Montana to help the Métis with their grievances against the federal government. The other leaders agreed—so on May 19, Gabriel, Michel Dumas, Moise Oulette and James Isbister left for St. Peter’s Mission in Montana Territory, where Riel was teaching school, in order to bring Riel back to Canada. By July 15, 1884, they were back on Gabriel’s farm with Riel and his family.

During the early winter of 1885, Gabriel and Louis Riel concluded that negotiations with the government had failed. In a secret meeting on March 5, it was decided that Métis would resort to taking up arms, **if necessary**. At this meeting, Gabriel Dumont was appointed the “Adjutant General of the Métis Nation.” He soon organized, along the lines of the buffalo hunt, approximately 300 men for potential military action.

March 26. At the Battle of Duck Lake the Métis outnumbered the North-West Mounted Police and Prince Albert volunteers. Early in the battle, Gabriel suffered a slight head wound that prevented him from leading the Métis to victory. He turned over the command to his brother Edouard, but when police and volunteers retreated, Riel ordered the Métis not to pursue them. Gabriel suffered a great loss in this battle: his brother Isidore and three other relatives were killed.

April 24-Battle of Fish Creek. The Canadian militia, led by General Middleton, outnumbered the Métis five to one. However, under Gabriel’s leadership the Métis drove off the inexperienced Canadian soldiers and used much of their ammunition. The Métis then headed back to Batoche to set up a defense.

May 9-12, 1885-The Battle of Batoche, only two weeks later. After four days of fighting the Métis ran out of ammunition and could no longer fend off the much larger, better-equipped Canadian militia. A few days after, Louis Riel surrendered, Gabriel Dumont and Michel Dumas went into political exile in the U.S. May 27.

They were arrested by U.S. authorities but released two days later on orders from Washington. Gabriel went to his relatives in Montana Territory to plan his next step. Madeleine arrived that fall at Fort Benton, Montana Territory, but, sadly, died in the spring of 1886 of tuberculosis, a disease that killed many aboriginal people.

June, 1886-Gabriel joined Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show as a trick-shot artist with Annie Oakley and others. He discovered a large community of French Canadians in New York and New England where he spoke about the 1885 Resistance. This led to contacts with French Canadian nationalists in Quebec—the Societe Saint-Jean Baptiste of Montreal, who invited him to do a lecture tour. The tour was cancelled because Gabriel’s anti-clerical outbursts upset French-Canadians who were strongly Roman Catholic at that time.

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*Dumont avoided capture by escaping to the United States where, in 1886, he accepted an offer to demonstrate his marksmanship by performing in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show.*

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In 1893-Dumont was granted an amnesty for his role in the 1885 Resistance, so he went back to his homestead in Batoche. He let his relatives farm his land and moved into a small cabin on his nephew Alexis Dumont’s farm. On May 19, 1906, Gabriel Dumont died suddenly while visiting Alexis.

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# OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE

## March 8 International Women's Day

### My Heroes

When I think of the word hero, not often do I connect it with women, yet heroes can be found in the most unlikely of places, in the home. By keeping the home running, in many ways, women keep the schools, businesses and the country running. Women are the core of society. I think the project called "Women of Aspenland" also attempts to recognize this.

Demonstrating how quickly history is lost, the question was asked "How many of us even know the name of our great grandmothers?" Elin, Guthfinna, Halldora, and Gudrun are my greats and my heroes. These four and all the other immigrant women had to be strong, to leave behind their homeland, loved ones, often their own children and journey to a unknown place. Some lost children on the trip and buried them at sea. Upon arrival, more travel was needed; so they loaded their few worldly possessions onto a train, then possibly a horse drawn wagon, forded a river or two and then on foot to what ??? In most cases there was no house waiting for them. In some areas the natives came to their rescue teaching them their ways of survival. As time went on land was cleared, houses built, then roads, bridges, a school, a community hall and a church.

When I see images of unknown people in restaurants, museums or in books, women from an era gone by, I wonder: What was their life like? What hardships did they endure? What did they do for fun? What happened to their family? Did they ever get back home, even for a visit? I can only imagine the replies: *"I did what needed to be done"*.

*"Yes, we lost a baby and then another son".*

*"You know, I will never see my homeland again or the two daughters I left behind".*

*"In my day it was a really big trip to get to Innisfail or even to haul the cream to Markerville".*

*"My husband walked to Calgary to work for the lumber company".*

*"We worked hard and enjoyed the simple things, like sitting by the fire at night versifying, listening to poetry, the Sagas or the Bible read aloud while I knit".*

*"Things were hard but we helped each other".*

**My Heroes – my great grandmothers: Elin Jonsdottir, Guthfinna Sveinsdottir, Halldora Gunnarsdottir, Gudrun Thordardottir**

Your hardships and suffering helped build a new country, "Canada".

I honour and thank you and I will remember your names.

Bernice Andersen  
Markerville, Alberta