

Edmonton Exhibition Lands

Area Redevelopment Plan Phase II

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## **Preface: First Nations Lands and at the Exhibition**

Hundreds of archaeological sites indicate aboriginal use of the land in what is now Edmonton and district for at least 5000 years. These first people hunted, fished and gathered raw resources to be processed into tools and other useful materials.

By the time the first fur trade forts were established in the district in 1795, the Cree had named this area *Otinow* (a place where everyone came). However, First Nations may have used this area well before this European contact.

About 12,000 years ago the study area was under a large lake, with a vast area surrounding it. Lake Edmonton drained suddenly about 11,000 years ago. The resulting lake bottom was transformed to a deep river valley, with deep ravines draining into it. The North Saskatchewan River valley was cut down to its present level about 9,000 years ago.

This process provided the first landscape known to postglacial First Nations. They hunted big game here. Fairly rapid climate changes posed additional challenges to these first peoples. At the same time this area was transformed into more deeply eroded ravines and uplands used for hunting and other vital activities. More diverse ecosystems and microclimates emerged, as around the wetlands and ravines in the general study area.

Archaeological evidence suggests that larger populations were active around the Edmonton and Frog Lake areas during the pre-contact period than at other spots in the district. For millennia these sites have been concentrated near the rivers and creeks, and their ravines, such as Kinnaird Ravine, were ideal for hunting, fishing, and the gathering of herbal foods.

The North Saskatchewan River has served as a boundary between the Blackfoot and Cree peoples for many years. The grasslands came up to the river valley before European settlement occurred. The land south of the river was transformed from grassland and shrub land to aspen parkland after the 1870s. The destruction of the vast buffalo herds, which grazed down the aspen saplings and other shrubs, and the new post-settlement emphasis on suppressing wildfire played a large role in this change.

The Blackfoot once claimed the area north of the river, but by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century traditional territories were changing. Cree and Assinibone, and perhaps Sarsi, were moving into the region surrounding the study area. The North West Company also brought Iroquois people here to trap for them, and other Aboriginal peoples would move through as they followed their own lifestyles.

Early fur trade journals suggest that this area was an important rendezvous for trade by the 1750s, and perhaps much earlier. The fur trade posts may have been attracted to this area for that very reason.

Even before European traders arrived in the Northwest, tribal territories had been disrupted by the introduction of horses and trade guns, as well as through the many devastating diseases that preceded the actual arrival of the newcomers.

Today the study area is located on Treaty 6 land, traditional territories of several First Nations and Metis people. Treaty 6 territory includes land in the Edmonton district that was a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Nakota Sioux,, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Salteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit and others.

Treaty 6 was signed in 1876, the same year the Indian Act defined Indigenous people, and the lands assigned to them, as a federal responsibility. Treaty 6 involved 50 First Nations across central Alberta and Saskatchewan.

First Nations peoples used land in the study area long before it was demarcated by surveyors, and later marked out for subdivision and settlement.

First Nations people have been a part of the Exhibition since the beginning. They came to the first fair in 1879 for the excitement, and were a vital part of the events after this. At least 300 were reported as camping on Groat's Flats for the parade and fair in late June 1909.

*The procession on the opening day, in which several hundred Indians participated, an illustration of which appear on this page, was well organized and thoroughly appreciated not only by visitors from a distance but by the great majority of our own people, to whom few opportunities have come in recent years to see the Red Man in all his native glory. 1*

First Nations people sometimes squatted in the study area, and efforts were made by the City to evict them when this happened. 2

The Exhibition eventually built an Indian Building, which hired many temporary workers during Exhibition Week Summer Fair. 3 The Department of Indian Affairs was providing support by the late 1960s. The Indian Exhibits during Klondike Days became a well-attended attraction. The Department of Indian Affairs also consulted on the format and development of major exhibitions, like the 1970 Exhibition Indian Exhibit. 4 The department also provided financial support for Team Products, Alberta and MacKenzie (10242-106 Street; Walter K. Hills, Business Manager). 5

At one time the Edmonton Exhibition held contests for Aboriginal crafts produced in reserves all across Alberta and parts of Saskatchewan. This involved hundreds of people, mostly women, whose work was displayed in the various pavilions, and in the Indian House after it was opened. Hundreds of crafts were obtained from the Charles Camsell Hospital alone each year. (See Historical overview for additional detail)

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1. *Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 June 1909; *Saturday News*, 3 July 1909
2. City of Edmonton Archives (CEA) RG11 Series 6.3 File 145
3. CEA MS 322.1 Class 1 File 112; 21 June 1962
4. CEA MS 322.1 Class 1 File 114; 3 September 1969
5. CEA MS 322.1 Class 1 File 114; 2 September 1969

## **The Edmonton Exhibition Lands: Chapter 1**

### **Precedents 1879-1908**

Fairs are almost as old as recorded history,” Guy Scott, past president of the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies, has noted. In England during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, ancient fairs began to be merged into a combination of agricultural improvement societies with the traditional craft fairs and festivals. The first agricultural fair in what became Canada was organized in Nova Scotia in 1765, then in Upper Canada (Ontario) in 1792, three years before the first Edmonton House was set up along the North Saskatchewan River. When the first settlers moved into the Hudson’s Bay Company territory after the land transfer to the new Dominion of Canada during the 1870s, the concept was brought west with many newcomers who came from Ontario, where agricultural fairs were well established. 1

The first Edmonton Exhibition was held by the Edmonton Agricultural Society, formed in September 1879. The Society raised \$323 to launch a fair to sell the produce of the Northwest to the country. This fair was “the first ever organized in the Northwest” 2, and was held on 15 October 1879, outside the fifth and final Fort Edmonton. Fort Edmonton V, built over four decades earlier, was located on the North Saskatchewan River valley escarpment below the present site of the Legislature Building. The first displays at this fair featured a livestock show, with livestock impounded within the fort palisade. Chief Factor Richard Hardisty’s “Big House”, famous across the Northwest, also hosted two rooms of displays featuring grain, vegetables and women’s handiwork. Hardisty was named president of the Society in 1881. Many of the district residents from Fort Edmonton and the growing settlement outside the palisade, as well as St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan and Sturgeon valley farms, attended the inaugural fair that year.

Many of Edmonton’s most prominent pioneers were involved in starting the fair and exhibition tradition in the district. Inspector W.D. Jarvis, North West Mounted Police (NWMP), was the Society president; Chief Factor Richard Hardisty of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) was the vice-president; Sergeant-Major Belcher, NWMP, Thomas Lamoreaux, of Sturgeon River settlement, and Donald Ross, an early pioneer entrepreneur who would be president of the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association in 1903-1906, were the first Society directors. Prizes were awarded for livestock and vegetables, and drew many entrants. Frank Oliver

reported to the *Saskatchewan Herald*, three years before he established the local *Edmonton Bulletin* in late 1881, that the original Edmonton fair was a big success, and that “those who did not make an entry are sorry for it....” Of its original funds, \$173 was paid out in prizes. 3

The Edmonton Agricultural Society was the first local body with legal status established anywhere within the vast, newly-created Northwest Territories, and therefore had the authority to make decisions beyond what would normally be expected of such a body.

The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that subsequent fairs were much less successful. The second year “not even an officer of the society showed up.” 4 Greater efforts were made in 1882 to showcase the produce of the district to offset damaging rumors from competing districts of poor agricultural potential around Edmonton. In 1882 there were many more entries shown in the new hotel built by A. Macdonald & Co., which served as an agricultural hall for the show. Donald McLeod’s corral held the livestock that year. 5

The Edmonton Agricultural Society in 1883 saw Matt McCauley serving as president, a position he held until 1885. The fair was held in October 1883. A Dominion Day fair was held on 5 July 1884, with the main event being the men’s tug-of-war between Edmonton and Big Lake, as well as the horse races, all the rage in the district in the 1870s and 1880s; racing was therefore a significant part of the Edmonton fairs from the earliest events. 6 The Fall Fair was held at Kellys’ Hall in October 1884; livestock and hogs were shown on Fraser Avenue (98 Street) near Main Street (Jasper Avenue), outside Kelly’s Hall. A close relationship existed between the organizers of the Dominion Day activities and the fair during the 1880s.

In 1892 a fair was held on East Jasper Avenue near Namayo Street, in the middle of what was emerging as the town commercial centre. There was a large rink just north of Jasper at this time where the stock was shown. The first Shorthorn was exhibited by Lawrence Rye from Namao; he would later become president of the Edmonton Exhibition Association, and Shorthorns were a favored breed for showing and sale at the Ex for decades. Rye was born in Parry Sound, Ontario, and moved to Alberta in 1892, and was raised on his parents’ homestead near Namao. When young he hauled freight for the HBC along the Athabasca Landing trail. He later focused on breeding and showing cattle and horses, and was president of the Clydesdale Horse Association of Canada, and the Alberta Horse Breeders Association. He would be appointed president of the Edmonton Exhibition Association in 1952. 7 The exhibition briefly moved down to 105 Street north of Jasper Avenue, where there was a large tract of land where a racetrack was built.

While no exhibition was held during 1896-1898, or in 1900, one was held in conjunction with Dominion Day in both 1899 and 1902. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported in 1899: “At 9:30 A.M. the procession composed of the band, citizens and Indians rode Main Street, the latter being in large numbers and riding with precision

almost military. At the grounds the scene was a busy one, full of life and color.... The visiting Indians are parading the streets today and favoring the public with vocal and instrumental selections.” It should be noted that indigenous people were a valued and popular part of the early parades and other activities, including later craft exhibitions in the Indian House that would be built on the Grounds. “Indian races” and the “Indian camps” were very popular during the nine years the fair was held in Ross Flats. 8

In July 1900 the *Edmonton Bulletin* published the details of a reorganization of the Agricultural Society. Notice was given of the intention to apply for a charter of incorporation by Letters Patent under the Companies Ordinance, Chapter 61 of the Revised Ordinances of the North-West Territories (1898), requesting that the new name of the company would now be The Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association, Limited. The purposes of the reorganized company were fundamentally similar to the original goals set out in 1879. A new feature of the Industrial Association was the purchase of HBC lands:

*Bounded on the north by the Southerly boundary of Calgary Avenue, on the West by the Easterly boundary of First Street, on the South by the said Saskatchewan River, and to improve the same by the construction of such works, buildings, tracks, machinery and improvements as the Company may think necessary. 9*

Things changed substantially in 1899. “The committee appointed by the board of trade to secure offers for [permanent] exhibition grounds...have decided to accept that of the H.B.Co., of 55 acres on the flat immediately in front of town. The property is bounded on the south by the river, on the east by the estate of Donald Ross (101 Street), on the north by Calgary Avenue (96 Avenue), and on the west Fourth Street, the street which is graded to a winter crossing of the river.” 10

In 1899 John A. McDougall and Cornelius (“Con”) Gallagher, who had been president of the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association in 1901-1902, purchased the needed land for the fair, and a petition was sent to the territorial council in Regina, defining the aim of local citizens to establish a fair. The new Edmonton Industrial Association was incorporated on 21 August 1899, to implement the development of the site as a fair.

The first Summer Fair was held in 1901, with another very successful one held in 1903, sponsored by the newly named Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association. Woods and Dietz were contracted to build the exhibition building and grandstand for the 1901 fair, and a traveling troupe of entertainers were lined up for the summer. A gold medal was to be awarded to the merchant with the best themed display at his store. 11

In 1891 the Calgary and Edmonton Railway reached South Edmonton, allowing a wider circle of participants from district farms along the rail line to the south to

come to the Edmonton fairs. In 1893 the first Spring Show was held, attracting an even wider number of livestock breeders.

The Edmonton Industrial Association was founded in 1899, incorporated by a grant of Letters Patent, and capitalized with stock valued at \$20,000, of which \$11,000 was subscribed. The Edmonton Board of Trade purchased the 55 acres of land in the Ross Flats for its proposed Exhibition Grounds at this time for \$7,000. The Edmonton Industrial Association then purchased this land from the Board of Trade for the same amount. Support for the Association was pledged by 117 citizens. These grounds grew in the coming years: Although no exhibition was given in 1900, the first summer fair was mounted, and an agricultural building and grandstand were built in 1901. Following the very successful summer fair in 1903, the Industrial Association had its full capital stock subscribed (\$20,000), and received \$1000 for an annual exhibition under bylaw 250. The City showed support by waiving taxes owed by the exhibition in 1901 and 1903; in 1903 a new dining hall was built on the grounds in the flats. An admission fee had been charged for the first time in 1895, and the Industrial Association was becoming more self-sufficient by the early 1900s. 12

The Exhibition, located in Ross Flats from 1901 until 1909, was growing with its community. In 1904 Edmonton became a city, Alberta became a province in 1905, and Edmonton was confirmed as the provincial capital in 1906. In 1905 stocks were consolidated, with 40% coming into the control of two stockholders. In 1904 attendance was about 20,000. Things were looking up for the fair, but the need for new grounds to accommodate the greater needs of the Association were beginning to concern the directors. 13

### **The Exhibition Lands 1906-1910**

In 1906 City Council leased the valley grounds from the Industrial Association for one year, for the sum of \$3000, and the option to purchase the grounds for \$60,000 at the end of the year. The City took over administration of the grounds in 1906, renting horse stalls, allowing the use of picnic grounds, and renting the halls. Opening day 1907 saw an attendance of 7,500. The City followed through on its option to purchase grounds, and went forward by purchasing “the Kirkness Lake property” in northeast Edmonton for \$24,000. The lake itself would be drained in 1911. 14

James Kirkness and his wife Sarah had the first important impact on the Exhibition Lands story. James Kirkness was born in the Orkney Isles in 1837, and entered into employment with the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1864. At this time he took passage to York Factory, where he was assigned to Oxford House as a farm laborer for five years. He was first transferred to Fort Edmonton in 1871, and then transferred to Rocky Mountain House where he remained until 1873. From 1873 until 1875 he was a clerk in Fort Edmonton. By this time former HBC employees were able to claim the recently surveyed river lots downstream from the Hudson Bay Reserve

(the Lower Settlement). Kirkness claimed River Lot 26 about this time. He and his wife moved to Lac Ste. Anne from 1875 until 1880. A hired man lived on the river lot to prevent squatters taking up residence. In 1880 he returned to the Edmonton district and resigned from the Hudson's Bay Company. His growing family moved into a log house on the river lot and farmed. However, in 1889 the Kirkness family moved to Fort Dunvegan to work for the HBC once again, until 1893, when they returned to Edmonton. A few years after 1905, the City Coal Company, under J.R. Brenton, sunk a mine near the mouth of Rat Creek. Then in March 1907 Kirkness entered into an agreement with the Standard Coal Co. Ltd., to mine the coal seam on River Lot 26. This was located on the north bank near present day 77<sup>th</sup> and 78<sup>th</sup> Streets. 15

In 1906 City Council negotiated an agreement with Kirkness to acquire the northern parcel of land on River Lot 26.

*Knowing that the deal might be lost if they pursued a plebiscite before making a decision, the councillors secured a deal for the land, which was later approved. Although their action attracted media attention, the councillors claimed that they had the best interest of the city in mind. 16*

Kirkness was paid \$25,725 for the land. He then built a large residence adjacent to the original log house in 1909. The Kirkness family lived there until James' death on 18 June 1911. By this time the Edmonton Exhibition was well established on his former property. In 1912 his widow and son developed the Virginia Park subdivision on the western part of the river lot. 17

Before the move to the last permanent location for the Exhibition Lands during 1908-1910, the first newly-named Provincial Exhibition was held in Ross Flats during 2-5 July 1906. The Calgary Board of Trade had been working to establish a provincial exhibition, but Edmonton scooped them. "The lesson is severe," wrote an Edmonton newspaper, "but it will teach some Calgary people the value of time in public enterprise." Joseph H. Morris, president, and J.M. Mercer, and H.R. Mountifield, very active in moving the fair to the present Exhibition Lands, were the executive of the Provincial Exhibition at this time. H.R. Mountifield was born in England, graduated from Portsmouth Naval Academy, and the London School of Art. He spent years in Japan, went to the Klondike gold rush, then came to Edmonton where he became the city's first auditor. Joe Morris had been president of the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association during 1907 and 1908. Morris is best known today for bringing the first automobile to Edmonton. Beyond this he was an alderman in 1901-1902, where he chaired the Board of Works (1901) and the Finance Committee (1902). He was a businessman who operated a wholesale grocery store for years in Edmonton. 18

A significant reorganization took place in 1908, when the Edmonton Exhibition Association filed its Memorandum of Association, which was registered on 15 April

1908 with Harold W. Riley, The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies. The objects of the association were outlined in the memorandum, as organization

*[for] the purposes of exhibiting and receiving for exhibition permanently or periodically, in structures, building or enclosures, in any place or places at or near the City of Edmonton in the Province of Alberta, any and every variety of thing and being found in animal or vegetable life, and any and every mineral product; exhibiting and receiving for exhibition any and all goods, wares, Merchandise, machinery, mechanical inventions and improvements, and works of art of every kind and description, and industrial, agricultural, horticultural, mineral or other products, either manufactured or grown, or in the process of manufacture or growth, and such other products and things as are generally exhibited at fairs or industrial or other exhibitions; conducting and holding horse, automobile and bicycle races and race meetings of every kind; conducting and holding athletic sports and games of every description; encouraging the improvement of agriculture in all its parts and branches; awarding and paying the exhibitor or contestant in any exhibition, race, game or sport, such prizes, medals or honorary distinctions, as may be deemed proper and expedient; erecting, letting, leasing and owning stalls, stands, rooms and places, in any of its buildings and structures, or on any part of its property, upon such terms and conditions as to the said company shall seem best; and generally to do all such acts, matters, deed and things necessary or incidental to the holding and conducting of industrial exhibitions, race meetings, athletic games and sports; for the purposes aforesaid or any of them; and purchasing, leasing or otherwise acquiring land necessary for the aforesaid purposes. 19*

On 14 April 1908 the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association, Limited, was reorganized as the Edmonton Exhibition Association, Limited. Bown and McDonald, the association's legal advisers, informed Ryley that: "We understand that as a matter of fact the Industrial is practically defunct." 20 The Edmonton Exhibition Association was capitalized with stock of \$1000 (200 shares of \$5 each, with no one stockholder to have more than one share). There were now to be 20 directors on the new board, 10 elected by the Association, two appointed by City Council, two from the provincial government, and one director representing each of the following: Edmonton Board of Trade, Sheep and Poultry Breeders Association, Canadian Manufacturers Association; Horse Breeders Association; Sheep and Swine Breeders Association. This proved another scoop on Calgary, as now all the major breeders associations were attached directly to the Edmonton Exhibition Association and the City of Edmonton.

Alexander Bowen Campbell was the first president, as he had been the last of the now defunct Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association; Campbell was a Nova Scotian who would serve as an alderman in 1914. Dr. L.E. Irving was the first vice-president; with other notables like Matt McCauley, Joseph H. Morris, Robert Lee, and Robert J. Manson on the board. McCauley had been Mayor of the Town of Edmonton from 1892 to 1894, as well as an alderman in 1896. By the end of 1909 there were

146 stockholders, including many merchants, farmers, and others whose names are familiar in Edmonton history. 21

The City of Edmonton granted the Edmonton Exhibition Association \$2,500 for barns, and paid off the deficit for the summer exhibition. City Council also proclaimed the afternoons of the two-day Exhibition as civic holidays. In 1909 attendance soared to 38,900, over a four-day event on the flats. The unwieldy structure of the Edmonton Exhibition Association organization was changed this year as well: Ten directors now were elected by the Association, eight appointed by the City, and two by the Board of Trade. City Council also passed a motion providing for clearing of the land around Kirkness Lake, and to have it surveyed for a racetrack and construction of the fair buildings. A bylaw provided for the \$75,000 needed to carry out these essential steps in setting up the newly acquired Exhibition lands. 22

Great efforts were made to get the new grounds ready for the 1910 exhibition. On 1 February 1910 the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that twenty acres of land in the East End Park were to be leveled and “put in shape” for use as athletic grounds for the summer. The Association decided on 31 January that they would make provision for the numerous athletic clubs in the city, setting aside the southwest corner of the park for their use. The Board of Commissioners recommended that a rider be attached to the Edmonton Exhibition Association bylaw that granted \$75,000, stipulating that the Association would undertake to level the required grounds, and that the field be prepared for games such as baseball and cricket. These twenty acres were to be located outside enclosed part of the Exhibition Grounds; swings, benches and tables were to provide for the public as well, comprising about 70 acres of the total Exhibition Lands of 147 acres. The summer fair was slated to open in August 1910, requiring a new Edmonton Radial Railway streetcar line to the park along Kinnaird Street (later designated 82 Street). The *Bulletin* also noted that there was “a large slough in the southern portion of the grounds which is to be made into an artificial lake” for skating. This slough later was made use of by the zoo in the park. 23

Calls for plans to develop the Edmonton Exhibition lands were sent out, and by 11 February there were 28 in the hands of the Association. Manager A.G. Harrison expressed his pleasure at the quality of the plans, and noted that three prizes were to be awarded. The first prize was won by Peter Rule, a recent immigrant working in the city as a building contractor, who came from Sunderland, England. Rule was the founder of Rule, Wynn and Rule, one of Edmonton’s most influential architectural firms in later years. Peter Rule’s vision for the grounds laid the foundation for many of the coming years. The horse barns were located in the northeast corner of the site, while the cattle sheds were found to the northwest. He selected the location for the arena, later known as the Edmonton Gardens. While he wanted to enlarge the little pond for boating, it later was drained. Rule’s vision also included a winter garden, greenhouse, zoo with bear pits, and a swimming pool, and other ideas that later were realized.

Later in February the City Parks Committee agreed to transfer control of the grounds to the Association, and it was reported that some work had already commenced in preparation for the summer fair and site development. The vision for the developing lands was described on 19 February in the *Edmonton Bulletin*:

*The fair grounds it is intended to place in the northern portion of the park, the north eighty acres to be fenced off for this purpose. In the remaining area athletic grounds will be laid out and the balance left in natural park. By this arrangement little of the woodland will have to be cleared, the fair grounds and athletic fields occupying a space already pretty clear of trees.*

Another important aspect of the lands for the future included the fact that the grounds were bounded by the Canadian National Railways and Grand Trunk Pacific Railway tracks, "from which switches will be laid to the loading platforms." This access was vital for an agricultural fair and would prove more valuable with passing time. 24

The *Edmonton Bulletin* notes that substantial groundwork had been accomplished during 1909 and early 1910. However, the *Bulletin* concluded that:

*The thing to be borne in mind of course is that the property was bought for a park, not for exhibition grounds. The placing of the fair buildings and race track there is a departure from the original intention. But it is a departure to which there will be no objection provided the park is not made of secondary consideration or neglected. Indeed should the grounds be developed along the lines suggested in some of the submitted plans the attractions of the park would be increased rather than diminished by the presence of the exhibition buildings. 25*

The first exhibition on the new grounds took place during August 1910, with an attendance of 80,000. Mayor George S. Armstrong was named chair of the Building Committee this year, and Council passed a second bylaw in December for \$75,000 to help sustain the new fair. Council also covered deficits for 1909 and 1910. In 1910 construction went ahead at a rapid pace: the grandstand, dining hall, manufacturers building, and stables were planned. The main project was the Stock Pavilion, planned to hold 1,500 cattle and up to 5000 people. Manager Harrison proclaimed that it was the object of the association "to make Edmonton the stock centre for the Province." A "subway" also was built in 1911. (Also see Horse-racing section of report.) The subway remained in place for many years, and for the original reasons. 26

The horse, cattle, sheep and swine breeders associations also were incorporated this year, with their head office shared by the Association manager, who was also the secretary of all five organizations. Much of the manager's responsibilities after this would be taken up attending breeders' conventions, and organizing breeders' shows and sales.

The Edmonton Exhibition Association apparently at first wished to obtain land from the Hudson's Bay Company near 101 Street in the Hudson's Bay Reserve, but could not meet the cost demanded. The Kirkness property was characterized by wetlands, sloughs and several small ponds and a lake. However this is where the history of the Exhibition would be made for well over a century through the hard efforts of the founders.

On the eve of the first summer fair, there was much anticipation in Edmonton. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that the "finishing touches" were being put on the grounds. A double shift of workers was finishing the grandstand in time for the opening events.

*Gravel walks, green lawns, groves of trees and pretty flower beds will greet the eye of the visitor to the fair on entering by the main gate at the southwest corner of the grounds. The roads and driveways which have been well graded, lead from the gate at Willow avenue on the east side of the grounds. All carriages and vehicles will enter by this gateway.*

At this point the ERR still arrived at the grounds along Alberta Avenue to the north. Almost two dozen buildings already awaited the patrons around the grounds, in addition to the many concessions, all flying flags. They all were illuminated with electric light at night as well. 27

The proud executive who oversaw the first big fair were: A. B. Campbell, president; James McGeorge, vice-president; Edwin Auld; William D. Carscadden, of Strathcona; William Golley; Charles May; D.R. Stewart; Robert J. Manson; J.H. McKinley; J.E. Lundy; G.S. Armstrong; J.B. Lubbock; J.C. Dowett; Bill West; D.C. Robertson; George Long, who had been president of the Agricultural Society in 1889-1890; C.H. Grierson; [T.]H. Grindley; Charles Gowan; and George Hunter. 28

### **Edmonton Exhibition Lands 1911-1914**

During July 1911 the new Industrial Pavilion for the Exhibition Grounds was announced. The Stock Pavilion was also planned and publicized for the summer of 1912. Roland Lines, one of Edmonton's foremost architects, was responsible for the Stock Pavilion design; one of his drawings appeared in the *Bulletin* on 24 July 1911. Of course the Stock Pavilion was to be second to none in the west, "the finest of its kind west of Toronto." Cost was estimated at \$120,000, and was to be constructed by Manson and Dunlop at the north end of the grounds. Work began after the summer fair of 15-19 August 1911. A work-horse parade further distinguished the events of 1911. Entries included teams from J.B. Mercer, the liquor dealer, Charles Gowin, Imperial Oil, and others. The first horse purchased by the Edmonton Fire Department, now fifteen years old, being taken in the parade on a cart drawn by another team.

In 1911 Council passed a third bylaw providing \$75,000 to the Edmonton Exhibition Association to assist in further building up the grounds, and an additional \$5000

was provided for the Association's debenture account. Concessions were allowed for bookmakers, sale of race programs, and the sale of 2% beer as well. The first public demonstration of an aircraft occurred at the 1911 summer fair, a harbinger of the future role of the city, and one that would be acknowledged at the fair in many ways in the future. 29

William J. Stark arrived in Edmonton in February 1912. Born in 1874 in Ontario, he had become closely associated with the Toronto Horse Show by this time. Its directors presented him with a diamond and emerald ring when he left for the west. The *Edmonton Bulletin* announced his credentials as the new Manager of the Edmonton Exhibition: "Mr. Stark has been a conspicuous figure in the horse society life of the city [Toronto] during the past decade. A member of them all, and secretary-treasurer of most, they will miss him." Stark died on 3 December 1928. During less than two decades in Edmonton he contributed greatly to the planning and development of the Exhibition. 30

The Summer Fair ran for six days in 1912, and 63,929 attended. The Association supervised and controlled races on the grounds, with the permission of City Council. What was now looking like an annual bylaw providing \$75,000 to develop the grounds also arrived during the year 1912. Alberta then chipped in \$8000; these provincial grants continued annually until 1920, including the war years 1914-1918, but then were discontinued until 1926. The "subway" was completed under the racetrack in 1912, the Machinery Hall and Race Barn opened, and grandstand bleachers seating over a thousand were opened. Racing made its first profits for the Association in 1913. The pari-mutual machines also were provided to the betting public that year. The Dog Building opened; dog breeding and dog shows were very closely followed by Edmonton people before the war, and found expression in numerous kennel clubs. But overshadowing everything would be the opening of the Edmonton Gardens, the largest livestock pavilion in Canada. 31

In 1912 the *Edmonton Capital* complained of the condition of the Jasper East road running out to the new Exhibition Grounds. It described the road as being "in a disgraceful and deplorable condition," and called on the city to improve it for the great crowds of fairgoers soon to arrive for events. 32

The last fair before the Great War of 1914-1918 saw attendance decline somewhat. The Articles of Association were amended, providing for 25 directors: 12 from the Edmonton Exhibition Association and 13 from the City of Edmonton. Terms of directors were for one year, with reelection now permitted. No financial bylaw was passed to aid the Exhibition during 1913, a year of budgetary stringency and local hardship, which was precipitated by an international financial crisis. Still, with the outbreak of war, City Council provided \$78,840 to provide continued support of the rapid development at the grounds. The feeling was that despite the war, agriculture would assume an even greater importance on the home front. 33

### **The Exhibition Grounds in Wartime 1914-1918**

Even before the First World War broke, the Exhibition had a special relationship with the military. It was clear to many that war would soon break out in Europe. The Cadet Camp was held in the park adjacent to the grounds in May 1914, drawing in well over a thousand cadets from Alberta who came from the districts north of Red Deer. Early in 1915 use of the Dining Hall was granted to the military. The Feed Store Building was turned over for use as a motion picture space for the men in February. Unfortunately damage was done to the Stock Pavilion, from men playing football inside. The 66<sup>th</sup> Battalion CEF was held on the grounds as a special case, and were still on the grounds during the summer fair. The 63<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was quartered on the grounds as well, but when a sufficient number of recruits were signed up, they were forwarded to the regimental headquarters in Calgary, the mobilization centre for the province. The military men played a part in the seasonal shows as a recruiting initiative. W.J. Stark observed that:

*We know that a great stimulus was given to recruiting by the military displays given at our Spring Show last April, and the response made by our citizens to the Red Cross, Patriotic, Belgian Relief, and similar funds, as well as the purchase of machine guns, was undoubtedly due in a large part to the enthusiasm created by the fine displays made by the military at the Horse Show. 34*

Grounds and buildings on EXA lands were “owned by the city of Edmonton, who pay the insurance and maintain the grounds the year round, with the exception of the time while they are in our possession, when we assume the maintenance and return them to the city in the same condition in which we receive them.”

*Our grounds and buildings up to the present time have cost about \$600,000. The largest single item is the Stock Pavilion, with which you are familiar, and which cost about \$175,000. The Exhibition Association, which is a joint stock company, each year elects 12 directors, and the city council appoint 13, but usually accept the recommendation of the Association in making these appointments.*

*We do not receive any specified grants towards current expenses, but have an agreement with the city which provides that they shall furnish us with funds to pay any deficit which we may have in any year; on the other hand any surplus goes to the city. I may say that they have never asked us for any such payment so far, but allow us to increase our prize list when we have a good year, and the funds to spare....*

*I may say that 1914 is the only year in which we have had to ask the city for any assistance in paying premiums; unfortunately our exhibition that year came shortly after war was declared, and when the country was panic stricken and our revenue was practically cut in two. We had, however arranged a very liberal prize list and had contracted for our attractions and assume other matters of expense, which we were unable to reduce on such short notice. 35*

The Edmonton Exhibition Association amended its Articles of Association by a special resolution passed on 20 November 1914; this was confirmed on 18 December 1914. Under Article 51 the Association could now “increase its capital by the creation and issue of new shares....” Article 79 specified that there were now to be 25 directors, 13 nominated by City Council, and 12 by the Association. Article 94 allowed directors to appoint associate directors from associated organizations such as breeders’ associations, to hold office “at the pleasure of the directors.” These associates would help with the growing workload on the Executive. Importantly for the constantly struggling association, Article 95k specified that the Association was empowered “to borrow or raise by way of temporary loan to meet current expenses such sum or sums of money as shall be required, and in particular to borrow against any grant or grants that may be promised to the Company.” The board of directors was also given further power to conduct business transactions more independently.

36

In 1915 William (“Bill”) R. West was Association president, J. McGeorge vice-president, and W. J. Stark manager. The Annual Report for the year noted that in addition to the new working agreement with the City...the exhibition grounds have been occupied for the most part of the year by the Military.” Events still continued despite the crowding by the army. Mayor W.T. Henry opened the Spring Show on 13 April, with the assistance of the provincial and federal departments of agriculture. A combined horse show and military tournament was put on with the help of the 49<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Battalions, Canadian Expeditionary Force, and the Canadian Mounted Rifles. The 63<sup>rd</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> Battalions also gave daily shows in front of the grandstand. Later the 138<sup>th</sup>, 194<sup>th</sup>, and 202<sup>nd</sup> Battalions lived and trained here. A musical ride with local boys and girls carrying flags of the Allies added to the patriotic flavor of this fair. Many soldiers were admitted free of admission, creating large turnouts but reduced profits. John Bright, Dominion Livestock Commissioner, opened the fair on 10 August 1915. The spring race meet was called off early, due to rainy weather and small field of entrants. This led to the first loss ever in this event. Of course, the most obvious impact of the war was seen in the grounds buildings.

*As a large number of the buildings had been fitted up for the occupation of the Military, the holding of the Summer Exhibition presented difficulties in the way of accommodation for the exhibits. We were able to obtain the assistance of the Department of Militia at Ottawa in the form of a grant to provide accommodation for the live stock, poultry, and agricultural exhibits. A number of temporary buildings were erected, and these have been left on the grounds and will be available for use during the coming year in case the necessity arises.*

37

While the Dog Show was cancelled, because it did not represent a productive part of agriculture during wartime, the Horticultural Show was inaugurated in 1915. Many more entries were made in the agricultural exhibits, now seen as a vital part of the home front contribution to the war effort. These more than tripled between 1913 and 1915, as did the dairy exhibits specifically. The Machinery Hall was

rechristened the Agricultural Building to accommodate the added displays, including the Dominion Experimental Farm Exhibit. In Domestic Manufacture, bread making proved the greatest success; wartime rationing hit hardest at bread, a fact that would last long after the war. Wartime efforts to increase productivity saw the provincial Department of Agriculture send its Demonstration Train to the grounds, where it parked for the duration on the spur line. Features were modern barns, poultry houses, and “everything that could interest the farmer in the line of modern equipment.” 38

Lynn Welcher, from Brooklyn, brought a roller coaster (“The Green Rattler”) and The Old Mill, better known as The Tunnel of Love, and set them up along the south fence, half in Borden Park.

In 1915 the Edmonton Exhibition Association and the City signed their first lease agreement to define the wartime role of the grounds. The Articles of Association were amended in time to quickly accommodate the Canadian military shortly after war broke out in August 1914. The Department of Militia and Defence received the right to use the grounds for the duration of the war; under this agreement the Association took over responsibility for maintenance of the grounds. The City paid insurance for the Association, covering the grounds and buildings.

E. Louise Holmes began to work as secretary of the Edmonton Exhibition Association in about 1915. She is credited with organizing the first sheep breeders’ annual sale of wool in 1915. For years she was the secretary-manager of the Alberta Provincial Co-operative Sheep Breeders’ Association, and for the Alberta Provincial Horse, Cattle, and Swine Breeders’ Association, the Northern Alberta Shorthorn Club, and the Edmonton Zoological Society. In 1948 she returned to her native Ontario, and died in 1966. 39

The Exhibition adopted “Co-Operation” as its motto for 1917, presumably in reference to the war effort. Agriculture remained paramount in the minds of the Association.

*The appeal today is to the farmer. In his hands rests the great decision. He has sent his sons to the fighting front, he has given his money to the cause in various ways, and he has seen his hired help recruited for the army – and he has not complained. In spite of this he is asked to do the almost impossible – produce more crops. 40*

The Spring Show was opened by Premier A.L. Sifton, the first show since 1914 where the military had not been part of the crews assisting the evening productions. However, the Edmonton Automobile Club put on a parade, and other groups stood in to help as well. The tea room was operating by this time, and the bull sale seemed to be doing well. More out-of-towners were attending than in the earlier war years. The summer fair was held in the second week of July, and this proved successful so this calendar was followed thereafter. The shortage of rail cars had caused the first

change of the summer fair to mid-July, but it had been slotted into this general date ever since.

Innovations included the Boys' Essay Contest, open to students at Alberta agricultural colleges, and the Baby Check Room for tired mothers. The National Art Gallery sent a prestigious art display, and a large display of Ukrainian needlework also was featured. But the biggest draw was the trench display.

*The number of returned soldiers in our city is steadily increasing. They are a factor in our daily life, and are entitled to our sympathy and support. We this year recognized this fact by giving their Association, free of charge, for the week of the Exhibition, a large section of ground, on which they erected tents, dug trenches, etc., and from which we believe they derived a very satisfactory sum of money. 41*

In June 1917 Captain James R. Ogilvy-Mills, Commanding officer at the Edmonton Military Convalescent Home, requested that the military have access to the plot south of Cattle Shed A, "for the purpose of Building natural trenches and dug-outs."

*We intend to periodically during each day put on a mimic attack and raid on a trench with dummy bombs. We would fence this, and charge an admission for the benefit of the soldiers in the Hospital and Home here. We would also erect booth or side shows for the exhibition of relics [like war trophies]. 42*



*Trench demonstration in 1917 at the Exhibition, EA-54-1113, City of Edmonton Archives*

Vandalism took place at the roller coaster during the spring of 1916, apparently by members of the 194<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the 218<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Still, relations remained cordial on the whole; a show was planned for the men during the grandstand show in 1917, and again in 1919. 43

By February 1917, Brigadier General E.A. Cruikshank, still in command of Military District 13, informed W.J. Stark that eleven buildings were to be restored and renovated and then returned to the Exhibition. These were: Building G; Building I; Building K; Building M; Building O; Building Q; Poultry Buildings No.1 and No.2; the Dog Building; the Fire Hall; and the Dining Hall. 44

The first auto races were held in 1917, and the Auto Club held another parade of decorated cars. The Willow Avenue entrance was closed to pedestrians and widened to allow only cars to enter. Finally, the Association was looking hopefully to the end of the war. "A number of our buildings are still held by the Military," the 1917 Annual Report noted, "but some of the barns which they have been occupying since the fall of 1914 were this year returned to us, and restored to the use for which they were originally built." 45

In July 1918 the federal government suspended pari-mutual betting for the duration of the war. To return some interest to the racetrack, harness racing with mules had a brief fling at the racetrack. Katherine Stinson also returned to Edmonton to entertain fairgoers, and to deliver the first airmail to the Exhibition Grounds on 12 July 1918, having taken three days to fly north from the Calgary Stampede. As did Lucille Belmont, who parachuted out of a balloon into the infield.

Another lease was drafted and signed in 1918. The federal government provided a grant in 1918, doubtless as compensation for its wartime use of the property. The merry-go-round and "Tunnel of Love" again showed up on the midway in 1918, perhaps heralding the anticipated return to peace. 46

One of the most popular aspects of the wartime Exhibition was the famous "aviatrix" Katherine Stinson. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported in June 1916 that "the bird woman" was coming to the summer fair "just to prove to us that she is perfectly capable of teaching the Canadian men who go to her for instructions in flying." She put on a show in front of the grandstand on the week of 10-15 July 1916. She operated her school in San Antonio with her brother and sister. In 1917 her flight to the Edmonton summer fair was interrupted by a forced landing and necessary repairs. What turned out to be the "most dramatic incident of the fair" occurred on the first night of the show.

*[After] making a good start from the western end of the race track enclosure and rising some 20 feet from the ground, [the aircraft] got beyond the aviator's control, swerved around until it was headed right for the grandstand, plunged earthward as its occupant cut off the engine and skidded sideways over the grass with a snapping of wheels and gear, while dirt and turf flew through the air and for one fearful instant it looked as though the machine were going to pitchpole end over end to ruin and destruction.*

"It is promised that when she does make a flight," the *Bulletin* stated, "she will drop some paper bombs into the returned soldiers' trenches on the fair grounds." 47

In 1918 Katherine Stinson returned to the fair to complete her most famous feat, and mark a historical landmark. Mail had been delivered by plane from Montreal to Toronto a few weeks earlier, but she intended to become the first to do so in the west. During the flight Canadian Pacific Railways Telegraphs reported her progress as she flew north to the Exhibition. These notices were posted all around the grounds during the day. She arrived with a bag of mail in her Curtis Jenny OX5 100 at the last moment. Even W.J. Stark had to hustle to arrange things for the big event at the last moment. Repairs on the plane along the way kept her arrival late, arriving at about 8:00 in the evening, but the crowds held in at the grandstand that July 9 to see history being made. 48

Katherine Stinson Otero returned to open the Exhibition and lead the parade in July 1959. The parade fittingly was dedicated to Canada's Golden Anniversary of Flight.

The Golden Hawks, the RCAF precision team of Sabre Jets also performed for the first time in Edmonton in 1959. Association President L. P. Bromham, presented Mrs. Otero with a silver bowl during her visit. 49

At the end of 1918 Exhibition president J.R. McIntosh reported that many of the Exhibition buildings still were in possession of the military.

Provincial Architect R.P. Blakey designed the Women's Building, unique in Canada at the time, at the end of the war. The building housed the Alberta Women's Institute rest room. This building was located on the recently purchased land in Borden Park.

Association president J.R. McIntosh summed up the effect of the war in his Annual Report:

*This period of war has been, for the Edmonton Exhibition Association, a succession of new conditions to be met and new problems to be solved. In 1914 our buildings were turned over to the Department of Militia, for the accommodation of soldiers, and a number of our barns are still in the possession of the Military. Temporary accommodation was provided, and we have at all times been able to reasonably meet the requirements of our exhibitors, notwithstanding the fact that the number of our live stock exhibits has steadily increased.*

Despite the shared use of the Lands during the war, many events were carried out. The annual Spring Live Stock Show ran 2-7 April 1918; the boys' and girls' Calf Breeding Competition was singled out for praise. The first horse sale was held at the Spring Show as well, realizing very high prices. The summer fair featured a health exhibit mounted by the provincial government, and an exhibition of work by returned veterans. "The live stock exhibit, of course, occupied the position of first importance...." Three times the number of agricultural machinery exhibits was noted, probably in anticipation of post war prosperity on the farm. Parking again became a problem, with the large number of postwar vehicles showing up at the 1918 summer fair, with cars parked on the side of the roads "to such an extent as to endanger life and limb." 50

With the war over, another lease was drafted and signed in 1919, and the national government provided another grant of \$5000, as it did again in 1920. Big crowds, in a festive mood, flooded the grounds for the first postwar summer fair in 1919. That year attendance broke 100,000 for the first time. People were in a hopeful mood and looking to the future.

The Annual Report for 1919 described progress made that year. The Spring Live Stock Show did very well with the bull and horse sales. Still, Pheasey and Batson were required to restore the Horse Stables and Cattle Barns and altered by the military. The Annual Report asserted that while only 18 bulls were sold in 1914, by 1919 at least 208 were sold. 51

Rapid postwar growth made it necessary to expand into 80 acres lying immediately south of the grounds, “formerly known as Borden Park.” On the “annexed” land the modern new Women’s Building was constructed, “the only one of its kind in Canada.” That year a new camp ground for rural visitors to the Exhibition camping out in tents was added to the new lands. (See 1925 Edmonton Fire Map) The new property also allowed expanded parking and room for the midway shows. “The Western Canada Trap-shooters’ Tournament was also given ample room with every safety provided for spectators, the shooting taking place over the lake section.”

*It is our hope in the not distant future, to make the Exhibition grounds the summer amusement park for the city, and with the Roller Coaster, the Old Mill, and the Merry-Go-Round, which was purchased and installed this year, we have the nucleus upon which to build up such a park. The experiment was this year tried of running these devices twice weekly during the summer months, and while we made no money we feel encouraged to progress along this line.*

Edmonton, with other fairs on the Western Canada Fairs Association, decided to feature a “high-class band... reducing in proportion the platform acts engaged.” John Philip Sousa filled this role that year.

Other developments that augered well were the promise of the federal Department of Agriculture to provide more prizes in the fat stock classes of the Spring Show, and the Edmonton Radial Railway indication of a new access to the grounds. This streetcar loop entered the grounds and allowed passengers off near the Automobile Building. Access now came down Jasper Avenue East, rather than along Alberta Avenue, speeding access to the Spring Show. 52

Not all local residents, like those in the Highlands, appreciated the streetcars role during the summer fair. The Highlands Community League complained in May 1921: “The question was discussed [on 31 May 1921] of the annual serious inconvenience caused to regular street car passengers from and to the Highlands by the fast practice of unloading such passengers at Agnes street [Ada Boulevard] to convenience the temporary Exhibition traffic in July....” 53

### **The Exhibition Struggles during the Roaring Twenties**

Edmonton did not experience the growth that it had hoped for during the postwar years. President J.R. McIntosh and Manager W.J. Stark, in the Annual Report for 1920 broke the news to members that “we have not prospered as well financially during the past year as we have in previous years.” Postwar inflation also necessitated increasing the value of prizes to attract farmers as entrants in the Spring and Summer Shows. Attendance also was down in 1920.

*Last year was the first year after the war, and everybody was in a spending mood and felt that with the ending of the war we were in for a period of pre-war prosperity. This did not materialize, and the reconstruction period through which we have been passing had an adverse influence. In addition to*

*this, the farmers had such a severe and long winter, and were put to such unusual expense in taking care of their stock, that they did not feel like taking the usual holiday, and this was reflected in our attendance, particularly at the Summer Exhibition, which fell off about 10,000. 54*

Several developments occurred at the Exhibition during 1919, but agriculture remained the dominant focus “where country and city meet.” A great deal of effort was expended through the shows, sales and relations with the various provincial and national breeders’ associations, with a concentration on the growth and health of livestock, poultry and swine, as well as grain and other crops.

### **The Exhibition During the Roaring Twenties**

In 1920 the summer fair featured “Wop” May flying “The City of Edmonton.” This Curtiss Jenny biplane, a local icon purchased by city residents during the war, was being stored at the Exhibition at this time, since there was not yet an established Edmonton airport. The entertainment for the grandstand crowds also included John Philip Sousa that summer. The stock and produce shows remained the core of the regional events. During the 1920s Edmonton and district farmers were taking many prizes. In 1920 Alberta grains took ten prizes in Chicago, and 43 in 1925. In 1922 Alberta breeders took fifteen prizes and one championship at the Royal Winter Fair and in 1924 took even more prizes.

CEA, Mayor Daniel K. Knott, to Harold Wight, nd

The Edmonton Exhibition was a reflection of social attitudes of the day, and would maintain this position during its history. At first agriculture was predominant, then an effort to promote industrial manufacturing, then emerging trends like the rise of aviation. Mostly this was a positive characteristic of the fair. However, sometimes this was not the case. During the 1920s and 1930s several cases of racism emerged at the Exhibition. On one occasion, the Ku Klux Klan petitioned for the right to burn a cross in the infield. May Dan Knott replied:

*This will certify that the Commissioners have granted the Ku Klux Klan the use of the Grandstand and Race Track enclosure at the Exhibition Grounds on August 8<sup>th</sup> for demonstration purposes. This permit is granted on the understanding that no smoking will be allowed on the Grandstand also that Fire Marshals will be allowed to be present to safeguard the property and that the grounds will be cleaned up after you are through with them at your expense or that the City be remunerated for the expense of doing so. It is understood that if the fiery cross is burned, it will be in the centre enclosure at sufficient distance from the buildings that they will not be endangered by the fire.*

*Hoping that this is satisfactory to you, I am, Yours truly, Daniel K. Knott.*

The following year a Fancy Dress Parade, under the direction of General Manager W.J. Stark and Charles Wilson, opened the 1921 Spring Horse Show. The “parade”

was held at the Horse Pavilion, and was extended over the three-day show. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that during the fancy dress part of the parade: "All the costumes were particularly good, and none more true than the Ku Klux Klan costume." (*Edmonton Bulletin*, 2 April 1920)

In 1930 W.J. Stark wrote to Carl J. Sedlmayr, founder of Royal American Shows, who would return to Edmonton in late 1931, along with other shows on the western Canadian circuit, to sell the idea of maintaining his shows in the Canadian west.

*Last year following the Exhibition, I had a delegation of colored people wait on me, feeling very much disappointed and aggrieved that they were not permitted to enter some of your shows.*

*I can of course understand that your operators on your shows have a great deal to do with colored people in the south, and no doubt they find it most desirable and necessary to refuse admission to certain shows to people of the colored race. For your information, however, I may say that the same feeling does not prevail here, and while I cannot say that the white people here associate with colored people, there is not the same feeling of antipathy or dislike as is exhibited in the south, and our Association would prefer that colored people be not refused admission, provided of course that they behave themselves, and pay the proper admission fees.*

*If there is any show on the midway in respect of which you would think this suggestion might not work out properly, I would appreciate it if you would see me, and let us discuss the matter personally before any show operator assumes to refuse admission to colored persons.* (CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 10 File 12; Letter from EXA Manager to Sedlmayr, midway operator, 8 July 1939)

Arena shows like auto polo were introduced in the spring of 1921, and were quite popular. But local newspaper coverage made it clear that the greatest interest remained with the livestock shows. The *Edmonton Bulletin* proclaimed on its front page in large headlines that the Spring Show was the "best ever." New sales records were set at the Spring Show in April 1921. An editorial noted that while market prices were dropping for beef and livestock generally, it remained very important to hold shows like the one in 1921, to encourage the lagging agricultural industry and maintain public interest. The newspapers devoted much of their local coverage to the Livestock shows every spring, summer, fall, and each breeders' meeting with their prize lists throughout the decade. 55

Percy W. Abbott was one of the most influential supporters of the Edmonton Exhibition. P.W. Abbott first served the Exhibition as a director in 1921. He was elected president between 1924 and 1927. In December 1927 he temporarily assumed the duties of Manager, and was confirmed in this position in 1928. He twice served as the president of the Western Canada Fairs Association. In December 1930 Abbott was also elected president of the American Association of Fairs and

Institutes. In 1939 he chaired the Royal Visit Committee, overseeing the miles of bleachers and decorations. 56

Percy Abbott was born in Lucan, Ontario on 29 April 1882, and was raised on the family farm. He came west in 1900, studied at the Regina Normal School, and taught two years in Stony Plain. He then articulated with Taylor and Boyle (later Taylor, Boyle and Parlee), then as a partner in Parlee, Freeman, Abbott and Mustard (later with Parlee, Freeman, Abbott and Howson). He was admitted to the bar in 1909, and between 1917 and 1933 practiced with Abbott and McLaughlin. When McLaughlin died, he established Abbott and Auxier, where he remained until his death in 1942. Abbott was a City Alderman in 1920 and 1921, and as president of the Board of Trade in 1922. 57

During the 1920s the winter hockey season, and the summer basketball season with the Grads, became increasingly popular. When artificial ice arrived in the 1930s hockey took off even more. The year 1926 was capped by a historical pageant celebrating the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Alberta, its “coming of age.” The Old Timers Cabin made its first appearance on the grounds, and CNR donated old Engine 103, which pulled the first train into the city in 1905. The engine was allowed to deteriorate and finally was junked. 58

In 1920 the federal Health of Animals Branch was adopting a plan to control bovine tuberculosis based on the plan initiated in the United States as the “Tuberculosis Free Accredited Herd Plan” in 1918. The Veterinary Director General for Canada contacted fairs to help establish and maintain purebred herds free from tuberculosis. This added another burden to the running of the agricultural sales and shows. W.J. Stark requested that the Health of Animals Branch aid by making arrangements for giving tuberculin tests to bulls offered for sale at the Spring Sales. This wish would be granted if all the bulls were gathered at a central point, days before the sale, a very onerous addition to the demands of the board on the eve of any sale. Monitoring entrants in the fair for disease free status, dealing with offending sales, and other issues would continue to plague the board for some time. 59

Another lease was signed in 1924, and the Articles of Association amended once again, providing for two-year terms for directors. The lease was updated again in 1926. Federal and provincial grants, with City Council covering a sizeable Edmonton Exhibition Association deficit, pulled the Ex through the doldrums of the 1920s. In 1929 the entrance to the Grounds was widened and improved, with the purchase of the necessary land for \$35,000. The Association raised some money by leasing some of its property to the company that put up a roller coaster in the park. 60

The Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers’ Association (NAPOTA), founded in 1894, was committed to supporting the Exhibition from its beginning. One of the main activities of the Old Timers’ Association was encouragement of the Edmonton

Exhibition. In 1925 it set up a tent to serve refreshments to visiting Old Timers, which proved to be a big success. NAPOTA then decided to build “a permanent memorial” to the early settlers of the Edmonton district. Major Fred Brewster donated the logs for the first cabin, which opened for the summer fair in 1926. Many called this the “Old Timers’ Roost” at the time. It became a popular meeting place and a spot where picnics could be held in the shade of nearby trees; the Old Timers also mounted annual historical displays there. A plaque was placed at the site in 2008.

The Edmonton Exhibition celebrated its fiftieth anniversary during July 1929. By this time it had been located on various locations until it settled on the location where it would remain for over a century. The *Edmonton Bulletin* printed a special issue praising the important role the Exhibition had played in the Edmonton story in the past half century. The Association advertised that there would be horse races every day. The fireworks display, “Niagara Falls On Fire,” was on a spectacular scale. Big grandstand shows featured Ethel Catherwood on 18 July. An impressive art exhibition was shown in the Manufacturers’ Building. (See Attractions section for more detail) A very large parade included an Edmonton float, with a large model of an aircraft and the motto “All Together For Edmonton.” Edmonton had opened the first “air harbour” in Canada two years before, and was on the cusp of its golden age of northern bush flying. Observation balloon flights were offered to the public. (See Parades section for more detail) Frank Oliver opened the affair. With the stock market crash that launched the Great Depression still a few months in the future, this big event ended a fairly stagnant decade on a celebratory note. 61

### **The Exhibition and the Great Depression**

The Great Depression was settling in by 1930, when another new lease was signed. Borden Park, with its pool and zoo, was returned to the City. Council had to approve guarantees up to \$20,000 to aid in dealing with another Association deficit in 1930. Some income was coming from leasing the arena. But the Association struggled financially during 1931-1934; nevertheless moved from a large deficit to surpluses during this period. This was done by operating with a skeleton staff: Percy Abbott, the general manager, John McGaffin, the groundskeeper, Louise Holmes, the secretary, Alex Bonneau, the chief clerk, and Marjorie Hunter. They also had to deal with the business of all the provincial breeders associations as well. In 1935 the Association signed a lease with the Beverly Coal Company allowing access to a loading platform along its northwest boundary, which helped a bit, but the lease for the roller coaster was surrendered and the ride dismantled this year as well.

In 1931 the famous Johnny Longden came to ride at the races, and the Exhibition kept horse racing alive on the prairies during this hard stretch. (See Horse-racing section for more detail)

Basketball occupied summer fans during the days of the Grads, when a basketball floor was added to the arena. In the winter the Glenora Skating and Tennis Club put

on shows enjoyed by the whole community. Junior hockey occupied Sunday afternoons, with competition among the Edmonton Athletic Club, the Maple Leafs and the South Side club. League teams like the Dominions (sponsored by Dominion Motors), or the Superiors (sponsored by Gainers) played on weeknights during the winter, in the days when the arena had no artificial ice. (See Sports section for more detail)

Stringent times saw the reduction of the Spring Show to three days in 1933, and prizes cut back 75%. The 1935 parade was the first in several years; a big grandstand show also saw a hopeful return to the old days.

George Robert Ball was president of the Exhibition Association during 1935-1936, and served as a board member for 26 years. He came to the Edmonton district in 1896, where he farmed for five decades in the West Salisbury district, raising purebred stock. He was known for his sheep and swine breeds, and exhibited at the Royal Winter Fair, winning prizes in 1932.

In 1936 a mile of "tar sands" asphalt walks were laid at the fair, as part of the "Boost Alberta" theme. In 1938 the Exhibition celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. But times remained hard under depression conditions. Louise Holmes, the Association Secretary, noted in March 1938 wrote to the Alberta Provincial Shorthorn Association in Calgary that "while the [Shorthorn] Club have very kindly voted me small honorariums – I do not take the money, for the two reasons that – first, the money is not available; secondly – until such time as the Club is in affluent circumstances, I see no reason for my being paid for writing a few letters, while the [Club] Directors give their services gratis."

Barbara Bannerman went to work for the Exhibition on Dominion Day 1938, and would prove a lasting and essential part of the Association team over three decades, retiring in 1969. During this time she was secretary for Al Anderson, James Paul, Charles Wilson, and P.W. Abbott; she also served with 14 Association presidents. Bannerman was born and raised in Red Deer; her father was Jim Bannerman, former assistant federal land commissioner for the western provinces. She began her working life in Edmonton with the Alberta Department of Agriculture, under the United Farmers of Alberta regime. She also was secretary to Agriculture Minister W.N. Chant, and acting secretary to Edmonton Mayor John Fry. 62

### **The Exhibition During the Second World War and Postwar 1939-1950**

In 1939, the City provided money to increase stalls at the grounds; ironically this was just before the grounds would be required by the RCAF for wartime occupation; however, the City would write off \$14,881.28 from the debts incurred by the Association during this construction. Livestock stall numbers increased from 92 to 176. In 1941 the City and the Department of Defence signed an agreement to allow use of the grounds once again.

Regimental bands were popular performers at the Exhibition Grounds. The 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion Band under the direction of Corporal Frank Parks, consisted of 24 musicians. The 101<sup>st</sup> Fusiliers Band, also performed regularly outside the major buildings during the summer fair. The Band from No. 4 Initial Training School accompanied the Precision Squad from No. 3 Manning Depot every night during the 1942 summer fair. P.W. Abbott noted that the whole evening performance is being largely built up around the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Air Force display” that summer. 63

The Royal Canadian Air Force would occupy the fair grounds for most of the war. With the outbreak of war in September 1939, conditions changed for virtually every aspect of life in Edmonton. The RCAF was clearly going to play a key role in the Allied cause through the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. During 1940 RCAF Flying Officer I.H. Christie, commanding officer in the city, had set up his office in the Provincial Building. In 1941, No. 1 Recruiting Centre was operating at the Provincial Building under the direction of Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant H.E. Jones. 64 In May 1941 City Commissioners formed a committee to draft a proposal to allow the federal government to use the Exhibition Grounds for wartime use. The federal government soon expressed its desire to “immediately” take over the stock barns for use of the RCAF. 65

Then in June 1941 Mayor John Fry learned of a revised and expanded proposal from the federal government, which was accepted by Fry and the Board of Commissioners. The Edmonton Exhibition Board was cut out of these rapid changes to the deal, leading to some bad feelings. The demands of the RCAF led to the cancelling of the 1941 summer fair. 66 By the end of the month, the federal government request had already been made for the use of the entire Exhibition Grounds as an RCAF “training centre....” 67 It was announced that the last of 63 consecutive agricultural fairs at the Exhibition would take place on 14 July 1941, and that “the barns have been turned over to the department of national defence to be made ready for the R.C.A.F. manning pool....” 68

During 1943 this responsibility was taken over by Squadron Leader William Paul Graham. However, as the demands for recruitment and training began to diminish in 1944, things began to move toward prewar normality. In August 1944 the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that it had been announced “that plans were being made to use the facilities of the former manning pool for a demobilization centre....” 69

By the end of August 1944 it was announced that the RCAF lease of the Exhibition Grounds was soon to end. “The exhibition grounds had been used by the dominion government as headquarter for the R.C.A.F. No. 3 Manning depot from the summer of 1941, until August of this year when the depot was closed, due to the cessation of recruiting activities.” 70 James MacKinnon, Minister of Trade and Commerce, announced that it would be used as a demobilization centre. The lease with Edmonton came into effect on 2 June 1941. The federal government paid \$8500 annually to the EXA for “operating expenses.” 71 In September it was reported that

the RCAF had added several buildings to the grounds during the war. 72 By July 1945 the summer fair was virtually back to normal, and crowded with celebrating postwar crowds. A headline proclaimed: "Fliers Find Fair Grounds Now Vastly Changed Place." 73

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan constructed several buildings on the Exhibition Lands in addition to taking over existing structures. The LINK Trainer was in a building just north of the Manufacturers' Building, which was renovated as an art exhibition area in 1945. The Royal Canadian Air Force put up a large frame structure in 1942, when it took over the grounds as No. 3 Manning Depot. The building was used as a drill hall, and was located near the east corner of the racetrack. It was used after 1946 as the Automobile Building, for displays, and later as an automotive shop when not used for exhibitions during the summer fair. It was demolished in 1958. 74

The last summer fair until the end of the war was officially opened by Air Commodore G.R.L. Howsom, Air Officer Commanding No. 4 Training Command, on 13 July 1942. Howsom in his address noted that the Exhibition "represents the work of a strong, happy and united people. By coming here...you are providing a source of entertainment and inspiration and you are able to look upon the fruits of your handiwork with the satisfaction of a job well done. And as such it is a useful contribution to our War Effort." 75

There were no Summer Fairs in 1943 or 1944, for the first and only times in Exhibition history. Otherwise a full schedule of events was maintained in 1943. In the spring this included the annual Spring Horse Sale; Show of Heavy Horses, purebred and grades; the Fat Stock Show; the Calf Feeding Competition; the Junior Educational Classes; the Sale of purebred bulls; and the Light Horse Show. In the fall there were shows of market lambs, purebred ewes and rams, commercial hogs, purebred sows and hogs, beef and dairy cows, and Junior Educational Classes. The annual winter poultry show also occurred in 1943. In 1943 race profits were distributed equally between the Association and local, patriotic organizations. The RCAF took over the pari-mutual building as well. In 1944 the grounds and buildings were returned to the Association. In short, most of the agricultural events continued as part of the home front effort in 1943 and 1944. The Summer Fair returned on 16-21 July 1945. 76

The Spring Show remained an important part of the annual programs through 1944. How these shows were conducted is indicated in a letter from the Managing Director in February 1944. There still was no means of weighing breed entrants at the grounds, and when subsequently sold at auction and transferred to the stockyards or abattoirs, they were then weighed, with 3% shrinkage allowed. Feed was for sale at the fair, and the corrals bedded down for the first time as stock was put up there. 77 Alberta's first Annual Futurity Show was held at the Spring Show on 24-28 March 1944. This was a show of young calves, nominated six months in advance for the show. The breeder had to use his judgement of how the calves

would develop by the time of the show. Breeders had the option of selling or not. The judging was a very popular event. 78

During and after the war the EXA continued to accommodate its patrons as a virtual tourist bureau. In June 1945 the Association Managing Director arranged accommodation at the Macdonald Hotel for the prominent rancher Frank Collicutt, visiting the first postwar summer fair from the Crossfield district. 79

During the war the Alberta Provincial Cattle Breeders' Association was quite concerned by the embargo on export of all cattle to the United States. This group sent a resolution that this embargo should be lifted to Jimmy Gardiner, the federal Minister of Agriculture in late 1944. Anyone wishing to export cattle to the U.S. required a federal permit from Canada, and none had been issued since the end of 1942. All such marketing was under the control of the Canadian government. "The action was first taken to regulate the distribution of meat in the interest of our war effort," Gardiner wrote. "[The] United Kingdom have urged us to ship our beef to them," due to postwar shortages. Gardiner noted that Canada was committed to send surplus beef to the U.K. until 31 December 1946, providing "an assured market at present prices until that time at least." As much beef was being shipped to Britain as had been shipped to the U.S. 80

Edmonton had suffered a severe housing shortage during the war. In October 1944 D.E. mould, Chairman, Edmonton Citizens' Rehabilitation Council, wrote to the Secretary of the Edmonton Exhibition Association.

*Owing to the very acute housing situation in this City, and the inconveniences and hardships veterans, of this War, are experiencing in obtaining suitable accommodation, it was suggested at a general meeting of the members of this Council held on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. inst. that your Committee be approached to ascertain your views regarding making available to returned men and their families certain buildings in the Fair Grounds. This would be a temporary measure only, until suitable accommodation is found for these men.*

The Managing Director replied that he and Board of Commissioners, with a representative of the National Housing Act, had identified several buildings suitable for meeting this request. These buildings were used for some time to meet the housing crunch among returning veterans. 81

With the return of peace, racing returned to the Exhibition Grounds, and it made \$33,000 profits from the horses in the first year. The Ex also bought its hockey franchise in 1945, a truly consequential development in Exhibition and Edmonton history. In 1948 the Stock Pavilion and Sales Ring were renovated. The old Arena was renamed the Edmonton Gardens. 82

## **The Exhibition in the 1950s**

The 1950s were years of optimism and growth in the wake of the Leduc oil strike in 1947. In 1957 Edmonton and Calgary were the fastest growing cities in Canada. Their citizens owned more cars too. In 1951 the new "Million Dollar Grandstand" was put up, and was officially opened by Lieutenant-Governor J.J. Bowlen during the summer fair. The first annual rodeo was launched by the Exhibition in 1951 as well. (See Rodeo Section) In 1953 the old Manufacturers' Building was renamed the Exhibit Building, and the Livestock Pavilion was expanded. The following year about \$2 million dollars was expended on the redevelopment of the site, including further upgrading of the Sales Pavilion and the Gardens. New gates and a beautification project were undertaken in 1955 for the Golden Jubilee year of the province. A new racing office was opened. By 1956 attendance was topping 300,000, and the Board was expanded to 26 directors. 83

The First Nations had always been an integral part of the Exhibition. Jessie Montgomery noted in 1938 that there were few items "in the really old Indian patterns" coming to the Exhibition, such as the rug in the Women's Pavilion by Mrs. D.C. Reitt of Edmonton. Hand stitching was disappearing from the moccasins and gloves, rather than handwork. In 1939 R.W. Hedley expressed his positive reaction to the First Nations arts and crafts. However, he complained that placing the exhibit in the same building as the cars did not work.

*The mixture of Ford Automobiles and Indian work, was not a harmonious one. If the building was used exclusively for Indian work, and a fine Teepee was erected in front, with an Indian sitting there in all his glory with paint and feathers, it would attract visitors to a really worthwhile exhibit. Perhaps this suggestion would not appeal to the Indian agent. 84*

Efforts were made to support more traditional methods for the exhibits. By 1949 the Charles Camsell Indian Hospital was sending many entries to the summer fairs. Patients won 18 prizes that year. Its Indian Crafts Department wrote that the young patients were very proud of the prizes, "and have the [winning name] cards tacked on the wall beside their name tags." 85

During the 1950s a renewed interest saw the construction of the Indian House, where "Indian craft displays" were exhibited and displayed for the public. A news release in about 1951 noted that "[one] of the most popular displays at the Edmonton Exhibition each year, the Indian Exhibits largely illustrate a line of craft that is getting to be a thing of the past - the skill of the human hands. Most of the exhibits are the toil of Indian youngsters who do amazing work." Exhibits were received from as far away as Fort Resolution and Gleichen. There are exceptionally large entries from Hobbema." Superintendent in Charge of the Indian shows was G.C. Laight. Many reserves were contacted and many responded. Categories were handicrafts, handwriting and manual training projects from the Indian Schools, and art exhibits from the elementary and junior high school grades. 86

Harry W.J. Maddison was president during 1950 and 1951. Born in London, raised on the Isle of Wight, he emigrated to Canada as a young man, to settle in Edmonton in 1909. He worked for Macdonald Consolidated and after 1931 for Canada Safeway. He was on the Alberta Liquor Control Board during 1955-1958, president of the Kiwanis Club in 1938, president of the Edmonton Club in 1959-1960, and a founder of the Edmonton Stamp Club. He died on 25 May 1975. 87

The Exhibition Lands were getting crowded as the Ex continued to expand its programs after the war, and during the oil boom initiated by the Leduc oil discovery in 1947. Manager James Paul wished to expand southward into Borden Park. "When the housing situation eases and tenants now living at the fair grounds in the city-administered emergency housing units find accommodation elsewhere," the *Edmonton Journal* reported, "return of this property will aid in alleviating the space shortage." 88

After an extension added 1200 seats to the Arena in 1947, as well as the addition of a curved façade later familiar to several generations of Edmontonians, the name also was changed to the Edmonton Gardens in 1947. For the summer concerts that summer, Hamilton Booking Agency requested that the Edmonton band for the grandstand show wear tuxedos or dark suits, with white shirts and black bow ties. "We realize that its has been difficult to obtain tuxedos for the past few years and in event some of your men are unable to comply with the formal attire, that they wear dark suits as indicated above." Needless to say, this caused some antipathy among the musicians. 89

During the spring of 1958 a three-year "expansion plan" was undertaken. This included a new Manufacturers Building suitable for year round use for minor league hockey and curling, a new stable area, a youth building, and expansion of the racetrack from four furlongs to six. Manager Al Anderson indicated that the plan could be carried out on the existing grounds footprint. The Automobile Building was to be removed starting on 1 July. Several of the old stables were to go, as was the current incarnation of the Thistle Rink. "The wooden grandstand to the west of the permanent structure erected in 1950 at a cost of \$1,000,000 will also be torn down, to make way for the stable areas." 90

The annual Spring Show (2-24 March 1950) was advertised as "the largest bull sale since the war and the largest fat stock show and sale in Canada." The main breeds were Shorthorns, Herefords and Aberdeen Angus. The railways were offering special reduced passenger and car-lot rates for entrants. Once again, farmers were urged to "improve your herds." 91

The Edmonton Exhibition Association also decided in 1950 to hold another Futurity Show at the Spring Show in 1952, hoping to repeat the success of the 1944 show.

The futurity shows were aimed at the small breeders, and had proven their worth in North Dakota and Manitoba. "The small breeders are convinced that the Futurity-

type show gives them a break. They are not overshadowed by big displays of larger breeders as at other shows and fairs. [The] number of entries to each breeder are limited.... Any breeder can give the time to fit a few head, whereas, fitting a whole show herd is out of the question for small breeders." The interbreed championships proved especially popular. With the growth of interest in futurity shows, it was suggested that Bob McGaffin was put in charge of getting the singles to the scales and weighed, as well as the groups and car-lots. In the early 1950s there was also much concern about entrants that were infected with Bang's disease. 92

Several significant changes occurred at the Exhibition during 1956. James Paul, who had been the General Manager from 1948 and 1956, retired after a crucial postwar decade in charge of development and administration. Before his terms as General Manager he had been a director for thirteen years, including six years on as an executive member. Paul came to Edmonton in 1912, worked nine years for James Ramsey Ltd., after which he went farming near Namao. He left the farm to his two sons in 1946. Paul had been Chair of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, and during the war served on the farm machinery appeal board, and worked for the Victory Loan campaigns. Under his leadership, the Exhibition built a grandstand that could hold 8,000, upgraded the racetrack facilities to include a new judges' stand, jockey quarters, and Totalizer, and built an addition to the Sales Pavilion and the Gardens. 93

Albert ("Al") J. Anderson former secretary-manager of the Eskimo Football Club, replaced Paul on 1 October 1956. Anderson was born, raised and educated in Calgary. He came to Edmonton in 1935, and represented J. Eveleigh and Co. Ltd. He was known for reactivating the old Edmonton Athletic Club. 94

Fred N. Miller had been assistant manager during 1954-1956, took on an enlarged job in charge of all agricultural aspects of the Edmonton Exhibition Association. He was named Assistant Manger and Supervisor of Livestock in September 1956. The scope of agricultural shows, sales, breeders' liaison, and other events had grown to the point that in 1956 a special position that oversaw all the related committee work was necessary. Miller was a native of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, and studies animal science at the University of Alberta and University of British Columbia. Miller came to Edmonton in 1949, after serving three years as principal of Olds Agricultural College. 95

In January 1957 the Edmonton Exhibition was renamed the Alberta Provincial Exhibition. "The change is intended to connote that the July exhibition is the biggest and most important in Alberta," the *Edmonton Journal* reported. James Paul noted that using the term "fair" would place Edmonton on the B Circuit regarding midway attractions. Members also felt that the term "exhibition" when made official would have a broader meaning, indicating industrial and arts exhibits on an equal footing with agriculture. Also, calling it the Edmonton Provincial Exhibition would be too limiting. Roy Marler, Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, recommended the removal of three structures, noting: "We don't want a shack town of old

buildings on the grounds.” These buildings were the wartime guardhouse, the “Green Building” used as a drill hall, and Building 16A opposite the Manufacturers Building. The Feed Building, privately owned, also was recommended by the board to be moved outside the grounds.

*To take in land recently granted the association by the city, the committee recommended the west fence be moved to its correct position. It also recommended the loading platform by the railway tracks be rebuilt. 96*

In April 1957, at a hearing before the Legislative Private Bills Committee, Al Anderson stated the desire of the Association to purchase additional land to the west. This would increase the Exhibition Lands from 88 acres to about 120 acres, allowing the extension of the racetrack to one mile if that became necessary. Plans were already in place to extend the track from a half mile to a 5/8-mile length. “In the past, the exhibition board has sought to extend the fairgrounds to the south, taking land from Borden Park,” the *Edmonton Journal* reported. “The plans were halted by the city’s policy that parklands can be taken away from parks only for essential utilities.” 97

Bingos with big prizes were quite popular in the 1950s. The Summer Fair saw the addition of a 12-car bingo, with two awarded every night of the exhibition. 98

During the 1957 racing season the Canadian Derby was moved from Polo Park in Winnipeg to Northlands Park in Edmonton. (See Horse-racing section for detail) The theme of the 1957 fair was “Progress to the North,” “with the intention of paying tribute to those pioneers who were instrumental in opening an developing this vast territory of Northern Canada. Appropriately Grant McConachie, President of Canadian Pacific Airlines, and a famous bush pilot, opened the fair in 1957. 99

The Western Canada Racing Association was established with four members: Edmonton Exhibition Association, with Calgary, Regina and Saskatoon. A new Promotion Department was set up in 1958, and an even more energetic approach was taken to advertising.

By 1958 the Edmonton Exhibition Association was active in so many areas that it required 25 committees to coordinate its efforts.

By the end of the decade several significant buildings and improvements had been added to the Lands. In 1949-1950 the Arena received an extension; the new Grandstand was built in 1953; The Gardens floor received a major upgrade in 1953-1954; the Grandstand Stage was built in 1954; the Pavilion received its extension in 1954-1955; the Jockey House went up in 1955, as did the new 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue Gate, and in 1957-1958 purchase of a building and additional lands were allowed future expansion. R.C. Marler, Chairman of the Building, Grounds and Development Committee, reported on a soil test that confirmed the obvious marshy nature of the Lands that had proven to be a challenge from the beginning. These conditions would affect future expansion plans, as they had in the past. This committee also

felt that construction of the “Sports-Exhibit Building” (SportEx) would displace nine barns containing 170 stalls and twenty tack rooms, with the garage, workshop and existing Stores Building, and that it would require enough construction to replace these vital parts of the racing facilities. 100

The final summer fair of the decade allocated each day to a specific theme: Monday was Armed Services Day; Tuesday was Farmers’ Day; Wednesday was Citizens Day; Thursday was Old Timers and Junior Farmers Day; Friday was Childrens’ Day; and Saturday was All Nations Day. “It is our intention to specifically promote each day to really mean something and to culminate it in such a way that the public will appreciate the significance.” 101

### **The Exhibition During the 1960s**

Then came the Sixties. A new stable was built for \$1.3 million in 1960. A new entrance designed by Rule, Wynn and Rule was opened in 1960, and there was another new Master Plan for redevelopment. A coat of arms was launched in 1961. The Northwestern Canadian Trade Show held its first exhibition, organized by the Edmonton Exhibition Association, the province of Alberta and the Canadian Manufacturers Association. In 1962, \$1.2 million was slotted in for the Sportex Building, which opened in 1963; the controversial Klondike Days theme was adopted during 1962-1963 too. Klondike Village began to be built in 1967. Klondike Days, which ran from 1962 until 2004, saw the emergence of Klondike Kate as the image of the new theme; with Klondike Mike and his little burro. Kate was a singer hired by the Exhibition to perform, and take an ambassadorial role selling Klondike Days. This brand was modeled on a real person, Kate Rockwell, a popular singer and dancer in Dawson City during the gold rush. The province was now granting over \$100,000 annually to the Exhibition. In 1968 attendance was over 500,000. The City Solicitor’s Report to City Council cited Section 30, Municipal Government Act, concluding that City Councillors and the Mayor, who were directors of the Association, could not vote on issues touching on the lease. Also in 1968 the Association purchased the Northern Alberta Trotting and Pacing Association (WCRA). In 1969 the WCRA saw Regina and Saskatoon withdraw from the organization. New barns were built for the Exhibition that year. 102



*Sportex, 1963, KS744, Provincial Archives of Alberta*

The Edmonton Exhibition Association board met in August 1960, and efforts were planned to prepare the Exhibition for the upcoming race meets. A fire had destroyed five horse barns in June 1960. (See Horse-racing Section for more detail)

The new coat of arms for the Edmonton Exhibition Association symbolically represented every major aspect of the association. It was adopted in the fall of 1961. The crest was supported by the figure of a horse on the right, representing horse racing and agriculture; on the left a harlequin represented entertainment. Four quadrants on the shield indicated the importance of industry, and gas and oil; stalks of wheat reinforced the ties with agriculture; a book and quill signified education and a commitment to youth; and the provincial floral emblem stood for the Exhibitions long association with the progress of Alberta. Maple leaf designs were there for the Canadian connection. 103

In 1961 fireproof race barns had been built for \$1.5 million. In June 1962 the new Sportex Building began construction. The timeline for completion would see it ready to house the Canadian Western Stock Show and Rodeo, and the Alberta Trade Fair in the spring of 1963. Poole Construction Co. Ltd. was the prime contractor. The Exhibition "coliseum committee began its tour of similar venues for ideas in the

late summer of 1962. Chuck Connors, Lucas McCain on the television series *The Rifleman*, attended the Rodeo of Champions in 1962, causing a local uproar when he ran for the fence when a bull broke loose; not something Lucas McCain would have done. The Yardley Jones cartoon was a classic. The Canadian Western Stock Show was held under the name Canadian Stock Show and Rodeo in 1962. Most of the major rodeo champions, such as Winston Bruce from Alberta, world champion saddle bronc rider, came to compete for the big prizes at the Rodeo of Champions. 104

The Youth Building was constructed next to the SportEx in 1963. The Ex had from almost its very beginning made concerted efforts to attract and educate rural and urban youth on the importance of agriculture. (See Agriculture Section)

In 1960, when it was found that 40% of total attendance was accounted for by patrons with passes, the first admissions were charged: at 50 cents at first, later raised to 75 cents. Admission to the evening grandstand shows remained free for the unreserved seats. This policy ended in 1968. 105

Henry Stainthorpe came to work for the Exhibition in 1967, to become known at the "icemaster" at Northlands for decades, in the Gardens and the Skyreach Centre. He began in the days when water barrels were used, in the days before Zambonis. Dan Craig, later the NHL ice consultant, was Stainthorpe's boss at one time. "I was fortunate to be able to work with somebody of his stature, work ethic and ability to read the ice well," he later recalled. 106

In May 1963 the Edmonton Journal proclaimed: "There will be no Edmonton Exhibition this year." Instead there would be a summer fair under a new name, and what the board called "a completely revitalized approach to the business of operating the city's largest entertainment spectacle." The Sourdough River Race was announced, as was the Gold Mine on the fair grounds. 107

In 1968 Walter Sprague began to promote the idea of moving the grandstand shows indoors. Expensive acts were being hired while the Association gambled against the weather, he said. "No private business ever invested the amount of money and take the risk we take," he stated. Jack Benny had been on the grandstand show at the 1968 fair. Benny performed under an umbrella, and later indicated he would never return. The Coliseum would soon provide an answer to some of these problems. 108

The most important development came from small beginnings. The Edmonton Exhibition met at the Glenora Club and formed a Coliseum Committee on 7 August 1962. The Edmonton Coliseum would be built for \$16 million; \$10 million of this was financed as a federal government loan to be repaid over three decades (at a 9% interest rate). The official opening of the new sports complex in the Coliseum was timed to close Canada Week, which ran across the country from 24 June to 1 July

1975. Canada Week started in 1969 amid growing concerns about Quebec separatism, and was designed to foster national unity. 109

Over two million patrons attended events at the Coliseum from 10 November 1974 to January 1977, its first two years. The first game on 10 November was between the Edmonton Oilers and the Cleveland Crusaders. Seating capacity was 15,248 when it opened (with 2000 more seats available if necessary). It was characterized by its immense exhibit space of 185,000 square feet. On 30 November the first concert featured Stevie Wonder. The Edmonton Exhibition Association, unlike the early days at the Arena (later known as the Gardens), sponsored only about ten per cent of events, all others were sponsored by organizations that leased from the Edmonton Exhibition Association. 110

As the 1960s approached an end, the Edmonton Exhibition Association announced its ambitious twenty-year development plan. Budgeted at \$7.7 million, it was slated to take twenty years to complete. Plans were to expand the Lands from about 90 acres to 210 acres. The commitment to the Klondike Days theme remained in place. Plans included “winterizing” the grandstand, adding another storey to the SportEx, increasing the racetrack to 5/8 miles and another barn and stables for 400 horses. 111

### **The 1970s: A Time of Rapid Change**

The Seventies saw further changes at the Exhibition. The financial underpinning of the Association had been in place for some time, but of course it was a constant struggle to achieve financial health during the decade, as it had since the beginning. Because the City owned the Exhibition Lands, all buildings and other improvements there were City property, under the lease that would expire in 1999. The buildings located on leased land were being written off at 7.5% per annum, rather than over the term of the lease. The Association also acquired properties adjacent to the leased lands, which were registered under the name of the City of Edmonton. Also, in 1968 the Association purchased all outstanding shares of the Northern Alberta Trotting and Pacing Association, and the Calgary Trotting and Pacing Association, for \$400,000. The sole assets of these companies, which had become inactive, were franchises to operate thoroughbred and harness racing. The bank also held as security for their bank loans of over \$1.5 million a deposit on the Exhibition Lands from the City, and a pledge of Government of Canada bonds; Alberta also guaranteed the special portion of the loans amounting to \$814,000. 112

The Association officers for 1972 were: Jack L. Bailey, in his second term as president; Harry Hole, first vice-president; H.E. Mildon, second vice-president; and Al Anderson, general manager. There had been much discussion about moving the exhibition to a new site, as many felt that it had outgrown the existing location. However, Jack Bailey reported in 1972 that the Board had decided to work within existing boundaries, and to expand by acquiring residential land adjacent to the present site following much discussion among stakeholders, and a report by Woods,

Gordon and Company, Management Consultants. "The key advantage to remaining on the present site is the easy accessibility to the site from all parts of Edmonton," Bailey reported. "This is essential to make all facilities viable throughout the year and in particular our success in racing is probably due to a very great extent upon the location of the track within the City." Once this key decision had been agreed upon, it was necessary to make plans to upgrade the Exhibition Lands. A modern coliseum, a lengthened racetrack, "additional land area," and an improvement in the general quality of Exhibition space were singled out for the coming improvements. 113

General Manager Al Anderson reported that during 1972 over two million patrons had used the grounds and facilities. A new stand-up bar at the racetrack boosted profits there somewhat, as well as the Association takeover of the concessions in the Grandstand. The rodeo took a loss and experienced reduced attendance. Even racing totals declined in 1972. Klondike Days was now the major source of profits. Canadian Derby Sweepstakes offered increased prize money, and an unexpected decline in attendance led to losses. Hopes were now pinned on the planned Coliseum. Anderson wrote: "Construction of this facility will assist greatly in the promotion of the annual rodeo, Ice Capades, Boat and Trailer Show, and major concerts." The World Hockey Association also was committed to forty games at the new venue. An option on land of \$300,000 was to be used on deposit for the purchase of a parcel of property valued at \$1 million; this transaction was completed 1 December 1972 with the Association assuming an agreement for the sale \$700,000 payable at the rate of \$100,000 per annum with 7% interest. 114

In 1972 the City approved new grounds boundary, and approved the Association request to purchase more land for expansion. Construction began on the Coliseum, the racetrack was improved, and the Food Fair building opened. The City land purchase was \$1 million.

In 1972 the Association also entered into a joint corporate venture with the Edmonton Oktoberfest Association, jointly owned and operated by the German Canadian Business and Professional Association of Alberta. 115

In April 1972 the Board accepted the planning report prepared by Woods, Gordon and Company, which had recommended the pivotal decision to remain on the historical site of the Exhibition Lands. The Board then authorized the its management to make further detailed plans to implement development of the site. Woods, Gordon pointed out four crucial shortcomings in the existing site: the need to enlarge the racetrack, which would reduce parking and midway space; the inadequate seating in the Gardens; total exhibition floor space was inadequate for the 1970s; and the growing use of simultaneous use of facilities could create increasing problems with parking and traffic flow. The Board looked to the coming location of the LRT station and the growing use of the Capilano Freeway to alleviate some of these problems. The Woods, Gordon Plan was for a ten-year project. The City approved a request for an annual assistance of \$370,000 for the duration of the

project “to apply to any land purchases by the Association.” Land assembly was to take place in the decade between 1972 and 1982, at a cost of \$4.7 million. The Board also accepted the Woods, Gordon recommendation to construct the new Coliseum on the old Hayward’s Lumber Company site, located immediately north of 118<sup>th</sup> Street at 74<sup>th</sup> Street, to be cleared early in 1973. The LRT would be adjacent to the Coliseum when built. This plan added 9,27 acres to the existing Exhibition Lands footprint at the time. Phillips, Battat, Hillier, Jones and Partners, of Vancouver, and Wynn, Forbes, Lord, Feldberg and Schmidt, of Edmonton, prepared the conceptual plan accepted by the Board. Coliseum design was directed at accommodating the needs of the Commonwealth Games, scheduled for 1978. 116

By 1972 the length of the Exhibition has expanded during the postwar years from six days from 1949 to 1966, nine days from 1967 to 1971, and then to ten days in 1972. 117

*1974 Aerial view of the Exhibition, J1399, Provincial Archives of Alberta*



The Association officers for 1973 once again were: President Bailey; first vice-president Hole; second vice-president Mildun, and general manager Anderson. That year saw a major parking lot expansion, a new WCRA building, a grandstand basement development, the Inner Rail Lounge, and major track and power extensions. The City also funded the Coliseum pedway in 1973. Perhaps more importantly, the Edmonton Exhibition Association promoted the first sweepstakes in Alberta, the Canadian Derby Sweepstakes, between 1970 and 1974. J.L. Bailey

noted that during 1973 the Exhibition had made profits that were “one of the highest in the history of your Association.” He attributed this to several factors: the decision to extend K-Days for an additional three days to accommodate the RCMP Revue which was celebrating the centennial of the NWMP march west. As a result there were more racing days, casino and midway operations. Bailey reported at the end of 1973: “Our Canadian Derby Sweepstakes also exhibited great increased sales due principally to the fact that we had a selling period approximately 30 days longer than any previous year, and during that 30-day period, we were the only sweepstake being operated in the province with the result that our profit increased by over 100%.” 118

Of course, the big news was that the contract for the Coliseum was let to Batoni Bowlen Enterprises. Until it opened in 1975, all eyes were on this big project.

Association officers for 1974 were: President Harry Hole; first vice-president H.E. Mildun; second vice-president D.R.B. McArthur, and general manager Al Anderson. At the end of 1973 Hole boasted of “a record number of year-round events” during that year. The Association was now committed to year-round activities, and this was reflected in the increased profits. The 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue Underpass also was almost completed in 1974.

On 21 June 1974 the Edmonton Exhibition Association, Commonwealth Games, and the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede formed a partnership to set up and operate the Western Canada Lottery within Alberta. The Canadian Finals Rodeo also was formed with a partnership with the Association this year. Farmfair also was set up in 1974, a large fall farm show to replace that formerly held in the summer during Klondike Days. 119

By 1975 the Annual Report announced that the Ex “offers the highest total of prize give-aways in North America.” The right to run raffles was part of the package since the Exhibition was technically an agricultural fair. Such fairs were allowed by law to run such affairs, while community leagues could not. All of the raffle money was directed to charitable causes by the Association.

*Edmonton was the first Canadian city to adopt legalized gambling and the results have proven extremely successful since the 1968 move. 120*

The much-anticipated Coliseum opened in 1975. And the racetrack was extended 5/8 mile. Further changes were renovation of the Sales Pavilion (1976), expansion of the livestock pens and stalls (1977), parking lot paving, renovations of the grandstand (including enclosure of the third floor), expansion of underground power system, renovation of the Silver Slipper, and construction of the LRT station tunnel. 121

The Annual Report for 1975 had as its main focus the flagship Coliseum project, “and its impact on the cultural, sport and business activities in Alberta.” Hon. Bill Yurko presided over the opening on Canada Day 1975. The Canadian Western

Superodeo in the spring, and the Canadian National Finals Rodeo, in November, both were held in the new Coliseum this year. Association President Harry Hole, looking forward to the Commonwealth Games, noted that a federal grant (\$3.7 million promised for assistance with construction of the Coliseum, a major venue for the coming Games), as well as a provincial grant, had not yet been received, but were necessary to go forward with the plans for 1978." 122

Other noteworthy developments on the grounds included expanded paving near the new Coliseum, in addition to more bus space, and a new parking lot behind the Sportex; parking now cost a dollar for major events, and two dollars for the Coliseum lots. The Klondike Days School Art Exhibit was established about this time, and would be held in the Silver Slipper in the future. 123

In 1974 the Western Canada Lottery replaced the Canadian Derby Sweepstakes, introduced in 1970 as the first sweepstake in Alberta. 124

By 1975 Klondike Days provided income of over a million dollars, and was the Edmonton Exhibition's "largest single income producing event." Attendance had doubled between 1962 and 1975. During its ten days, Klondike Days employed 1,500 people, and generated \$500,000." Big acts in the new Coliseum also boosted Klondike Days. These included Paul Anka, Dianne Warwicke, Jeff Beck, Bobby Vinton, Johnny Cash, Gladys Knight and the Pips, The Guess Who, Charlie Rich, the Beach Boys, and the Osmonds. The big shows continued to be a significant draw. In 1978 the Coliseum of Stars saw the Eagles perform twice, and the Beach Boys returned, with Dolly Parton also putting on a show. Attendance was disappointing for some of the acts however, and there was some soul searching about the initial outlay needed for such shows. When Waylon Jennings cancelled, it was a blow to the Ex finances. 125

Some difficulties occurred between the EXA and its residential neighbours in 1975. The long-range plan to acquire houses to allow for expansion came forward when the Edmonton Journal reported that 316 houses were to be taken down to provide additional parking. This was based on a site development plan recently completed by K.C. MacKenzie and Associates Ltd. for the Association. This report, following the Woods Gordon and Co. report to City Council in 1972, which recommended that the Exhibition not pursue plans to find another site but rather remain within its existing Lands. K.C. McKenzie had therefore recommended in its 1975 report looking to expand west of 81 Street and the removal of the last houses near the new Capilano Freeway. This understandably caused concerns among local residents. Al Anderson indicated that the recent report was a follow-up to the 1972 report, and that implementation would be stretched over "two decades." He noted that the Ex had been acquiring land for twenty years, and was currently in the middle of a ten-year acquisition plan using City funds. 126

The Commonwealth Games held in Edmonton during 1978 benefited from the new Coliseum. The Gardens were still used as the boxing venue. The Games proved to

be the major focus of EXA efforts, but the Silver Slipper was “modernized,” 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue widened, and connections to the LRT station were concluded. Raffles were well established as one of the most popular parts of the fair. In 1978 the Associated Canadian Travellers offered a \$75,000 grand prize in addition to daily \$1000 prizes. The Lions’ Dream Home was a regular feature of the raffle and draw scramble. Kinsmen Car Raffle saw ten vehicles given away on a daily basis. The 4-H Clubs had their Steer-A-Day award. The Rotarians daily draws included a Winnebago Motor Home. The Bonanza Gate Draw offered a total of \$1500 daily. This was perhaps the heyday of the raffles frenzy, although its persistence is impressive. 127

### **The Northlands Period Begins 1979**

The Edmonton exhibition ushered in its 100<sup>th</sup> year by hosting a gala skating party at the Coliseum on New Year’s Eve, followed by a giant fireworks display on the grounds. 128

On 1 January 1979 the Edmonton Exhibition Association began operating under its new “corporate identifier.” From this date the operation would be known as Edmonton Northlands. The change was meant to emphasize that all activities that occurred at Edmonton Northlands now were the responsibility of a single comprehensive organization, the Edmonton Exhibition Association Limited. “We will continue to use the name Edmonton Exhibition Association Limited for business and legal purposes,” the 1979 Annual Report announced. “Where Edmonton Northlands is used it is in essence our trade name and the legal entity remains the same.”

The new branding was addressed by a new logo, “geometric in design and based on the compass rose.”

*Emphasis is placed on the northern point representing Northlands, with other directional point representing the variety and multiplicity of events held on the grounds.*

*To reinforce the new identity, new corporate colors of red, orange and brown are used in various combinations. The facilities on the grounds have been renamed. The Edmonton Coliseum is now identified as Northlands Coliseum. Similarly, other facilities become Northlands Sportex, Northlands Gardens, Northlands Golden Garter and Northlands Silver Slipper. The Sales Pavilion becomes Northlands Pavilion. Northlands Race Track remains Northlands Park.*  
129

Association President A. Ross McBain announced further financial support from the Alberta government in the Exhibition Centennial Year.

*During the course of our birthday year, the Government of the Province of Alberta announced a major revision to their program of assistance to the fair industry in Alberta. Included in this program is the provision for a major*

*capital grant, a guaranteed loan program up to one half the cost of an approved program and provision for repaying the loan and other debts by ay of grant tied to the provincial tax on pari-mutuel wagering. 130*

Despite efforts to create a big splash for the centennial of the Exhibition, General Manager George Hughes reported that Klondike Days showed a decline in attendance and profits “for the first time in many years.” 131

Amis the celebrations the Ex felt the need to address changes in the entertainment landscape. The Planning and Development Committee was reorganized in 1979 “to consist of a small core group that would deal primarily with the master plan and budget. Several committees were organized to address major projects like the AgriCom, Klondike Village, the new race Barns, Hall of Fame, parking and traffic, and the buildings and grounds generally. 132

The 1980s would see many changes at Northlands. H.L.D. Perry was the new president in 1980, while George S. Hughes remained as General Manager. The Association was going ahead with three major planning documents directed as substantial changes to the grounds in the coming decade. This year continued with preferred parking lots, new electronic message centers and computer ticketing. A capital expansion program also was launched, valued at \$7 million. The MacKenzie Spencer Associates Master Plan for the 1980s now seemed to be the blueprint in forward thinking for the Association. 133

This period saw many historical commemorations. In 1980 the Cavalcade of Stars brought 50,000 to the Coliseum this year as part of Celebration 75, the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Province of Alberta. In other developments, streets were closed at the request of the EXA during 1980. These included: 74<sup>th</sup> Street north of 115<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue; a portion of 117<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Avenues; a lane east of 74<sup>th</sup> Street between 117<sup>th</sup> and 118<sup>th</sup> Avenues; and a portion of lane south of 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 72<sup>nd</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> Streets. Changes to the grounds included an infield electronic message centre, new barns complex, new bleacher seating in the grandstand and renovations, the 115<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrance, the Coliseum clock and scoreboard. 134

The Mackenzie-Spencer Master Plan was completed in 1980, which led to the recommendation that no further expansion be undertaken by the EXA until an overall parking plan was approved. The EXA used part of Borden Park for Klondike Days this year. The Lottery and Super Loto were aiding in the EXA development plans during the 1980s. In 1981 the Western Canadian Racing Association was shut down, but the Exhibition racetrack chute was extended. The Coliseum seating was expanded. And most notably, the Sales Pavilion was demolished in 1981. The Cantrade exhibition also started in this year. The following year, 1982, the Edmonton Gardens was demolished, and the Agricom Building commenced construction. Hu Harries, long associated with EXA, also presented his Social/Economic Report.



*June 1964, the Sales Pavilion, KS783.2, Provincial Archives of Alberta*



*June, 1964, The Edmonton Gardens, KS783.1, Provincial Archives of Alberta*

The years 1981 and 1982 saw an acrimonious dispute between the Exhibition and the new downtown convention centre over funding. Mayor Cec Purves demanded that the Association withdraw its grant application from the federal government, or expect Council retaliation. This demand was rejected by the Exhibition board. Ultimately the Exhibition was successful in its bid for the federal grant, to be issued in 1984. Alderman Percy Wickman advised against Council retaliation, but advised that the Northlands board be restructured, “to ensure it is controlled by the city,” as reporter Norm Ovenden wrote. 135

Len Perry noted the passing of two of the earlier members of the Exhibition team in 1981. Roy Marler and Lawrence Rye, both former presidents of the Association, died during 1981. 136

The Attractions Committee continued to add more free entertainment at the Northlands Stage, on the southeast corner of the grounds, and the Klondike State. The Coliseum was opened all the time the grounds were open beginning in 1981. The Dream Home was moved to the southeast corner of the grounds near Borden Park, and with it came a Lottery Corner with a “draw stage” where all major draws were conducted. The ACT Tower was moved to the same corner. Lottery sales came

in at well over \$1 million. The Golden Garter Casino was so successful it was difficult to find a table at the many blackjack tables, roulette wheels and “wheels of fortune.” 137

The biggest change saw the old Edmonton Gardens demolished. The original Livestock Pavilion built in 1913 changed its purpose in the fall of the same year when the Thistle Rink burned down. Edmonton needed an indoor arena for hockey and other seasonal events. The name was changed to the Arena, and its role at the centre of Edmonton’s sports and cultural events guaranteed for decades. After an extension added 1200 seats in 1947, and addition of the curved façade familiar to several generations of Edmontonians, the name also was changed to the Edmonton Gardens in 1947. Work also continues in 1981 on the program to have all utility lines undergrounds by 1983, while \$1.4 million spent on underground power installations. 138

Persistent and sustained negotiations, led by Alberta International Trade Minister Horse Schmid, saw a huge trade show from China at the Exhibition in 1984. The Great Circus of China played the Northlands AgriCom during April and May. These events were thought of as a promotion of the official opening of the AgriCom. 139

Another reminder of Edmonton’s past was added to the Exhibition Lands in 1987. The Edmonton City Dairy (ECD) milk bottle, familiar to several generations of Edmontonians, was placed within the little railway circuit that year, for riders to enjoy and reminisce. George K. Guild first built the huge bottle for Edmonton City Dairy to use on its Exhibition Parade float. Parts were obtained from New York City, and were shipped to Edmonton, where it was assembled and mounted on the roof of the new ECD building on the east side of 109 Street just north of Jasper Avenue. There it became a local landmark for six decades, at an impressive 27 feet and eight tons. Murray Hamilton, an Exhibition Director from 1959 to 1963, advocated for the milk bottle’s preservation when the ECD building was demolished in 1977. Ten years later, Don Hamilton, president of the Association and son of Murray Hamilton, dedicated the installation of the big bottle on 22 July 1987. 140

### **The Exhibition During the 1990s**

The 1990s would prove to be a time of financial uncertainty and testing. During 1990 Edmonton Northlands and the City concluded “a conditional agreement which settled significant financial demands made by the City against Northlands.” Northlands agreed to pay taxes for properties dating from 1983-1988. These taxes were not paid to the City “pending confirmation of the basis of determination by the Court of Revision, which under the terms of the agreement is required by December 31, 1990.” Western Canada Lottery Alberta Division funding was changed in 1990, when a Ministerial order was issued which proved that Edmonton Northlands would receive \$5 million annually from the lottery Fund up to 31 March 1991. Of this \$4.5 million “must be used to make payments of principal and interest on debts incurred for capital development projects.” 141

All land purchased by the Edmonton Exhibition Association was scheduled to revert back to the City of Edmonton on condition of the lease agreement, which was to expire on 31 December 1999. This agreement, under which the Lands were held by the City of Edmonton, and leased to the Exhibition Association for a dollar a year, was extended up to 2019. "At the expiration or earlier termination of the lease, the buildings and improvements on the leased lands will revert to the City of Edmonton. Provided that the Company is in good standing, the City shall grant a renewal lease for a further term of 30 years at a cost, and upon other terms and conditions, to be agreed upon by the parties." 142

In 1994 a new agreement was entered into with the Edmonton Oilers Hockey Corp., the major tenant of the Coliseum. "The new agreements replace the existing agreements which would have expired in 1999."

*Previously [Northlands] operated the Coliseum and received all revenues from facility rentals, food and beverage and certain advertising. Under the new agreements Edmonton Oilers Hockey Corp. is granted the right to manage the Coliseum for a period of ten years, with certain rights of renewal, subject to the right of [Northlands] to occupy the Coliseum during Klondike Days and the Canadian Finals Rodeo. Under the previous agreement [Northlands] received a percentage of gate revenue for professional hockey games played in the Coliseum, but under the new agreements [Northlands] receives a fixed license fee of \$2.8 million per year. In addition [Northlands] has obtained a special share in Edmonton Oilers Hockey Corp., together with various collateral covenants, which grant [Northlands] control in most circumstances over any attempt to move the Edmonton Oilers professional hockey team outside the City of Edmonton. Under a related agreement with the City of Edmonton, significant sums have been expended by Edmonton Oilers Hockey Corp. on renovations to the Coliseum. 143*

On 10 February 1995 bank arrangements were made for financing the Grandstand. A capital loan of \$20 million was provided, with repayment due in full by 31 March 1997. 144

Problems mounted during 1995. Northlands President Robert Westbury reported: "There are no institutions, companies or governments which are immune to change. To remain economically viable, a restructuring of the business being conducted is the new reality for organizations. Northlands Park is not an exception." Hopes were placed on the new entertainment centre, Northlands Spectrum. Chuck wagon racing was returned to the rodeo, authorization of Northlands to operate a casino for charitable causes, and other initiatives were tried. Most importantly the City once again extended the lease for fifteen years, to 2034. Edmonton Northlands was renamed Northlands Park, the new name and logo reflecting Northlands' "updated approach to its business." On 5 October the WHL awarded the city a Tier One Junior Hockey franchise, the Edmonton Ice, which began their season at the AgriCom.

Finally, Northlands ended its association with World Trade Centre Edmonton, which had been entirely funded by Northlands since 1984. 145

“Northlands” is the name used by a wide variety of activities on the Exhibition Lands. It is a non-profit, volunteer organization, which oversees around 2,500 events annually. These include big events like the Canadian Finals Rodeo, K-Days, trade shows horse racing, slot machine gambling, and major concerts. Since the early 1970s Northlands has also produced Farmfair International, an agricultural show to which attracting international breeders who come to show and sell livestock. Revenues are reinvested in events and facilities.

During the early 2000s two landmark buildings were demolished: the Golden Garter in 2001 and the Silver Slipper in 2003.

One facility operated by the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation near Northlands was the Edmonton Expo Centre (the EXPO Centre), which opened as the AgriCom during 1984-2009, and was located across from the Coliseum in the Montrose neighbourhood; it was built on the site of the old Edmonton Gardens. Andrew Huntley, Chairman of the Northlands board, officially unveiled the new EXPO name on 8 September 2009. The 2009 expansion doubled its size, including four new exhibition halls and conference areas. This was the first home of the Edmonton Oilers; the team would move into the new Northlands Coliseum in 1974. The facility was used until 2017. In July 2017 Northlands revealed Northlands was considering refocusing on agriculture. Part of this component of Northlands Vision 2020 involved shutting down the Coliseum, Northlands Park and the EXPO Centre. The City announced on 29 August 2017 that it would take ownership of the EXPO Centre and forgive the remaining \$42 million debt. Operations were to merge with the Shaw Conference Centre under the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation by 1 January 2018, when it would also take over the Coliseum.

The first Pedigreed Seed Show was the Northlands Western, in 1984. Operations were taken over by the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation on 1 January 2018. Northlands Coliseum was opened in 1974 as the Edmonton Coliseum, and subsequently as the Skyreach Centre and Rexall Place. It was closed on 1 January 2018. Northlands Park was based on the horse racing circuit finished in 1951, and renovated in 1995. It features a large slot machine space, restaurant, harness and thoroughbred racing and international simulcast racing. Plans are to close it by the end of 2018. Northlands Sportex convention hall opened in 1963, and was demolished in 2008 to accommodate expansion of the Edmonton Expo Centre. 146

Northlands Park was the corporate operating name for Edmonton Northlands, the name being adopted from the racetrack in 1995 and then changed to Northlands in 2006. Northlands Park was the name for the grandstand at the racetrack until 2006. Dining areas were set up on the second floor so spectators could view the races directly, or on screen. Las Vegas style slots were located on the main floor in the gaming room.

The big acts remained one of the mainstays of Northlands programming in 2007. Beyonce, Billy Joel, Van Halen, Bon Jovi and Eric Clapton played Rexall Place that year. The Ford World Men's Curling Championships set an attendance record when it came to town. In October 2007 Northlands launched its Project Evolution.09, an ambitious plan for facility expansion. The goal was "to build the biggest and best trade and consumer show venue outside of Toronto." Shows received their Canadian premiere at Capital Ex that summer; these included Walking With Dinosaurs, EXplore Butterflies, and Sip!, the new "gourmet food and wine experience." The Swing Tower and Mega Drop were added to the midway. Northlands also purchased the Alberta Farm and Ranch Show, with plans to rebrand it the Northlands Farm and Ranch Show the following year. There were 166 race days at Northlands, with attendance at 1.4 million, and paid purses of \$19.8 million. 147

In 2008 Northlands introduced the Rexall Edmonton Indy. The Annual Report for 2008 noted: "The Alberta agriculture industry is challenged to sustain itself in these uncertain times, and Northlands is not immune to the impacts of this sector." This can perhaps be seen as a nod to the fact that the foundational role played by agriculture in the early days of the Exhibition might be about to take a downgrade in its value within the Exhibition's scheme of things. Still, the Northlands Farm and Ranch Show, and Northlands Horse Power were features of 2008. These were an effort to provide "a critical mass of programming" to promote the agricultural fairs as "a destination for agriculture twice a year." By this time Northlands had a Racing Entertainment Centre Agreement (RECA) with the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC). AGLC retained 85% of net profits, while Northlands retained 15%. 148

Klondike Days was first rebranded as Capital Ex in 2006, causing some controversy. Northlands president Ken Knowles, however, noted that the 2007 Alberta Tourism Awards had endorsed the change. However, Northlands announced that Capital Ex would be retired as a brand in 2012. A survey chose K-Days as the name to replace Capital Ex.

Attendance was dropping around this time, and caused some controversy when Northlands decided not to release attendance figures for 2008 because of an agreement with the Indy Racing League. When the figures were released, they indicated a decline, as would occur again in 2009. Attendance continued to get weaker for the subsequent years.

Northlands Park was for some time the horseracing track at Northlands. The horseracing season generally consisted of the spring standardbred harness racing meet during February and March. The Thoroughbred meets were in May or June through September of October. A full harness meet went to mid-December.

The Tim Horton's Brier was held in Rexall Place during 2013. Cirque de Soleil raised its big white tent on the grounds in the spring. The Canadian Country Music Awards

was hosted at Rexall Place in September. In May 2014 the Northlands Urban Farm was opened for the first time in the southwest corner of the grounds. 149

Vision 2020 was the response put forward by Northlands to its declining fortunes. Released in 2015, it sought to “redefine itself in bold, new ways.” The year saw several important events. The Northlands Arena Strategy Committee undertook plans for the future of Rexall Place in April 2015; its report recommended cooperation with the Oilers and the City of Edmonton. On 2 November 2015 Northlands produced and hosted the Capital Region Event Summit, with about 200 event producers, not-for-profits, and other stakeholders in the Capital Region, to discuss best practices for regional developments. “The future for Northlands remains bright as we lay out our blueprint for the next evolution in our long history,” the Annual Report concluded. “With changing realities in our city and the evolving need for our community, our 160 acre site will be re-created in bold new ways.” Northlands Coliseum remained an important part of the plans in 2015. “One of the ‘coolest’ elements in our redevelopment plans is the redesign of the historic Rexall Place building into the incredible Northlands Coliseum. In addition, Northlands was exploring the idea of modifying its “campus area” to include residential and retail space. 150

In 2016 Northlands included a brief report on what it called “The Era of Competition.” The sense of struggle at Northlands is clear.

*As historians look back on Northlands’ history they will view this as the tipping point for what will form [the] next generation of Northlands. During this time period the push was on for a new facility, City Council and Administration were under continuous pressure from all sides to make a decision and Northlands worked every angle possible to maintain a piece of business that was essential to the sustainable future of the organization.*

*All of this evolved under an intense media spotlight which only furthered the hard lines drawn in the sand by all parties and left little appetite by Edmontonians for any of the entities involved as each presented their arguments to why they were the best option.*

The problem, through the eyes of Northlands, was summed up in 2016 as the fact that the relationship between Northlands, Oilers, City of Edmonton, Edmonton Economic Development, the media and the public “became confrontational.” Also, Northlands felt that under the new Master Agreement with the City, the Oilers Entertainment Group wanted to exclude it from any future development, by limiting funds and partnerships at the Northlands Coliseum (Rexall Place). Northlands officially felt there was no way out of the impasse at this time. It still placed some faith in its Vision 2020 plan, but enthusiasm was waning. 151

The Oilers Entertainment Group (OEG) played a crucial role at this time. This company manages Katz Group of Companies’ sports and entertainment operations.

Daryl Katz purchased the Oilers in 2008, and set up Rexall Sports Corporation to run his sports and entertainment. Rexall Sports was reorganized as OEG in 2014.

Northlands announced on 18 February 2016 that at the end of that year's season, Northlands Park would be closed as part of its Vision 2020 plan. Vision 2020 foresaw the site redeveloped as an outdoor festival grounds. 152 Northlands President Tim Reid then announced in August 2016 that this plan remained under discussion with the city, although he was clear that "our plans are not to continue racing at this site. But we've also got to listen to our stakeholders – the owners, trainers and jockeys - and be considerate of their industry." Horse Racing Alberta called for bids to build a new A-level racing complex in Edmonton. Century Casinos won the bid, with plans to locate the new facility near the Edmonton International Airport. When completed plans are to hold the Canadian Derby there. The 2017 Canadian Derby was advertised as the final one to be held at Northlands. Its history at the Ex goes back some time. From the days of the Manitoba Derby in Winnipeg which began in 1930, and was renamed the Canadian Derby in 1935. Three-year old Canadian Thoroughbreds ran there before Polo Park was closed in Winnipeg in 1956. The Canadian Derby then was moved to Northlands Park, where it would run until 2017.

Northlands continued to lose sports and entertainment events for a variety of reasons. As early as the summer of 2016, Tim Reid, Northlands President and Ceo, lamented that Northlands was in danger of closing. Problems preceded this date, however. When the Katz Group managed to develop its downtown Rogers Place in September 2016, it was clear the days for the traditional role played by the Coliseum were numbered, putting further pressure on Northlands. The Oilers Entertainment Group has an agreement in place with the City preventing use of the Coliseum for sports or entertainment events, abruptly ending a long tradition of among regional sports and concert fans. Horse racing and the Canadian Finals Rodeo are now fond memories. K-Days and the fall Farmfair remain in place. The City assumed control of the Coliseum property on 1 January 2018. The fate of the Coliseum itself remains uncertain. 153

On 19 January 2018 Northlands President and CEO Tim Reid resigned. Geoff Oberg, Chair of the Board of Directors praised Reid's three-year term. Kevin Gunderman, Vice President of Corporate Services, assumed the role of Interim President and CEO. Gunderman was deeply involved in the development of a new business model for Northlands.

A series of Northlands Area Redevelopment Plans were launched in 1990. Planning for these began in 1985. The ARP directed the City Planning and Development Department to regularly review progress on its implementation. The first review occurred in 1998. The Northlands ARP had a clear mandate. "It is the goal of the Northlands ARP to facilitate the continued operations of Edmonton Northlands as a major exhibition and recreation facility servicing Edmonton and Northern Alberta

while preserving the viability and quality of life of surrounding residential communities.” 154

During the 1990s work continued on completion of Capilano Drive (Now Wayne Gretzky Drive) north to the Yellowhead Trail and Fort Road. Parts of the Burns property, and the former Mount Lawn water and sanitation yards were leased to the Oilers for event parking in 1994. Northlands Park continued through the decade and into the next. Northlands was permitted to continue acquiring and clearing properties within designated West Bellevue and North Cromdale expansion area. It maintenance yard was extended south to 113 Avenue east of the LRT corridor, but was limited in its plans by two properties on the west side of 79 Street that remained in private hands. Northlands Park completed its acquisitions in West Bellevue, received road closure and rezoning approvals in 2004, and began developing a parking lot in June 2005. A new General Development Plan called for several developments in February 2004, providing further plans for site development. 155

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### **Theme Chapter 1: The Exhibition: Deep Roots in Agriculture**

The Edmonton Agricultural Society formed the first version of the Edmonton Exhibition in 1879. Its records form one of the largest in the Exhibition papers at the City of Edmonton Archives, and have been used as the basis for this thematic chapter. Additional context will be found in the main overview of Exhibition history in the first chapter. Agriculture has remained a steady theme throughout the history of the Exhibition and Northlands for decades. Agriculture remains the principal theme to be addressed when evaluating the history of the Exhibition. 1

A description of the Edmonton Exhibition records housed at the City of Edmonton Archives describes the early efforts of the Association:

*The primary goal of the first Edmonton Exhibition was to display the agricultural produce and livestock of the surrounding district. A large portion of the work done by the Exhibition Association has involved the administration and promotion of different types of agriculture in northern Alberta.*

*In 1912 the manager of the Exhibition Association was appointed Secretary of the Alberta Provincial Cattle, Horse, Sheep and Swine Breeders' Associations.... Corresponding on a variety of matters, the secretary provided a valuable service, organizing animal registration, contacting similar breeders, arranging meetings and circulating resolutions and directives to members.*

*The Exhibition Association also organized two major livestock events: a Spring Livestock Show and Fall Livestock Sale. 2*

The agricultural tradition remained throughout most of the history of the Exhibition and Northlands. Facilities for agricultural meetings and educational seminars were provided at no cost for recognized groups over the years, such as the original four breeders' associations, and subsequent such groups. It sponsored major breeders' association shows, parades and sales that sometimes almost eclipsed the flagship summer events. In 1950 the Association launched a program of summer camps for seek-long holidays for farm boys and girls. The Association also supported 4-H Clubs in a substantial way from an early date, hosting public speaking competitions and the 4-H Beef Shows. Programs were designed to support rural youth in all Alberta districts. Klondike Days began the practice of inviting farm families to the fair as guests.

One of most important early connections made by the Association was with the four major breeders' associations. Of these the Alberta Provincial Cattle Breeders' Association was probably the most important. This association had its head office in Edmonton, and had a 12-member Board of Directors, elected by its members. The General Manager of the Exhibition was always a part of these groups, adding greatly to his value to Alberta agriculture, and also adding greatly to his work. The objects of the Cattle Breeders' were almost identical to those of the Exhibition.

Article: 3 (1) specified the goal: "To assist, promote, foster and encourage the breeding, raising, fitting and marketing of cattle of the various different types and breeds, and to assist and encourage the breeders of cattle in the Province of Alberta." This included promotion of "cattle of quality", to lobby the provincial government to these ends, to distribute to members information to promote these objects, to promote legislation to these ends. 3

Records reflect the hectic role of the manager in sorting out grants from the various breeder's groups and clubs from far and wide as to entrants' names, sire and registration. By 1914 these duties took up much of Manager W.J. Stark's time. Clubs also regularly asked for grants and provision for special prizes for their breeds: in 1915 these included, among others, the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada; Canadian Jersey Cattle Club, organized in 1908 in Brampton Ontario; Canadian Ayrshire Association, Huntingdon, Quebec; Dominion Shorthorn Breeders' Association, Burlington Ontario; and the Canadian Hereford Breeders' Association 4

The connections the breeders' associations kept a wide network in place, operating out of the Exhibition grounds. Frank Collicutt, the famous owner of Willow Spring Ranch (Hereford Cattle), was a regular and successful entrant at the stock shows. Collicutt was a Calgary director of the Canadian Hereford Breeders' Association. 5

Stark reported in December 1916 that the Grounds and buildings on the Exhibition lands were "owned by the city of Edmonton, who pay the insurance and maintain the grounds the year round, with the exception of the time while they are in our possession, when we assume the maintenance and return them to the city in the same condition in which we receive them."

Stark further noted in this letter to Charles Gray, Secretary of the American Aberdeen Angus Association, with headquarters in Chicago, that with the First World War raging in Europe, limiting resources for the Exhibition:

*[Our] grounds and buildings up to the present time have cost about \$600,000. The largest single item is the Stock Pavilion, with which you are familiar, and which cost about \$175,000. The Exhibition Association, which is a joint stock company, each year elects 12 directors, and the city council appoint 13, but usually accept the recommendation of the Association in making these appointments.*

*We do not receive any specified grants towards current expenses, but have an agreement with the city which provides that they shall furnish us with funds to pay any deficit which we may have in any year; on the other hand any surplus goes to the city. I may say that they have never asked us for any such payment so far, but allow us to increase our prize list when we have a good year, and the funds to spare....*

*I may say that 1914 is the only year in which we have had to ask the city for any assistance in paying premiums; unfortunately our exhibition that year came shortly after war was declared, and when the country was panic stricken and our revenue was practically cut in two. We had, however arranged a very liberal prize list and had contracted for our attractions and assume other matters of expense, which we were unable to reduce on such short notice. 6*

Despite cutbacks in the fair during wartime, J.H. Grisdale, Director of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, notified W.J. Stark, in May 1917 that the Association of Breeders of French Canadian Cattle, planned to be exhibiting at the 1917 Edmonton fair. 7

The American Guernsey Cattle Club, Peterboro, New Hampshire, presented a silver trophy for the 1917 show; the winner Jean Du Luth Farm Advanced Register Guernseys, Duluth, Minnesota, reminded the Exhibition on 10 November 1917 to send the silver award which had not arrived there although three had arrived from Calgary. There were problems in funding, since silver could not be sent from the United States to make the cup. The cup was finally manufactured by Ash Brothers in Edmonton. Also, the Shorthorn Breeders of Alberta met at Olds on 12 November 1917 to organize a Provincial Shorthorn Breeders' Association. 8

Pat Burns offered special prizes 1917-1918. These include: for pen of 3 or more bacon hogs raised in Edmonton district; best brood sow with litter of at least 5 "at foot", raised in Edmonton district; best pair chicken roasters, not less than 7 pounds a pair, dressed, raised in Edmonton district; best 4 dozen eggs, weighing at least 23 ounces to a dozen, displayed by wife of an Alberta farmer; two or more best beef steers, weighing over 1,100 pounds, raised in Edmonton district; pen of 4 or more best grade mutton sheep raised in Edmonton district. 9

Groups like the Dominion Shorthorn Breeders' Association, Guelph, Ontario, offered prizes; for example, the Calf Feeding Competition for the Winter Fair in 1918 (special prize to first prize winner in competition, provided the calf was sired by a pure bred Shorthorn bull, plus four more special prizes for four calves sired by pure bred Shorthorn bulls standing highest in the competition.) This event was first staged at the Spring Show for 1917. 10

Sometimes the Manager had to act as an arbitrator between sellers and buyers from the stock sales. W. Skinner Riverton in October 1919 wrote to W. J. Stark, complaining of a purchased bull from the Bull Sale held on April 1917. "It is a well known fact that the Hereford is a very prepotent breed, and a Hereford bull bred to any kind of cow will invariably leave a white faced calf. Our crop of calves from this bull are all colors – whites, reds, and roans and very few white faces, also he was supposed to be a Polled Hereford, and quite a few calves have horns."

*We did not use this bull till last year, except to one cow or would have written you before. We have used a Hereford Bull for five years with our herd and in consequence all our young stock are white faces, and it is most annoying to see such a nondescript lot of calves this year, and the lack of uniformity will make quite a loss when we come to sell.*

*There is evidently something wrong about the registration of this bull, he is certainly not a purebred Hereford, and we consider it is up to the Exhibition Association to pay us due compensation. 11*

Charles Ellett, from Sandy Lake, outside Strathcona, donated a silver challenge cup for baby beef competition for best calf sired by an Alberta bred Aberdeen Angus bull, "to be won twice before becoming the property of the exhibitor." 12

Stark noted in the fall of 1920 that the Calf Feeding Competition "is without doubt the most popular event at our Spring Show, attracting more attention and eliciting more enthusiasm from spectators and competitors alike, than any other individual item on the programme...." He added that "it is the belief of the Edmonton Exhibition management that too much cannot be done to interest the boys and girls in all phases of farm life, and that nothing does more to encourage an intelligent interest in better live stock generally, than our annual Calf Feeding Competition." 13

Plans for the 1921 Spring Show: "hope to have the dates a little later, so as to avoid the cold weather which has been a disadvantage for the past two or three years." 14

A widespread bovine tuberculosis epidemic became a significant problem in western Canada during the early 1920s. There was a growing need to have all fair entries tested for this disease. The federal government agreed to pay owners of "reactors" to the bovine tuberculosis test in part. 15

R.S. Hamer, a federal government bull buyer, noted in October 1923:

*The dairying end of the cattle industry is coming into more prominence year by year. The Live Stock Branch have found it necessary from time to time to send in sires from the east owing to the fact that those offered in the west are not of the quality and breeding in sufficient numbers, which the live stock branch considers desirable and of proper standard. Also, it is noted that the Live Stock Branch has only supplied sires in districts which are in a position to go into dairying in a real way; close to centres of population – and with a creamery near; where they will make dairying the real business of their operations.*

*Dual purpose cattle [are] better in outlying districts where dairying as the main business of the farm is not feasible [are] Red Polled and Dual purpose Shorthorns. 17*

As the 1920s and 1930s progressed the Manager assumed a wide range of duties: choosing breed judges suggested by the breeders' associations for each breed; sales of breeding stock to the federal breeding programs; finding grants for the contests and events; providing information to other fairs in Canada and U.S.; ensuring breed documentation and purity, always a difficult and contentious issue; as well as the general stock sales. 17

The federal government curtailed its grants to A-Class Exhibitions early in the Depression. This caused a great deal of concern among the many breeders' associations and exhibition boards that depended upon them. In April 1932, the Secretary of the Canadian Red Poll Association wrote exhibition associations, concluding that the reduced grants had been a "severe blow to all those who have at heart the improvement of live-stock." The Red Poll Association recommended the cancellation of agricultural shows and fairs that year for this reason. 18

The Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada wrote to Louise Holmes, on 16 August 1932, to congratulate the Ex, since its fair "was again a success, despite the curtailment of grants."

*We regret very much that you found it necessary to advance some of our grant to the exhibitors, as we have strict instructions to pay all our prize money direct to the exhibitors. Under the circumstances it will be necessary for you to send us a list of the advances which you have made to each exhibitor, after which we will forward the remainder of his winnings direct to him, reimbursing you Association for the amount which you have advanced. 19*

In February 1933 the Secretary of the Canadian Aberdeen Angus Association, corresponded with to Louise Holmes, turning down requests for some financial support for prizes in this category. The Depression made these grants more important, and less available. The answer was discouraging.

We regret to have to inform you that the financial situation looks very doubtful for us at the present time. The result is that a recommendation has been forwarded to the members of the board advising that all grants be

discontinued for the summer show season of 1933 and the spring show season of 1934. So far as we can see at the present time it will be quite impossible to maintain the grants for the coming year. 20

Stark wrote to L.R. Lounsbury, American Guernsey Cattle Club, Peterboro, New Hampshire, in May 1933:

*Many important changes have been introduced in our regulations this year, to conform to Federal Government requirements, and all cattle entered must have successfully passed a T.B. Test within sixty days of the Exhibition, or be from accredited herds. Any animal in the dairy classes which is neither from an R.O.P. qualified dam, nor by an Advanced Registry sire or Selective Registration sire, not by an R.O.P. sire, or which has not qualified in the R.O.P., shall be penalized by a deduction of 20% of the prize money won. Females of dairy breeds must have to their credited at least two production records made before the age of 6 years, and at least one record for each subsequent year. 21*

Field days became more popular in the rural areas of Alberta as the Depression deepened. G.S. Black, Director of Extension with the Alberta Department of Agriculture, wrote to Louise Holmes, in April 1934: "As you are no doubt aware, field day activities throughout the Province have greatly increased during the past year. This increase has already caused considerable overlapping and, if allowed to continue, may work to the detriment of all concerned." The need for the Exhibition to coordinate its activities with the province was increasing. 22

Breed associations still were an important part of the exhibition, advising on the selection of fair judges. The Shorthorn Society of Great Britain and Ireland offered a Gold Medal for the best Canadian-owned Shorthorn bull on exhibition and selected by the Canadian Shorthorn Association, still one of the most popular breeds. They did this for fairs in western Canada; this was done for the Edmonton fair in 1935. 23

The Shorthorn Society of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland repeated the offer of a Silver Medal for the best dairy Shorthorn bull in 1939 fair. Edward & Sons, Ltd. of Glasgow, sent to Silver Medals to Louise Holmes in February 1939. 24

Zones free of bovine tuberculosis were being organized throughout Alberta by the mid-1930s, many around the Edmonton district. This had some impact on the Spring and Fall shows.

The Edmonton Spring Bull Sale entries closed on 13 March 1939. The Alberta Provincial Shorthorn Breeders' Association provided a \$50 grant for the bull sale; all bulls had to pass tuberculin tests; area involved expanded to increase Peace River country. Cattle not tested for TB 60 days before entry or sale had to be tested at the last minute at the Exhibition grounds. 25

Percy W. Abbott, the Managing Director, was very ill during this hectic time and was “ordered to take a six month’s rest,” after which he went to coast. 26

The Shorthorn Society of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Silver Medal was awarded to John Gardhouse and Sons at the 1939 show. 27

The Second World War once again worked hardship on the Exhibition. The Managing Director informed P.J. Hoffmann, Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Red Poll Association, in March 1941:

*As the Federal Government has eliminated all grants to agriculture fairs, our revenue has been seriously reduced, and we are not in a position to enlarge on our commitments for 1941.*

*So far as the Red Poll classes [of the breed] are concerned, we will be prepared to reinstate these, when we are assured of competition and exhibits of sufficient merit and numbers to justify this action, and when financial conditions permit.*

28

During the war it became more difficult for entrants to get their stock to the shows. An Exhibition letter to one breeder in April 1942 made it clear that “the Government has no policy now whereby they pay a portion of the freight on a bull purchased at our Spring Show.” 29

Many visitors to the fair were accommodated by the Exhibition during the war. In a letter to Charles Brinton, of Vegreville, in March 1943, the Ex noted: “With regard to room. This is something we cannot promise but it is possible we may get something for you at the hotel across the tracks. However, this year we have moved a building up near the barns and we are going to put a few cots in there so that you will not be stuck. The building will be fairly comfortable as we have put in gas and the building is right handy to the barns.”

The Beverly Coal Co. Ltd. Cup was donated for the “best Belgian male,” any age, bred and owned in Alberta. It was passed from winner to winner. For example, the Exhibition requested it back from the 1942 winner, Harry Gauf, of Fort Saskatchewan. 30

Edmonton packing plants like O.A. Brown Ltd., Weiller & Williams Co. Ltd., and others provided special prizes for the Spring Show and the Bull Sale in 1943. In the meanwhile, the Managing Director continued to arbitrate between dissatisfied customers of the various sales. In November 1943 the Managing Director wrote:

You will understand that the Exhibition Association only acts as a medium between the seller and purchaser and is responsible only for the money received from the sale of the animals. We are, however, always willing to lend our services to attempt to straighten out any difficulties that may arise.

31

Otto Schmalzbauer, of Maloy, Alberta wanted to enter his bull in the spring bull sale in 1944. In reply the Exhibition wrote: "We would appreciate it if you would send us the pedigree for the animal. When you ship the animal ask the railway Company for half-rate and your pedigree will be produced to the Railway Co. here in Edmonton."

In 1944 the Managing Director noted in response to one query: "I am sorry to inform you that we will not be able to hold an Exhibition in the Summer of 1944, the Department of National Defence still occupying our grounds as a Manning Depot." 32

Despite such hardships, the stock shows still filled a vital role. The Managing Director wrote in April 1944: "We now have 514 head of finished cattle entered for our Fat Stock Show and Sale, April 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>. This, we believe, is the largest show of finished cattle ever held in Edmonton." These included: 55 Junior Calf Feeding Classes, 52 singles, 25 groups of 5 and 18 car lots. The T. Eaton Co. offered a prize for a special class to encourage the Breeding of Delivery type Horses" in 1944. The Bull sale for 1944 saw heavy sales of Herefords, Shorthorns and Angus. With the end of the war the Summer fair was on again during 16-21 July 1945; also Spring Show 10-13 April 1945; Bull Sale on 12 April 1945. Agricultural shows had survived the war, and were seen as a vital part of the war effort on the home front. 33

The postwar years saw an increase in interest in the stock shows. At this time "The Edmonton [bull] sale is held under the auspices of the Alberta Provincial Cattle Breeders' Association and all taking part in the sale must be members." The Fall Show was held on 6-9 November 1945. 34

Efforts were made to reestablish the stock shows on a pre-war level. The Exhibition noted:

*In looking at our files we find that we have not had a classification for Guernseys since 1938, and that year we had a full classification but no entries. In 1937 we gave a full classification but only had one exhibitor with a small herd and one with a couple of entries, so that it became necessary for us to discontinue the classification.*

*This year our Fat Stock Show and sale, as well as our Bull Sale, will be held April 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>," an Exhibition letter noted on 8 February 1946.*

*We as an Exhibition do not offer specials for any particular breed but do so at the request of the breed Associations. In 1945 only one request was made and that was from the Alberta Branch of the Canadian Holstein Association. 35*

The Managing Director wrote to Canada Packers in April 1946: "This will remind you that on Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 2.30 p.m., fourteen carloads, twenty pens of five's and a number of singles will be offered at Auction at the Exhibition grounds." Local packing plants frequently got their slaughter stock at the Ex. 36

Weiller & Williams Co. Ltd., of Edmonton, once again provided prize ribbons on steers purchased at the recent Spring Cattle Show. "You will find 20 firsts, 20 seconds, 20 thirds and all the yellows we had left which is fourth prize," wrote Exhibition Chief Clerk to Ketchum Bros. Alberta Stockyards in Calgary, on 17 April 1946.

The Summer fair came back with a bang on 15-20 July 1946. Another Silver Medal for best dairy Shorthorn was awarded once again.

The Exhibition had to cope with the postwar housing shortage when people came to town for the fair. Among other things it also had to find feed for visiting stockholders. "The Exhibition Association does not sell hay but the hay dealers around the City supply all exhibitors requiring same," the Manager wrote. "Just what price they will charge I cannot say but it ill be the average around town." Those needing accommodation also received assistance. "We have a building east of the Arena with cots and mattresses but no bedding which we open up for the benefit of the exhibitors during the Spring Show." 37

"We have a Building No. 7 which is heated and has a number of cots.... [Had to provide own bedding] I will, however, contact one or two private houses to see if a room might be available for your daughters and, if so, will advise you." 38

On Wednesday 7 April 1948 the Fat Cattle Sale, "from baby beef to steers over 1500 pounds (1200 head)" were advertised to local packing plants on 1 March 1948. 39

A farmer in Greencourt was notified of assistance in getting stock to the Exhibition. "We have made arrangements with the Highway Traffic Board to allow live stock coming to the Spring Show to travel by truck, half load without permit." 40

The Exhibition remained the "man in the middle" by performing many services during the 1940s. Sleeping accommodation in the new Sales Pavilion was arranged for farmers in town in 1949. "It is the procedure of the purchaser at our Fat Stock Sale to mail the cheque to the seller after deducting 2% for our commission." 41

The area from which stock came remained north of Calgary. "The only shipment we have coming from South of Calgary to our Bull Sale is the McIntyre Ranching Co. They will be coming with 10 bulls and I assume they will be shipping into the Calgary sale and possibly holding them over there and bringing them here. You may be able to arrange a pool car with them. We have other entries in the Calgary vicinity but they are at Bowden and north." 42

After the Fat Stock Show and Sale the Managing Director wrote to W.W.J. Maddison, Manager, Canada Safeway Limited in Edmonton, in April 1951: "Northern Alberta has a great potential and it is our hope that we can help to develop more breeding and feeding of good quality live stock thus establishing a sound and well balanced farm economy. This accomplishment is made possible through the generous

support of our good friends paying premium prices well above the market, especially in our junior division.”

The Managing Director informed Wilf J. Edgar, president of the Hereford Breeders' Association, Innisfail, in April 1951: “Our public relations are improving but that, too, can be improved considerably. When we have developed sufficiently to warrant more competent staff. During sale time there are so many small details to take care of that it is hard to find sufficient time to do our best public relations. We have just recently engaged the services of a young graduate which, I am sure you will agree, will be an asset to our organization when you meet him.” 43

Fred Miller, the Agricultural Assistant at the Exhibition, wrote to A.M. Paulson, North Dakota Winter Fair, Valley City, North Dakota, in April 1951. A rodeo coming up 16-21 July at the Summer Exhibition was causing the usual scheduling uproar. “It’s just a case of getting out of one thing and then jumping into another. Our hockey is all over for another year and we didn’t win the championship either.” 44

Note: Sometimes concerns were addressed to the EXA regarding decisions of the culling committees set up by the breeders associations. EXA only administered these and other committees, but sometimes took the brunt of the criticism.

The first Futurity Show was held at the Exhibition in 1952, in consultation with the Cattle Committee and representatives of the various breeders associations. 45

Managing Director James Paul reported in July 1950, in the midst of the post-Leduc prosperity, that plans were shaping up to make the summer fair worthy of “the attention of a continent [which] is focused on this world air centre and foremost Canadian Oil City.” For the first time a Junior Farmers Building was in the works. The Farm Boys’ and Girls’ Camp also was a new feature of Exhibition programs; Ricky Sharpe, the World Wheat King, attended the Farm Camp in 1951. 46

Fred Miller, Assistant Manager, wrote to Warren Smith, Olds in December 1951: “We hope to have room for nurse cows at the Spring Show. This year we are going to have the swine show and sale come at such a tie that it won’t interfere with Cattle Show and Sale. This will make some extra room for the Futurity Show. 47

Miller reported in February 1952: “The sale of Futurity animals is clearly outlined in the Spring Show Prize List on page 37. The bull calves which are too young to come into the regular Spring Bull Sale categories and which do not stand first or second in the breed classes cannot be sold. One of the fundamental features of the Futurity Show is that animals exhibited need not be sold. As a matter of fact in the U.S.A. where this show originated they absolutely discourage the sale of these young animals. They’re taken back home and added to the regular herd. Usually they’re the best animals, which the breeder wants to keep anyway. There are very few of the exhibitors offering any of these animals for sale. You bring your animals out for show to advertise what you’ve got and compete for prize money the same as you would at the Summer Exhibition.” 48

Animals were tested at the Exhibition for diseases like bovine tuberculosis before shows and sales by the Health of Animals Branch.

Two national livestock breeders' shows were held at the Exhibition in 1959: The Capital City National Angus Show, and the National Holstein-Fresian Show. "This is the first time in the history of major Canadian exhibitions that two national cattle shows have been staged at the same time," it was reported. The Junior Judging competition and the Dairy Princess competition also began in 1960. 49

The Edmonton Exhibition Association board met in August 1960, and efforts were planned to prepare the Exhibition for the upcoming race meets. A fire had destroyed five horse barns in June 1960. (See Horse Racing Section)

The Youth Building was raised next to the SportEx in 1963. The Ex had for many years made concerted efforts to attract and educate rural and urban youth on the importance of agriculture. By 1968 there were two youth committees that were quite active. Typical projects included: a junior dairy show, Alberta dairy princess competition, annual 4-H Club public speaking competition, rural youth seminar, junior beef show, 4-H calf show, auction of 4-H calves, junior exhibitors' banquet, and a youth centre operating during the summer fair in the Youth Building. 50

During the summer fair in 1969 the Exhibition Association launched its Alberta Farm Family Award, organized by over 125 Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade in northern Alberta in 32 designated areas, with the assistance of the Alberta Department of Agriculture. Families which received this award were looking for a way to upgrade the image of the farm family in the eyes of the city dweller." Unlike the Mater Farm Family Award these awards were not for record setting farms, but for those "the good average farm family." 51

A sign of declining interest in the agricultural roots of the Exhibition occurred in 1973, when it was announced that for the first time in its history there would be no livestock show at the 1974 summer fair. It was planned to move the show to November after this date. Reporter Shawn Waddell reported: "The decision results from a growing feeling within the EXA that the livestock show holds increasingly smaller importance alongside a major urban fair like K-Days." This did not meet with much support in the farm community at the time. "Many farmers are tied to their farms in the fall by harvest and the fact their children – the usual source of summer help on the show circuit – would be back in school." In addition, many farmers from out of the city had made a tradition of attending fairs on the circuit during the summers. 52

Farmfair opened in 1974, aiming to match the big fall fairs in Regina or Toronto. Plans were afoot to add farm buildings to the grounds to facilitate this vision. 53

Harry Hole reported in 1975 that plans were to make the Canadian Western Stock Show and Sale in the spring, and Farmfair in the fall, "the premier agricultural event in Western Canada." 54

In 1981 agriculture was reasserting its influence in the overall Exhibition picture, as construction of the AgriCom began in October. Len Perry reported that due to plans for completion of the AgriCom in 1983, "we see an expansion of Northlands' role in the agricultural field that will provide an innovative exhibit facility, worthy of that major Alberta industry. It will enable the proper staging of major events such as the World Angus Forum [scheduled for 1985]." 55

The International AgriTrade Centre was opened in 1989 as a room in the AgriCom where international cattle traders could gather to relax, have a meal or a drink, and discuss the cattle sales as they watched them. In 1995 a Chinese delegation in the market for Simmental, Charolais, Piedmontese, Holstein and Limousin breeds came to Farmfair on a shopping trip. By the mid-1990s Farmfair was reaching out with even more programs, such as the Agri-Experience, which invited young people to experience aspects of rural life that now were quite unfamiliar to city kids. By 1995, at Farmfair, over \$1 million was realized from cattle auctions on site. Alberta Agriculture estimated that about \$3 million in sales came from contracts closed at the fair. The AgriTrade Centre was connected with the World Trade Centre database, and the Alberta Agriculture computer network, which provided health certificates and export regulations to the traders. Interested traders could see unusual breeds like the Gelbvieh, developed in Bavaria, and introduced into Canada in 1972. A Peoples Gelbvieh Bull Futurity was held at Farmfair '95; for \$500 breeders could enter, and each got a vote; the winning bull was awarded \$15,000. By 1995 Alberta was the foremost sheep-breeding province in Canada, with a third of the total national flock. 56

The Edmonton Exhibition was established as the Edmonton Agricultural Society, less than a decade after the transfer of the Hudson's Bay Company lands to the new Dominion government in Ottawa. It was a unique fair in the Northwest Territories, that would grow for over a century based on a firm foundation laid down by its organizers. The Northwest and Alberta changed profoundly over the decades, but the original and sustaining theme of the fair has been agriculture, and what it has meant in times of prosperity and depression, peace and war.

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#### Notes

1. City of Edmonton Archives (CEA) MS 322 records document the agricultural programs and plans undertaken by the Edmonton Exhibition Association during 1913-1962.
2. CEA MS 322 Shelf list p.8
3. *Bylaws and Articles of Association of the Alberta Provincial Cattle Breeders' Association*
4. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 2; CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 3

5. CEA M322 Class 1 File 4
6. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 5; W.J. Stark to Charles Gray, Secretary, American Aberdeen Angus Association 29 December 1916
7. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 6; J.H. Gridale to W.J. Stark, 7 May 1917
8. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 7; Stark to American Guernsey Cattle Club, Peterboro, New Hampshire, 28 June 1917
9. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 8
10. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 9
11. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 11: W. Skinner Riverton 4 October 1919 to W. J. Stark, manager, complaining of a purchased bull at the Bull Sale April 1917
12. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 11: December 1919
13. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 13: Stark to Charles Gray, Secretary, American Aberdeen-Angus Association, Chicago, 11 October 1920
14. *Ibid.*, W.J. Stark, 25 October 1920
15. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 14; For the importance of testing see CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 12
16. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 20; Dairy cattle – Memo 13 October 1923, from R.S. Hamer, federal government bull buyer
17. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 24
18. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 33; Circular to exhibitions, 5 April 1932
19. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 34: Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada, to Miss E.L. Holmes, Secretary, EXA, 16 August 1932
20. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 35: Secretary, Canadian Aberdeen Angus Association, to Miss E.L. Holmes, Secretary, EXA, 6 February 1933
21. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 35: EXA manager to L.R. Lounsbury, American Guernsey Cattle Club, Peterboro, New Hampshire, 25 May 1933
22. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 38; G.S. Black, Director of Extension, Department of Agriculture, Alberta, to Miss E.L. Holmes, Secretary, EXA, 24 April 1934
23. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 41; Letter: 23 February 1935 (Won by F.H. Deacon, Unionville, Ontario); Letter: 30 August 1935
24. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 45: Letter: 24 October 1938

25. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 46; "Catalogue of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Auction Sale of Pure Bred Bulls Thursday 13 April 1939 Judging 9:30 Sale 1:30 at Arena Sale Ring Auctioneer J.W. Durno, Calgary, assisted by Earl Lanyon, Edmonton – for sale - 60 Shorthorns, 26 Aberdeen Angus, 14 Hereford, and 2 Ayrshire to sale: total 102 bulls. Culling Committee selected Approved Bulls, bulls, and culled bulls"
26. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 47; Letters, 30 August 1939; 16 November 1939
27. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 51
28. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 52; Exhibition Managing Director, to P.J. Hoffmann, Secretary-Treasurer, Canadian Red Poll Association, Annaheim Saskatchewan, 21 March 1941
29. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 54: Letter to William Stuart, Grimshaw, 4 April 1942
30. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 56; EXA letter to Charles Brinton, Vegreville, 23 March 1943; Letter; 31 March 1943
31. Managing Director EXA to J.F. Goertzen, Stettler, 4 November 1943
32. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 59; Alex Bonneau, EXA Chief Clerk, to Schmalzbauer, 25 February 1944; Managing Director EXA to H.R. White, Secretary, Canadian Shorthorn Association, 28 February 1944
33. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 61: Letter: 5 April 1944 by the EXA managing director; Letter 6 May 1944
34. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 63: Letter 28 April 1945; NOTE MS322 CL 1 FILE 64; NOTE MS322 CL 1 FILE 65: Reply to Guernsey club 15 January 1946
35. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 65; Reply to Guernsey Club 15 January 1946
36. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 66; Managing Director EXA to S.F. McDougall, Manager, Canada Packers Limited, 1 April 1946
37. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 68, 18 March 1947, 27 March 1947
38. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 69; Managing director to John Wood, Camrose, 1 August 1947
39. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 71
40. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 72; Managing director to farmer in Greencourt 2 April 1948
41. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 74; Chief Clerk to farmer in Hairy Hill 15 March 1949; Chief Clerk 25 March 1949

42. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 81; Managing Director EXA to W.A. Crawford Frost, Nanton, 21 February 1951
43. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 82; Managing Director to W.W.J. Maddison, Manager, Canada Safeway Limited in Edmonton, 2 April 1951
44. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 82; Fred Miller, Agricultural Assistant, EXA, to A.M. Paulson, North Dakota Winter Fair, Valley City, ND, 17 April 1951
45. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 83
46. CEA MS 322 Class 3 Subclass 11 File 3; James Paul July 1950; CEA MS 322 Class 3 Subclass 11 File 3; F.N. Miller, Letter to *Free Press Weekly*, 7 July 1951
47. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 84
48. CEA MS 322 Class 1 File 86; Fred Miller to J.R. Francis & Sons, Tofield, 5 February 1952
49. *Edmonton Journal*, 10 July 1959; CEA MS 322 Class 11 Subclass 1 File 3, 1960 President's Report
50. Stan Williams, "Youth shares the spotlight of exhibition association," *Edmonton Journal*, 15 July 1968
51. *Edmonton Journal*, 25 April 1969; *Edmonton Journal*, 11 July 1969
52. Shawn Waddell, "K-Days drops livestock show," and "Exhibition's profit doubles," *Edmonton Journal*, 13 December 1973
53. "Farm fair exhibition sees larger stature," *Edmonton Journal*, 8 November 1975
54. Alberta Corporate Registry 510006349-021; Harry Hole, President's Report, EXA Annual Report 1975
55. Alberta Corporate Registry 510006349-023; Edmonton Northlands, owned and operated by Edmonton exhibition Association Limited, Annual Report 1981, p.2
56. *Edmonton Journal*, 7 November 1995; *Edmonton Journal*, 9 November 1995; *Edmonton Journal*, 10 November 1995

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## **Theme Chapter 2: Borden Park: Playground, Midway and Zoo**

The story of Borden Park goes back to its days as the East End Park in 1907. In the summer of that year plans were implemented by City Council for the further development of East End Park, "and the establishment of a small buffalo herd in connection with it [the plan]." When Frank Oliver, then Minister of the Interior, was in Edmonton, Mayor William Griesbach requested that Oliver obtain a buffalo bull

and two cows from the government herd (the “Pablo herd” at Lamont), to be maintained by the city as an attraction. However, it was decided that three bison were to be obtained from the buffalo in Banff; these were two cows and one bull. Costs for the necessary enclosure and hay feed were provided. “There is a slough on the East End park from which the animals might drink,” it was reported. The City Commissioners also felt “that these buffalo might form an attraction in this park, and that possibly in the future other animals might be added, thereby to some extent increasing the traffic of the municipal street railway,” which already extended to this part of the city. On 15 June the aldermen and Commissioners went out to inspect the proposed site for the buffalo enclosure. <sup>1</sup> The buffalo remained an attraction for some time, and in May 1926 many Edmontonians turned out to see a newly-born calf. A photograph was published in a local newspaper. Two years later Emily, the 1926 calf, also gave birth to a calf, arousing interest in the competition to find it a name. This was the beginning of a regular trek out to the zoo for the spring births among the animals. <sup>2</sup>

East End Park, named in 1906, was renamed Borden Park after Prime Minister Robert Borden visited Edmonton in 1914. Borden Park was designated a Municipal Historic Resource in 2012, reflecting the important role it had played in municipal history during the preceding century.

Concrete steps were taken in 1911 to establish the zoo on a more permanent basis. The Exhibition Association directors met on 26 June 1911 to discuss asking the federal government to change the location of its poultry farm on the Hudson’s Bay Reserve to a strip of land bordering the Exhibition Grounds. One director stated:

*The lease held by the government on the land it uses as a poultry farm, which belongs to the Hudson Bay company, expires next year, and we propose to lease to the government for similar purposes, 10 or 12 acres, at a nominal yearly rental, in that part of the park adjacent to the fair grounds. If the government will make the change and add to the farm a quantity of rabbits and pet stock, in addition to the turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and other poultry now comprising the showing, we will put in a couple of moose, buffalo, deer and other animals, and within a few years Edmontonians will have a zoological garden of which all may feel justly proud. <sup>3</sup>*

Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, Lynn Welcher of New York arrived in Edmonton to construct the big roller coaster that briefly dominated the park. Welcher built roller coasters in Canada and the United States. A popular swimming pool also opened in September 1919. The roller coaster (the “Green Rattler”) and pool drew Edmontonians out on the Edmonton Radial Railway streetcars to spend hot summer days. East End Park had gained an Edmonton Radial Railway streetcar connection in 1908. <sup>4</sup>

Plans for a successful zoo seem to have met limited success in the early 1920s. Exhibition Manager W.J. Stark wrote to City Commissioner C.J. Yorath in June 1921,

suggesting that the city might support plans for a revitalized zoo. This “formation of the nucleus of a zoological garden in the Exhibition grounds” had been considered for some time, apparently, suggesting that the zoo had fallen on hard times since 1911, probably due to the First World War occupation of Borden Park. Yorath expressed the opinion that birds and animals might not thrive in the cold winters. Stark replied that he felt this would not be a problem, if a caretaker were provided for the animals. I located no record of how this initiative turned out. 5

In 1926, the Exhibition Association established a zoological gardens in Borden Park. Although officially under the direction of the Exhibition Association, the zoo received little support from it. Constant struggle to survive characterized the following years.

The Edmonton Zoological Society was established on 27 May 1926, largely to support the new zoo, indicating that money would be raised through donations, membership fees, Exhibition booths, tag days, and whist drives. “That the Zoo is popular is evidenced by the fact that even on cold, disagreeable days, the animals are visited by hundreds, and the attendance in the park on holidays, Saturdays and Sundays is very considerably increased over previous years.” The zoo was maintained entirely by donations and subscription lists and membership fees. A “tag day” held in June 1928. 6

The first general meeting of the Edmonton Zoological Society was held in April 1927 in City Council Chambers. Honorary Directors were appointed: Mayor A.U.G. Bury; Commissioner D. Mitchell; Professor William Rowan; H.H. Cooper; J.W. Glenwright. The founding Directors were: Professor Rev. Alfred Martin Rehwinkel; James Tyrell; P.W. Abbott; Alderman Alf Farmillo; John Blue; A.H. Esch; C.W. Hillas; W. Nobbs; J.G. Suss; A. Rendall; and W.J. Stark. 7

Professor William Rowan was representative of the caliber of men on the founding board. He designed the special whooping crane stamp adopted by the Canadian Post Office in 1954. He was influential in the location and planning of the valley zoo that would replace that in Borden Park. Most famously, his experiments on the migration of crows made him well known internationally. 8

Attendance went up after elk, and once again buffalo, were added to the park in the winter of 1926-1927. Zoo Superintendent John McGaffin credited the new animals with this success. Prairie chickens also took up residence on their own initiative that winter. One little girl named Jean Mackenzie donated a coyote to the zoo and asked to name it Rummy. “Most of the children in Edmonton have seen buffalo and elk for the first time in their lives this winter in Borden Park, yet these animals are native to western Canada,” a Society report noted. The zoo gained two more of the ever-popular buffalo, and in November 1927, some beaver from Rochford Bridge to replace those that had recently escaped their pond. 9

About eleven acres in a southeast part of the park, a heavily wooded and well-drained grove, was fenced in the summer of 1928. Many animals began to be donated to the zoo during the 1920s. During the winter of 1928 a Rocky Mountain sheep died; its hooves had not been properly tended. After this there were several complaints from the public, and Secretary Louise Holmes requested that Dr. F.A. McCord examine the health of the animals. Dr. McCord's report gave the animals a positive account of their health. By May 1928 there were houses for the bears and badgers, cages for the porcupines and coyotes, and enclosures for the buffalo, elk, Rocky Mountain sheep and deer. Rev. Rehwinkel, a founder of the Zoological Society, left to become president of a Lutheran college in Winfield, Kansas in the spring of 1928. 10

E.L (Louise) Holmes explained the goal of the zoo in a letter in May 1928: "Our object is merely to inculcate a love for animals in our boys and girls, and to help make Borden Park more attractive to those who for financial reasons are unable to visit the lake resorts." Another tag day netted proceeds of \$284.58. The Society wished in 1928 to obtain a young musk ox, but this idea was shot down by O.S. Finnie, Director, Department of the Interior, North West Territories and Yukon, due to their rarity and difficulty of obtaining one from their isolated reserve. However efforts were made to build up the avian component of the park. Miss Holmes wrote to Paul E. Page, at Lac Ste. Anne, on 24 August 1928:

*We have an artificial pond, about 3 acres being used for islands and channels, the whole enclosed by poultry wire, surmounted by two strands of barbed wire, to keep out dogs. In one end we have a deep pond in which we have two beavers, and we have just concluded the work of putting a cross fence in, to divide the beavers from the birds. All birds in this enclosure must of course be pinioned, or their wings clipped; The present flock includes a peacock, one Canada goose, loon, and bittern. We have at various times had other varieties of native water and wild fowl, but as the most of our specimens have been presented to us by hunters who have shot them down, or secured them in some such fashion, they have not always been in good condition when we received them, and we have found it difficult to keep them alive under such circumstances. Also, before we put up the barbed wire, we suffered some losses through depredations by dogs.*

*We also have a number of bird cages enclosed by half-inch netting, and in these we have two golden eagles, two owls, a number of pigeons, some silver pheasants, etc. We also have a band stand in which we kept some ten canaries all through last winter, and they are thriving splendidly.*

*Our main section of the zoo consists of two mature buffalo and a calf born this year, two elk and a calf of this year, two mountain sheep, three mule deer – all of which we have had for some time and are in splendid condition, having bred here. We also have a couple of coyotes, six porcupines, three black bears, and a few other minor specimens of native animals."*

*Last winter we housed our birds in one of the Exhibition Poultry buildings, and in all probability we will do the same again this year – (exclusive of the eagles and owls, which stayed in their cages, with reasonable protection from the north winds.*

Miss E.L. Holmes wrote to A.P. Chatell, who donated “Bruin” to the zoo.

*Bruin and Louise are the best of friends, and have furnished amusement and interest to many thousands of visitors to Borden Park; if you have driven around the Park any fine afternoon or evening, you will have noticed the crowds that congregate in front of the bear pit at all times. On some Sundays it was almost impossible to get near the enclosure, so many people would be standing around the pit watching the bears, which play together all day long.*

This letter was an appeal to provide additional funds to buy bear food. There was a new addition to Bruin’s house in the fall of 1927. A donated fawn named Miss Edson also came to live at the zoo. The Edelweiss Club responded to an appeal with a donation. These were years when the zoo struggled along through donations, whether animals or cash donations. 11

Miss E.L. Holmes reported in February 1929 that most of the work at the zoo was conducted by volunteers. “The grounds staff of workmen have been very interested in the Zoo, and have done considerable night work, free of cost, simply to help get the Zoo well established.” The directors also conducted work bees to clear brush from the enclosures. 12

An inventory of animals at the zoo in February 1929 included: 3 elk; 3 buffalo; 2 mountain sheep; 2 mule deer; 2 badgers; 2 coyotes; 3 black bears; 2 beaver; 7 porcupines; 1 woodchuck; 3 albino gophers; 7 rabbits; 1 monkey; 14 canaries; 10 mallards; 1 Canada goose; 1 Egyptian goose; 2 peacocks; 2 silver pheasants; 24 pigeons; 1 golden eagle; 1 American red legged hawk; and 1 great horned owl. In November 1929 it was estimated that there were a total of 198 animals at the zoo. 13

That spring crowds were large enough that E.L. Holmes expressed safety concerns, especially for the western fence of the main corral. She noted that “the crowds which congregate there and feed the animals on Sunday afternoon stand right close to the fence, and Kenny, the big buffalo, also stands there and demands tidbits, and if there should be a calf this spring he is going to be cranky; should he ever take the notion to ram the fence, someone is going to be killed.” Stronger fences made of telephone poles were planned. Donated trees also were planted around the park in the spring of 1929. 14

The year 1929 saw the famous and much-photographed monkey arrive in the zoo. Plans were in the works for a monkey house to be housed in a temporary building from Oliver, obtained from the Edmonton Public School Board, and the monkeys were to be obtained from Vancouver. 15

Minnie Bowen, president of the Edmonton Humane Society, wrote to P.W. Abbott on 3 June 1929 regarding a complaint regarding the zoo cages: "Two coyotes are in a pen on cement floor (which is made very hot always by sun in the summer time) with only a small box to get into and with no other shade. There was considerable criticism by a number of visitors on the misery of these animals yesterday and we have been asked to take the matter up." Bowen suggested a bigger box with more shade. Holmes responded on 5 June, indicating that plans were in place to provide a heavy canvas roof for the enclosure. Coyotes had been donated as pups, and were able to dig out of a former pen. 16

Miss Holmes informed Mayor A.U.G. Bury on 15 June 1929 that boys were bringing their dogs around to stir up the animals, and that dogs had recently broken into the rabbit enclosure and killed twenty. "It is not possible for us to shut the park gates at night, as there are public roads running through," she observed. A new fence had just been put up around the duck pond. "In one instance we found where one man had deliberately put his dog over the fence and set him at our birds; he wired down the barbed wire at the top of the fence – and forgot to remove the tie wire after taking his dog out." 17

The zoo was well recognized by the zoological community by 1929. Miss E.L. Holmes informed the Directors of the Edmonton Zoological Society on 27 June 1929, that there had been an offer from the Stanley Park Zoo to provide five South American monkeys (2 male and 3 female); one male Rhesus monkey; one pair of Ring-necked pheasants; and one pair of parakeets. Stanley Park wanted to swap for the beavers, but Borden Park wanted to keep them. 18

Edmonton Zoological Society Receipts (9 December 1928 to 18 September 1929) indicate that another buffalo bull, female elk, pair of beaver, a porcupine and a female lamb, were acquired. Collection boxes were put out around the park to raise funds at this time.

A tearoom opened at Borden Park in the summer of 1929, and was operated by the Exhibition; it featured "art moderne" influenced interior decoration, and had a soda fountain. It also could be used for swimming parties. 19

Edmonton Zoological Society held its AGM and elected new directors for 1930: G. Buchanan, E.E. Nixon, A. Rendall, B. Hager, L.W. Besler, P.W. Abbott, J.A. Sutherland, B. Lawton, and A.G. Aldridge. A change occurred in the administration at the same meeting. "[An] arrangement had been made with the city commissioners and approved by the council, whereby the city took over on May 1<sup>st</sup> the operation and maintenance of the Zoo [from EXA], the Edmonton Zoological Society to continue to function in an advisory manner, and for the securing of new specimens. It is also definitely understood that the Society shall wipe out the present indebtedness and as you have already been advised, a Tag Day will be held on June 14<sup>th</sup>." 20

Secretary Holmes also reported to R.B. Matheson, Assistant Commissioner, Dominion Lands, on 28 May 1930: "At the recent annual meeting of the Zoological Society, Mr. E.E. Nixon was made President, and Mr. John Suss was appointed Zoo Manager – the latter being a new position created for the especial purpose of retaining Mr. Suss's services, and giving him authority in connection with Zoo matters."

During October 1933 the Edmonton Public School Board donated a portable as winter quarters for the birds. In the summer of 1935 fundraising was undertaken to upgrade the bear pit that had been receiving some negative comments from the public.

The Great Depression led to difficult times for Borden Park. Edmonton Zoo Week was held on 24-29 May 1937 to build support. A Mutt Show was held at the Tivoli on 25 May 1937. Miss Holmes wrote to Miss Gwen Young and Miss Leslie Lockerbie on 22 May 1937, that she was looking for "some young ladies of pleasing appearance" to solicit funds for the zoo on Monday, 24 May for several hours in front of HBC store window with the monkeys on display in it.

E.L. Holmes notified the Society Executive Committee (Dick Rice, vice-president; D.V. Hicks, HBC advertising manager; C.R. Morrison, John Suss, R.W. Hedley (with EPSB); and Fred Kemp) on 10 June 1937 that Boy Scouts and Girl Guides now were patrolling the zoo on Sundays and holidays.

Woodland Dairy Limited was providing one gallon of skim milk daily to feed two new moose calves obtained from Belloy, Alberta.

A Whistling swan and a peacock died of infections, probably from their pond water. Another Whistling swan added to the zoo's two; they were found by a farm boy in a small lake, where it appeared to have been shot by hunters. 21

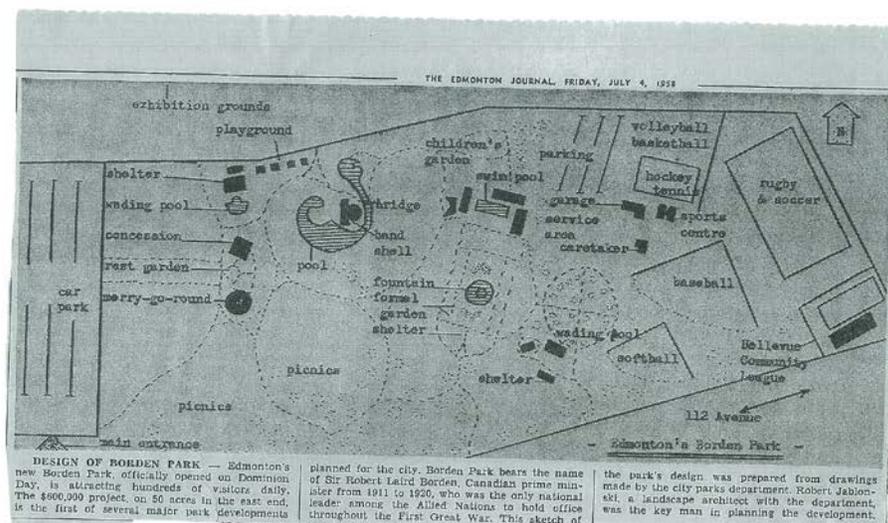
By 1938 Thomas Chadderton was the zoo caretaker, and another animal casualty occurred when a Black swan died after its feeding being neglected for about two weeks during October 1938. Two additions to the zoo in 1938 perhaps merit some attention. In April 1938, Captain Edward Hourston of Edmonton presented the Zoological Society with a parrot. This parrot would enter into local legend during the wartime RCAF occupation of the grounds shortly after. He picked up the phrase "who goes there, and startled many a returning airman in the evenings. [Robert Whitson, personal memory] "Wop" May also donated an arctic wolf cub in September 1938. 22

Children loved the bears, of course. A young boy from Glendon, Alberta (Master Yvo Vesey) sent a dollar to the zoo to buy them buns for Halloween. In a reply the Exhibition wrote: "I hope you do not object if we buy carrots and apples instead. You see, the three bears get buns with currants in, at least once a day, and the apples and carrots will be a much greater great." 23

In 1939, John Lanlon, of Waskatenau, was authorized to collect 12 Hungarian partridges for the zoo. Caretaker Thomas Chadderton, a resident of Edmonton for thirty years, and zookeeper since 1929, died in the fall of 1940. It also turns out the recently acquired timber wolf was a female, not a male, as discovered by the new caretaker. Authority was granted to slaughter one buffalo bull ("Surplus Buffalo"). E.L. Holmes noted on 14 January 1941 that the zoo swans (originally six from England, and two black swans from Australia) were gone. There were no swans in the zoo by January 1941, and no Muscovy ducks as of February 1941. 24

Professor Alfred M. Reiwenkel, professor at Concordia theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and founder of the Edmonton Zoo, returned to the city in 1954. He urged the city at this time to plan for and build a new expanded modern zoo worthy of a city like Edmonton. The Borden Park pool was renovated in 1954 and 1955. First the old dressing room was torn down. 25

Mayor William Hawrelak and the Loyal Edmonton Regiment Band opened the Borden Park Band Shell on Dominion Day 1958. Edmonton also had a band shell on the previous fair grounds. 26



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1958

*July 4, 1958, The Edmonton Journal praised the re-design of Borden Park*

Plans for a road along the northern boundary of the park led to an additional two acres being added to the Exhibition Lands, located just east of the Women's Building. 27

By 1957 a decade had passed in consideration of a move to a more favorable site for the zoo. The move to the new Storyland Valley Zoo was well under way by then. This project would see the end of the animals in the Borden Park.

In 1980 Borden Park, for the first time, was included in the grounds. "A wide range of activities were programmed for the area. In addition, the Bandshell was also used, and the Cosmopolitan Musical Society supervised concerts and a band competition." The Urban Youth Committee assisted the Attractions Committee in staging events in Borden Park that summer. 28

In 1981 many lottery and draw events were moved to the southeast part of the grounds, drawing more people toward Borden Park. The Annual Report noted that as a result that corner, which in the past seemed to have gone into exile, came alive."

*In the midst of the noise and pavement, the eastern third of Borden Park (never before used as part of the Exposition) provided ten acres of grassland, proving to be a welcome addition to a busy midway. "Park it in Borden Park" the advertisement read and that is just what people did. The Sports Canada Demonstration Centre offered everything from football and baseball to grass skiing, lacrosse and archery. The ever popular B.C. Timber Show moved to Borden Park and performed three times a day; the CFRN Klondike Belly Flop Championship entertained each evening as did the nightly rock concerts at the CKRA Rock in the Park Stage.*

Many other events occurred at the park during this summer, including the Fiji Firewalkers. 29

Borden Park would remain a vital part of the city however, and looks confidently to the future. In 2006 the Borden Park Revitalization Survey, by City of Edmonton Community Services Department, still looked to rejuvenate this much valued part of the east end. 30

During Phase 1 of the Exhibition Lands Area Redevelopment Plan (September 2017), public response to surveys indicate that Borden Park remains the most important component of the Lands for them. "Time and again, participants emphasized the value of green space in general and Borden Park in particular, praising the revitalization efforts already underway and celebrating the park as a 'hidden gem' of Edmonton." The 2017 ARP document found that several concepts predominated the discussions: possible "improvement with wider sidewalks, lower impact maintenance vehicles and better access"; protection of the park and its retention for park uses. Large festivals should be avoided; finally, Borden Park should be "a thoroughfare for pedestrians and cyclists." Borden Park was identified as the foremost strength of the study area by 59%, while 21% identified Northlands,

24% EXPO Centre, and 13% the Coliseum. Among the most important feature to be preserved or enhanced in the study area, almost 70% identified Borden Park. 31

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1. Reported 5 June 1907; 15 June 1907
2. *Edmonton Bulletin*, 4 May 1928
3. *Edmonton Journal*, 27 June 1911
4. *Edmonton Bulletin* 7 May 1915
5. City of Edmonton Archives (CEA) MS 322 Class 4 File 1: Correspondence June 1921
6. CEA MS322 CLASS 4 FILE 1; Secretary-Treasurer, Edmonton Zoological Society to Charles E. Campbell, Publisher, *Edmonton Bulletin* 18 May 1928
7. *Edmonton Bulletin* 2 April 1927
8. "City Zoologist's Design Used For Whooping Crane Stamp," *Edmonton Journal*, 8 December 1954; "The birdman of Alberta shed light on migration," *Edmonton Journal*, 28 August 2005
9. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 2; Rev. A. Rehwinkel, 3 February 1927
10. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 1; William Rowan to E.L. Holmes, Secretary, Edmonton Zoological Society, 24 January 1928; Holmes to McCord 26 March 1928; McCord to Homes 30 March 1928; *Edmonton Bulletin* 23 May 1928
11. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 1; E.L. Holmes, Secretary, Edmonton Zoo, letter 19 May 1928
12. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 2; E.L. Holmes to William Reader, Calgary Parks Superintendent, 11 February 1929
13. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 2; Holmes to J.B. Harkin, Commissioner, Canadian National Parks, 26 February 1929
14. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 2; Holmes to John Suss, President, Edmonton Zoo, 15 April 1929
15. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 2: Miss E.L. Holmes, Secretary, Edmonton Zoo Society, to J.W. McCool, City Telephone Department, 28 May 1929
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*
19. CEA Clipping 22 June 1929
20. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 3; Miss E.L Holmes to new directors 22 May 1930
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22. Edmonton Exhibition Association Annual Report 1943
23. *Ibid.*; Letter 26 October 1929
24. CEA MS 322 Class 4 File 4; W.H. Wallace, Fish and Game Commissioner, to Miss Holmes, 25 January 1939; Department of Mines and Resources, Lands, Parks and Forest Branch 18 November 1940
25. *Edmonton Journal* 3 July 1954; *Edmonton Journal*, 2 September 1954
26. *Edmonton Bulletin* 11 May 1893
27. CEA, Parks and Recreation Scrapbook, 1956
28. Alberta Corporate registry 510006349-023; Mike Marples, Attractions Committee, Edmonton Northlands, owned and operated by Edmonton Exhibition Association Limited, Annual Report 1980
29. Alberta Corporate registry 510006349-023; "Lotteries," Edmonton Northlands Annual Report 1981
30. *Edmonton Examiner* 11 October 2006; public notice
31. City of Edmonton; O2 Planning + Design Inc. *Edmonton's Exhibition Lands Redevelopment, What We Heard Report, Phase 1, September 2017*, pp.2,6,9,13

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### **Theme Chapter 3: Horse Racing at the Exhibition**

Eye-Opener Bob (Robert Chambers Edwards) wrote in his newspaper in 1903: "The secret of the never failing success of the Edmonton fair is that the management is not too stuck up, religious or hypocritical to take official cognizance of the race horse man. The horsemen are greeted royally and squarely when they get there and the purses are paid right away when won. 1

Moralistic and religious forces did sometimes raise resistance to racing and gambling in Alberta, but generally Edmonton was a great race town. A Dominion Day fair was held on 5 July 1884, with one of the main events being the horse races, already a popular *ad hoc* event at many gatherings throughout the district in the 1870s and 1880s. Racing was a significant part of the Edmonton fairs from this

early date onward. Tony Lauder, from a prominent pioneer family, and an early Edmonton Fire Brigade chief, was a successful jockey at these early races. 2

Formally organized horse racing arrived in Edmonton in 1907. In 1909 the Edmonton Exhibition race track held every western Canadian record for pacing and trotting, making harness racing an important part of the Association's activities from the beginning of its occupancy of the new Exhibition Lands. 3

At first the racetrack shared space with the stock shows. A "subway" was built at the racetrack in 1911 to alleviate problems that this caused:

*The subway the management feels is one of the pressing needs of the exhibition. Hitherto it has been a precarious business holding the judging, as the animals often had to dodge the horses on the race track, but it is hoped that the subway will eliminate all element of danger. It will connect the ring with the stable without a crossing on the race track and will allow the judging to go on concurrently with the racing. Hitherto great care had to be taken, for fear the racing and judging would interfere, as the show animals had to walk across the track. The stock parade will now be held inside the ring and will not interfere with racing. It will also be open for the use of automobiles and carriages, to allow them to enter the judging ring, and by imposing an entrance fee, may prove lucrative.*

The subway remained in place for many years, and for the original reasons. 4

Horse racing made its first profits for the Exhibition Association in 1913, the year that pari-mutual machines were provided to the Edmonton betting public for the first time. Edmonton historian Tony Cashman concludes:

*In 1913 the delightful revenue possibilities of gambling and booze had not occurred to sober Canadian governments. In their maiden run the mutual machines returned nearly 95 percent of the pot to the bettors and gave the exhibition a clear profit of \$6,781.15. This compared neatly with \$3,800 which would have been paid by the bookies and \$10,500 received in grants from senior governments. A subtle change had occurred in the ten years since the Bulletin had defended racing purses because fast horses drew crowds to see prize exhibits of slow horses and fat cattle. By 1913 fast horses were not only attracting crowds; the money the crowds bet was important to financing the entire operation of "The Model Fairgrounds of the Dominion." That trend has never reversed. 5*

Racing suffered reduced attendance and betting during the Great Depression. The 1920s were not always the best either. In fact there was no harness racing in Edmonton in 1927. In 1931 the famous Johnny Longden came to ride at the races, and by such promotions the Exhibition kept horse racing alive on the prairies during this hard stretch. 6

There were political and social forces at work, discouraging betting in Alberta during these years. At the end of 1920, Fred Johnston of Johnston Storage and Cartage Co. Ltd., in Calgary, proposed a week-long race meet in Edmonton, beginning on a Victoria Day. Exhibition Manager W.J. Stark met this idea very positively, but Johnston wrote to him in February 1922: "Owing to the fact that the United Farmers at their last convention adopted a resolution condemning betting, and fearing that a weeks racing meet might antagonize sufficient people to injure future racing, we have decided to give a two day meeting instead of a seven day meeting." 7 Interest in horse racing declined during the 1920s, and suffered losses despite increased purses during 1925-1927. During these years only a one-day race was permitted. In 1928 no fall race was held. The Exhibition petitioned Dr. J.H. Grisdale, federal Deputy Minister of Agriculture, for the right to run two races in May.

*For your information, we have held local race meetings in May twice during the past three years, but have not made any money on these meetings; our object is more to encourage local horsemen and breeders. A two-day meet, with races on May 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, would accomplish our purpose much better than a one-day meet.*

However, a race was only permitted on Victoria Day in 1928. Entry fees that year were \$5, to be refunded to starters. Admission was one dollar, or 50 cents for ladies. Events included: Trot, pace, free-for-all, pony race and open running race. Harness races were held, and the pari-mutuel machines were well advertised. Also, the Hotelmen's Association of Alberta arranged the Edmonton Hotel Keepers' Handicap in 1928. This move was motivated by the obvious numbers of visitors needing accommodation during the summer fair. 8

During the Second World War the RCAF took over most of the grounds for most of each year. However, the Air Ministry allowed use of the track for two races in 1941. There was much opposition to racing during the war. Mayor John Fry, several Aldermen, the Ministerial Association, a neighbouring community league, and others were vocal in their opposition; such opposition was given wide coverage in the newspapers. Percy W. Abbott observed: "It seems to me a foolish thing to cancel racing just because there is a war." Since the federal government and the RCAF controlled the grounds, the races went on. Council subsequently allowed one race, but not the desired second one. 9

With the return of peace after the Second World War, racing returned to the Exhibition Grounds, and it made \$33,000 profits from the horses in the first year. Harness racing returned on the Victoria Day weekend in 1952. Each day this event saw six dashes, one stake (two heats) and one quinella. The dash purses were \$300 and the stake purses \$700 (\$350 for each heat). The Exhibition and Alberta Harness Horse Association cooperated on the 1952 season. "A crowd estimated at 7500 came to their feet time after time for the stirring finishes," a news release enthused. "Frequently six and seven horses finished in the wire, which showed the capable

classification of the Executive of the Alberta Harness Horse Association.” The new Parker Starting Gate was used in these races. The Exhibition planned to use two five-dollar wickets, four two-dollar straight wickets, four two-dollar place wickets, and four two-dollar show wickets. The one quinella used six wickets. 10 In 1952 the Alberta government passed an Order-in-Council granting the Calgary and Edmonton Exhibition Associations \$5000 each. There also was a further grant by way of half the pari-mutuel tax collected by the province, with a maximum of \$50,000 for each association. This replaced an agreement between the Speers Corporation and the Aberhart government. Speers had operated pari-mutuel throughout the western circuit since 1925. With the Speers properties and assets up for grabs, the Horsemen under former Attorney-General Lucien Maynard tried to grab the deal from the Exhibition through a private members bill, which was defeated in April 1957. 11

Totalizer machines were introduced in Edmonton in 1954, providing more speed in racing calculations and information for betting patrons. 12

Harness racing met with mixed success in the mid-1950s. The Assistant Manager noted that in 1955 “we had a pretty fair meet. One of the days fell on May 24<sup>th</sup> and we had an overwhelming crowd and we found we had insufficient pari-mutuel wickets to hand the customers. The next year we undertook to increase facilities and the crowd was poor.” 13

R.C. Marler, Chairman of the Building, Grounds and Development Committee, reported on a soil test that confirmed the obvious marshy nature of the Grounds. These conditions would affect future expansion plans, as they had in the past. This committee also felt that construction of the “Sports-Exhibit Building” (SportEx) would displace nine barns containing 170 stalls and twenty tack rooms, with the garage, workshop and existing Stores Building, and that it would require enough construction to replace these vital parts of the racing facilities. 14

The racing fraternity was the beneficiary of two significant projects during the 1950s; these were the new grandstand in 1953, and the Jockey House in 1955.

In 1960 the harness racing at the Exhibition saw another change. A group headed by Bill Connell secured a charter to operate harness racing in Calgary and Edmonton by a private bill in the Legislature. In fact, it was the agricultural connection that allowed pari-mutuel betting to occur in the first place.

*Shortly after this they approached us to lease our race facilities land finally after long negotiations both Calgary and Edmonton entered into similar agreement with them. This calls for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of 1% of the pari-mutuel play to be paid to us or \$500.00 per day whichever is the greater. We retained the concessions and as well are receiving 50 [cents] per horse per day for stabling. They must race a minimum of 8 days at a time and must pay this minimum charge in*

*advance subject to later upward adjustment if required. ... and are to set their dates after the Western Canada Racing have allocated ours. 15*

Pari-mutuel betting remained a key part of Exhibition financing by 1956. The Exhibition Association opposed the granting of permission to establish a new Alberta racetrack, or to operate additional pari-mutuel betting that year. In a submission to the Legislature it contended that its pari-mutuel revenues were “used to a large degree for furthering and developing an agricultural programme.” This included the Spring Live Stock Show, and the Summer Exhibition, with their many programs. Money went into the prizes and the construction of buildings such as the new Sales Arena and Stock Pavilion. The Association reported that the 1954 Fall Show and Sale, Spring Cattle and Bull Sale, and the Light Horse Show, despite their value to the farming community, all showed deficits, and needed the pari-mutuel revenues very much.

*The increase in purses is the determining factor in the quality of horses; it is the factor which guides and determines the price that race horse men can pay for horse. Raising the standard of our horses is one of the most essential factors for higher pari-mutuel betting. This was quite noticeable last fall when the circuit was able to retire sixty head of the poorer horses. The public like to back the horses which have established form and are known to all race horse fans. Only small betters will back the “dark horse” or “long shot.” 16*

The increasing importance of this issue is evident by the fact that purse money increased from \$21,000 in 1945 to \$61,300 in 1955. The money to fund purses and projects like the new Jockey Club, then under construction, or stabling race horses at less than cost over the winter, was borrowed from the City. “Revenue from horse racing figured largely in the planned repayment of this loan.” 17

Polo Park closed in Winnipeg during 1957, causing concern among horsemen who raced the western circuit. This reduction left the prairie circuit at 71 races, down 17 from the previous year. Edmonton offered 28 races that year. A total of \$240,000 was guaranteed for the 28 races, hoping to attract the thoroughbreds. See Part I for more detail) 18

The Western Canada Racing Association was established in 1957, with four members: Edmonton Exhibition Association, with Calgary, Regina and Saskatoon. E.I Clarke and Al Anderson represented Edmonton at the organizational meeting in Regina. The new organization was set up to “control racing undertaken by the four Exhibition Associations,” with matters affecting the Spring and Fall shows in Edmonton and Calgary having their associations granted exclusive jurisdiction. The principal aim of the new organization was to purchase race management operations of the R. James Speers Corporation at the assessed value of \$44,337.53. Lou Davies, of Winnipeg, and former Operating Manager of the Speers Corporation, was named the first General Manager. The first racing office was located in Edmonton. This group would control thoroughbred racing on the prairies after this. Its head office

was located in the Macleod Building. The “Memorandum of Association of Northern Racing Association Limited” was drawn up in Edmonton in April 1957. Its object was to oversee and manage the new racing regime. 19

Since the new organization also took over the pari-mutuel operations, some objection was voiced by the provincial Deputy Attorney General, and insisted on taking the issue to Premier Ernest Manning for consultation. Legal advisor Stanley McCuaig concluded:

*While I do not think the Registrar of Companies can withhold registration of such a Memorandum and Articles and that if he refused, the Supreme Court would require him to register the company, nevertheless having regard to the intervention of the Deputy Attorney General and what he has had to say on the subject, I think we should move a little slowly. 20*

The year 1957 also saw a dispute between the Exhibition and participating horsemen on the issue of purse distribution. The Horsemen’s Benevolent Protective Association led this protest. Lou Davies had sole authority to deal with the HBPA on this issue. Al Anderson, however, seems to have disputed this arrangement. It took some time to clarify this issue. 21

The Edmonton Exhibition Association board met in August 1960, and efforts were planned to prepare the Exhibition for the upcoming race meets. A fire had destroyed five horse barns in June 1960, and killed 25 thoroughbreds and the owner-trainer Rex Ireland. Al Anderson wrote in a news release: “It is truly tragic that this should happen when the new stable area is so near to completion.” The barns were officially opened by J.D. Higginson, Chief of Pari-Mutuel Betting, in 1961. 22

Five barns had been burned down at the end of the spring race meet. The Exhibition board, the Horseman’s Association, and the Western Canada Racing Association held a one-day meet, raising \$40,000 for victims of the fire. R.C. Marler, Chairman of the Building, Grounds and Development Committee, reported on a soil test that confirmed the obvious marshy nature of the Lands. These conditions would affect future expansion plans, as they had in the past. This committee also felt that construction of the “Sports-Exhibit Building” (SportEx) would displace nine barns containing 170 stalls and twenty tack rooms, with the garage, workshop and existing Stores Building, and that it would require enough construction to replace these vital parts of the racing facilities. 23

An article in *Time* magazine had reported that the barn had been used after the fire inspector had warned that the wiring was not up to specifications. This account was denied by the Association, and legal action was threatened. A new water truck was purchased at this time. No horses were stabled in wooden barns after this date. The Horse Show went on, as did the races. Quinella and Daily Double ticket machines were planned for installation in 1961 as well.

R.C. Marler, Chairman of the Building, Grounds and Development Committee, reported on a soil test that confirmed the obvious marshy nature of the Lands. These conditions would affect future expansion plans, as they had in the past. This committee also felt that construction of the "Sports-Exhibit Building" (SportEx) would displace nine barns containing 170 stalls and twenty tack rooms, with the garage, workshop and existing Stores Building, and that it would require enough construction to replace these vital parts of the racing facilities. President Lloyd E. Wilson reported at the end of 1960 that completion of the new stables was "expected momentarily...." Demolition of the old wooden barns was progressing, and five had been removed north of the racetrack. A contract had been signed to demolish a further fifteen barns. And on the east side of the grounds, and this work had started. This area was slated for use of the planned SportEx. In the meantime it provided more parking space. Also in 1961, fireproof race barns had been built for \$1.5 million. 24

A new coat of arms for the Edmonton Exhibition Association, adopted in 1961, symbolically represented every major aspect of the association. The crest was supported by the figure of a horse on the right, representing horse racing and agriculture. 25

The thoroughbred circuit operated under Western Canada Racing Association was formally dissolved in November 1968, when Saskatoon and Regina left the WCRA. Edmonton and Calgary remained with WCRA. Al Grillo had to then plan how the 1969 harness racing season could be organized in the west. 26 Standardbred and thoroughbred racing remained separate events and organizations under the Edmonton Exhibition Association in 1968. In February of that year Association president Walter Sprague and the new chair of the Racing Committee, Ted Mildon, announced that Al Grillo would be the new General Manager of the harness racing; Grillo was the former manager of Western Harness Raceways. Sprague foresaw a rapid growth in the popularity of harness racing across North America, and saw the same thing happening in Edmonton. In 1968 the most well-liked events in harness racing Western Canada Futurity, the Klondike Gold Pan, the Lieutenant-Governor's Handicap, and the Northlands Championship. Sprague announced that the "hoopla of the Canadian Derby," and the Speed To Spare Championship would now be offered as the top prizes for the pacers and trotters. 27

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Also in 1968 a longstanding beef that the jockeys at Northlands had with the track was addressed. For some time they had complained that the track was uneven in places, and as Don Fleming wrote, this "often made racing conditions treacherous during the monsoon season." Grillo noted that in places "there was a variance as much as 22 inches."

*Hitherto I guess the track crew depended on plain ordinary eyesight to detect the variances, but not even the best trained eye is good enough.*

*This time it was properly engineered. In harness racing, the mobile starting gate convinced us that the track wasn't truly level.*

Prior to this change in which the track was raised about a foot above, improving the drainage during rainy weather. Plans also were announced for the "long promised expansion to five or six furlongs" in the near future. 29

In 1968 the Exhibition Association purchased all outstanding shares of the Northern Alberta Trotting and Pacing Association, as well as the Calgary Trotting and Pacing Association, for \$400,000. The sole assets of these companies, which had become inactive by this time, were franchises to operate thoroughbred and harness racing. The bank also held as security for their bank loans of over \$1.5 million a deposit on the Exhibition Lands from the City, and a pledge of Government of Canada bonds; Alberta also guaranteed the special portion of the loans amounting to \$814,000. This financial commitment would cause some difficulties for the Association, but it enabled racing to continue into the 1970s. 30

One of the more important developments in 1971 saw the Edmonton and Calgary exhibition associations allowed to conduct off-track betting. Negotiations with the province had begun in the fall of 1970. Attorney-General Edgar Gerhart announced that they were currently licensed to conduct pari-mutuel betting, and in the future would be allowed to act as agents for each other in off-track betting shops as well. Gerhart noted that this system would take off-track betting out of the hands of "private entrepreneurs." Off-track betting also would be channeled through the tote machines at the track "and would be reflected in the odds on the race."31

By 1972 there had been much discussion about moving the exhibition to a new site, as many felt that it had outgrown the existing location. However, the Board decided to work within the existing boundaries, and to expand by acquiring residential land adjacent to the present site. Once this key decision had been agreed upon, it was necessary to make plans to upgrade the Exhibition Lands. Among plans for a modern coliseum, a lengthened racetrack was added to the immediate plans. 32

General Manager Al Anderson reported that during 1972 over two million patrons had used the grounds and facilities. A new stand-up bar at the racetrack boosted profits there somewhat, as well as the Association takeover of the concessions in the Grandstand. Even racing totals declined in 1972. Klondike Days was now the major source of profits. While Canadian Derby Sweepstakes offered increased prize money, an unexpected decline in attendance led to losses there as well. Hopes now seemed to rest with the planned Coliseum.

Major efforts were made in 1973 to turn the decline around. That year saw a major parking lot expansion, a new WCRA building, a grandstand basement development, the Inner Rail Lounge, and major track and power extensions. Perhaps more

importantly, the Edmonton Exhibition Association promoted the first sweepstakes in Alberta, the Canadian Derby Sweepstakes, between 1970 and 1974. Association president J.L. Bailey reported to the members that during 1973 the Exhibition had made profits that were “one of the highest in the history of your Association.” He attributed this to several factors: the decision to extend K-Days for an additional three days to accommodate the RCMP Revue which was celebrating the centennial of the NWMP march west. As a result there were more racing days, casino and midway operations. Bailey reported at the end of 1973: “Our Canadian Derby Sweepstakes also exhibited greatly increased sales due principally to the fact that we had a selling period approximately 30 days longer than any previous year, and during that 30-day period, we were the only sweepstake being operated in the province with the result that our profit increased by over 100%.” 33

By 1975 the purchase of the harness racing operation was paying off quite well, with almost \$1 million in direct profit since 1968. “The 1975 harness meet enjoyed an excellent quality of standardbred horses which resulted in exceptionally fine racing,” the Annual Report indicated. “Over 70% of the races required a photo finish to determine the winners – delighting the Association and fans alike.” 34

In 1978 a new tote board was installed for benefit of the racing public. The lower grandstand also was glassed in during the year. The Terrace Lounge was provided with expanded dining room facilities. Gambling profits were generally up significantly. When the harness racing ended on 14 November, its profits also were up. 35

Money realized from the 78-day thoroughbred racing season made record amounts. On Derby Day, 25 August 1979, almost \$1.6 million was gambled. Daily average wagering was over \$700,000. The same could be said for harness racing, which ended on 13 November setting record high attendance and profits; total wagers were about \$34.5 million for the season. Land had been acquired, lane closures, and utility relocations were in place to allow construction of the new racing barns east of 79 Street. 36

In 1980 the Association was going ahead with three major planning documents directed as substantial changes to the grounds in the coming decade. A capital expansion program also was launched, valued at \$7 million. The MacKenzie Spencer Associates Master Plan for the 1980s now seemed to be the blueprint in forward thinking for the Association. Improvements to the racing facilities were a significant part of this plan. 37

As part of the anniversary celebrations for Alberta’s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and plans by the City of Edmonton’s Municipal Anniversary Committee, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowden, attend the Exhibition on 25 July 1980. This was for the inaugural running of the Princess Margaret Stakes, a thoroughbred race. Also on the racing front, the 240-stall Race Barn was completed, opening on 10 April, 1980, with a horseman’s cafeteria and dormitory. Thoroughbred racing

season ran for 76 days in 1980, with about \$1.65 million in wagers handled. Harness racing season closed at Northlands Park on Remembrance Day, handling over \$672,000. The Canadian Derby Ball returned for a second year, and was a substantial success. The Building and Grounds Committee under Ken Webb was concentrating on the racing complex during 1980. A Director of Racing was appointed in 1980 for the first time, bringing all aspects of Northlands racing under his control, and unifying thoroughbred and harness racing activities. H.L.D. Perry was the new president in 1980, while George S. Hughes remained as General Manager. The Association was going ahead with three major planning documents directed as substantial changes to the grounds in the coming decade. This year continued with preferred parking lots, new electronic message centers and computer ticketing. A capital expansion program also was launched, valued at \$7 million. The MacKenzie Spencer Associates Master Plan for the 1980s now seemed to be the key blueprint for forward thinking at the Association. 38

“Racing is its own season,” noted the Annual Report for 1981. “Spring, summer and fall are all rolled into one, separated only by the changing of the guard from harness to thoroughbred and back again.” The inaugural Autumn Gold Pacing Championship was singled out as the highlight of the season. It was the richest harness race ever contested in Western Canada, and was won by Michael’s Glory. Harness racing opened early on 27 February, the standardbreds returned on 7 August. Thoroughbreds ran from 10 April to 3 August, “with the longest single meeting in the history of Alberta.” Finally, the Derby “which has quietly propelled itself into a social event as much as a classic thoroughbred horse race,” was dominated by Frost King in the events. 39

In 1981 the Exhibition Association suffered a setback when the Western Canadian Racing Association was shut down.

Northlands announced on 18 February 2016 that at the end of that year’s season, Northlands Park would be closed as part of its Vision 2020 plan. Vision 2020 foresaw the site redeveloped as an outdoor festival grounds. 40

Northlands President Tim Reid then announced in August 2016 that this plan remained under discussion with the city, although he was clear that “our plans are not to continue racing at this site. But we’ve also got to listen to our stakeholders – the owners, trainers and jockeys - and be considerate of their industry.” Horse Racing Alberta called for bids to build a new A-level racing complex in Edmonton. Century Casinos won the bid, with plans to locate the new facility near the Edmonton International Airport.

When completed plans were to hold the Canadian Derby there. The 2017 Canadian Derby was advertised as the final one to be held at Northlands. Harness racing continued to increase in popularity during the 1950s, and became increasingly popular year by year. By the 1970s this was clear. Harness racing ran for fifty days

in 1971, from 20 August to 16 October. Harness racing ran for 55 days the following year (18 August-21 October 1972). 41

Harness racing and thoroughbred racing were under new management and regulations in 1973. Revenue climbed by about a third. “[The] solidifying of a circuit embracing Saskatchewan, and next year Calgary,” was seen as a very promising profit maker. Racing ran from 18 June to 30 October 1973, and for 58 days (17 June – 29 October) the following year. In 1974 Northlands Racetrack was extended to a 5/8 mile track from its previous half-mile track. 42

Thoroughbred racing also contributed greatly to the EXA pot. In 1968 harness racing ran for 42 days; attendance was 114,673; over \$5 million was handled at the track. By 1976 harness racing was running for 67 days, attendance was up to 186,160, and almost \$17 million dollars flowed through the track. The record wagering rose 23% from 1975 to 1976. 43

Horse Racing Alberta (HRA) was given further support to extend its plans in the spring of 2006, when the provincial government agreed to a ten-year extension to its slot machine contract. There were 625 such machines at Northlands; much of the profits from these machines went to provide the purses that attracted entrants to begin with.

By 2009 HRA had become symbolic of provincial Conservative favoritism. HRA salaries were controversial, and when Dr. David Reid, CEO, retired in 2009, Shirley McLellan remained as chair, and Don Getty as vice-chair. That year HRA cut seven live racing days from the thoroughbred meet, and four standardbred dates in the fall and winter season. HRA received protection under the Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act, and the need to come up with the \$22 million it owed to Ivanhoe Cambridge for work on the new site at the International Airport south of Edmonton. 44

The Canadian Derby became the foremost racing event between 1957 and 2017. During the 1957 season the Canadian Derby was transferred from Winnipeg to Edmonton. Robert James Speer, an Ontarian who moved to Manitoba in 1900, built several racetracks in western Canada. He opened Polo Park in Winnipeg in 1925; the Manitoba Stakes was inaugurated here in 1930, and was limited to Manitoba-bred horses. In 1936 this event opened to any three-year-old Canadian thoroughbreds, and was renamed the Manitoba Derby. The Manitoba Derby then became the Canadian Derby in 1941.

When Polo Park closed in 1956, the Canadian Derby moved to Northlands Park, where it would run for decades. When the Derby came to Edmonton, some thought was given to an appropriately extravagant name for the new event. The General Manager Al Anderson petitioned Lieutenant-Governor J.J. Bowlen for a gift of fifty guineas, as was regularly done for the Queen’s Plate. Bowlen replied:

*In 1955 the question of the running of a "Queen's Plate" in Canada was reviewed and the policy was established at Buckingham Palace that there was to be only one Queen's Plate in each Commonwealth country and that in Canada, thenceforth, there would consequently be only one Queen's Plate.... 45*

A dispute also developed between the Manitoba Jockey Club who complained that Edmonton had not sought permission to stage the Canadian Derby in 1957 or 1958. Furthermore, McCuaig, Desrochers and Company, representing the Exhibition, noted that R.J. Speers had done something similar when setting up the Winnipeg Derby, using a name originally used in Hamilton. This legal development soon blew over with no litigation. The purse was increased to \$15,000 in 1958. In 1960 the Derby obtain a little royal approval in the form of the Governor-General's Trophy, donated by Governor General Vanier to the annual winner. "This, of course, again emphasizes the national significance of the Canadian Derby," the Chairman of the Derby Committee concluded. The Derby now was conducted with a certain amount of pomp and circumstance. The opening breakfast, "colorful, exclusive," held in 1960 at the Petroleum Club, with the Lieutenant Governor arriving in a landau drawn by hackneys, and a guard of honor provided by the Edmonton Sheriff's Posse. He would later provide the new trophy, and decorate the horse with blanket of daisies, to mark the year's Dash for the Daisies." 46

Derby history at the Ex goes back some time. From the days of the Manitoba Derby in Winnipeg which began in 1930, and was renamed the Canadian Derby in 1935. Three-year old Canadian Thoroughbreds ran there before Polo Park was closed in Winnipeg in 1956. The Canadian Derby then was moved to Northlands Park, where it would run until 2017. Start here

The Edmonton Exhibition Association promoted the first sweepstakes in Alberta, the Canadian Derby Sweepstakes, between 1970 and 1974. The early 1970s saw some financial problems for the Association, and even racing totals declined in 1972, when Canadian Derby Sweepstakes offered increased prize money, but an unexpected decline in attendance led to losses. However, things turned around dramatically the following year, when the 1973 Annual Report indicated that the Canadian Derby Sweepstakes had increased its profits by 100%, "due principally to the fact that we had a selling period approximately 30 days longer than any previous year, and during that 30-day period, we were the only sweepstake being operated in the province...."

The Canadian Derby went back to the Manitoba Derby in Winnipeg, which began in 1930, and was renamed the Canadian Derby in 1935. Three-year old Canadian Thoroughbreds ran there before Polo Park was closed in Winnipeg in 1956. The Canadian Derby then was moved to Northlands Park, where it would run until 2017.

Northlands announced on 18 February 2016 that at the end of that year's season, Northlands Park would be closed as part of its Vision 2020 plan. Vision 2020 foresaw the site redeveloped as an outdoor festival grounds. 47 Northlands

President Tim Reid then announced in August 2016 that this plan remained under discussion with the city, although he was clear that “our plans are not to continue racing at this site. But we’ve also got to listen to our stakeholders – the owners, trainers and jockeys - and be considerate of their industry.” Horse Racing Alberta, established by the province under the Racing Corporation Act in 1996, called for bids to build a new A-level racing complex in Edmonton. Century Casinos won the bid, with plans to locate the new facility near the Edmonton International Airport. When completed plans are to hold the Canadian Derby there. The 2017 Canadian Derby was advertised as the final one to be held at Northlands. 48

Horse racing in its several forms provided over a century of color and excitement at the Edmonton Exhibitions, from the river valley to the present site of the Exhibition Lands. Its history forms one of the principal themes that express the essence of Exhibition history.

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#### **Theme Chapter 4: Midways at the Exhibition: Rides, Vice, and Scandals**

Midways came to the fair later in the day. As the urban population began to discover the fair, and see entertainment in more than agricultural form, rides and shows began to provide something for the city dweller. Not that the visiting farmers and their families did not appreciate the spectacles provided by the midways.

##### Johnny J. Jones Exposition

The Johnny J. Jones Exposition was a famous traveling railway show that was well known at midways across North America in its day. It set up stages featuring a variety of amusements and acts; long rows of concession booths; and midway rides. In 1895, Johnny J. Jones established his company, the Johnny J. Jones Exposition Shows & Trained Wild Animal Exhibition, out of DeLand, Florida. By 1916 the show was big enough to expand into the west. The Jones family operated the show after his death in 1930, until 1951 when the U.S. IRS seized its assets for sale for unpaid taxes. During its heyday during the 1920s, the show came to town in fifty steel cars, innovative for its day, as opposed to the wooden boxcars that were less safe for the animals. 1

Exhibition Secretary Louise Holmes recalled in 1921 that since she had been in Edmonton, the Western Canada Fairs Circuit had its midway attractions supplied by the Western Vaudeville Managers' Association, and the Western Fairs Booking Association. "To the best of my knowledge, no member of this organization [Edmonton Exhibition] knows who will get the contract until the representatives from different organizations present their propositions to the meeting." 2

On 8 February 1922 the Edmonton Exhibition board decided to follow other members of the Western Canada Fairs Association and secure the Johnny J. Jones shows for the coming summer fair. The other large carnivals had formed a "combination," and the WCFA felt that this would help to maintain some competition among the midway shows, and keeping down the rates for these shows. Also, in 1922 W.J. Stark noted that prices for farm produce were much better than

the previous fall, and he felt that “the people from the country will come in better [numbers] than they did last year.” 3

Fireworks have been a big attraction from an early date, from patriotic “portrait” displays, to later extravaganzas. The Exhibition board decided to hire the Hand Fireworks Company, from Hamilton, Ontario once again to provide the fireworks show for the 1922 summer fair. The Edmonton Exhibition ushered in its 100<sup>th</sup> year by hosting a gala skating party at the Coliseum on New Year’s Eve, followed by a giant fireworks display on the grounds. The Hand Company handled fireworks for the Exhibition for decades in the 1920s and 1930s. 4

### The 1930s

The Morris and Castle Midway shows did a circuit through western Canada in 1930, including the Edmonton Exhibition. Features included embalmed baby whales, Hawaiian dancers, motordromes “where men race on the straight wall while chased by lions,” and “a portrayal of the inside history of American prisons.” Rides included the Lindy Loop, which would remain popular through the 1930s. 5

The midway in 1938 included attractions like “Miss Anatomy” and “Al Capone’s Car,” with the Ferris wheel and merry-go-round. [CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 10 File 11]

### Royal American Shows

Carl J. Sedlmayr, founder of Royal American Shows, came to Edmonton in late 1931, along with other shows on the western Canadian circuit, to sell the idea of getting the shows into the Canadian west. Their interest piques, in the late summer of 1932, fair representative from Edmonton and other western Canadian locations attended the State Fair of Minnesota to check out the shows. It got a contract with Calgary in 1934. During 1942-1945 it could not come to Canada because of wartime restrictions on railway use. After the war, Royal American returned at the height of its size and success. 5

Delegates to the Western Canada Association of Exhibitions convention (20-22 January 1941) in Winnipeg saw several presentations by midway show companies. Other members of the Class A Circuit felt that some changes should be made. There was now a desire to obtain the services of “a strictly Canadian Midway.” It was also felt that since the Royal American Shows had occupied the Edmonton midway for some time, “and our patrons were inclined to feel that the Midway attractions were the same they had seen before,” that a change was in order. It also was felt that the Royal American Shows might return in the future with a better offering of shows. The WCAE therefore decided to hire the Conklin Shows. Barnes and Carruthers also were hired for the grandstand show – “Music and Wings,” advertised as a new “Musical Extravaganza of Matchless Splendor. Musical Melodies, Bright Comedy and Beautiful Girls.” The theme of the show was patriotic, with RCAF, Army and RCN members involved. Milt Britton’s orchestra was also on the platform. 6

Edmonton found itself at the centre of a scandal in 1975 that would see the disappearance of Royal American Shows from Canada. This tax-evasion scandal led to the Laycraft Inquiry, a Royal Commission named for Justice James H. Laycraft, which was set up to investigate Royal American's practices in Alberta. This inquiry led to the establishment of the Alberta Gaming Commission, the first in Canada, and would change the way "carnivals" were conducted after 1976. On 24 July 1975 over 130 Edmonton City Police and RCMP arrived at the Edmonton Exhibition grounds, seizing many documents, large amounts of money, under a provincial search warrant. These accounting documents led to 87 charges against Royal American Shows under the Criminal Code of Canada and The Income Tax Act. Noting that large suitcases of money were being transported out of Canada led to a lengthy investigation of abuses of the traditional cash-only basis of carnival transactions. The Task Force surveillance disclosed many corrupt practices among all carnival organizations, but Royal American was singled out for prosecution because it was the largest at the time. The Task Force found that Royal American had defrauded the Edmonton Exhibition Association of \$52,164.63, as well as other Criminal Code charges. The details of this scandal remain controversial to this day. Equipment was seized in Edmonton and Regina, held in storage until the 1990s, and then sold off to pay unpaid fines. The disappearance of Royal American Shows led to Conklin Shows taking over the Edmonton midways for decades. 7

In November 1975 Royal American Shows announced that it had decided not to return to the Canadian circuit in 1976, following the Edmonton Exhibition board requested that Royal American post a \$1 million performance bond. Soon after, the Association announced that Conklin Shows, of Toronto, would provide the midway for the coming summer. At this time Royao American Shows, two of its executives, a former executive, and six independent concessionaires had been charged with ten counts of fraud, following the summer investigation. 8

### Conklin Shows

James Wesley (Patty) Conklin was born Joe Renker, in Brooklyn in 1892. He later took his step-father's name. He cut his teeth in the corrupt and shady carnie shows, and came to Canada with his adoptive mother and brother Frank in 1921. Later that summer they took up with the International Amusement Company at St. Boniface. They traveled the west until they bought a half interest in his future partner Speed Garrett's show. Conklin and Garrett Shows then continued to work the western Canadian circuits after 1924, graduating from the C Circuit to the B Circuit fairs. It was what was called a "gillie" outfit, traveling by train with a small crew, and hiring men locally to put up the shows. Conklin Shows grew to be the largest in Canada, especially after 1937 when it obtained the contract to provide shows for the Canadian National Exhibition. During the 1980s and 1990s Conklin remained a vital part of western Canadian shows, and was able to resist the decline in midways that began then. In 2004 Conklin sold its route and equipment to North American Midway Entertainment. The midway was famous in Edmonton and other venues for

its big rides, like the late lamented Zipper and Super Loop. The big rides are still a major draw at the Edmonton summer fairs. 9

The Chillkoot Railway was inaugurated in the midway in 1980. Kiddie Land also got its permanent location on the west side of 73 Street between 115 and 116 Avenues. And the “gold mine” showed a profit for the first time. 10

Midways seem to breed controversy, and in 2005 Conklin Shows experienced another such uproar during the summer fair. While midways depend upon a small core of experienced workers, this group is boosted by many local or imported seasonal people. With no unions, these people can work up to sixteen hours per day seven days a week, for a fixed weekly wage. In 2005 many South African workers spoke to the Edmonton press about their working conditions there, and soon left Conklin. Conklin was issued a warning by Alberta Human Resources and Employment, which continued to monitor conditions among Conklin workers. 11

The midway has had a bad reputation from its beginning, and the story of the midways at the Edmonton Exhibition has not gone unscathed by scandal. But, of course, it seems to have left more happy memories than otherwise over the years. Many will be sad to see the midway disappear from its historical haunts.

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### **Theme Chapter 5: Attractions at the Exhibition 1914-1961**

While the Edmonton Exhibition Association has its roots deeply embedded in the agricultural history of Edmonton and district, other attraction beyond the spring and fall stock shows and sales, and cattle, swine and sheep breeders became increasingly important over the decades.

Exhibition attractions were mostly featured at the summer fairs, but many other attractions came to the Exhibitions during different seasons as time went on. Parades date from the 1920s; Ice Cycles and Ice Capades became big winter events. Of course, hockey became the foremost among winter events, with curling. During the First World War military bands were very popular. The 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders Band, with John Slatter as bandmaster, appeared at the fair in 1914. 1

Attractions evolved with the times, and as the automobile age dawned in a big way, attractions reflected these changes. The Exhibition board decided in 1922 to line up auto polo, auto races, and a polo match at the Spring Show. Sig Haugdahl set the one-mile auto speed record at the summer fair in Edmonton that year. Many of the most popular attractions were to be found at the midways. Johnny J. Jones shows indicated that they once again would come to the summer fair 1924. (See Midway section for detail) 2

Ethel Catherwood, one of the most famous women athletes of her day, came to the fair in 1923. Born in North Dakota and raised in Saskatoon, the "Saskatoon Lily" was an all-round athlete, including as an Olympic competitor. But entered into show business for a while in the 1920s, when she would jump a horse off a platform into an artificial pond. This was one of her specialties in 1923.

Manager W.J. Stark hired a "theatrical orchestra for the acts" at the summer fair. He wrote to E.F. Carruthers, World Amusement Service Association, in Chicago:

*I had my eyes opened in Weyburn, where Sam played the same acts that we have on the circuit but with the Highlanders Band playing for them instead of our Band. It was hard to recognize them as the same. I also was particularly disgusted with the treatment which your acts got last year, particularly those musical girls, and I think you need not worry about the music at Edmonton any more. 3*

Getting to the Exhibition Grounds could prove difficult, especially in the winter. The Winter Carnival was held in the Arena on 3 February 1928. The Exhibition Secretary at that time requested that the Edmonton Radial Railway provide a special streetcar running on the loop near the Arena for the convenience of Edmonton supporters of an early series of events aimed at convincing the city to embrace the winter. 4

Amateur band competitions were popular during the Depression. The Exhibition held its first Amateur Band Contest in 1928, open to any community of under 7500 population. Bands from the Elks, BPOE and other fraternities also participated. H.G. Turner was Director of Music, cooperating with the Exhibition, and arranged for the amateur band contest held on 14 July 1930, among others. This year the contest was held in the Arena. Thaviu's Band and Presentations, of Chicago, also had a successful Revue at the Summer Fair that year despite drenching rain. The 1920s also saw the first sustained demand for "pageants." These would be included in parades in the future, especially on special commemorative dates like the sixtieth anniversary of Confederation, the Golden Jubilee, and similar occasions. (See Parade section for detail) The John B. Rogers Producing Co. of Chicago presented a quite lavish pageant in 1928, as a stage production. The following year the Rogers people presented a pageant on the Arabian Nights theme. 5

Several important art exhibitions were organized through the Exhibition and Edmonton arts groups as well, bring Canadian and international artists usually only seen in Central Canada to the west. For example, an art exhibition was mounted at the summer fair in 1929, loaned by the Royal Academy of Arts, and shown on the top floor of the "Octagon Manufacturers' Building." Paintings, sculpture and drawings by prominent academic painters of Canada were featured. 6

Well-known Canadian artists like C.W. Jeffreys, John William Beatty, Frederick M. Bell-Smith, Tom Thomson, *et al* were shown to the public at the Exhibition Grounds the following year, in 1930. Major Frank Norbury, the Edmonton artist and sculptor, oversaw the exhibition. 7

Many Edmontonians still recall the Ice Capades. These colorful winter extravaganzas began with the Ice Cycles. Ice Cycles was established in 1945 to meet the overwhelming demand for Ice Capades, an associated company that was becoming very popular at the end of the Second World War; a second Ice Cycles circuit was set up in 1953 to meet the popularity of such shows in the postwar years. Scheduling ice shows proved tricky at the Arena during the 1947 season because of the possibility of hockey playoffs there. But Ice Cycles was presented on 22-27 April 1948, to sold-out crowds. The Barbara Ann Scott show was put on shortly before the Ice Cycles, causing that organization some concern. (Scott would return in March 1951 to appear at the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues ice show.) 8

The Arena was getting so many shows after the war that it was almost a problem for the Association. Ice Cycles 1949 ran during 15-19 February of that year. It featured

the “ballet” group undertook a precision routine in Mounted Police costumes. “The Mother Goose omelet was one of the highlights for the younger population as they saw Little Riding Hood, the big bad wolf, the three little pigs, the old woman who lived in a hoe and other pantomime characters.” Ice Cycles returned in 1950, and by “special arrangement” with Walt Disney, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was the centerpiece of the show. The show ended with the whole cast performing from the *Merry Widow*. In 1955, at the height of the Cold War, the star of Ice Cycles was Aja Zanova, a Czech world champion who had sought political asylum in London. 9

Ice Cycles 1952 featured a production of *The Student Prince*. James Paul arranged the Ice Cycles at the Gardens during that time. Efforts were made by the Association to keep down costs of shows to \$2.50, to encourage families and children to see the ice shows. Rotarians sponsored the opening night in 1952, and helped to keep things economical. Ice Cycles had a close relationship with Disney during the 1950s; 1953 featured *Cinderella* “for the first time on ice” among nine large production numbers and twenty acts. The John B. Rogers Producing Co, of Ohio, had mounted a *Cinderella* show in 1928 as well. 10

Ice Cycles 1953 was mounted at the Gardens on 2-7 February 1953. Sonja Henie and her Ice Review at the Arena on 12-17 July 1954, put on by Holiday on Ice Shows, NYC. Ice Cycles also returned that year. The Sonja Henie Revue of 1954 also returned for every night of the 1958 fair. 11

The Exhibition Managing Director wrote to A.R. Grant, business manager of Holiday on Ice, NYC, on, noting: “Last year was the first year for an ice show in our Arena and we did not expect that it would go too well. Our public were very pleased with the caliber of your show and we are well aware of the fact that your star, Sonja Henie, did help us with our promotion.” At the 1953 show a colorful semi-circular bandstand was set up for the musicians. 12

Ice Capades in the Gardens remained very popular during the 1950s. The big show on 19-24 January 1959 proved this. During this period many service groups also provided free tickets or passes to children, except for weekend shows, swelling the attendance and the noisy enthusiasm for the ice shows.

By 1959 the Exhibition was becoming concerned about their relationship with the parent company. The EXA General Manager wrote to Dave Dauphinee, Manager, Pacific National Exhibition, Vancouver, on 16 February 1959:

*[The] thought occurred to us that possibly Ice Capades have been working the circuit too long and are becoming a trifle dictatorial in their attitude. We found this particularly in respect to the type of tickets to be printed, nature of auditing ticket sales, depositing of receipts and various other things that created a great deal more work for our staff and, as result, adding to our over all expenses. It appears that most people are quite satisfied with them so we*

*have confirmed our date for 1960 but still intend to have tickets printed and ticket selling done the way se want it and not by their standards.*

The General Manager pointed out problems developing in the main venue, the Gardens, by the end of the 1950s. On 25 February 1959 he wrote to John H. Harris, president of International Ice Attractions Inc., Hollywood: "We are in the unhappy position in Edmonton of occupying a building that is 57 years old and, as a result, there are certain sections of it that certainly do not lend themselves to good viewing of any spectacle." He added that the Exhibition was "wishing for a replacement within a reasonable length of time."

He also added some good news for the bottom line at the Exhibition: "You will be quite happy that in the Provincial budget brought down in the Provincial Legislature last week-end the Amusement tax of 10% was abolished and the Provincial Treasurer made the statement in the House that he did not anticipate any of this being passed on to the public which more or less permits promoters to retain prices at present levels and retain that portion devoted to tax." Before this, International Ice Attractions had been pressuring the Association to raise seat prices, but it had been resisting this. 13

After the heyday of the giant ice shows, the attraction persisted to some extent. In September 1990 the AgriCom saw Kurt Browning, Kristi Yamaguchi, Lisa Sargeant and other stars at an ice show designed to assist figure skating development in Alberta. 14

By 1990 the AgriCom was being consistently being criticized for its poor performance space and acoustics. Columnist Neal Watson pointed out that a very small crowd out to see a concert by Bruce Hornsby probably reflected the rundown condition of the venue. However, despite stopgap measures, it would take until 2006 for concerted efforts to be made to improve the AgriCom. 15

By the 1960 the fair was growing, and more attractions were available for the public. The days when an aviatrix like Ktherine Stinso, or an aerial horse diver like Ethel Catherwood could alone draw the crowds was passing, with the vaudeville shows. Bigger attractions were needed to satisfy the public "World-class!" One age of attractions ending and another beginning.

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### **Theme Chapter 6: Everyone Loves A Parade**

Parades have been part of the Edmonton Exhibition experience from its beginning as an agricultural fair in 1879. At first these little "parades" seem to have been fairly informal, and arranged on a small scale. In 1879 livestock was an important part of the fair, and as prize stock was led around this might be considered the first example of a parade. Twenty years later, after the fair had struggled to get established, at the 1899 fair the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that there was a morning parade with a band, and "citizens and Indians" riding on Main Street, "the latter being in large numbers and riding with precision almost military." 1

The first parade to promote the summer fair may have been staged in 1903. In June 1908 a parade given by Campbell Brothers Consolidated Shows put on an exotic performance. This was the first time the Exhibition relied on imported shows, the start of a longstanding tradition. Informal parades seemed to continue intermittently. In June 1909, some 300 "Indians" were reported camping in Groat's Flats for the parade and fair. 2

Shortly after the Exhibition settled into its present site, the parade tradition began to pick up. In 1911 a horse parade was given as a tribute to the role of horses in the agricultural west. This occurred on Citizens' Day 16 August 1911, when about 300 horses were shown off to best effect by their owners. The 101<sup>st</sup> Fusiliers Band led off, along Jasper Avenue, ending up at the Grounds. 3

During the First World War Edmonton held many parades. Most of these were regimental parades, or were put on by specific organizations other than the Exhibition. However, in 1917 the Edmonton Automobile Club "debuted" in a parade of "decorated and illuminated" cars. This was held in conjunction with the Exhibition's Spring Show, and was supported by the Edmonton Exhibition Association. Some fifty cars rolled down Jasper Avenue and ended at the Exhibition Grounds. 4

During the Summer Exhibition in 1917 Katherine Stinson, the famous "aviatrix" visited the city; mule races proved very popular; sulkies with "lady drivers" raced; and the military put on shows centred on trenches they had dug on the grounds to educate the public. There seems to have been another auto parade, and the parade included a float designed to look like "HMS Kent." Other floats of course had a military theme in 1917.

The year 1918 saw the United Commercial Travelers put on a Citizens' Day parade of decorated cars. This was the year that the venerable "Where City and Country Meet" theme was replaced by "Sell Your Hammer and Buy a Horn," signaling the rise of King Automobile.

A Fancy Dress Parade opened the 1921 Spring Horse Show, with Guy Weadick putting on two "bucking horse" shows for that event. This "parade" was held at the Horse Pavilion, spread over the three-day show. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported: "The arena itself looks particularly well this year with its horse show colors and the Chinese lanterns." During the fancy dress part of the parade: "All the costumes were particularly good, and none more true than the Ku Klux Klan costume." W.J. Stark and Charles Wilson were in charge of the fancy dress parade. During the horse show many horses also were paraded: draught horses, women's carriage horses, saddle horses, "roadsters," and heavy horse breeds like the Clydesdales, Belgians, Percherons and Suffolk Punch. Horse sales were reported in great detail in the local press. 5

A parade of University of Alberta purebred stock selected from its herd prizewinners at shows in Chicago and Guelph was also held in 1921. Hon. Duncan Marshall, Minister of Agriculture, led the parade at the opening of the Exhibition Spring Show parade on 12 April 1921. 6

In July 1923 the manager of the Edmonton Exhibition Association notified J.J. McCormack, Secretary of the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council: "We are hoping to put on a monster parade on Wednesday, Citizen's Day, at the Exhibition...."

Imperial Oil planned to put six decorated trucks in the parade, and Heintzman and Co. also offered to participate in the parade. The Edmonton Commercial Grads led the 1924 parade. 7

During the 1920s the parades grew in popularity. The Johnny J. Jones show was a regular feature of the midway by the end of the decade. (See Midway section for detail) In July this show asked to be in the 1929 parade as well. "I am counting on you furnishing your band, camels, the pygmies, and as many clowns as you may have available," Jones wrote. This big parade ran on Monday, 15 July 1929, and at 1:00 left the corner of 109 Street and Jasper Avenue, with the Jones show in line. Canadian National A.A. Pipe Band, a popular added attraction, followed the *Edmonton Journal* float. 8

By 1929 prizes for decorated cars were well-established features of the parades. Prizes for decorated private cars and decorated bicycles in the parade were judged by local celebrities and dignitaries, such as A. Balmer Watt, editor of the *Edmonton Journal*, B. de Graves, editor of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, and Emily Murphy. Frank Dynes, manager of the Edmonton Hudson's Bay Company, won the award for "best decorated car". "We have almost as an annual event a street parade on the opening day of our Exhibition," the manager wrote, "and we frequently give prizes for the best decorated cars in the parade." 9

The 1929 parade included ambitious floats designed by the Hudson's Bay Company, Johnstone Walker, Swift Canadian Company, P. Burns and Company, Gainers Ltd., Paveys' Candy who "have promised a float if their new truck has been delivered by that time." Hayward Lumber Company Ltd. "will put their large elephant into the parade as part of their display." North West Utilities, W.H. Clarke and Co., and dozens of other local companies promised to provide floats. 10

Parade Day 1935 saw the resumption of parades after a brief hiatus caused by the Great Depression. The Army and Navy Store provided an impressive float, SS Edmonton, which was singled out for praise by the local press. But it could not rival previous, or succeeding, parades.

The Edmonton Exhibition parade was cancelled in 1940.

*The regular Exhibition parade has been cancelled this year. It was felt desirable to save the amount of money expended in this connection, inasmuch as most of it comes from the merchants and business firms, who get so many calls now in connection with war effort, that we thought it unfair to ask them to make additional contributions in order to assist in our parade.... [The] Edmonton Exhibition having lost its Federal grants, as have all other Associations; music on the grounds has been reduced to two engagements only, of local bands.*

The Exhibition parade tradition was revived in 1951, setting off a golden age of great Exhibition parades during the 1950s. The first parade in twelve years was an

Edmonton morale booster, if any was needed during the oil boom. The 1951 Mammoth Parade of Progress had over one hundred floats, 14 bands and many other participants. The Exhibition float represented the United Nations with flags from all member countries. 11

By 1953 the Exhibition was operating at full blast as the postwar, oil-fueled boom. This was the Diamond Jubilee of the Exhibition as well. In May, the Managing Director informed Carl Sedlmayr, with the Royal American Shows:

We have had an extremely busy spring with our harness races, rodeo, horse show and various cattle events and now we are working on our Exhibition. Everything is pointing to our biggest and best year of all. All phases of our various departments should participate in substantial increases. Payrolls in our City are the largest ever. We had an increase of 14,000 added to our City's population. Building is away ahead of last year and we are having nice rains now and the rural area should be prosperous.

The 1953 Diamond Jubilee Parade was held on Monday, 13 July 1953. This was also Coronation Year, and the city was in a celebratory mood. 12

H.W.J. Maddison, Chair of the Parade Executive Committee, sent the following observation to EXA members:

*In reviewing the 75-year history of the Edmonton Exhibition Association gives credit to its outstanding success year after year to the support received from Alberta's farming communities – the grain growers, livestock breeders, ranchmen and cattlemen, horseowners and gardeners, and last but not least, the Junior Farm Personnel.*

*For years this support has been received without due recognition from the public point of view. That is why it is the sincere wish of the Edmonton Exhibition Association to give Agriculture and Rural Life, a more prominent place in the Annual Parade. This we hope to do through active participation by Alberta's 4-H Clubs. 13*

Awards offered for parade entries included the Connelly Trophy for the best non-commercial float; the Birks' Trophy for the best float representing national firms; the Canada Safeway Trophy for the best local firm's float; the Lawrence Rye trophy for the best 4-H Club entry; and merit awards for outstanding or unusual floats. John Michaels was the parade marshal. Super-Atomic Fireworks also ended each day, as did chuck wagon races. At least 136 entries were made in the 1953 parade. Starting with the Police Escort and Chief of Police, and a massed pipe band, and the RCMP, the parade was led off by Lt. Gov. J.J. Bowlen, Premier E.C. Manning, Mayor William Hawrelak, and other dignitaries. Many ethnic groups were represented, as were all branches of the military. A float was devoted to "Indians." Many local businesses then followed. "Miss Roughneck" had a float, as did many towns from around Alberta. Several 4-H Clubs also entered, as did the chuck wagons from the

fair, and the Civil Defence Fire Unit and two rescue units. Edmonton Fire Department brought up the rear. 14

The year 1955 provided another opportunity to mount a “mammoth” celebratory parade. This was the Golden Jubilee for Alberta as a province. Chief Justice G.B. O’Connor, as chair of the Edmonton Jubilee Committee, reported that Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent would be “the chief participant” in the Edmonton events. The parade was one among several celebrations that year, including a parade down Jasper Avenue to 95 Street and then to Clarke Stadium where a “National Pageant, similar to that which took place for the Coronation in the Edmonton Gardens [on 2 June 1953].”

Despite every effort, some criticism was leveled at the parade by one director. Bands were bunched up and discordant performances occurred. However, he noted:

*The worst Faux Pas which could have happened in any Parade took place in front of us. A float depicting the Virgin Mary, a group of children kneeling in adoration at her feet. A grammophone – with a vocalist singing Schubert’s “Ave Maria” very beautifully – one of the most moving spectacles in the whole Parade. But the tragedy was that this group was followed immediately by a Hill-billy group playing Cow-boy music – at the same time. 15*

On 16 July 1956 the Grey Cup Parade was held, celebrating the success of the Edmonton Eskimos. Bud Poile organized this event for the EXA, and once again John Michaels was the parade marshal; Stan Reynolds entered a Rumley tractor; Mr. Peanut showed up; Al Oeming and Cheetah also fascinated the crowds. But the highlight was the appearance of the Eskie champions riding in open cars to the loud applause of their fans. Many bands participated, including the Edmonton School Boys’ Band, Edmonton Girls’ Pipe Band, and many others from communities around the province. No band prizes were offered but a bandstand was set up in front of the Manufacturers’ Building for out-of-town bands to perform on afternoons. Alberta Civil Defence once again provided a fire pumper and two rescue vehicles, as befit an event in the middle of the Cold War. 16

The 1957 Parade of Progress was enlivened by large animal balloons interspersed throughout the lineup. These were provided by Giant Balloon Parades, which had participated in other Edmonton parades for the Exhibition. The 1957 parade was very similar to that of the preceding year in its lineup. A soapbox derby entry was added this year, and the Civil Defence were there again as well. The 1958 Salute to Youth Parade ran on 14 July 1958. The parade included RCMP band and musical ride at the forefront. Maclab Construction and other local companies provided many floats. This year the large local department stores “were brought back into the parade.” Youth oriented floats provided by the department stores were themed “Fairyland,” “Adventureland,” “Sport,” “Rock ‘n’ Roll,” and “Rockets.” A “high class Comic Section” was added this year. The “Best Decorated Car” awards returned. And the Dr. J.J. Bowlen Lieutenant Governor’s Trophy for best Old-Timers entries

was added. The Old-Timers' Section included a Landeau carriage and team, bearing the Lt. Governor; a Victorian carriage; a stagecoach; a Red River cart; a mechanical reaper; a flat rack wagon; a buck board; early fire fighting trucks and a 1907 International "horseless." The parade theme for 1959 was The Golden Anniversary of Flight. 17

The big parade tradition continued into the 1960s. The parade theme for 1960 was "Modern Trend" and was held on Monday 18 July 1960. Many antique cars were in this parade, to illustrate the march of time and the theme of progress.

In 1959 the Exhibition became the Home of the Canadian Derby and this would be commemorated by the EXA as well. 18

R.C. Easton, Chairman of the Parade Committee, pointed out in 1961, that the success enjoyed by Calgary in having a single theme every year might be a good model for the future. "He said to get full support of a theme here, all areas must be stimulated into interest." Al Anderson noted that adopting "the Great Northern Theme" could develop many aspects of the north so connected to Edmonton history. This was undoubtedly part of the discussion that led to the Klondike Days theme the following year. 19

By 1975 the spectacle was called the "Klondike Days Parade." Parade Chair Doug Burns mounted a big parade with entries from far and wide. The 1978 Klondike Days Parade was opened by a fly-past from CFB Cold Lake, with several floats dedicated to the 1978 Commonwealth Games. 20

A special parade marked the centennial of the Edmonton Exhibition. An evening parade was held to start the Klondike Days, with the Snowbirds from CFB Cold Lake flying above Jasper Avenue. The centennial parade was limited to 100 entries. Governor General Edward Schreyer, and his family, acted as honorary parade officials. 21

The Edmonton Northlands Homecoming Parade started off Klondike Days with the Lieutenant Governor and Premier Peter Lougheed as parade marshalls. 22

It was estimated that 250,000 people watched the Klondike Days Parade in 1981. Mark Berger, a disabled Edmontonian, was the Honourary Parade Marshall as part of the theme International Year of the Disabled. 23

Parades remain a significant part of the Exhibition experience. Their roots can be seen to be deep in the agricultural past of the Edmonton district. From simple livestock parades, "Indian" processions, through decorated cars and visiting midway shows, to the triumphant Eskimos in the 1950s, the parades have been a reflection of their times.

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### **Theme Chapter 7: Rodeo Days at the Exhibition**

The first significant Canadian rodeo opened on 2 September 1912 as "The Last and Best Great West Frontier Days Celebration," the forerunner of what came to be known simply as the Calgary Stampede. The roots of some of the subsequent main rodeo events in the Canadian Northwest included bronc busting on the Military Colonization Ranch, roping contests at the Fort Macleod Agricultural Fair in the 1880s, while the famous John Ware demonstrated steer wrestling on the Walrond Ranch. The first professional rodeo, with rules, regulations, fees and prizes was held in Raymond, Alberta in 1903; it was staged at a stadium built for the purpose by Ray Knight the previous year. When Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show toured western Canada in the early 1900s, an appetite began to grow for a bigger and better shows, culminating at Calgary in 1912. 1

Guy Weadick, a former American cowboy and showman, promoted the first Wild West Shows in Canada, and was a founder of the Calgary Stampede. The Great War of 1914-1918 saw the end of many events, including rodeos, but the Victory Stampede in Calgary in the summer of 1919 revived interest in rodeos in Alberta. During the early 1930s it was hard to get top American cowboys to compete, however. The Rodeo Association of America, which represented rodeo managers to their own advantage, was boycotted by Canadian and American competitive cowboys at the Boston Gardens rodeo in 1936. After this, competitors received a bigger cut of the gate receipts, and this led to the formation of the Professional Rodeo Cowboy's Association, and the Canadian Rodeo Cowboys' Association, founded in 1944. From 1944, the Exhibition Association dealt with these groups directly. 2

The Edmonton Exhibition Association announced that it had plans to put on a rodeo in connection with the Summer Fair in 1924. Manager W. J. Stark contacted Guy Weadick, on his T.S. Ranch near Longview, Alberta to see if the famous Calgary

Stampede performer could attend the Edmonton event. Instead he appears to have attended the Spring Show on 9 April.

*Weadick is bringing some clever cowboys and cowgirls with him, who will give exhibitions each evening consisting in the riding of bucking horses, fancy and trick riding, fancy and trick roping, and the exhibition of the educated mule "Prohibition Flossie."*

In a letter to Pat Burns, Stark indicated that the 1924 stampede was "in response to requests from hundreds of people in the northern part of the Province who have never seen a stampede." The 1924 rodeo at the Edmonton Exhibition was long remembered as a financial disappointment, and probably it was this memory that discouraged the return of rodeo to Edmonton until 1950. 3

The Canadian National Finals Rodeo was set up during the Second World War, in 1944, through the efforts of the Canadian Rodeo Cowboys' Association.

The second edition of the rodeo in Edmonton came about in 1950; it grew from a meeting between General Manager James Paul and the famous Herman Linder, retired rodeo rider. Linder was a rodeo competitor beginning in 1929; he later set a record of 22 wins at the Calgary Stampede. In 1934 he won the first place bareback, first place bull riding, first place saddle bronc, and second place saddle bronc open, and was named North American and Canadian All-Around Cowboy. The first chuck wagon races were planned in 1950. 4

Plans to revive the rodeo suffered from memories of the money-losing 1924 rodeo. But Linder was able to stage his first rodeo on the Exhibition infield in June 1951. The first rodeo in 1951 was protested by the Edmonton chapter of the Alberta Humane Society, the Society attacked the rodeo as "a cruel and most unworthy type of entertainment for the City of Edmonton, and ask that the matter be reconsidered." The Exhibition arranged to have an officer of the Humane Society present at all the rodeo shows. The issue of animal safety would recur for many years. However, the success of the first rodeo, and especially the popularity of the chuck wagon races, led the Association to start planning for 1952 immediately. 5

The Board voted unanimously following the 1950 rodeo to arrange a second one with Herman Linder, and to accomplish this set up a Rodeo Committee. 6

Linder returned in 1952 but the weather was cold and rainy. Linder examined the muddy infield on the early morning of the first day, had an early meeting with Paul, and within two hours had made the decision to move the rodeo indoors. The cowboys and Exhibition staff helped to move the chutes and other equipment indoors at the Gardens. This is how the rodeo became Canada's largest indoor rodeo. It rained all rodeo week, but the show made some money. Guy Weadick praised the 1952 rodeo:

*I feel sure that with what transpired last year, when you moved into the Edmonton Gardens with the Rodeo presentation, you had such success, even with the almost immediate decision you had to make, in order to move indoors, - that from then to now, you have been able to make the necessary changes indoors that will permit the corralling of the cattle, so they can be handled in a manner that will insure fast presentation of the events in which they participate and at the same time allow you to present a very fast and entertaining programe (sic), that will show your patrons that in moving into the building, they will be assured of a much better, faster and all around better show than could ever be expected outdoors in Edmonton at that time of the year.*

Rain returned to plague the 1953 rodeo, the rural roads became impassible, and there were many fewer patrons attending. 7

The rodeo was moved back to the last week in May in 1954, and Rex Allen was the imported "Western star" for that year. In 1956 Cliff Ross was appointed Rodeo Chairman, and that year the date was moved to the last week in April; Rex Allen returned to sing his "Western hits," and profits began to grow. Rex Allen would attend more than any other Western star, again in 1963-1964, with Slim Pickens, who was a rodeo clown. Buddy Heaton, another famous rodeo clown attended in 1954; Roy Rogers' Liberty Horses also performed. This was the age of western stars, and Gene Autry put on a one-night show at the Gardens on 15 October 1954. The 1955 rodeo was held in June, before a crowd of 6000. 8

The first Rodeo of Champions was held in 1957. But it became a giant success in 1958 when Don Dodge brought Poco Lena, the biggest money winner, to the Ex. The first sold out performance occurred in 1960. When the Oil Kings made the playoffs in 1961, there was a conflict with the rodeo, and Ross agreed to hold off on the rodeo, if it could join up with the stock show in 1962. This is where the Canadian Western Stock Show and Rodeo appeared. Ross had taken over from Linder by 1962, and Len Perry became Rodeo Chair in 1969. During these years the Vold family provided the stock; Harry Vold and Reg Kessler from 1951-1962, and son Wayne Vold after 1967. 9

The rodeo was very popular in the 1950s. Chuck wagon races were a big hit in 1951, as part of one of the Linder rodeos. The first year had twenty entries, including most of the participants from the Calgary Stampede. On 17-21 June 1952, events included calf roping, bronc riding, steer decorating, bull riding and bareback riding. The 1953 Rodeo had steer wrestling instead of steer decorating. 10

During the mid-1950s the event continued to be very popular. It was renamed the Rodeo of Champions, and usually had most of the top North American rodeo champions attend.

A cutting horse competition was held in 1956. The Rodeo was held 29 April – 4 May 1957, again to good attendance. Wild horse racing was added on 30 April 1959 at the Rodeo of Champions (27 April – 2 May 1959). The Canadian Rodeo of Champions featured the Canadian Championship Jumper Sweepstake, at the Gardens, during 2-7 May 1960, as well as a Quarter Horse Show. The Rodeo of Champions, growing in popularity, was held again during 1-6 May 1961. 11

The rodeo remained in style during the 1960s, although its popularity began to diminish until reinvigorated through later initiatives.

The Edmonton Sheriff's Posse first appeared at the 1956 Calgary Stampede, and then in Edmonton, where it became a regular event in parades. Before this it was a private club, established in 1951 by RCMP Constable Henry Norris. It really took off in 1964 when the Exhibition purchased two stagecoaches, and after this the group began to show up at many fairs, riding with the stagecoaches. By 1968 it was referred to as the Klondike Posse, escorting the stagecoach on their Palominos in parades and other events. They first performed their "pattern riding" at the Northlands Horse Show in the fall of 1965. 12

In 1960 Governor-General Vanier and Mrs. Vanier attended a Friday evening performance of the rodeo. Vanier agreed to sponsor the Canadian Derby at this time. He also offered to provide a trophy, designed by the famous sculptor of western art, to each year's best three-year old horse in western Canada. 13

In 1966 the Reining Quarter Horse Stake was added to the evening program at the Gardens for the first time. During the 1960s "Western stars" like Michael Landon, and the other members of the *Bonanza* cast continued to fill out the rodeo shows. The nightly livestock parades became increasingly well attended. The rodeo opened on a Sunday in the spring of 1967, the first important sports event to play on a Sunday after the Sunday sports bylaw was passed by City Council in November 1966. The 1967 Sports Show and Rodeo was the first show to open in the newly renovated Edmonton Gardens. Cy Taillon, the "Voice of Rodeo," had announced the rodeo for almost every year it had been active. The Denver man explained the essentials of the five standard events to the crowds: saddle bronc riding, bareback bronc riding, Brahma Bull riding, calf roping, and steer wrestling. 14

The Canadian Finals Rodeo grew out of these beginnings, becoming the national championship rodeo in Canada. The first CFR was held at the Gardens in November 1974, with 24,000 in attendance; by 1977 it was held in the Coliseum, with 46,049 attending, almost doubling attendance in three years.

ICFR is the final event in the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association season, culminating that season each November until 2017. Every year CFR featured the top ten money-winners in each event across the Canadian rodeo season, as well as the second and third place finishers in the last ten rodeos in the Canadian Tour each year. Each event was contested over five days, with six rounds. In 2006

international contestants were invited to become participants in CFR. Prior to this only Canadian cowboys competed.

The K-Days Rodeo was a so-called one-header, where each competitor competed in only one event daily over three days. There were ten competitors for every event for a total of 30 entries per event over the three days. Cash prizes went to the highest point scorer in each event at the end of the three days.

Association President Harry Hole wrote in the Annual Report for 1975: "Edmonton established itself in the forefront of rodeo activities with the Canadian Western Superodeo, in the spring, and the Canadian National Finals Rodeo, in November. Both of these events are now held in the Coliseum, attracting visitors from all of Western Canada." The old rodeo established in 1950 as the Edmonton Exhibition Rodeo had changed briefly when it was known as the Golden Jubilee Edmonton Rodeo in 1955. It then became the Rodeo of Champions for several years, until the western Canadian Rodeo was organized. In 1975 it was renamed Superodeo. Prominent Edmonton Rodeo Chairmen were J.C. Peter, Cliff Ross, and Len Petty. 15

During 29 March to 2 April 1978, the Canadian Western Superodeo put on a big show for its patrons. Canada's largest indoor rodeo, as it was being billed, also had many acts besides traditional competitive events. The year 1978 saw Mexican Charro, Francisco Zamora demonstrated his skill in classical Maguey roping, and other acts amused the crowds in addition to the Trail Horse Stake and Cattle Cutting Competition from the Quarter Horse Show. The fifth CFR also wound up the season on 12 November in great style. 16

The centennial of the Exhibition was marked by the Northlands Superodeo returning to "the star attraction format," featuring Don Williams musical act. The CFR ran from 14 - 18 November 1979. Tommy Bews of Pekisko, Alberta set a record by capturing his fifth All Around Championship at the CFR. 17

The Canadian Finals Rodeo once again brought together the top ten Canadian cowboys in each event in 1981. A new committee, the Canadian Finals Rodeo Promotion Committee, chaired by Warren Holte, was formed in June 1981. It was an offshoot of the original Canadian Finals Staging Committee. Len Perry and the Board of Directors decided that it would be in the interests of the Canadian Finals Rodeo to have the local staging and promotion committee operate as a separate entity rather than as part of the overall CFR Commission. 18

Over 40,000 turned out for the Superodeo in 1981, to see three "Super Events": matched calf roping, matched saddle bronc riding, and matched Yak riding. Successful rides were measured in single digit seconds. 19

Toward the end CFR was offering about \$1 million in prizes, attracting top cowboys from far and wide. Since 1974 CFR has been held at Northlands Coliseum. Disputes between CFR, and Northlands and the Oilers Entertainment Group, failed to reach an agreement. On 21 July 2016 organizers announced that CFR would be held in

Edmonton for the last time that Fall. When plans to move to Saskatoon fell through in October 2016. A new deal allowed elements of the rodeo to remain for one final blowout. This change came as a shock to Edmonton and its rural districts. A city-wide celebration marked by families in cowboy hats and boots, with horse trailers parked outside city hotels and motels, now seems to be a thing of the past.

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17. Alberta Corporate Registry 510006349-023; Len Perry, Chairman, Canadian Finals Rodeo Commission, and Don F. Freeland, Chairman, Northlands Superodeo, Edmonton Northlands, owned and operated by Edmonton exhibition Association Limited, Annual Report 1979

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19. Alberta Corporate Registry 510006349-023; Edmonton Northlands, owned and operated by Edmonton exhibition Association Limited, Annual Report 1981, p.6

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## **Theme Chapter 8: Athletics and Sports at the Exhibition: Horseshoes to Hockey**

### Early Athletics and Sports

Sports and athletics have played a very important role at the Exhibition from the beginning. Early historical references were to horseshoe competitions, marked early summer fairs, as did tug-of-war, cricket and other events no longer common.

More organized sports soon followed. The Shamrock Athletic Association started using the infield of the racing oval in 1918. They also requested the use of one of the rooms under the grandstand for a dressing room. 1

Probably the most well known team in Edmonton during the 1920s was the Edmonton Commercial Graduates, who rented the arena to play the famous Minneapolis team on 2-3 December [1927]. The Grads were regular contenders during these years. 2

By 1928 the Exhibition infield was used for baseball and junior football on weekdays. The Sons of England, established in Edmonton in 1910, organized a Cricket Club, for which a small pavilion was built in the same year at the Exhibition Grounds; the cricket pavilion would be removed during the summer fair later that year. The Provincial Skating Championships also were held in the Arena on 3 February 1928. 3

A.R. Lawrence, manager of the Eskimo Girls' Basketball Club, requested permission to play at the Exhibition in 1930. On 17-22 July 1933, another tournament was held; at this time the standing champs from 1932 were the Mundare Senior Boys;

Mundare High School Junior Boys; Bruderheim Senior Girls; Red Deer High School Junior Girls. Teams from all around the district also competed between 1934 and 1938. In 1938 Percy Page and the Grads were introduced from the stage in front of the grandstand audience during the summer fair. The Second World War ended this tournament. 4

The Second World War caused several changes in sports and celebrations. The Winter Carnival was cancelled when the Royal Canadian Air Force took over the grounds as its Manning Depot. 5

Events like the annual safety driving contest for tractors began in 1953; on 12-17 July 1954; in 1955; and 15-20 July 1957 in the grounds.

#### Hockey at the Exhibition

Various sports such as curling and basketball have been performed at the Exhibition Grounds, but undoubtedly the king of these has been hockey for most of its history. For hockey, dependable ice is required. This ice came to the Arena for the 1927-1928 season. Exhibition President Percy Abbott wrote to Mayor Ambrose Bury in November 1927: W.J. Stark and Abbott informed with Bury "the question of putting ice in the Arena this winter."

*It was pointed out that while it was very doubtful if there would be any professional hockey, it still might not be good business to allow the Arena to remain idle as a rink this year, as doing so would mean a very considerable loss of prestige....*

*We understand that the City contemplated building a free rink on the corner of the Park Grounds, and such a free rink in close proximity to the Arena is merely another reason why no undertaking to operate without a loss could be given....*

The City Clerk C.E.K. Cox notified the City Commissioners that at a special meeting of Council held on 9 November 1927, "[by] resolution it was agreed that ice be placed in the arena rink for the coming winter." Hockey appeared that December, but transportation proved to be a problem. Streetcar service promised by the Edmonton Radial Railway only served the Alberta Avenue entrance so that many people walked from the Highlands line, even though the ERR had promised to use the loop into the grounds. In the days before large-scale mechanized ice making, makeshift methods were used. In November 1949, the following method was used:

*We use a model T front axel with 50 gallon drum mounted up-right. The flooding bar is perforated and can be made 4 or 5 feet wide, depending on how fast you want your ice flooded. The water can be controlled wither by use of a valve at the back or by a control on the push treds (sic). We use the latter. Attached to the bar at the back for flooding you can use a canvas or sack. This is a very inexpensive type and works very satisfactorily. It is very similar to those used in the Maple Leaf Gardens. 6*

The Exhibition shared the ice between hockey games and members of the Edmonton District Hockey Association. The matter of sharing Sunday afternoon hockey and supporting junior hockey teams was rectified in 1947 by the Exhibition board passing a resolution: "That we subsidize the Junior Clubs to the amount [of \$1000] to each Club and that we endeavor to allot them two nights a week for League games in the Arena instead of Sunday." (CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 9 File1; W.J. Stark to Art Potter, EDHA, 10 September 1947)

### The Edmonton Flyers

The Edmonton Flyers represented the city from 1940 until 1963. The team played in several senior and minor professional leagues during the more than two decades they competed. The Flyers first were part of the Alberta Senior Hockey League (1940-1941) but did not play during 1941-1945, during the Second World War.

Professor W.G. Hardy proposed a Big Five Senior Hockey League for the 1945-1946 season (Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Calgary) as he felt that Alberta and Saskatchewan could not support more teams alone. The organization meeting of the Western Canada Senior Amateur Hockey League was held in Calgary on 9 September 1945. The Western Canada Senior Amateur Hockey League included Edmonton, Calgary Stampeders, Saskatoon Elks and Regina Capitals. In February 1946 CKUA offered a cup to the player judged to be the most valuable in his team.

After the war they were part of the Western Canada Senior Hockey League (1945-1951), then in the Pacific Coast League (1951-1952), and at the end of their run for the Western Hockey League (1952-1963). As the senior hockey champions of Canada, they won the Allan Cup in 1948. The Flyers won three Lester Patrick Cups as the Western Hockey League champions, for the 1952-1952, 1954-1955, and 1961-1962 seasons. During their time in the WHL, the Flyers were a minor league affiliate of the NHL Detroit Red Wings. Edmonton fans followed great players like Al Arbour, Johnny Bucyk, Glenn Hall, Bronco Horvath, Bud Poile and Norm Ullman as they built their careers on the ice at the Edmonton Gardens.

The Pacific Coast League was established as an amateur league during 1945-1948. Summer 1948 the directors decided to professionalize the League, with an original 10 teams, divided into Northern and Southern Divisions in both the US and Canada. In 1950 the Southern Division was disbanded, leaving 6 teams from the Northern Division as the reorganized Pacific Coast League. In 1951 Portland withdrew, and Calgary, Saskatoon and Edmonton joined. The league name was changed in 1952 to the Western Hockey League. In 1955 Fred Miller was appointed manager of the Flyers, with the Edmonton Exhibition Association. Appointee Assistant Manager in January 1954, he became manager in August 1955. Bud Poile was the coach, and Percy Ferrell the trainer. This season the Flyers had recently lost several key players to the NHL: Ullman, Bucyk, Horvath, Hall and Stanku. In 1957 the league was split into the Coast Section (New Westminster, Seattle, Vancouver and Victoria) and the Prairie Section (Brandon, Calgary, Winnipeg and Edmonton). In 1958 the

Edmonton Flyers team was transferred from operation by the Exhibition Association to the Detroit Hockey Club, the first NHL Club to have direct control of a club in the Western Hockey League. 7

Frank Gerald Currie was named manager and coach of the Flyers as of 1 May 1950, a team that had won the Allan Cup for the 1947-1948 season. Bud Poile became manager in 1952. Frank Currie had led the Flyers to their first Allan Cup in 1947-1948. Currie came to Edmonton from the Montreal Forum where he was one of Frank Selke's right-hand men. Currie had played in England and Quebec, as well as in lacrosse before this. About this time, in 1949, Cecil "Tiger" FGoldstick joined the Flyers organization as team "aches and pains man," a former lightweight boxing champion in the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War, as well as an accomplished wrestler. "Tiger" became a beloved personality around the city for years. 8

Edmonton was admitted to the Pacific Coast League as a full member in May 1952, at the PCL Annual Meeting. Dr. Rupert Clare and Gordon MacDonald represented Edmonton at this meeting. In the PCL days Edmonton sported white as its predominant home color, and gold and blue as its away color. 8

The Flyers were building a strong team in 1952. The October 1952 lineup included: Glen Hall in goal; Jim Hay, Pat Coburn, Hugh Coflin, and Bud Poile, defence; Earl Johnson, Jim Uniack, Lou Jankowski, Earl Reibel, Jim Anderson, Len Haley, Gerald Ehman, and Jack McDonald, forward; Bud Poile was the coach and Pat Coburn the captain. Flyers fans were focused on the game broadcasts on CKUA, with Art Ward announcing the hometown play. 9

Although the Prairie Clubs held a big margin over the Coast Clubs, Edmonton was struggling in this 1953.

Vic Stasiuk, right winger, increased scoring lead to 3 points over teammate Earl Reibel in previous week (end of February 1953) Stasiuk had 35 goals, and 43 assists for 79 points. Stasiuk then was taken out for the season by a dislocated hip from "a freak accident", and Jim McDonald with a broken jaw. RE: Stasiuk Report 9 March 1953 "It was a bad break both for the Edmonton Star who seemed headed for the individual scoring title and for the club who needed his services badly in the drive for a play-off spot." Top season scorers March 1953 - Vic Stasiuk and Earl Reibel, in the entire WHL; also Earl Johnson, Jim Uniack, Larry Wilson, and Bud Poile. 10

An *Ice Chips* news release in March 1953 noted that "Earl Reibel, ('the shifty Edmonton centerman'), who won the 'rookie award' of the American League last season, is almost a cinch to lead the Western League in scoring this season." The WHL final official scoring records published on 26 March 1953 reported that Reibel was top of the list; Vic Stasiuk was number 3 despite his injuries sustained during the season. *Ice Chips* (5 April 1953) concluded: "The Edmonton-Calgary series was

not a good one for the home fans. The visiting team winning all five games. The Flyers winning all three games played in Calgary by a one goal margin....” 11

The final play-off for WHL championship in 1953 was in Saskatoon, between the Flyers and the Saskatoon Quakers. “...Calgary carried Edmonton the full five games and into sudden-death overtime in the fifth game before the Flyers were able to win. The flyers had another tough series with Vancouver and although the Edmonton team were able to win same in four games the Canucks gave them a real battle.”

1953 Edmonton Flyers won the President’s Cup, after eliminating the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> place clubs. “It was the first time that a fourth place club has gone on to win the play-off championship.” 12

The Flyers were developing their star roster in 1953. A WHL release note: “For the first time in several weeks a new player, Enio Scisizzi of Edmonton, leads the individual scorers. Scisizzi with 20 goals and 19 assists for 39 points has three more than his closest rival.” 13

In the early 1950s James Paul was the team manager, and the coach was Bud Poile; home arena for the Flyers was the Edmonton Gardens, with ice 85x215 feet, and seating 6800 enthusiastic fans. “Bud Poile of Edmonton continues to lead the playmakers with 31 assists although he has missed the last few games due to a leg injury,” reported a WHL release in January 1954. Glen Hall played goal every game of the season as of 24 March. Don Poile won the “Rookie of the Year” award. He scored 26 goals in the preceding season, with 33 assists, for a total of 59 points. He was a right winger who won out over Bill Bucyk, another Edmonton possibility.

“After four games, Edmonton and Calgary are right back where they started from and their finals are now reduced to a three game series with Calgary having the advantage of home ice. Two of the three games, should the third be necessary, will be played in Calgary. During the regular season they divided their 19 games equally. They have done the same in their first four play-off games. Each won the games played at home. There is only one goal difference in their scoring in these four games. Calgary has scored 14 to Edmonton’s 13 goals.” Don Poile and Enio Scisizzi both scored 70 goals in the final tally. Others scored higher in the league. 14

Johnny Bucyk and Bronco Horvath shared individual honors for the first week of the season with 5 points each. This was a sign of things to come for the Flyers. Promising rookies Johnny Bucyk, Norman Ullman and Jerry Melnyk were becoming local stars and Roy Kelly soon was added to the roster. WHL as of 30 October 1954: Horvath had a hat trick in October 1954, to the loud approval of the fans. 15

The Flyers won the President’s Cup in 1953 and 1955, for the WHL winner. Billy McNeill set the scoring pace for rookies with 45 points. As of 23 January 1956, Jerry Melnyk held WHL leads with goals in eleven consecutive games, and was top scorer and assists as of 22 January 1955. 16

A WHL release reported: "At the end of the 1952-53 season, Edmonton's Earl Reibel led the league with 90 points and immediately graduated to the Detroit Red wings where he has been one of the Star Centers of the NHL." Horvath also set a new league record by scoring 110 points during the 1954-55 season, scoring 50 goals to lead the "goalgetters." Horvath's performance earned him a try-out with the New York Rangers where he established himself as a NHL performer. During this WHL season each member team had a puck with its logo on one side; the Flyers had an aircraft logo. Tony Lesick was named team captain, with Al Arbour and Jerry Melnyk as assistant captains. Len Lunde led the rookie scorers in October 1956 – Edmonton obviously was blessed with good rookies during these years. 17

These were exciting times on the ice. Rough and tumble tactics saw the that the Flyers tended to rack up more penalty points in these days than most of the other teams. The WHL notified its clubs in December 1956: "We have fined Mr. Poile \$100.00 for threatening to punch an official and for the use of abusive language in the presence of paid customers." 18

Dennis Riggin, the Flyers goalie, was named best rookie in Prairie Division by sportswriters, and the first goalie to win best rookie in the WHL. Born in Kincardine, Ontario on 11 April 1936, he played junior with the Hamilton Tigers. Riggin came to Edmonton, and took over from goalie Giles Boisvert when he was injured. 19

### The Oil Kings

The Oil Kings have lived through several iterations: the Edmonton Oil Kings (1951-1976); the Edmonton Oil Kings (1978-1979); and the Edmonton Ice (1996-1998). The original Oil Kings team played in the Western Canada Junior Hockey League (1951-1956), then with the Central Alberta Hockey League (1956-1965) during which time they won the Memorial Cup in 1963, then joined the Alberta Senior Hockey League (1965-1966), and finally joined the new Western Canada Junior Hockey League in 1966. When the World Hockey Association was organized, and the Oilers arrived in town, attendance began to decline. The original Oil Kings became the Portland Winter Hawks in 1976.

While with the Central Alberta Hockey League (1956-1965), the Oil Kings struggled, much to the vocal discontent of the fans and owners. In one game with Ponoka on their "inaugural road test," things went south.

*[They] sure as heck were on the wrong foot last night," roared a raging Leo LeClerc. "I didn't make the trip but I heard enough ... to make me sick. Imagine...a bunch of old men outskating juniors. ...they couldn't pass, couldn't shoot...they looked sick. ("Oiler Bass Raging About Poor Efforts," Edmonton Journal, November 1959)*

Bill Hunter made a brief effort to revive the team under the original name during the 1978-1979 season. This team had very low attendance, and after one season became the Great Falls Americans, lasting 28 games.

The WHL came to Edmonton in 1996, with the Oilers in a slump, and refusing to allow them to play in the Coliseum, which forced the Edmonton Ice to play in the AgriCom. The Ice relocated to Cranbrook, and was renamed the Kootenay Ice after two seasons. A team named the Oil Kings returned to Edmonton in March 2006. This team won the Memorial Cup in 2014.

The Oil Kings led major junior hockey back to Edmonton when the Edmonton Investors Group was awarded an expansion franchise by the WHL on 16 March 2006, to begin playing during the 2007-2008 season. Patrick LaForge, president and CEO of the Edmonton Oilers, was one of the most influential promoters of this move. Bob Green, the general manager for the new franchise, began scouting for team members that year. The team logo used originally between 1950 and 1976 was restored as the “new” logo. 20

Head coach Steve Pleau was released from the remainder of his contract in June 2010, as was assistant coach Rocky Thompson. The Oil Kings ended their season at 16-43-4-9, and fan support was slumping after the first three seasons. Derek Laxdal then became the new coach. Laxdal had played with the Toronto Maple Leafs and New York Islanders, after the juniors with the Brandon wheat Kings and New Westminster Bruins in the WHL. Laxdal came from the East Coast Hockey League's Boise, Idaho team to Edmonton. Randy Hansch was named general manager of the team in August 2013. 21

In 1998 the Oilers sold the naming right to Skyreach Equipment Ltd., a St. Albert company. The former Northlands Coliseum, and Edmonton Coliseum, was now the Skyreach Centre. Exhibition president Harry Hole felt that this deal went “a long way toward putting the Oilers on a solid foundation.” Hole, Jack Bailey and Ted Mildon, were the prime pushers for the Coliseum project 25 years before. This team seems to have secured the land from the City, grants from the province, and a \$10 million loan from the federal government. Things were slow to start, and Hole remembered walking on the site with Deputy Premier Hugh Horner when the excavations were just beginning.

*“I said, ‘We were going full blast but we haven’t got all the money yet.’ Horner said, ‘Harry, whatever you do, don’t stop.’ Well, that was all I needed to hear,” Hole recalls. 23*

## The Edmonton Oilers

The Edmonton Oilers have such a recent and avidly followed history to the present day, that their story will be dealt with by a fairly concise approach. The team was organized in 1971, and played its first season in 1972-1973 as one of the twelve

founding teams in the World Hockey League. When the Calgary team dropped out of the planning, the team was renamed the Alberta Oilers. This lasted one season, and they returned to the Edmonton Oilers name for the 1973-1974 season. The Oilers joined the National Hockey League on 1 November 1979, as one of four franchises introduced with the NHL and WHL merger. The team won Stanley Cups in 1984-1985, 1987-1988, and 1990, during the “dynasty.”

Bill Hunter was at the centre of the team history in these formative days. Hunter owned the Oil Kings, founded the Canadian Major Junior Hockey League, which became the WHL. It was Hunter who revived the Oilers name from the Oil King days. In 1976 Glen Sather was acquired for his final season as a player, and quickly moved to the coach’s bench. He remained in this position for 23 years. In 1978 the new owner Peter Pocklington acquired Wayne Gretzky. The rest, as they say, is history. Home games were played at the Gardens, making this venue acquire a unique role during the dynasty years. The Gretzky statue, Stanley Cup held aloft, became another iconic spot outside the Coliseum. When Gretzky was traded, things went into a slump, but the team returned to the playoffs. On 5 February 2008 the Edmotnon Investors Group provided letters of intent dto Daryl Katz for the sale of the Oilers. The Katz Group owned the naming rights to the rink and it was renamed Rexall Place after the Katz company from 2004 until 2016. Unfortunately the Oilers finished last in the league. 24

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#### Theme Chapter 8: Athletics: Sources

1. City of Edmonton Archives (CEA) MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 4 File 1; Mayor Joe Clarke to W.J. Stark, 12 April 1920
2. CEA MS 322 CLASS 2 Subclass 4 File 3
3. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 2 File 1; Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, Alberta Branch, Letter 7 January 1928
4. Memo 18 June 1930 to Louise Holmes; winners of this first regional basketball tournament are listed
5. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 4 File 4
6. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 9 File 1; P.W. Abbott to City Commissioners, 8 November 1927; C.E.K. Cox to City Commissioners, 10 November 1927; E.L Holmes to K. McConnell, 22 December 1927; CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 9 File 1; Letter 7 November 1949
7. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 1; Flyers news release 1955; *Flyer Flashes* 3 November 1955

8. City of Edmonton Archives MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 6 File 3; CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 6 Files 4-5. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 6 File 8, Flyers news release 8 December 1954
9. Pacific Coast Hockey League, Agenda Annual Meeting, 1952, held in Seattle, 13-14 May 1952; Agenda Annual Meeting p. 3; CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 3
10. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 3
11. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 6
12. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 6; *Ice Chips* news release 16 March 1953; *Ice Chips* news release 16 March 1953; *Ice Chips* 5 April 1953
13. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 6
14. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 8; WHL release
15. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 9; WHL release 11 January 1954; WHL release 13 April 1954
16. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 10; WHL release 11 October 1954; *Ice Chips* 25 October 1954; WHL release 30 October 1954
17. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 14
18. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 16; WHL release
19. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 17; WHL "To All Clubs" 28 December 1956
20. CEA MS 322 Class 2 Subclass 5 File 19; WHL release 2 May 1957
21. Derek Van Diest, "Oilers get into junior hockey," *Edmonton Sun*, 17 March 2006; Derek Van Diest, "Green's machine," *Edmonton Sun*, 2006; Derek Van Diest, "Back to the future," *Edmonton Sun*, 10 November 2006]
22. Mario Annicchiarico, "Oil Kings dismiss Pleau after disappointing campaign," *Edmonton Journal*, June 2010; *Edmonton Journal*, 18 June 2010; Terry Jones, "Kings hire top ECHL coach," *Edmonton Sun*, 19 June 2010; Alicja Siekierska, "Oil King's name Green's former right-hand man GM," *Edmonton Journal*, 13 August 2013
23. Dan Barnes, "Skyreach gives Oilers a lift and Coliseum a new name," *Edmonton Journal*, 24 September 1998; Jac Macdonald, "Skyreach marks its silver anniversary in low-key way," *Edmonton Journal*, clipping, nd
24. "History of the Edmonton Oilers," *Wikipedia*, last edited 10 March 2018; accessed 16 March 2018

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**Appendix:** Historical Land Titles; City of Edmonton Ownership of Exhibition Lands (that portion of paved parking lot and central-south part occupied by Bonanza Park).

CT & Associates Engineering Inc., Edmonton, Alberta, conducted a historical land titles search for Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Central-East Portion of Northlands Grounds, Edmonton, Alberta, 2015.

Their conclusions follow:

The west half of the subject site has been owned by the City of Edmonton since 1928.

The east half of the subject site has been owned by the City of Edmonton since 2000. Prior to this, between 1948 and 2000, the east half consisted of twenty-four residential lots with the City of Edmonton having ownership prior to 1948, prior to the subdivision. 1

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1. CT & Associates Engineering Inc., Edmonton, Alberta. Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Central-East Portion of Northlands Grounds, Edmonton, Alberta. Edmonton: CT & Associates Engineering Inc., March 2015, p.7

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## **Conclusion**

The themes and overall history presented here highlight the integral nature of the Exhibition and its lands to the development of Edmonton community. The services provided by the various groups that have supported and developed the area speak to basic principles of “being Edmonton”. Support for community commercial endeavors – from early agriculture, through development of new technologies - run the gamut of what has made Edmonton an economic power. Activities focused on also reflect deep commitment to community “quality of life” issues as they have evolved in Edmonton. Provision of service to citizens is a touchstone of “The Ex” in all its work – from zoos, to preferential railway rates that allowed all to participate, to public events like parades, to development of ties that have brought outstanding sporting teams and entertainment to Edmonton.

The initial phase of the ARP, public consultation, reflects the value our citizens still place on the importance of a family space, of connections to the natural world, of having events that are inclusive of all and using these lands effectively to build Edmonton as a vibrant community. These values were in fact reflected from the earliest days of the uses of this area.

## **Appendix:** Edmonton Gardens summary

The Edmonton Livestock Pavilion was completed on 17 May 1913, and was designed by Roland Lines, one of Edmonton's foremost architects who would be killed in the First World War three years later. The Thistle Rink, up until then the centre of ice sports, burned down on 30 October 1913, necessitating the need for another similar venue. Work started on Stock Pavilion with Manson and Dunlop holding the contract. W. J. Stark, the Exhibition manager, said at the time: "...the Stock Pavilion was the biggest project ever undertaken by any exhibition association in Canada." The Stock Pavilion was reported open in May 1913. It boasted that it was larger than Madison Square Gardens and could seat 7000, as well as having stables for 200 horses. 1

When the Pavilion was refitted with ice, it became known as the Arena, and was renamed the Edmonton Gardens in 1949. George Marks (9332-108 Avenue) submitted the name "Edmonton Gardens" to the "Name the Arena" contest on 29 August 1949, and won the prize for naming the new arena.

The Gardens would host many big events in coming years, in addition to the sports events that became its hallmark. The Moscow Circus played the Gardens on 17-21 December 1963, for example. However, by 1965 there was a big debate about the future of the Gardens; the Fire Chief made many statements to the press about the fire danger in the aging building, and local insurance representatives were quoted to the same effect. Plans of the Gardens indicating fire exits, in the event of a fire, were printed in the *Edmonton Journal*. Former Fire Chief A.J.G. Lauder was quoted as saying: "I would like to attend hockey games there, but I value my life too much." 2 Fire Chief Jim Graham ordered the closure of the Gardens in May 1966, and Exhibition manager Al Anderson said he would not attempt to resist this move. 3 However, shortly after this Bill Henning, Exhibition president, said that the Association would appeal to the Provincial Fire Commissioner. 4 Provincial Fire Commissioner A.E. Bridges, however, upheld the closure, unless significant changes were made to the Gardens. 5 Acts like the already booked Shrine Circus were annoyed that they could not use the Gardens. The Association felt it had to appeal the closure decision to protect itself from litigation by other acts that were already booked.

Substantial renovations were undertaken over the winter of 1966-1967. The Gardens reopened with the Rodeo in January 1967, with renovations only about half completed. 6

The last scheduled event at the Gardens occurred on Sunday, 3 January 1982. Demolition began almost immediately after this.

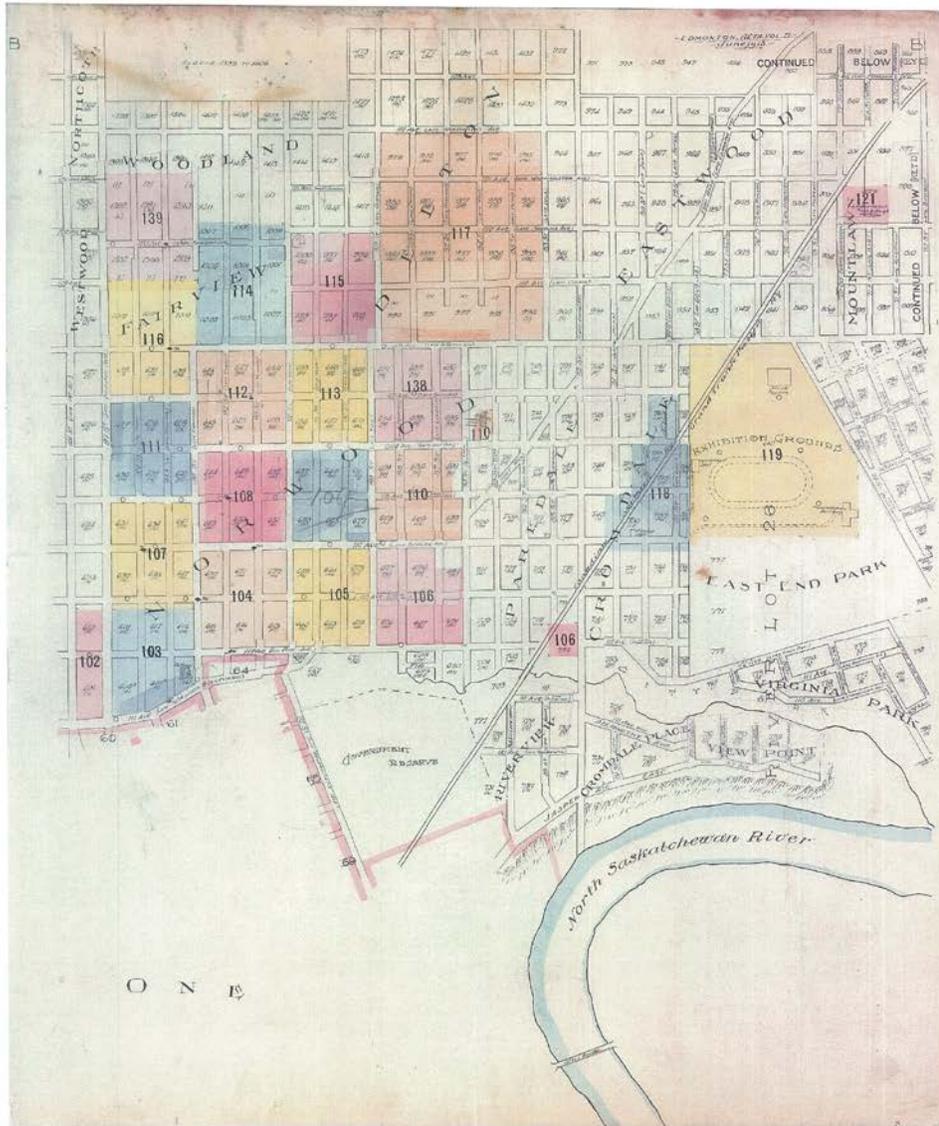
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1. *Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 February 1913; *Edmonton Bulletin*, 1 November 1911; *Edmonton Bulletin*, 17 May 1913

2. *Edmonton Journal*, 1 June 1966
  3. *Edmonton Journal*, 25 April 1966
  4. *Edmonton Journal*, 7 May 1966
  5. *Edmonton Journal*, 11 May 1966
  6. *Edmonton Journal*, 13 January 1967; *Edmonton Journal*, 27 May 1966
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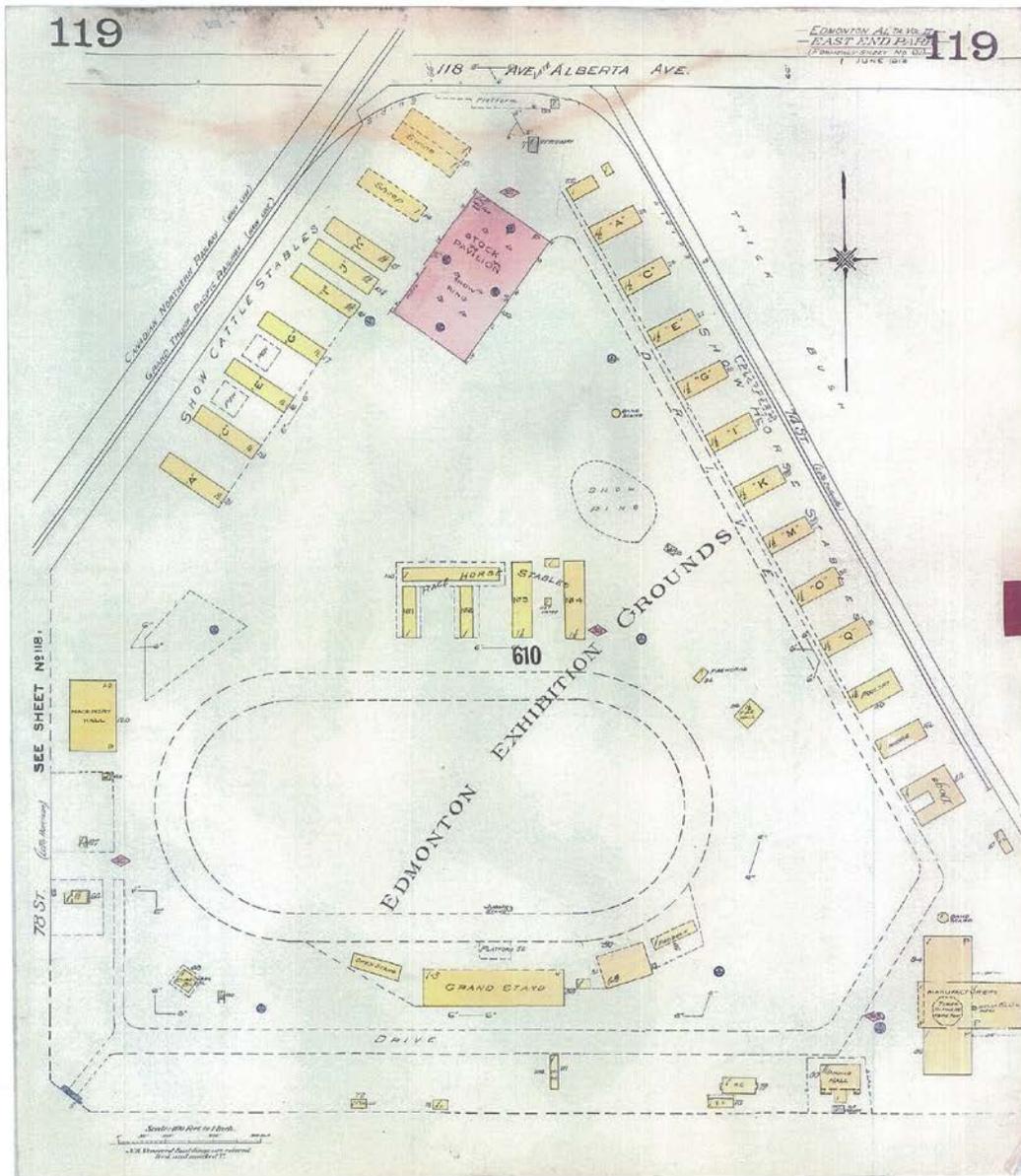
# Aerial Views and Maps

1913 FIRE INSURANCE MAPS



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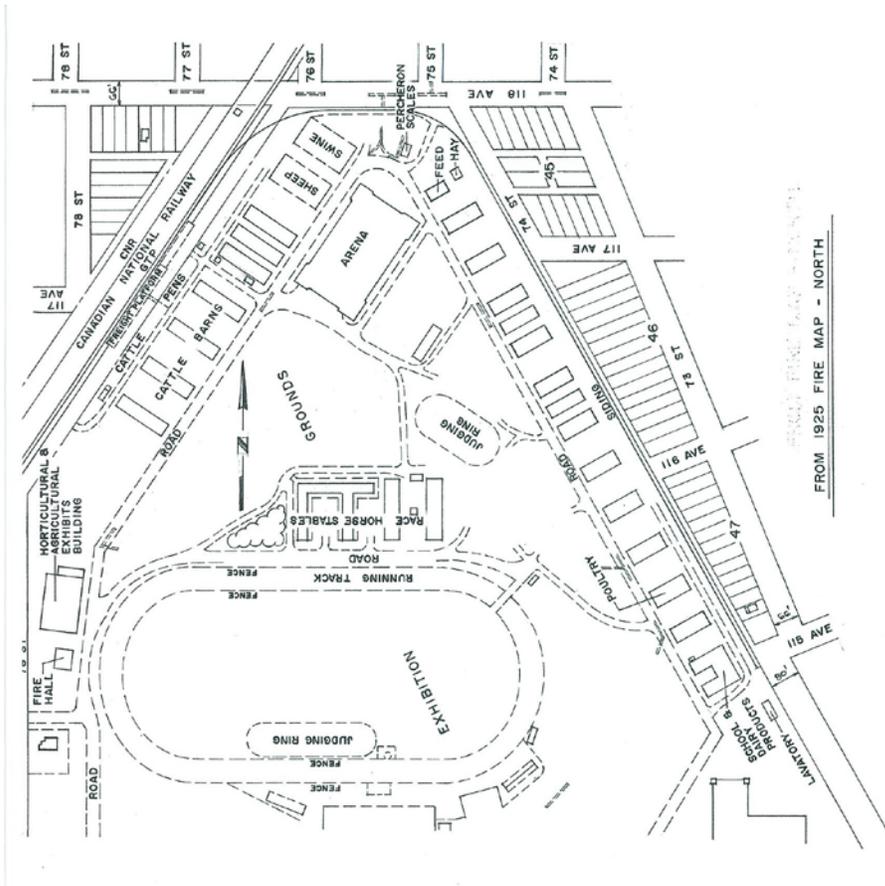
1913 FIRE INSURANCE MAP



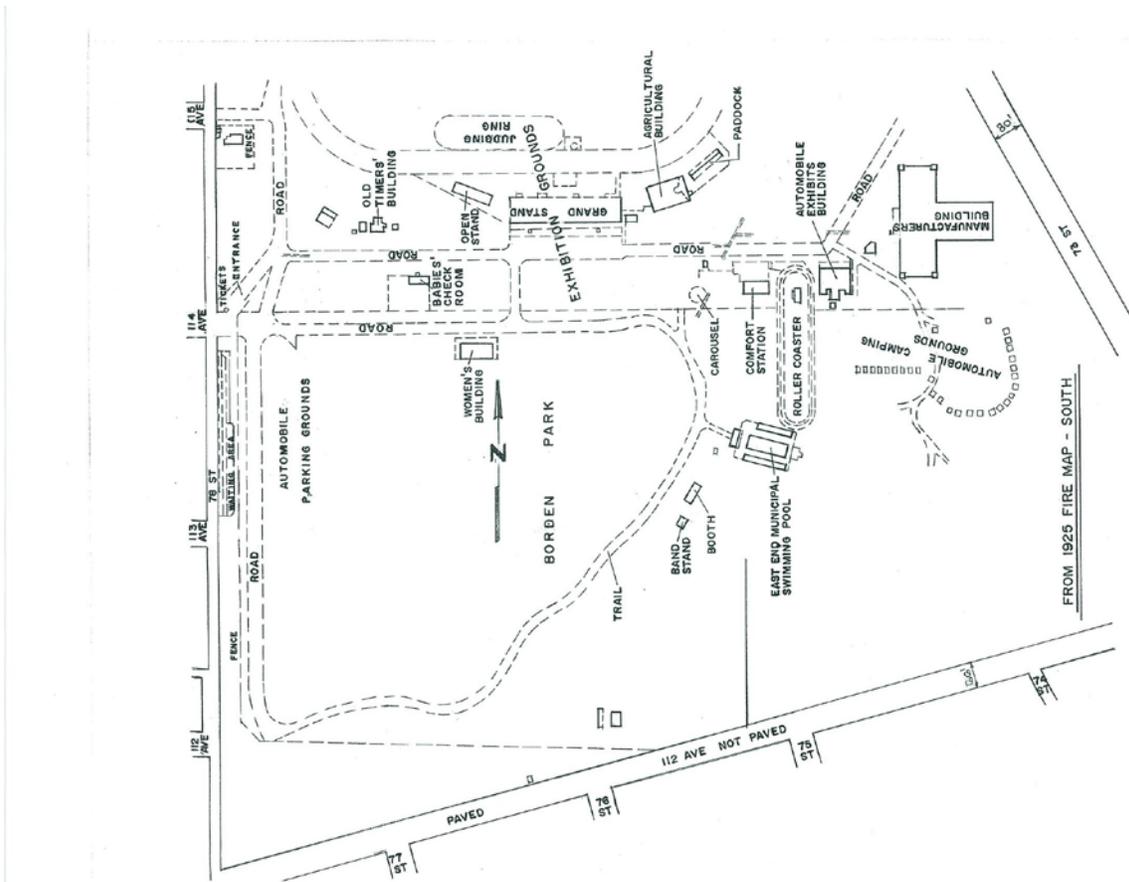
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1924, City of Edmonton Archives, CA-73



Based on 1925 Fire Insurance Map, redrafted by Allan Bevan



Based on 1925 Fire Insurance Map, redrafted by Allan Bevan



1930, City of Edmonton Archives



Aerial, 1948, City of Edmonton Archives

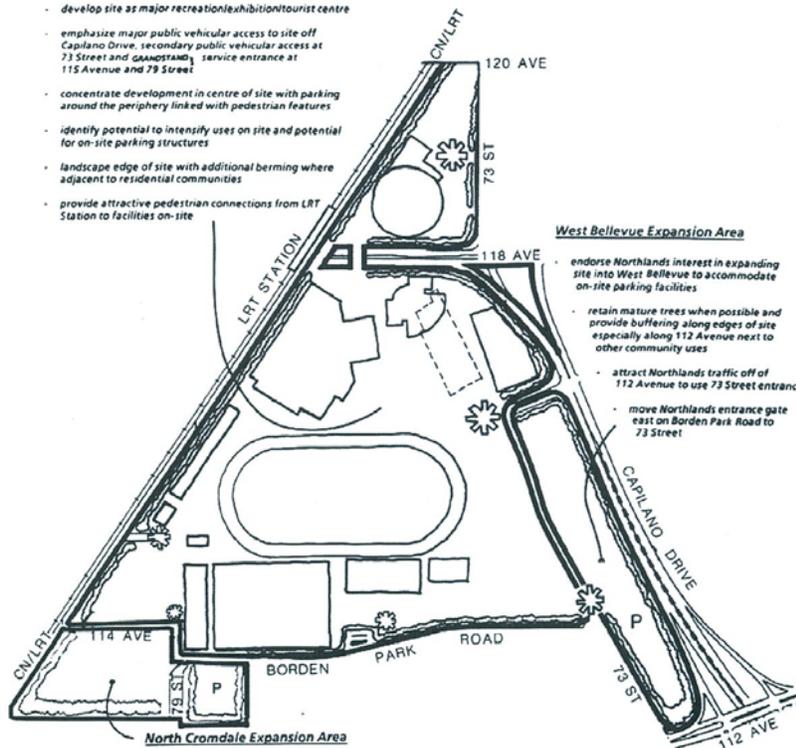
The following materials are all from the Northlands ARP of November 2005

Northlands Area Redevelopment Plan Review – November 2005

Appendix 2 Northlands ARP General Concept

**Edmonton Northlands Site**

- develop site as major recreation/exhibition/tourist centre
- emphasize major public vehicular access to site off Capilano Drive, secondary public vehicular access at 73 Street and Gasstroam, service entrance at 115 Avenue and 79 Street
- concentrate development in centre of site with parking around the periphery linked with pedestrian features
- identify potential to intensify uses on site and potential for on-site parking structures
- landscape edge of site with additional berming where adjacent to residential communities
- provide attractive pedestrian connections from LRT Station to facilities on-site



**West Bellevue Expansion Area**

- endorse Northlands interest in expanding site into West Bellevue to accommodate on-site parking facilities
- retain mature trees when possible and provide buffering along edges of site especially along 112 Avenue next to other community uses
- attract Northlands traffic off of 112 Avenue to use 73 Street entrance
- move Northlands entrance gate east on Borden Park Road to 73 Street

**North Cromdale Expansion Area**

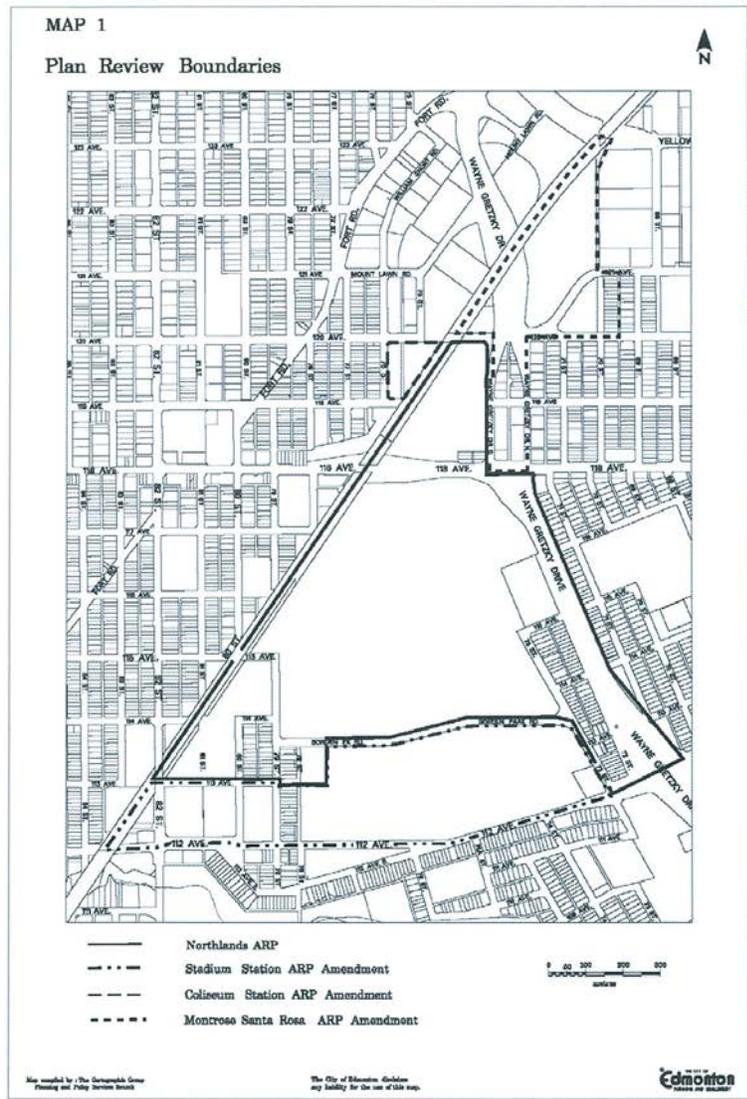
- endorse Northlands interest in expanding site into this area north of 113 Avenue to accommodate on-site parking, storage and horse exercise uses
- retain mature trees when possible and provide buffering along edges of site and parking lot especially along 113 Avenue next to other community uses
- attract Northlands traffic off of 112 Avenue to use 79 Street
- sign and landscape parking lot

N  
NOT TO SCALE

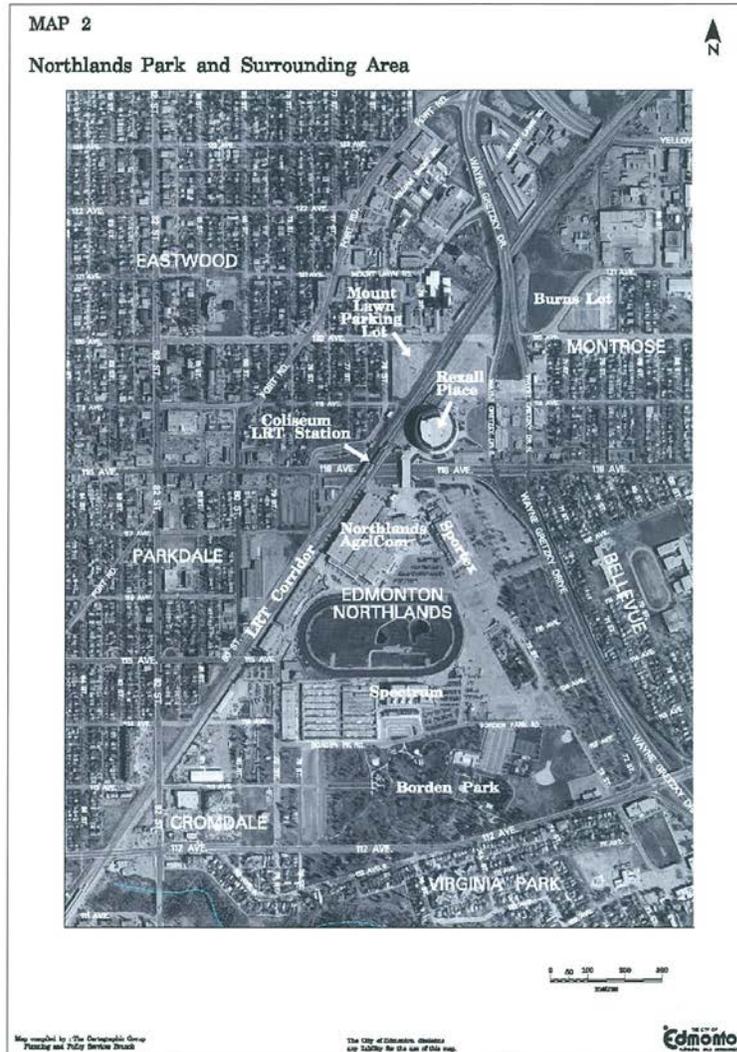


Attachment 1

Northlands Area Redevelopment Plan Review – November 2005



Northlands Area Redevelopment Plan Review – November 2005



Northlands Area Redevelopment Plan Review – November 2005

Appendix 4 Northlands Park Facility Master Plan

