

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Calgary Exhibition and Stampedes:  
Culture, Context and Controversy, 1884-1923

by

Linda Christine English

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

MAY, 1999

© Linda Christine English 1999



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*

*Our file Notre référence*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-47940-4

Canada

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis traces the evolution of the Calgary Exhibition from the inaugural fair of 1886 to its unification with the Stampede in 1923. The fair's early growth occurred against a background of local and national cultural and economic developments. The central theme is the exhibition's relationship with the region's livestock and grain economy. The initial mandate of fair organizers was to promote the district's agricultural products. Change distinguishes this period under analysis, however. Over the years, the annual exhibition necessarily adapted to meet the increasingly diversified interests of the growing population. Entertainment was the key. To attract record crowds, it became imperative that management augment its agricultural exhibits with an extensive entertainment program. With the union of the Stampede and the Calgary Exhibition, organizers could maintain their agricultural focus and offer fairgoers an exciting rodeo competition.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Through the financial support offered by the Department of History at the University of Calgary, I was able to pursue graduate studies and complete this thesis on my chosen topic, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. I would like to thank both the University and the Department for their generous financial support. A Graduate Research Scholarship, a Graduate Teaching Assistantship, and the George Self Department of History Scholarship allowed me to concentrate on my research and facilitated the completion of my Master's thesis. I would especially like to acknowledge the efforts of my supervisor Dr. Henry Klassen. His continual guidance and positive reinforcement has left an indelible impression on me that extends far beyond the confines of this work. Thank you, Dr. Klassen. I would also like to thank the Department's office staff, particularly Olga Leskiw, for directing me through the endless paperwork and for offering much appreciated levity.

On a less serious note, I would like to recognize my cohorts in the program who were forced to listen to my continuous 'thesis talk' and honored me with their presence all the same. Special thanks to Kristin for keeping me both physically fit and emotionally sane. I am indebted to my husband Cam for entertaining Alexander while I worked and for listening to my endless thesis angst. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the most patient and understanding three-year-old that I have ever known. Thank you, Alexander for providing me with a daily dose of sunshine.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval Page.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
 INTRODUCTION.....	 1
 CHAPTER ONE - BEGINNINGS: FROM A MODEST PROPOSAL TO A VERITABLE EVENT, 1884-1907.....	   19
Summary.....	48
 CHAPTER TWO - IDENTITY: A TRIBUTE TO THE PAST, 1908-1912.....	  50
Summary.....	84
 CHAPTER THREE - INTEGRITY: FOR THE BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY, 1913-1919.....	  86
Summary.....	121
 CONCLUSION THE 1923 CALGARY STAMPEDE, EXHIBITION AND BUFFALO BARBECUE.....	   123
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 132

## INTRODUCTION

Above all else, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the first forty years of Calgary's annual summer fair—from a mere idea in 1884 to the Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue in 1923. I have considered the Calgary Exhibition in relation to both the wider Canadian society and the prevailing cultural dispositions which influenced it. Although I explore a number of themes, the relationship between the fair and the district's livestock and grain interests is of primary concern. The Calgary Exhibition was the forum which annually drew together three, sometimes competing, interests—ranchers, grain farmers, and town residents. Since fair success was intrinsically linked to a strong regional economy, these interests needed to work together—they needed to compromise. With continual growth, however, the fair's agricultural focus was threatened by the need to satisfy increasingly diversified urban tastes. In the forty years under consideration, fair organizers stressed one or all of the different interests in response to changing economic and social conditions. The 1923 'solution' satisfied the long-term needs of the three representative groups. The unification of the Stampede with the Calgary Exhibition gave organizers the opportunity to promote the district's agricultural and ranching industries and, at the same time, offer a thrilling entertainment venue to both its rural and urban visitors.

Despite being a vital Calgary institution for over a hundred years, the subject of the Calgary Exhibition and early Stampedes has been largely ignored by academic

historians. My thesis aspires to remedy this oversight. Utilized most often by non-academics, popular history is one approach to the historical discipline. Generally, the history meant for popular consumption has been left to antiquarians, journalists, and non-professionals who have little appreciation of the historical method.<sup>1</sup> Professionals, on the other hand, typically produce history for other professionals. Historian Naomi Griffiths asserts, "Taking for granted an audience that had a similar broad context of knowledge and assuming that reader and writer shared a common belief that overt moral judgments were nothing more than subjective opinions, many wrote for other professionals, faculty and graduate students, rather than the average intelligent reader."<sup>2</sup>

The academic historian's perception of popular history, according to urban historian Alan Artibise, "was either that popular history was not worth doing—because it was something scholars should not waste their time on—or that it was something that could not be done—because it was impossible to describe historical reality in a popular way."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, popular historians have enjoyed a larger readership than their academic counterparts. The subject of this thesis, the Calgary Exhibition and early Stampedes, has in the past rested virtually in the domain of popular historians. Should their contributions be overlooked? I would argue, no.

The most substantial undertaking on the history of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede is James Gray's *A Brand of Its Own: The 100 Year History of the Calgary*

---

<sup>1</sup> Bruce M. Stave, "Interview: Urban History in Canada—A Conversation with Alan F. J. Artibise," *Urban History Review*, Vol.8, No.3 (February, 1980), p.137.

<sup>2</sup> Naomi E. S. Griffiths, "Craft, Judgment and Belief," in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Sixth Series, Vol.III (1992), p.76.

<sup>3</sup> Stave, "Interview: Urban History", p.137.

*Exhibition and Stampede*.<sup>4</sup> From its title alone, one can infer that Gray's book aspires to cover a lot of that institution's history. However, Gray's treatment of his subject is hardly in-depth and he does not provide either footnotes or a bibliography. Yet, Gray's contribution to Stampede historiography remains sound. He provides an overall framework for his readers on a subject that had not been previously addressed or, for that matter, organized into a cohesive narrative. In my own research, I have found that the primary documentation consistently supports Gray's conclusions.

Grant MacEwan is another popular historian who has contributed scholarship on the subject of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. In his *Agriculture on Parade: The Story of the Fairs and Exhibitions of Western Canada*, MacEwan chronicles the marriage between the Calgary Exhibition and the Stampede.<sup>5</sup> His book is a collection of brief histories on a variety of agricultural fairs; including a short treatment of the Calgary enterprise. MacEwan and Gray's popular histories contain colorful anecdotes and are useful as starting points. Scholars approaching the subject, however, must chart their own course through the primary material rather than relying solely on these sources.

Similar to MacEwan's approach, David C. Jones' *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs: The Illustrated Story of Country Fairs in the Prairie West* examines a variety of fairs, mostly from the perspective of social history.<sup>6</sup> Jones looks at turn-of-the-century fairs and considers how prairie economic and social mores influenced these annual events. While Jones does not focus on the Calgary fair specifically, his analysis

---

<sup>4</sup> James H. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own: The 100 Year History of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Grant MacEwan, *Agriculture on Parade: The Story of the Fairs and Exhibitions of Western Canada* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1950).

lends itself to a greater understanding of the prevalent societal values surrounding Western Canadian agricultural fairs. His scholarly analysis is supported by references to governmental correspondence, annual reports, and numerous prairie publications.

Keith Walden opts for the cultural approach in his book, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture*. Central to cultural history methodology is understanding how meaning in history is debated and disseminated. In his study, Walden, “shows how the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, from its founding, in 1879, to 1903 (when it was renamed the Canadian National Exhibition), influenced the shaping and ordering of the emerging urban culture.”<sup>7</sup> He does not focus on the Industrial’s beginnings or administrative development; rather, he attempts to understand how the institution shaped the wider Toronto society.<sup>8</sup>

David Breen and Kenneth Coates have adopted a different strategy. Their book, *Vancouver’s Fair: An Administrative and Political History of the Pacific National Exhibition* is, as the title suggests, a political and administrative history. The authors seek, “to address the politics of the fair, to examine guiding principles and forces that determined the character of each year’s fair as well as the management of the exhibition facilities, and to understand how these changed over time.”<sup>9</sup> They admit that the very important, but more elusive, social dimension of the fair and what it reveals about the

---

<sup>6</sup> David C. Jones, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs: The Illustrated Story of Country Fairs in the Prairie West* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p.1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xi.

<sup>9</sup> David Breen and Kenneth Coates, *Vancouver’s Fair: An Administrative and Political History of the Pacific National Exhibition* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), p.5.

urban community is not part of their study.<sup>10</sup>

My own analysis of Calgary's Exhibition and early Stampedes encompasses both of the above approaches. Admittedly, I favor Walden's cultural emphasis. I did, however, incorporate some of the Stampede's political and administrative history into my examination. I went beyond a cultural approach and relied on more conventional methodology to explore the impact of context and change on the Calgary Exhibition. The 1923 Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue was very different from the inaugural fair of 1886. I have chronicled the changes in both the fair's focus and scope. From a political standpoint, the controversies that surrounded the Stampede's administration reveal a great deal about popular perceptions of these kinds of managerial roles. Essentially, my approach to this subject is a blend of cultural, political, social, and intellectual history with a touch of good 'old fashioned' narrative history thrown in.

If there is an approach that is close to my own methodology, it is found in Ken Coates and Fred McGuinness' *Pride of the Land: An Affectionate History of Brandon's Agricultural Exhibitions*.<sup>11</sup> In this analysis, the authors contextualize the historical development of the Brandon Exhibition in relation to the broader Western Canadian picture. Morality, competition, and economics are just a few of the factors that molded and shaped Brandon's annual exhibition. Such factors similarly influenced the Calgary Exhibition's evolution.

In many ways, my analysis is as much an urban history as it is a fair history. As the setting for the annual exhibition, the city itself is necessarily integrated into the

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

complex story of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. Understanding the evolution of the fair requires consideration of what was happening in Calgary and the surrounding area. Accordingly, any study of the city's historical development would be incomplete without an examination of the fair's local and regional impact.

Literature on Calgary's history proved essential to my thesis. Max Foran and Heather MacEwan Foran's city biography, *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis*, provides scholarly insights into a host of topics pertaining to the city's history.<sup>12</sup> Although the authors do not include footnotes in their study, as preeminent Calgary scholars, they have produced an invaluable book. Hugh Dempsey's *Calgary: Spirit of the West* provides a general outline for the city's historical development and delves into the subject of pervasive civic attitudes.<sup>13</sup> Does the city have a unique and distinguishable character? According to Dempsey's account, most definitely. Anthony Rasporich and Henry Klassen's collection of essays on early Calgary entitled, *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region 1875-1914*, is a venerable source for more in-depth consideration of particular Calgary topics.<sup>14</sup> Sheilagh Jameson's article on the ranching community, "The Social Elite of the Ranching Community and Calgary", proved especially relevant to my analysis. She contends that many of the British ranching elite maintained a way of life on the frontier that was reminiscent of their lives before emigrating.<sup>15</sup>

The subject of the cattle industry and ranching culture has been dealt with in

---

<sup>11</sup> Ken Coates and Fred McGuinness, *Pride of the Land: An Affectionate History of Brandon's Agricultural Exhibitions* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers Limited, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Max Foran and Heather MacEwan Foran, *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis, An Illustrated History* (Canada: Windsor Publications Ltd., 1982).

<sup>13</sup> Hugh A. Dempsey, *Calgary: Spirit of the West* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Ltd., 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Anthony W. Rasporich and Henry C. Klassen, editors, *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region 1875-1914* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975).

David Breen's important work, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier 1874-1924*.<sup>16</sup> Both Breen and Jameson's studies are critical additions to any discussion of ranching and cultural influences in Southern Alberta. Breen minimizes the influence of the American cowboy north of the border and asserts that the Canadian range was never in the hands of the 'wild and woolly' Americans. Instead, he contends that the ranch country was under the supervision of middle and upper class British emigrants and Easterners who were often educated and professional men.

The extent to which the American cowboy influenced the region's cultural identity is considered in Dempsey's *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy: An Illustrated History* as well as in Warren Elofson's article, "Adapting to the Frontier Environment: The Ranching Industry in Western Canada."<sup>17</sup> It was, argues Dempsey, primarily American cowboys who herded the thousands of heads of cattle which arrived in the district in the early 1880s. The newly arrived cowboys were typically American, frequently young, and tough enough to brave the harsh Alberta winter.<sup>18</sup> Historian Warren Elofson reiterates Dempsey's position and adds, "The Americans were able to fill a void which people from England and the East would have had extreme difficulty filling themselves and, therefore, they did much to make the new cattle kingdom possible."<sup>19</sup> Further, notes Elofson, "British and Eastern ranchers may well have had their grand balls

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.57-70.

<sup>16</sup> David H. Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier 1874-1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Hugh A. Dempsey, *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy: An Illustrated History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1995). W. M. Elofson, "Adapting to the Frontier Environment: The Ranching Industry in Western Canada 1881-1914" in *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol.VIII, edited by Donald H. Akenson (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1992), p.307-327.

<sup>18</sup> Dempsey, Ibid., p.11.

<sup>19</sup> Elofson, "Adapting to the Frontier Environment", p.314.



and their polo clubs, but on the streets of Calgary and Fort Macleod it was the frontier cowboy who caught the public imagination. It was his special status in virtually everyone's mind that shaped and directed the popular culture."<sup>20</sup>

For an overview of the massive agrarian migration into Alberta, I have relied on Breen's *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier* as well as Paul Sharp's influential book, *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada: A Survey Showing American Parallels*.<sup>21</sup> Sharp attributed the influx of Americans into Alberta to an increase in land prices south of the border which precipitated the movement north. He noted that the movement was inevitable—land-hungry farmers turned to the unoccupied and promising lands to the north as soon as cheap land which did not require new and unfamiliar techniques of farming, such as irrigation, disappeared south of the border.<sup>22</sup>

Although he deals with American society, Robert Haywood's *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns* proved to be quite interesting.<sup>23</sup> Haywood considers the issue of Victorian class in the American West and he successfully breaks down the 'wild and woolly' frontier town stereotype. In his depiction, the cattle town emerges as a diverse hub comprised of many classes, including merchants, professionals, speculators, and, of course, cowboys. Thanks to Haywood, I was able to draw many Calgary parallels with the situation south of the border.

For insight into the prevailing culture and the issue of class in Calgary, I consulted

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 317. For an interesting primary source evaluation on this subject, see the *Macleod Gazette*, 30 November 1886, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Paul F. Sharp, *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada: A Survey Showing American Parallels* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1948) reprinted by Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.3.

*Ranchers' Legacy: Alberta Essays by Lewis G. Thomas*.<sup>24</sup> Thomas' conclusions are particularly useful for understanding the ideologies and traditions of the cattlemen who operated just outside of the city, although their connection with Calgary was exceedingly strong. Simon M. Evans' *Prince Charming Goes West* also explores the subject of a Southern Alberta ranching culture in relation to the E. P. Ranch, southwest of Calgary.<sup>25</sup> Henry C. Klassen's essay, "Life in Frontier Calgary", provides important insights into the late Victorian culture in Calgary. He establishes that the frontier city was comprised of representatives from all social classes who regularly interacted with each other at various community events.<sup>26</sup>

On the subject of Aboriginal involvement in the Calgary Exhibition and Stampedes, my analysis barely scratches the surface. In all honesty, I feel this issue could occupy an entire dissertation in its own right. The sources that I consulted on Aboriginal involvement in fairs are Keith Regular's article, "On Public Display," Daniel Francis' *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, and Katherine Pettipas' *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies*.<sup>27</sup> Finally, I must mention one last secondary source, John Herd Thompson's *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918*. This book

---

<sup>23</sup> C. Robert Haywood, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Lewis G. Thomas, *Ranchers' Legacy: Alberta Essays by Lewis G. Thomas*, edited by Patrick A. Dunae (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> Simon M. Evans, *Prince Charming Goes West: The Story of the E. P. Ranch* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Henry C. Klassen, "Life in Frontier Calgary" in *Western Canada Past and Present*, edited by A. W. Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary, McClelland and Stewart West Ltd., 1975), p.42-57.

<sup>27</sup> Keith Regular, "On Public Display" in *Alberta History*, Vol.34, No.1 (Winter 1986), p.1-10. Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992). Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1994).

proved invaluable for my chapter on the Calgary Industrial Exhibition and the war years.<sup>28</sup> It details the impact of the Great War on the prairie economy and the existing social structure.

In his comprehensive analysis of the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, Walden notes that, "Though ideally it would be otherwise, Toronto newspapers are the single detailed source of information about what happened on and off the fairground."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, I relied heavily on the newspaper reports of Calgary's annual exhibition. The city's few daily publications, specifically the *Calgary Herald* (founded 1883), the *Calgary Tribune* (founded 1885), the *Morning Albertan* (founded 1902), and the *Calgary News-Telegram* (founded 1910), provided detailed accounts on all aspects of the fair.<sup>30</sup> I also consulted the Calgary-based faction of the agrarian press, the *Farm and Ranch Review* (founded in 1905). I was especially drawn to the editorial columns which consistently offered useful insights into the Calgary institution. Unfortunately, I was less successful in accessing substantial personal recollections of the fair, except for those of Stampede Manager Guy Weadick, those found in Sherrill MacLaren's *Braehead: Three Founding Families in Nineteenth Century Canada*, and those from a surrounding town's local history.<sup>31</sup> In terms of archival material, I found the promotional literature which was published by the exhibition's management particularly telling of the fair's intended purpose. Since

---

<sup>28</sup> John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1978).

<sup>29</sup> Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto*, p.27.

<sup>30</sup> For information on the background of these newspapers see Gloria M. Strathern's *Alberta Newspapers 1880-1982: An Historical Directory* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1988). The *Calgary Tribune* became the *Alberta Tribune* in 1895 and the *Morning Albertan* became the *Calgary Albertan* in 1924, p.28-31.

<sup>31</sup> Sherrill MacLaren, *Braehead: Three Founding Families in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1986). Elma DesBrisay, "Things I Can Remember About My Childhood

perception was central to my analysis, promotional rhetoric and press reports on the Calgary fair constituted the bulk of my primary materials. The most extensive collection of the fair's history is located at the city's Glenbow Archives—the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds. Cash ledgers, pictures, posters, correspondence, minutes from meetings, and, fittingly, promotional material are just some of the items found in this vast collection. Obviously, I have not discussed all aspects of the fair, just those which I deemed relevant. History is a highly selective discipline and my selection can be found in the following pages.

\*\*\*\*\*

One would think at least a little trepidation crept into cowboy Clem Gardiner's mind upon mounting the frenzied bronc which the *Calgary Herald* described as, "a mean chunk of horse that had more than a pinch of Satan in his make-up."<sup>32</sup> According to the *Herald's* rendition the animal was one of the real, old style, thoroughly wicked outlaws. Gardiner was, however, considered one of the best riders in that year's show and he had earned his reputation the hard way. He piled on to the fiery horse and the battle commenced—man against beast. The *Herald* reported, "Clem Gardiner was up on a bunch of lightning and temper. He stayed on for a time, but the animal had some entirely new twists that finally loosened Clem, broke his spur, and pitched him headlong."<sup>33</sup> On that warm Calgary evening, in a contest of sheer will, the stubborn horse emerged victorious.

---

in Okotoks", in *A Century of Memories 1883-1983: Okotoks and District*, Okotoks and District Historical Society, 1983, p.361-364.

<sup>32</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 4 July 1908, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Surprisingly, the above event did not take place during Calgary's first Stampede in 1912, but rather, the bucking-bronco contest was featured during the city's 1908 Dominion Exhibition. By that year, Southern Alberta boasted a long tradition of cowboy competitions. Races amongst cowboys had been held at the city's annual exhibition since 1891, and the first rodeo events appeared at the Calgary Exhibition held in 1893, thanks to efforts of George Lane, a prominent local rancher.<sup>34</sup> Lane was one of the many American-born cowboys who ventured northward in pursuit of ranching opportunities above of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel in the early 1880s.<sup>35</sup> While the extent to which the American cowboy influenced the district is contentious, the presence of a vital and ubiquitous ranching culture is considerably less controversial. Without a doubt, the cowboy is very much a part of the province's rich ranching heritage.

According to Calgary historians, Max Foran and Heather MacEwan Foran, Southern Alberta possessed all the necessary ingredients for successful open range ranching opportunities, "Plentiful fresh water and adequate sheltered areas complemented the highly favorable and fast-growing prairie grasses."<sup>36</sup> With the introduction of crucial federal legislation in 1881, large scale ranching operations promptly appeared throughout the southern regions of the province. The ranching community provided early Calgary with its first substantial industry; as a result, the community enjoyed unrivaled esteem in the minds of civic leaders.

The initial mandate of Calgary's inaugural fair was to promote the district's agricultural development. Since ranching played an important role in the economy of

---

<sup>34</sup> Dempsey, *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy*, p.123.

<sup>35</sup> Supplement to the *Calgary Herald*, 30 August 1919, p.19.

both the city and its hinterland, organizers were committed to promoting livestock raising at their fall exhibition. In the decades following the 1886 inaugural fair, the Calgary Exhibition's commitment to the ranching community remained steadfast. In addition to this critical industry, after the turn of the century, Southern Alberta developed an equally significant wheat economy. Between 1900 and 1910, Alberta experienced a massive wave of agrarian settlement predominantly from south of the border. Consequently, the avowed purpose of the city's annual fair was to showcase the region's agricultural products, both grains and livestock. With the continual encroachment by wheat farmers on the rancher's grazing lands, tensions, indeed, existed between the ranching and farming interests. However, only rarely did these two groups publicly clash. When it came to the annual exhibition, the relationship between ranchers and farmers is more aptly characterized as one of compromise than one of conflict.

If the status of agriculture at the fair was unequivocally affirmed, the role amusements played tenuously shifted from year to year depending on the city's political climate. Racing events, midways, and even cowboy competitions, lured fair visitors away from the important educational exhibits. Along with agricultural displays, industrial exhibits grew increasingly important in bolstering the city's diversifying economy. A 1907 *Herald* editorial asserted, "The tendency of all undertakings of this kind is to sacrifice utility to means of attraction; to place horse racing above industrial exhibits and side-shows ahead of agricultural displays. This country wants a certain amount of fun mixed with its education but it doesn't want an exhibition of Alberta's

---

<sup>36</sup> Foran and Foran, *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis*, p.90.

resources turned into a Donnybrook fair.”<sup>37</sup> The desire to entertain city residents with ‘cutting-edge’ amusements did not necessarily coalesce with the need to promote the district’s livestock and grain displays. Town (and later city) residents included representatives from the developing industrial sector as well as a growing non-agricultural population whose interests in the fair were primarily entertainment-oriented. As the town matured into a veritable city, the desire to amuse urban residents became even more pronounced.

In the years between the 1908 Dominion Exhibition and the 1912 Stampede, event promoters appear preoccupied with lavish ceremonies and gala parades. Such spectacles paid tribute to the province’s closing frontiers, specifically those related to the Aboriginal population and the large-scale ranchers. The 1908 Exhibition opened with an elaborate historic pageant highlighting the progress of the district’s settlers in cultivating and ‘civilizing’ the ‘barbaric’ land. Approximately a thousand delegates from the district’s Aboriginal communities, dressed in their traditional raiment, slowly passed by the cheering parade spectators—symbolizing the integration of the Native culture into the large society. In a similar vein, organizers of the 1912 Stampede sought to honor the ranching pioneers who faced the challenge of learning to coexist with the grain farmers. At times, specific exhibition issues aggravated the already thorny relationship between ranchers and wheat farmers. Less prevalent in the years between 1908 and 1912 was the emphasis by exhibition management on the agricultural purposes of the fair; instead, a pageant or ‘gimmick’ headlined the year’s entertainment venue.

In 1913, an economic depression crippled the wheat economy and brought the

---

<sup>37</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 9 July 1907, p.4.

agricultural focus back to the forefront of the exhibition's program. A successful fair created the perception of a strong regional economy. The connection with the rural hinterland was exceedingly strong. The surrounding towns such as Fish Creek, Innisfail and Davisburg maintained a relationship with Calgary that was mutually beneficial to all concerned. The rural and small town communities required the cultural and economic services that the city provided. Calgary, on the other hand, needed the surrounding area for growing market opportunities.

Early on, promoters realized that, through exhibition success, perception could be manipulated and auspiciously shaped. Within the wider provincial and national context, fair organizers molded the exhibition's objectives in reaction to the political and economic climate. In the period under consideration, the urban population exploded as thousands of immigrants from the British Isles and Eastern Canada flooded into the Canadian West. Amidst this context of rapid change, David C. Jones argues a 'country life mentality' emerged which idealized the virtues of rural life and criticized the vices of the city.<sup>38</sup> Undoubtedly, the country life mentality contributed to the ongoing debate concerning the fair's agricultural focus. During the war, the Calgary Industrial Exhibition did its part towards creating the appearance of 'business as usual'. The fair continued its operations throughout the war years and, rather than buckling under difficult conditions, it generated record attendance.

In his book, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture*, Keith Walden observes, "Most analyses of exhibitions and local fairs view them as self-contained, almost insulated,



environments.”<sup>39</sup> Yet, rarely do fairs operate in a vacuum. Calgary’s annual fair was consistently influenced by the political and economic circumstances outside of its main gates. In the heat of competition for the province’s capital, Calgary newspapers hurled aspersions at the Edmonton Exhibition for what they considered its ‘loose-jointed’ and morally lax operation. The passing of the ranching frontier prompted management in 1908 and 1909 to organize a historical tribute to mark the occasion. Prairie economics dictated the extent to which the district’s agricultural developments would be stressed. By 1923, slumping attendance figures forced exhibition management to re-examine its entertainment policy and, subsequently, the crowd-pleasing rodeo became a permanent fixture in the summer festivities.

In the first decades of existence, the Calgary Exhibition encountered its inevitable share of controversy, reflective of both the culture and context which surrounded it. The city was overwhelmingly British and Eastern Canadian in its ethnic makeup. Americans, especially after 1900, also contributed to the frontier city’s political and social environment. The new arrivals brought with them the underlying biases and late Victorian attitudes prevalent in their former homes. These old values fused and evolved into a distinctly regional character. Calgary’s annual exhibition grew out of and helped shape this new cultural identity. Quite often, the social mores of the dominant culture are revealed through controversy. In 1905, a prominent religious leader questioned the accessibility of gambling at the fairgrounds and garnered massive support for his campaign. Yet, in the years that followed, gambling practices persisted with very little

---

<sup>38</sup> Jones, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs*, p.3.

<sup>39</sup> Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto*, p.xv.

public objection. In another instance, Stampede Manager, Guy Weadick, attracted considerable criticism from both the press and the public for his flagrant management style, despite his integral part in the highly touted 1912 operation. Significantly, Weadick was invited back to the city in 1919 to manage that year's Stampede.

Considering the number of years under analysis, the three Stampedes and the dozens of exhibitions actually generated little controversy. In fact, only a handful of mishaps made their way into the media coverage. As an agent of civic boosterism, the newspapers were inclined to put a positive spin on the annual event and their criticisms of the fair were generally tempered. Thus, the controversies that actually crept into the press are particularly telling of the city's incipient culture.

In the years before 1923, exhibition organizers grappled with the question of focus. Was the annual exhibition a forum for entertainment or agricultural promotion? What weight should be given to either aspect? Ranchers and grain farmers alike, no doubt, viewed the fair as an agricultural event—a showcase for their hard work. But what about the non-agricultural population whose numbers steadily increased in the four decades under examination? This thesis examines the ongoing dialogue between agricultural and non-agricultural entertainment-oriented interests. Year in and year out, fair organizers met the challenge of competing interests and, more often than not, harmonized these different factions. In 1922, the *Morning Albertan* aptly stated, "It is difficult these days to preserve an even balance between educational exhibits and what are termed 'attractions'. Without the exhibits there is no reason for an exhibition.

Without the attractions many people would not attend.”<sup>40</sup> Guided by economic circumstances, exhibition organizers turned to Guy Weadick’s ‘tried and true’ program for a world-class cowboy competition. The Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue of 1923 amalgamated the Calgary Exhibition with the Stampede and, ultimately, it provided the formula on which the present-day event is modeled.<sup>41</sup>

The 1923 show evolved from almost four decades of trial and error on the part of Stampede and exhibition management. The perception provided by Calgary’s newspapers was that the 1923 effort reflected the city’s true spirit. The cowboy theme was not borrowed or imposed from some southern locale, but was endemic to district’s history. According to the *Albertan*, the phenomenal success of the 1923 Exhibition, which was so essentially a Calgary enterprise, revived the old spirit of confidence, the old community spirit.<sup>42</sup> The successful formula encompassed a tribute to the area’s ranching heritage, a crowd-thrilling cowboy competition, and, at its foundation, a vast array of the Calgary district’s agricultural feats. The 1923 show finally ended the debate between ranchers, grain farmers, and urban residents—a compromise was reached. Much of what Calgary was and aspired to be could be found simply by passing through the gates of the 1923 Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue.

---

<sup>40</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 8 July 1922, p.4.

<sup>41</sup> The title ‘the Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue’ appears on the 1923 program for the event. However, some secondary sources and newspaper ads for the show reverse Stampede and Exhibition, see the *Calgary Herald*’s ad on July 7, 1923, p.8. ‘Prize List for the Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Barbecue, 1923’ published by the Stampede Committee, 1923. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F35.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 July 1923, p.4.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BEGINNINGS: FROM A MODEST PROPOSAL TO A VERITABLE EVENT, 1884-1907

*Farmers must remember that visiting strangers are sure to judge of the capabilities of this country from what they see placed on exhibition at the forthcoming show, and if we are to secure a good number of new settlers from the visitors the show must be a complete one.*

*-The Calgary Herald, 2 October 1889, p.4*

In early August of 1884, months before the town's incorporation, Calgary's first newspaper suggested an interesting project to its subscribers. In view of the favorable harvest, the nearly one-year-old *Calgary Herald - Mining and Ranche Advocate and Advertiser* proposed that, "With such prospects before us would it not be well for our people to take some steps towards the formation of an agricultural society?"<sup>43</sup> An agricultural society could organize an autumn exhibition, thereby allowing farmers the opportunity of comparing crops. Further, the *Herald* continued, "It would also be the means of letting the outside world know what Alberta can produce, and would doubtless induce emigrants to settle here."<sup>44</sup> The newspaper's modest proposal for a fall exhibition ultimately evolved into the self-proclaimed 'greatest outdoor show on earth', the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede.

The August 6, 1884 edition of the *Calgary Herald* fell just shy of the local upstart's first anniversary on August 31, 1884. Although the paper was the brainchild of

---

<sup>43</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 6 August 1884, p.4.

two Ontario-born emigrants, A.M. Armour and T. B. Braden, they relinquished their editorial roles by December of 1884 and were subsequently succeeded by another Easterner, Hugh St. Quentin Cayley.<sup>45</sup> Through the formation of an agricultural society, the *Herald's* editors primarily sought to refute Palliser's negative report on the agricultural potential of the area. During his expedition to Southeastern Alberta in 1858, Palliser recorded 'desert-like' conditions, "He saw the great river jutting through its deep, narrow valley of baked marls and clays, a jagged rent across an endless, parched plain of sage and sand and cactus."<sup>46</sup> Palliser's gloomy report on the arability of Southern Alberta was challenged by John Macoun's assessment of the district in the summers of 1879 and 1880. Macoun, a field naturalist, optimistically reported that he felt quite safe in saying that eighty percent of the whole country was suited for the raising of grain and cattle and he would not be the least surprised if future explorers had found an even more favourable estimate.<sup>47</sup>

Alberta residents had suffered long enough from misrepresentation and erroneous ideas of their district, its climate and capability for production. The *Herald* asserted that no amount of writing or verbal testimony would convince Easterners as readily as an

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Shortly thereafter in 1885, Braden became editor of the *Herald's* competitor, the *Calgary Tribune*. Gloria M. Strathern, *Alberta Newspapers 1880-1982: A Historical Directory* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1988), p.28. For a brief history of the *Herald's* origins see "When the Herald Came to Calgary" by Thomas B. Braden, *Alberta Historical Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer, 1961), p.1-4, "A Newspaper is Born" in Grant MacEwan's *Calgary Cavalcade: From Fort to Fortune* (Edmonton: The Institute of Applied Art Ltd., 1958), p.47-51, and Tom Ward's *Cowtown: An Album of Early Calgary* (Calgary: The City of Calgary Electrical System, 1975), p.120-130.

<sup>46</sup> David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1987), p.7.

<sup>47</sup> W. A. Waiser, *The Field Naturalist: John Macoun, the Geological Survey, and Natural Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p.42.

exhibition of their produce. Men would then see and judge for themselves.<sup>48</sup> Local residents quickly acted on the newspaper's recommendation and after a meeting at Boynton Hall on Saturday, August 16, 1884, Calgary established its first agricultural society. Calgary's future mayor, James Reilly, was appointed as the Society's first chairman.<sup>49</sup>

The initial mandate of the Agricultural Society reflected the aims specified in the *Herald*, namely to vindicate the area's agricultural reputation:

If the agricultural and other products of this district were placed on exhibition, it would effectually refute the statements that are constantly being made by interested parties to the effect that this country is a barren waste with almost perpetual snow and ice, where agriculture could not be successfully carried on.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to these purposes, an exhibition would attract the Calgary district's most successful agriculturalists who could disseminate their techniques and, thus, raise the potential for the entire region. David C. Jones' *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs: The Illustrated Story of Country Fairs in the Prairie West* explores the educational nature of agricultural fairs. Jones contends that many involved in agricultural societies felt that fairs would become the prime instrument for agricultural improvement as well as initiators of technological and scientific change.<sup>51</sup> The federal government was also a major proponent of such societies and demonstrated its support by offering grants

---

<sup>48</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 13 August 1884, p.4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 August 1884, p.4.

<sup>50</sup> Report on the first meeting of the Agricultural Society, *The Calgary Herald*, 20 August 1884, p.4. According to the *Herald*, "Speeches to the same effect were made by numbers of gentlemen present, the opinion of the meeting being unanimous in this respect."

<sup>51</sup> Jones, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs*, p.3.

to a host of local organizations.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the potential benefits, the Calgary Agricultural Society did not immediately organize a fall exhibition, but rather pursued other directions in promoting the area's farming capability. The first act was to vote that \$50 was to spent on a pamphlet for free distribution advertising the area's resources and farming potential. A committee that included the *Herald's* editor, T. B. Braden, was appointed to prepare the pamphlet.<sup>53</sup> The text of the document appeared in the newspaper's September 10, 1884 edition. Evidence of the pamphlet's success is the *Herald's* report that, "The applications for the pamphlet issued by the Calgary Agricultural Society are so numerous that it has been deemed advisable to request the Government to have 25,000 more copies printed."<sup>54</sup>

In 1884, the Society also made a plea to farmers to gather examples of their best products, as well as coal, mineral and timber specimens to compose part of a display car that the Canadian Pacific Railway was going to exhibit in the East. Regarding the 1885 exhibit, the *Herald* warned locals that people in Canada will undoubtedly look for the Calgary section in the exhibition car this year, and if there was none to be seen, the impression caused by its absence would either be that the area suffered a bad season, or else that crops had been neglected due to the recent troubles.<sup>55</sup> The troubles to which the newspaper referred were the rebellion in Saskatchewan headed by Louis Riel. However, the *Herald* had reported months earlier that the simple truth was that the rebellion had no

---

<sup>52</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 19 August 1887, p.4. The *Herald* reported, "At the last session of the Federal Parliament the sum of \$10,000 was voted for the aid of Agricultural societies in the Territories."

<sup>53</sup> "Early History of the Calgary Exhibition" published by the Stampede Committee, 1931. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F35, p.2.

<sup>54</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 17 December 1884, p.4

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 September 1885, p.2.

disastrous effect on Alberta and the crops were never more promising.<sup>56</sup>

The Agricultural Society was reorganized in April of 1886 with Major James Walker appointed as President and J. G. Fitzgerald continuing in his role as Secretary.<sup>57</sup> Walker was both a one-time member of the Northwest Mounted Police and a former manager of the Cochrane Ranche west of Calgary. After two years in Cochrane's employ, Walker resigned to go into business for himself and became one of the best known figures in early Calgary.<sup>58</sup> J. G. Fitzgerald, another successful figure in the community, was an auctioneer, accountant, real-estate agent, and deputy-sheriff.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, community leaders swelled the ranks of the Agricultural Society including such men as T. B. Braden, James Lougheed, Councillor James Bannerman, Colonel James Walker, Fire Chief James Smart, and A. E. Cross.<sup>60</sup> Cross is a pivotal figure in both Calgary history and culture. After working at the Cochrane Ranche for two years, he left the company and established the A7 Ranch. In 1892, Cross together with William E. Cochrane and W. R. Hull formed the Calgary Brewing and Malting Company. As a rancher, civic entrepreneur, and one of the 'Big Four', Cross must be considered a central character in this story.<sup>61</sup>

The Society's inclusion of successful urban leaders paralleled the administration

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 8 July 1885, p.2.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., "Early History of the Calgary Exhibition", p. 3-4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., *Calgary Cavalcade*, p.68.

<sup>59</sup> *The Calgary Tribune*, 22 October 1886, p.5. In addition to his other responsibilities, Fitzgerald had a ranch on the Bow River. "Calgary, Alberta: Her Industries and Resources" pamphlet compiled by Burns & Elliott (March, 1885) reprinted by Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1974, p.41.

<sup>60</sup> James Bannerman operated Bannerman & Co., a dry goods firm which sold books, stationary, fancy goods, paper, etc. He also acted as assistant-postmaster and ventured into city politics. Ibid., "Calgary, Alberta", p.27.

<sup>61</sup> For an in-depth evaluation of Cross and his contribution to early Calgary, his ties to Montreal and his strong American links, see Henry C. Klassen's "Entrepreneurship in the Canadian West: The Enterprises



of other fairs, especially world fairs. The hegemonic nature of fairs has drawn the attention of several contemporary scholars.<sup>62</sup> In his analysis of Toronto's Industrial Exhibition, Keith Walden observes, "Fairs were instruments of hegemony, used by elites to generate support for a culture dominated by white, male, middle-class values, and organized increasingly around capitalist production and the possibilities of consumption thus provided."<sup>63</sup> The Calgary Agricultural Society reflected this kind of hegemony.

The underlying principle advocated by capitalist interests in Calgary was that of progress. The perception of progress was central to civic boosters. The Calgary newspapers consistently parlayed the desire for growth, progress, and, consequently, economic prosperity.<sup>64</sup> The *Herald* observed, "It is the bounden duty and interest of every farmer to let the world know what is being done and what can be done in crops about Calgary. Every man who owns a foot of land anywhere in this district is interested in having the country filled up by an industrious class of farmers."<sup>65</sup> It was a sentiment reiterated by the *Calgary Tribune* in its coverage of Calgary's first agricultural fair, "To the farmers of Alberta we would say that the success of this fair means dollars in all of

---

of A. E. Cross, 1886-1920" in *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol.XXII, No.3 (August, 1991), p.313-333.

<sup>62</sup> In his discussion on the 'second school' of thought on fair history, Neil Harris observes, "This group has treated the fairs as revelations not of the idealism of American society, but of its unequal distribution of economic power, its class organization, its subordination of women, its racism, and its materialism. The fairs' purpose were, in general, according to these analysts, mercenary and ideological, imposing on society a special image of the world." Neil Harris, "Great American Fairs and American Cities: The Role of Chicago's Columbian Exposition" in *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p.113.

<sup>63</sup> Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto*, p.xiv.

<sup>64</sup> Historian Paul Rutherford chronicles the role Canadian national newspapers played in promoting the idea of growth and progress, "All could expect marvelous things from the grand Canadian barbecue: loads of wheat for world markets, more commerce and new industries, booming cities and contented farms." Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late-Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p.161.

<sup>65</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 4 September 1889, p.4.

your pockets.”<sup>66</sup> The editorial continued, “Every farmer who makes even a single entry at this fair will benefit himself, benefit his neighbor, benefit the community at large.”<sup>67</sup> Hence, the Calgary area’s economic prosperity was directly linked to the community’s participation in the fall exhibition. Of course, success was only assured if all members of the community became involved. Community life in frontier Calgary from the 1880s onwards included representatives from all classes—ranchers, professionals, land speculators, as well as, those from lower-income occupations, such as smaller merchants and labourers. Everyone aspired to improve their economic situation in the frontier environment. The diversity of classes in burgeoning cattle towns is discussed in Robert Haywood’s analysis of three American towns, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns*. Haywood notes that as far as the differences in values and expectations were concerned, there was little to distinguish one elite occupational category from another and cattlemen and merchants were rarely at odds. Indeed, most town merchants and professionals had some investment in the ranching industry.<sup>68</sup> A. E. Cross and Major James Walker were two such Calgary figures who had interests in both town businesses and the ranching industry.

Needless to say, women comprised a significant and vital percentage of the town’s population. In its editorial column, the *Herald* encouraged women to take an active role in their local exhibition. An ample display of flora and fauna by the ladies of the district would offset the ‘wild woolly’ reputation of the West and demonstrate that refined culture did exist in equal proportions in the Calgary district as with any part of the

---

<sup>66</sup> *The Calgary Tribune*, 16 October 1886, p.4.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

civilized world.<sup>69</sup>

What could the citizens of Calgary proper do towards making the annual autumn exhibition a success? According to the September 19, 1888 issue of the *Calgary Herald*, Calgary residents could form a citizen's exhibition committee to work in conjunction with the farmers and ranchers in the surrounding area. Although the mandate of the fair was decidedly agricultural, town merchants maintained a vested interest in a successful event. It was obvious to town residents that visitors to the fair could not come to Calgary without parting with some of their hard-earned cash, and the more visitors, the more money for local businesses. The *Herald* asserted, "The people of Calgary, consequently, are directly interested in making the exhibition as attractive as possible and it becomes them to consider in what way they can contribute to the attractiveness of the fair."<sup>70</sup> Since the Agricultural Society was necessarily preoccupied with agricultural exhibits, the townsmen could pursue other types of attractions to amuse fairgoers. The publication was well aware of criticisms lodged against the Toronto Exhibition because of its 'circus like' atmosphere. However, the *Herald* boldly countered, "It should be the aim of the people of Calgary to make the local exhibition the great fair of the Territories, and they cannot do better than follow Toronto's example and provide outside attractions for the

---

<sup>68</sup> Haywood, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns*, p.41.

<sup>69</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 4 September 1889, p.4. The question of cultural refinement is discussed in L. G. Thomas' essay, "The Rancher and the City: Calgary and the Cattlemen, 1883-1914" in *Ranchers' Legacy: Alberta Essays* by Lewis G. Thomas, p.41-59. After detailing rancher participation in a host of cultural activities, Thomas concludes, "It was a snobbish society, though it imagined itself to be highly egalitarian. It was a society based on values that traditionally do not survive in a frontier environment, though in Southern Alberta they proved remarkably durable.", p.57. Also see Henry C. Klassen's "Life in Frontier Calgary", p.42-57. For insight into the extreme upper end of ranching society, see Simon Evan's *Prince Charming Goes West: The Story of the E. P. Ranch* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1993).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 September 1888, p.4

people.”<sup>71</sup> If entertainment drew visitors to the fair, then the local newspapers supported its inclusion in the fall festivities.

The first exhibition staged by the Agricultural Society was held on October 19 and 20 of 1886 and, although deemed a success, it offered little in the way of entertainment.<sup>72</sup> Inadvertently, the Baby Show, held on the second day of the fair, provided at least some amusement for the exhibition visitors. Coverage of the event by the local newspapers is, in itself, rather humorous. Three infants participated in the judged event and to get away from the crowd which was so eagerly pressed around, the judges requested that the little folks be taken to the stage. After which, the *Calgary Tribune* reported:

After displaying their awkwardness in handling the children (much to the amusement of the crowd) the judges who were bachelors of no experience in this department, retired to compare notes, and finally decided that as they were all remarkably fine looking, well fed children, to divide the prize equally among the three; they then cowardly made their escape through the back door, but the exhibit proved that Calgary’s climate is well adapted to this important industry.<sup>73</sup>

In its account of the event, the *Calgary Herald* matched the comic tone of its competitor. Once the judges were brought face to face with the smiling contestants, the police band appropriately burst out with the enlivening strains of ‘Peekaboo’, “After some futile attempts at ascertaining the weight and age of the exhibits, the judges withdrew to the back of the stage out of pistol shot and came to the conclusion that they

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> The 1886 Calgary fair was by no means the earliest on the prairies—Fort Garry hosted an agricultural exhibition in 1871 with Portage La Prairie following suit in 1872. Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.6.

<sup>73</sup> *The Calgary Tribune*, 22 October 1886, p.5.

only way to avoid bloodshed was to award a first prize to each competitor.”<sup>74</sup> Apart from the Baby Show, Calgary’s first fair offered little in the way of organized entertainment—the focus of the show was the agriculture and livestock exhibits.

Mirroring the modest population and sophistication of the time, industrial exhibits at the 1886 exhibition were, indeed, limited. The *Tribune* acknowledged the pains some of the merchants took to improve the appearance of the fair through exhibits of their merchandise. Rankin & Allan were singled out by the paper as one of Calgary’s most enterprising and prosperous firms with a capital exhibit of dry goods, ready made clothing, and millinery.<sup>75</sup> In the same issue, the *Tribune* also commended sash, door and mouldings manufacturers, Jarrett & Cushing for their exhibit.<sup>76</sup> Not surprisingly, only a handful of town merchants displayed their wares at the inaugural fair. During the two-day event, roughly 500 visitors attended the exhibition and took in the displays of agricultural products and assorted livestock.<sup>77</sup> The paucity of exhibits and participants reflected the town’s immature status; however, the exhibition was declared a success by Calgary residents who quickly forecasted a bigger and better event in the years to come.

Despite the marked growth of the fair in the succeeding years, both newspapers insisted the exhibition could be improved with greater participation from the public. In its 1888 coverage, the *Herald* reported that while the industrial exhibits might not be as large as similar ones at Toronto, Montreal or London, the lack of quantity was amply made up by the excellence in quality. However, the publication observed that it was as

---

<sup>74</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 23 October 1886, p.1.

<sup>75</sup> *The Calgary Tribune*, 22 October 1886, p.5.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>77</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 23 October 1886, p.4.

inexplicable as it was regrettable that the exhibits of grain were not more comprehensive.<sup>78</sup> In this same article, the *Herald* reported that Lieutenant Governor Sir Fred Middleton and Mr. Long, a member of the Imperial House of Parliament, were asked by the Agricultural Society to act as judges at the horse ring. Indeed, as early as 1888, Calgary's local fair could boast the involvement of highly influential figures, recognizable on a national scale.

The *Tribune* also noted that the display of grains at the 1888 fair were particularly lacking. With scores of granaries within a few miles of Calgary, this deficiency was especially troubling to the paper.<sup>79</sup> The *Tribune* affirmed that this indicated that the farmers as a body had not gone in heartily to make the show what it should have been in these respects.<sup>80</sup> The article suggested two possible reasons for the lack of participation by local farmers. The first was that the farmers, having already paid their membership to the Agricultural Society, were annoyed with having to pay an additional fee to display their goods at the fair and, thus, chose not to exhibit at all. Another possibility the *Tribune* proposed was that the farmers might be disgruntled with the domination of the Agricultural Society's leadership by townspeople.<sup>81</sup> In the end, the paper admitted it was perplexed by the farmer's apparent snub of the fall exhibition.

However, a close examination of editorials from the previous years suggests another possible source of contention. Ten days after the initial 1886 Calgary Exhibition, the *Tribune* noted that preparations for the following year's fair were already underway

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1888, p.8.

<sup>79</sup> *The Calgary Tribune*, 3 October 1888, p.1.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

including the selection of dates for the 1887 show. The Agricultural Society decided that an earlier fall date would improve the show of livestock at the next show because apparently the late October 19<sup>th</sup> date impinged on the stock displays at the 1886 fair. According to the *Tribune*, "It was found that stock-raisers were unwilling to take the risk of bringing valuable animals from their ranches, 20, 30 or 50 miles distant, at a time when one of the most troublesome storms of the year is looked for."<sup>82</sup> The article suggested that there was no reason that the fair should not be held earlier, perhaps during the last week in September.<sup>83</sup>

Subsequently, late September dates were chosen for both the 1887 and 1888 fall exhibitions. In a letter to the editor of the *Tribune*, T. W. Shaw, an influential Midnapore farmer, cogently argued against the selected dates for the fall fair. While the late September dates were good for the exhibition of livestock, the dates were poor for cereals and roots since grains would be hardly cut by September 25, much less threshed.<sup>84</sup> According to Shaw, "Under no circumstances can you obtain from the farmers a fair exhibit of what this country can produce before October 15, and this year it will be later."<sup>85</sup> Clearly, the farmers preferred late October dates as compared to the ranchers' desire for earlier dates. The polemical issue of date selection appears to have been settled in favor of the ranchers, as the exhibition was never again held in late October.<sup>86</sup>

Since the ranching frontier provided Calgary with its first economic muscle, ranchers won special recognition in the area. Calgary historian Max Foran acknowledges

---

<sup>82</sup> *The Calgary Tribune*, 29 October 1886, p.4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 September 1887, p.2.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

the importance of ranching to Calgary in stating, "Especially before 1907, the ranching hinterland was crucial to Calgary's commercial existence, and early business leaders fully appreciated the implications of their dependence on cattle."<sup>87</sup> Endemic to the region's economy, ranching and, especially after 1900, grain growing interests permeated all aspects of the Calgary Exhibition.

The ranching frontier was kick-started by federal legislation introduced in 1881. The federal government sanctioned a controversial lease system, which provided for 21-year leases at one cent per acre per year. Interested parties could lease up to 100,000 acres and were expected to stock their new land within three years with one head of cattle per 10 acres. Senator Matthew Cochrane, a wealthy Quebec cattle breeder, was one of the first to take advantage of the new legislation.<sup>88</sup> Conspicuously, Cochrane was largely responsible for the legislation.<sup>89</sup> The huge grazing leases which had been granted to Cochrane and other ranching companies such as Bar U, Oxley, and Walrond discouraged farming and made it difficult for the homesteader to find suitable land.<sup>90</sup> By acting decisively on the question of fair dates, fair organizers eased escalating tensions between farmers and ranchers and the issue never crept into the press again.

Entertainment, beyond Baby Contests, was added to the 1891 Exhibition in the form of spectator races. Scheduled to amuse fair visitors that year were Indian races, cowboy races, pony races, and gentlemen's driving races while bicycle races were added

---

<sup>86</sup> Due to inclement weather, the 1890 exhibition was forced to postpone its dates from October 8th and 9th to the 10th and 11th. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.11.

<sup>87</sup> Foran and Foran, *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis*, p.90.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of Cochrane's role in the 1881 legislation, see Breen's *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier*, p.17-19.

<sup>90</sup> Dempsey, *Calgary: Spirit of the West*, p.41.



the following year.<sup>91</sup> In its account of the 1892 agricultural exhibition, the *Tribune* declared that the most exhilarating aspect of the fair was the races, especially the Indian races.<sup>92</sup> According to the publication:

The most exciting of all the events were the Indian races, the first of which was next called. Eighteen competitors were entered, and a half-mile dash was made in excellent time. The tawny riders rode like centaurs, and the mass of galloping steeds was not unlike a cavalry charge. Two of the contestants were far superior in speed to the others and won with ease, making a close race with one another for 1<sup>st</sup> place.<sup>93</sup>

After their 1891 inclusion, races tended to be the main source of crowd amusement. Their appeal to fair visitors continued well into the next three decades of the exhibition's history. In the period between 1891 and 1893, a number of small nearby communities began hosting their own agricultural fairs. Initially, the impact of competing exhibitions meant a drop in the number of exhibits at Calgary's fall event. The *Herald* noted, "The holding of exhibitions for the first time this year by the Davisburg and Sheep Creek Societies, whose members formerly exhibited at Calgary, will account in a large measure for the falling off of exhibits in agricultural products."<sup>94</sup>

In spite of a bumper crop in the Calgary district in 1895, tragedy struck for area farmers in the first week of September. For two days, the country was hit with a barrage

---

<sup>91</sup> *The Calgary Tribune*, 5 October 1892, p.4.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* On the issue of Native involvement in fairs, Keith Regular writes, "The Natives were only too glad to escape the confines of their respective reserves and the domination of the Indian agents, and to partake of a festive occasion along with their white neighbours." Regular, "On Public Display", p.1.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Calgary Tribune*.

<sup>94</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 5 October 1892, p.6. The *Macleod Gazette* reported on what 'may be termed' the first exhibition of the Macleod Agricultural Society in its October 22, 1891 edition. Apparently, an exhibition was held in 1886, the same year as Calgary's first fair, but the results were so unsatisfactory that it was not repeated. *The Macleod Gazette*, 22 October 1891, p.2. The *Tribune* printed an account of the inaugural fair at Davisburg and it noted that, "A nice little room was erected on the grounds, where vegetables, grain roots, dairy products, and ladies' work were exhibited." *The Calgary Tribune*, 28 September 1892, p.1. For a report on the first Innisfail agricultural fair, see *The Calgary Tribune*, 12 October 1892, p.1 and for the beginnings of the Fish Creek Agricultural Society see *Ibid.*, 25 January 1893.

of sleet and snow accompanied by a killing frost. The farmers focused all their efforts on saving their crops and all talk of an agricultural exhibition for that year ceased.<sup>95</sup> Though fall exhibitions were carried on by residents of the neighbouring communities, Calgary's fall fair was not held for the next four years. On this respite, James Gray noted, "The exhibition issue did not die. It was kept alive by the residents of Fish Creek, High River, Davisburg, and Innisfail areas. Each year, came the first week of October, and the farm communities picked a convenient spot and staged their own outdoor exhibitions."<sup>96</sup> No doubt, many of the former Calgary exhibitors opted to display their products at the other district fairs. After hosting the first Territorial Exhibition in 1895, Regina's local exhibition also took four years off and returned in 1899.<sup>97</sup> In Calgary, the first decade of its existence had come to an end and, at least provisionally, so had its celebrated fair.

'Up from the ashes', Calgary's fall exhibition reappeared in September of 1899 with a new name and a new mandate. According to the *Calgary Herald*, "It is intended by the promoters to make Calgary's one of the big Western fairs, namely Winnipeg, Calgary and New Westminster. Hence, the name of the association the Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition Association."<sup>98</sup> By the turn of the nineteenth century, Winnipeg had unquestionably emerged as the premier metropolis in the West. It had an established exhibition that was second to none in the territories west of Toronto. Since its early emergence in 1869, New Westminster's agricultural fair had also achieved dominance

---

<sup>95</sup> Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.13.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Bonnie Stephenson, *Agribition* (Regina: Canadian Western Agribition, 1990), p.14.

<sup>98</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 5 September 1899, p.2. In March, 1900, the Calgary Agricultural Society was restructured as a non-dividend paying joint stock company called the Inter-Western Pacific Exposition Company, Limited. "The Calgary Exhibition 1884 to 1920" published by the Calgary Industrial Exhibition Co., Ltd., 1931, Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F35, p.2.

over its Pacific coast hinterland. Sponsored by that community's Royal Agricultural and Industrial Society, the New Westminster Exhibition was by far the largest in the province and it attracted agricultural exhibitors from throughout British Columbia, the Pacific Northwest, and the Canadian prairies.<sup>99</sup> Clearly, the aspirations for the newly organized Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition were high, especially since the town's population by 1901 was still under 5,000.<sup>100</sup> Historian Henry C. Klassen relays the story of one woman's first impression of the meager city, "In the late 1890's one wife, after her long journey from England, got off the train at the centrally located railway station and greeted her husband with the words, "My dear, where is the town?"<sup>101</sup>

Without missing a beat, the 1899 Exhibition again offered races as its main feature. In its coverage of this fair, the *Herald* reported, "The races were, after all, the chief attraction, and when the bell rang for the first race the grand stand was fairly well filled."<sup>102</sup> The exhibits of cattle and horses were fairly strong, according to the *Herald*, however, if there had been more effort on the part of ranchers in the area, they could surely have been improved. Improvement was needed in virtually all areas of the exhibition. But since it was the first attempt in years, the *Herald* deemed the affair 'a good start'. After all, Rome was not built in a day. "It was felt that the city had to make a start in the exhibition line and taking everything into consideration, the late season, the

---

<sup>99</sup> Breen and Coates, *Vancouver's Fair*, p.7. According to Breen and Coates, the dominance of New Westminster Exhibition stunted the development of Vancouver's PNE and forced it to maintain a predominantly industrial focus, p.6-24.

<sup>100</sup> Calgary's population in 1891 was 3,876; in 1901 it was 4,091. *Census of Canada, 1890-1891, Census of Canada, 1900-1901*. While still a rather paltry population, there was considerable growth since the formation of the town's Agricultural Society in 1884. Dempsey cites the 1884 population figure at 428. Dempsey, *Calgary: Spirit of the West*, p.61.

<sup>101</sup> Klassen, "Life in Frontier Calgary", p.44.

<sup>102</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 28 September 1899, p.1.

fact that farmers and ranchers are still busy with hay and crops, and the apathy and lack of interest that to a large extent had to be contended against, the result is far from discouraging", the *Herald* concluded.<sup>103</sup>

Both the *Herald* and the *Albertan* declared the Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition in 1900 a bonafide success. After repeated attempts and more than one failure, Calgary had at least succeeded in holding an exhibition which was representative of and highly credible to the city and the surrounding area.<sup>104</sup> The exhibition was on track to meet and possibly exceed expectations and, with a successful fair under its belt, the burgeoning city took its first step towards national recognition as an important prairie center.

In the years following 1900, promoters of the fair continually sought to surpass the success of previous amusements by adding new attractions to their venue. As if to accentuate the entertainment focus, in 1903, the fair's dates were indefinitely shifted to the month of July. Thus, the fall exhibition had become a summer celebration. Autumn dates, though standard for agricultural fairs, often conflicted with harvesting or were hampered by poor weather. For such reasons, Brandon switched its fall fair to the month of July in 1898.<sup>105</sup> No doubt, harvesting issues, unreliable weather and a more sophisticated entertainment focus all contributed to Calgary's decision to move its fair dates to summer.

Exhibition success was intrinsically tied to the ability of the fair to draw crowds. Under the heading 'Plenty of Amusements', the *Herald* professed, "While many exhibition visitors attend shows for the educational value received, it is no reflection on

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 29 September 1899, p.1.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 13 September 1900, p.2, *The Albertan*, 15 September 1900, p.1.

the Western public to state that a vastly larger number attend exhibitions principally in order to be amused, and it behooves all good showmen to cater liberally to both classes."<sup>106</sup> It was the propensity to cater to those only interested in amusement that drew criticism from the Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture for the Territories, C. W. Peterson, in 1902, "Instead of having the farmers and their families who used to attend to see stock, we now have young people, largely from the cities and towns, who are present to see attractions and to bet on the races."<sup>107</sup> Organizers were indeed concerned with attracting visitors, even young visitors, from Calgary and surrounding towns as well as rural visitors. They catered their program to all interests. It must be pointed out, however, that despite a widening gap between rural and urban interests, in this early period, these differences were relatively minor. Historian Grant MacEwan notes, "Perhaps it was the aura of the ranching country or of the Foothills, but in any case there was a distinctiveness about the pioneers who came to the Calgary area, and among other things they tended to erase the line of demarcation between the men of the street and the men of the soil."<sup>108</sup> Many of the earliest urban residents straddled the imaginary line that separated the town and farm people. Indeed, as the years progressed this line would become more pronounced.

At times, the exhibition's amusements bordered on the absurd. For example, the 1903 Exhibition included a brandy and soda race where participants were expected to ride

---

<sup>105</sup> Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.10-11.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 July 1904, p.7.

<sup>107</sup> North West Territories, *Annual Report Agriculture* 1902, p.123 as cited in Jones, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs*, p.4.

<sup>108</sup> Grant MacEwan, "The Town-Country Background at Calgary" in *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region*, p.1. In Toronto, according to Keith Walden, the differences between the urban residents and the

to a table, dismount, drink a brandy and soda, light a cigar and return with the lit cigar.<sup>109</sup>

Not surprisingly, the race drew cheers and laughter from the crowds. The *Herald* recounted the event:

The brandy and soda race was nothing if not amusing. In this event a table was placed on the track even with the west end of the grandstand upon which was the brandy and soda the competitors had to down. Those entered were required to ride to the table, dismount, pour their brandy and soda, drink it, remount and return to the starting point. There were no less than thirteen men in the event. In one of the shoots much merriment was caused when one of the horses became a bit fractious when the rider dismounted and knocked over the improvised table.<sup>110</sup>

The various races attracted enormous crowds and appeared not to have disappointed their audiences. According to the *Herald*, the prim and proper hoards that turned out to view the day's races were soon thrown into a frenzied state: "Well gowned women stood up and screamed their delight and their male escorts threw up their hands and shouted. The pent up enthusiasm of the day broke out in wild abandon."<sup>111</sup> By 1904, fair organizers could truly boast that they had 'arrived' as estimated figures for attendance on the final day of show ranged in the thousands.<sup>112</sup>

In that same year, management offered fairgoers something new for their entertainment viewing—vaudeville performers. Between races, trapeze performers, trick bicycle riders and fun makers, both male and female, in gorgeous circus costumes,

---

country folk were more pronounced. He asserts that the rural folk were often depicted as bumbling fools by the city newspapers. Walden, *Becoming Modern*, p.213.

<sup>109</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 2 July 1903, p.4.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 July 1903, p.4.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 July 1904, p.1.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* The *Herald* estimated the figures at somewhere between 7,000 to 10,000 visitors; however, such figures seem a little ambitious.

performed before the grandstand.<sup>113</sup> Their feats of daring thrilled thousands of onlookers but also drew criticism from conservatives. As Jones explains, “It was perhaps the unleashing of the unpredictable, the irrational, and the suicidal of which such attractions at their worst were capable—and the promotion of irresponsibility, dare taking, and pleasure-seeking—which so struck the many opponents of supplementary attractions at agricultural fairs.”<sup>114</sup>

In all the chaos, the fear was that the exhibition was losing its focus. With the inclusion of vaudeville type acts, fair visitors might lose interest in the agricultural and livestock displays. According to the *Whitby Chronicle*, if removed from the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, “Four-fifths of the visitors would not miss the livestock and agricultural implements.”<sup>115</sup> But at the Calgary Exhibition, even farmers themselves, who could best benefit from the agricultural displays, might be detracted by the lurid amusements. Children were especially susceptible to the immoral influences at the exhibition. In its 1904 coverage, the *Herald* observed that the children who crowded the grandstand and surrounding greens found particular amusement in the special vaudeville performances while their elders enjoyed the speed numbers.<sup>116</sup>

Despite growing criticism, the exhibition’s vaudeville acts were not the first target of moralists. Instead, they directed their efforts at an issue that developed in 1905 regarding gambling on the fairgrounds. The controversy also revealed a growing rivalry between Calgary and its neighbour to the north, Edmonton. The two cities were both

---

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 July 1904, p.1.

<sup>114</sup> Jones, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-tongued Fakirs*, p.2.

<sup>115</sup> *Whitby Chronicle*, 16 September 1892, as cited in Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto*, p.282.

<sup>116</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 9 July 1904, p.1

vying for the capital of the newly proclaimed province. Calgary, by this time an established business centre for all of Southern Alberta, saw itself as the natural choice for the capital. However, Edmonton ultimately won the capital. The Alberta government's 1907 decision to grant the province's sole degree-granting university to Edmonton also served to aggravate the bitterness between the two centers.<sup>117</sup> The *Calgary Herald* reflected the city's resentment:

The people of the South have tolerated the injustice of the location of the capital being fixed at the instigation of a clique of extreme party men interested in Edmonton. At that time the feeling of injustice was somewhat assuaged by assurances that the university would be placed at Calgary or some other point not to the north. Now that selfish and hoggish element has again turned down the south.<sup>118</sup>

According to historian Grant MacEwan, Edmonton had hosted its own agricultural fair since 1879.<sup>119</sup> Over the years, that fair grew in size and sophistication. Apparently, the 1902 fair was the largest ever seen in the area and a considerable number of Calgary residents ventured up to partake in the festivities.<sup>120</sup> By 1905, however, Calgary attitudes towards the Edmonton Exhibition became increasingly antagonistic and, interestingly, moralistic. A 1905 *Herald* editorial asserted that if Edmonton preferred the 'loose-jointed' institution being run there under the name of exhibition to a well regulated industrial enterprise like Calgary had then she certainly deserved it.<sup>121</sup>

Edmonton's 'loose-jointed' reputation stemmed from the gambling allowed on the

---

<sup>117</sup> Dempsey, *Calgary: Spirit of the West*, p.78-81.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 April 1907, p.2.

<sup>119</sup> Grant MacEwan, *Agriculture on Parade*, p.65. As MacEwan points out, "Edmonton is one of the oldest names on the prairies and when the first fair was held at that outpost on the North Saskatchewan River in 1879, Brandon, Vancouver and Saskatoon did not exist; Regina was a Pile of Bones; Moose Jaw was nothing more than a creek; Calgary was a Mounted Police post and Winnipeg was a city in infancy."

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

<sup>121</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 11 July 1905, p.2.



fairgrounds. A gambling syndicate which had paid \$1,300 to Edmonton's fair organizers to 'fleece' their city's residents had traveled south to try their hand at Calgary. The syndicate paid \$500 to Calgary fair officials to set up their gambling operations on the fairgrounds.<sup>122</sup> The presence of the gamblers, however, did not go unnoticed by critics. The *Herald* reported that a serious row had developed at the exhibition grounds over the operations of a large number of gamblers, who were plying their trade very openly.<sup>123</sup> The 'openness' of the unethical trade disturbed many fairgoers and opposition mounted.

Reverend G. W. Kerby led the charge against the gamblers. Kerby's importance to Calgary's early history cannot be overstated. Initially, he preached at the city's Central Methodist Church. From 1911 until 1942, he occupied the position of principal of Calgary's first post-secondary institution, Mount Royal College.<sup>124</sup> Kerby demanded the 'grafters' close up shop and he appealed to both the chief of police and the mayor to support him. Since the gamblers had received authorization from fair directors, city officials claimed they were powerless and the gambling operations continued. Not satisfied with the outcome, Kerby sent a letter to the *Herald* which the newspaper printed on its front page. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

The press of the city deserves the thanks of the citizens of Calgary for its clear and strong stand against the wide-open gambling specialties of the Calgary Fair. The presence of these 'tin-horn' men cannot be justified on any grounds whatever. One expects to find such a gang on a Bowery street, New York, or in an out of the way mining town, but in a modern up-to-date exhibition they are 'back numbers'. The mayor should have given them their marching orders, and the chief of police should have arrested them on the

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1905, p.1.

<sup>124</sup> See J. H. Collett's "Calgary's First Principle of Mount Royal College: Dr. George W. Kerby" in *Citymakers: Calgarians After the Frontier*, edited by Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson (Calgary: The Historical Society of Alberta, Chinook Country Chapter, 1987), p.281-289.

spot.<sup>125</sup>

Although Kerby could not drive wide-open gambling activities from the 1905 fair, his influence helped prevent the syndicate from returning in 1906. Without a doubt, one of the strongest voices against the fair's inclusion of gambling activities was the agriculturally focused, *Farm and Ranch Review*, founded by C. W. Peterson and M. D. Geddes. On the 1905 gambling scandal, the *Review* stated, "While we do not pose as extremists, it certainly did seem a pity that the reputation earned by Calgary for an absolutely clean show should be jeopardized." The gambling syndicate's activities, emphasized the *Review*, "have no place at an agricultural fair and should be cut out."<sup>126</sup> Betting on horse racing continued, however. Yet, the *Morning Albertan* in 1907 proudly declared the Calgary fair free of 'easy money artists': "The famous side show, which was one of the principal attractions at the Edmonton fair, and was indecent enough to even disgust the Eskimos, had the impudence to apply for space on the Calgary Fair grounds."<sup>127</sup> Of course, the easy money artists were flatly rejected by the fair's management. Seemingly, Calgary was too chaste to allow them to set up shop.

Gambling was not the only moral difference between the two fairs. According to a *Herald* editorial, liquor was sold freely on the Edmonton fairgrounds and produced a great deal of revenue for the northern exhibition. A gentlemen revealed to the *Herald* that liquor was so rampant at the previous year's Edmonton fair that a license inspector was struck over the head with a beer bottle when he sought to interfere. Meanwhile,

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 8 July 1905, p.1.

<sup>126</sup> *The Farm and Ranch Review*, July 1905, p.24. For more on the *Review*'s C. W. Peterson see the Introduction to C. W. Peterson's *Wake Up, Canada! Reflections on Vital National Issues*, edited by David C. Jones (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1989).

<sup>127</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 9 July 1907, p.1.

liquor at Calgary's fair was so sparse that inspectors could find nothing to complain of.<sup>128</sup> Calgary may have lost the provincial capital, but, in the eyes of the *Herald*, Calgary took the lead over its northern counterpart on the issue of probity.

In 1907, Edmonton officials met with the farmers from the surrounding area to discuss the role entertainment should play at their annual exhibition. However, rather than limiting amusements, such as horse racing, farmers indicated they wanted more time to frequent such attractions. They suggested that the judging of agricultural and livestock exhibits be halted at an appropriate time each day to let everybody enjoy the contests on the track.<sup>129</sup> Concurrently in Calgary, newspaper editorials began warning city residents of the danger of losing sight of the prime focus of the exhibition—to display the district's agricultural achievements. As a 1907 editorial remarked, "The tendency of all undertakings of this kind is to sacrifice utility to means of attraction; to place horse racing above industrial exhibits and side-shows ahead of agricultural displays. This country wants a certain amount of fun mixed with its education but it doesn't want an exhibition of Alberta's resources turned into a Donnybrook fair."<sup>130</sup>

Lectures from the editorial pages did not, however, lead to any serious cessation of amusements at the Calgary Exhibition. The quandary between morality and amusements was complicated by the enormous crowds drawn to such attractions. After all, a fair's success was inextricably linked to the number of visitors who attended. By 1906, fair success was measured in the thousands. The *Herald* reported that over seven thousand people had attended the last day of races at the 1906 fair and every one of them

---

<sup>128</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 11 July 1905, p.2

<sup>129</sup> MacEwan, *Agriculture on Parade*, p.69.

was more than satisfied with the sport provided by the fast horses and other attractions.<sup>131</sup>

Rather than curtailing its entertainment venue, the Calgary Exhibition chose to expand its amusements. Extensive amusements titillated rural visitors, but more significantly, they attracted those in the burgeoning population who did not have agricultural ties to the fair. Evening fireworks were added to the program in 1905.<sup>132</sup> A decided novelty at the 1906 Exhibition was the balloon ascent and parachute drop. The *Herald* revealed that the big gas bag went up to a great height, drifting slightly to the southeast, and the drop was made outside of the exhibition grounds.<sup>133</sup> Immediately preceding the evening fireworks, wild woolly cowboys demonstrated before the grandstand their bronco-busting and steer roping capabilities.<sup>134</sup> Largely due to its amusements, organizers revealed that fully twelve thousand and sixty-three persons paid admission to the grounds over the three days of the 1906 Exhibition with a daily average slightly over 4000 persons.<sup>135</sup> Clearly, the fair had surpassed its 1886 predecessor in which 500 persons took in the two-day event.

Much of the criticism directed at exhibitions stemmed from the influx of 'confidence men' or 'fakirs' who traveled the fair circuits and swooped in to inveigle unsuspecting fairgoers. The *Herald* contended, "The Calgary fair is today the greatest exhibition of natural resources west of Winnipeg. On them it rests to see that its chief object is safeguarded and that the grounds are kept absolutely free from fakirs of every

---

<sup>130</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 9 July 1907, p.4.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 July 1906, p.4.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 July 1905, p.1.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 July 1906, p.1.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 July 1906, p.7.

description.”<sup>136</sup> Jones maintains that over the years the flimflammers and confidence men who plagued early fairs played many a trick on gullible farmers in both urban and rural locales.<sup>137</sup> Obviously, con men operated in cities outside of fair dates; however, their activities intensified at exhibition time. On the front page of its July 6, 1907 edition, days before the annual fair, the *Morning Albertan* alleged that Calgary would soon be flooded with confidence men and the usual crowd of ‘flim-flammers’ were coming to the city in readiness for the fair. The paper admonished Calgarians to *be careful*.<sup>138</sup>

Although the Calgary fair had its share of necessary evils, it still claimed higher moral ground over its Edmonton counterpart. Rather than completely submitting to the entertainment aspect, Calgary organizers dedicated the first day of the fair to the judging of agriculture and livestock. This move prompted admiration from the Minister of Agriculture, W. T. Finlay, who remarked, “You may say what you like about attractions and that kind of thing, but the backbone of the fairs is the agricultural exhibition. By devoting one day to judging, to the agricultural feature alone you are encouraging the very thing that goes to make these fairs valuable.”<sup>139</sup> Adding fuel to an already raging fire, Finlay continued, “I do not propose to make comparisons, but I noticed that in Edmonton where there were races all the four days, that there was no audience about the judging rings. In Calgary today the judging rings were the centre of interesting people.”<sup>140</sup>

Though races occupied a substantial component of Calgary’s exhibition, the

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1907, p.4.

<sup>137</sup> Jones, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-tongued Fakirs*, p.58.

<sup>138</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 6 July 1907, p.1.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 11 July 1906, p.1.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Also see the *Farm and Ranch Review*, July 1906, p.18.

perception held by critics like Finlay was that they were peripheral to the agricultural exhibits. According to some observers, the situation in Edmonton was very different. In a letter to the editor of the *Morning Albertan*, A. O. MacRae of Red Deer wrote:

Only yesterday I chatted with one of the cabinet ministers of Alberta about the Edmonton fair. He said those in charge had lost sight of the aim and end of the fair. The exhibits in all departments were mere excuses—side shows. The encouragement of cattle raising, horse breeding, grain growing, etc., etc., the source of all our future prosperity, these things were lost sight of or relegated to the background and the ‘Carnival of Races’ was the all important feature.<sup>141</sup>

Calgary effectively dealt with criticisms of its fair amusements by ‘one-upping’ Edmonton’s flagrant entertainment focus. By dedicating a full day to judging exhibits, the Calgary fair appeared more committed to the agricultural purposes of the exhibition. At the same time, it augmented and diversified its entertainment venue. Calgary reaped the rewards of its amusements and, because it dedicated a full day to judging, it actually drew compliments from the Minister of Agriculture. Indeed, the government position in relation to the fair’s mandate was decidedly agricultural. The Department of Agriculture itself participated in the large-scale fairs by setting up instructional exhibits on weeds, poultry, dairy, as well as domestic science work. On the Department’s activities, the *Farm and Ranch Review* asserted, “We think we are well within the mark in stating, that the Alberta Department of Agriculture has planned a more advanced and energetic policy regarding the development of fairs than any other similar department in Canada.”<sup>142</sup>

Congruent to the growth of the fair was the maturation of the exhibition’s industrial exhibits. In 1886, the inaugural fair had little to offer in the way of industry.

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1907, p.3.

<sup>142</sup> *The Farm and Ranch Review*, July 1906, p.8.

However, in 1907 the manufacturers' display was so large that two buildings were necessary to house exhibits.<sup>143</sup> The fair was no longer solely a forum for rural agriculturalists—it also showcased the efforts of urban industrialists. The sophistication of displays inspired the *Morning Albertan* to boast that the exhibits have reached such a point that people attend the exhibition for that purpose and not merely to witness the enticing attractions.<sup>144</sup> Particularly impressive to the *Albertan* was that the 'Made in Calgary' display occupied a large part of the manufacturer's building. On this display, historian Paul Voisey writes, "To advertise Calgary, manufacturing displays were added to the annual agricultural fair, and the city authorized special 'Made in Calgary' shows."<sup>145</sup> The *Morning Albertan* asserted that, though this exhibit was but a small part of the representative manufacturing establishments in the city, it gave the outsider some idea of the large amount of manufacturing done in Calgary.<sup>146</sup>

Calgary, along with its fair, had long surpassed its rudimentary beginnings. A booming market between 1905 and 1915 increased the number of factories in the city to sixty-nine, up from 1901's figure of ten, and the average number of employees per factory rose from thirty-one in 1901 to forty-four. At the W. H. Cushing firm alone, the capital invested between 1905 and 1910 soared from twenty thousand dollars to a staggering five hundred thousand.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, the city's annual exhibition was the perfect forum to promote these impressive strides in manufacturing.

In 1907, the neighbouring community of High River hosted its first agricultural

---

<sup>143</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 9 July 1907, p.1.

<sup>144</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 10 July 1907, p.3.

<sup>145</sup> Paul Voisey, "In Search of Wealth and Status: An Economic and Social Study of Entrepreneurs in Early Calgary" in *Op. Cited*, *Frontier Calgary*, p.235.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

fair. Unlike the modest country fairs which debuted in such communities as Davisburg and Innisfail in the 1890s, the High River event could boast a rather extensive industrial exhibit. Some of the same manufacturers who helped fill Calgary's industrial buildings set up similar displays at High River's fair. These manufacturers included the Alberta Implement Company, Massey-Harris, Heslip, Kelly & Young, Stanley & Dawson, and the High River Implement Company.<sup>148</sup> Considering the region's economic base, it should come as no surprise that most of these industrial exhibits featured the newest innovations in farm machinery.

Somewhere between eight and ten thousand people were expected to visit the grounds on 'Citizens' Day', the second day of the 1907 Exhibition.<sup>149</sup> However, it was 1907's 'Americans' Day' that promised to draw the largest crowd, exceeding the tremendous number of visitors to Citizens' Day.<sup>150</sup> Why was Americans' Day expected to attract the highest attendance of that year's fair? Perhaps, a 1906 article on the first major 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration in Calgary best clarifies Americans' Day's popularity. The editorial discussed the gigantic crowds that took in the American holiday and observed, "The percentage of actual Americans in Alberta was suggested at least by the immense crowds who cheered for Uncle Sam at Exhibition park. One of the speakers of the afternoon stated that he felt that the destiny of the West was in the hands of its American

---

<sup>147</sup> Voisey, "In Search of Wealth and Status", p.224.

<sup>148</sup> *The High River Times*, 25 July 1907, p.1. The article also reported on the impressive Ladies' Exhibit and the fair's bucking contest in which two cowboys, Charles Millar and H. W. Jacob competed for a purse of thirty five dollars. For a brief discussion of the High River Agricultural Society and its petition for official registration with the provincial government see Lillian Knupp's *Life and Legends: A History of the Town of High River* (Calgary: Sandstone Publishing Ltd., 1982), p.157.

<sup>149</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 10 July 1907, p.1.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 July 1907, p.1



population.”<sup>151</sup> Between the frontier cowboys and the homesteaders after 1900, the Americans were strongly represented in the population of Southern Alberta.<sup>152</sup> The highlight of Americans’ Day was the much anticipated ball game between the former Americans and the Canadians. The *Herald* recounted, “On the diamond the superfluous flesh victims, from Canada and the United States, labored and swatted and sweated for victory.”<sup>153</sup> In the end, the Canadians emerged victorious.

\*\*\*\*\*

In a word, ‘change’ characterized Calgary’s exhibition in the years between 1886 and 1907. The inaugural exhibition was a modest affair with a mere 500 visitors. In 1907, however, between 8,000 and 10,000 visitors frequented Citizens’ Day, only the second day of the fair. Industrial exhibits grew from merely a handful of manufacturers at the 1886 exhibition to a display that encompassed two buildings. When Lieutenant Governor Bulyea opened the 1907 Exhibition, he affirmed the incredible change in the fair over the previous decade. In its coverage of the Lieut.-Governor’s speech, the *Herald* reported that Bulyea, “Had taken some part in the Calgary fair 10 or 12 years ago and he was in a position to appreciate the strides that had been made. The growth of the fair indicated the growth of the city and country surrounding and afforded an opportunity to visitors to see what Alberta was capable of.”<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 10 July 1906, p.2.

<sup>152</sup> According to Howard Palmer, nearly 600,000 American immigrants came to Western Canada between 1898 and 1914. In the years between 1907 and 1915, Americans took out forty percent of the homesteads in the Northwest and, by 1911, twenty-two percent of Alberta’s population was American born. Howard Palmer, “Patterns of Immigration and Ethnic Settlement in Alberta: 1880-1920” in *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), p.11. For a discussion of the American cowboy’s influence see comments in the Introduction by Dempsey and Elofson, p.6-7.

<sup>153</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 13 July 1907, p.1.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1907, p.1.

In many ways the fair of 1907 was still the flagship for the agricultural community. However, its aims became more complex as it matured. Exhibitions after the turn of the century functioned dually as entertainment and educational venues for both urban and rural visitors. Even in this early period, the city saw the birth of a developing industrial sector and a growing non-agricultural population. Fair organizers needed to consider the agricultural interests—farmers and ranchers, as well as diversifying town interests. In the early years of the Calgary Exhibition, the prevailing sentiment was to attract fairgoers ‘at all costs’. With growth, however, came the onset of ‘confidence men’ and the fear that the exhibition was losing its agricultural focus. Races, midways, and vaudeville performers seduced the crowds away from the livestock and grain exhibits.

Pressure to keep agricultural interests in the limelight led fair organizers to dedicate a full day to judging exhibits. Despite the enormous amusement program, the Calgary Exhibition appeared more dedicated to showcasing the district’s farming and ranching interests. From the beginning, fair administrators were preoccupied with perception. In 1886, it was essential that the district demonstrate its farming prowess through an exhibition of their products. In 1907, agricultural bravado was still a concern, but it was not the sole concern of fair organizers—their goal was to create a veritable event. Since the reputation of the burgeoning city was at stake, the show needed to be exceptional.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IDENTITY: A TRIBUTE TO THE PAST, 1908-1912

*Remember that Alberta is the most interesting province in Canada. It's 'different' from the others. See this grand province before the picturesque Indians, cowboys, and tremendously fascinating Western life is forced far in the background by the energetic wheat farmer.*

*-Prize List for 1908 Dominion Exhibition<sup>155</sup>*

*Yes! Thou art gone and in thy stead  
Dame Progress proudly stands  
With stolen crown upon her head,  
And blood-stains on her hands.*

*But though from sight of loving eye  
Thou hast sadly passed away;  
My love for thee shall never die  
Till in the ground my form they lay.*

*-excerpt from Wild West by Wallace D.  
Coburn<sup>156</sup>*

In 1907, the *Calgary Herald* boldly predicted that due to the tireless efforts of civic promoters the Dominion Exhibition would doubtless be held in Calgary the following year.<sup>157</sup> With the opening of the city's Dominion fair on July 1, 1908, the *Herald's* forecast proved true. The prestigious fair catapulted the burgeoning city into the national consciousness—Calgary had unequivocally arrived. Following the exhibition, the *Herald* remarked, "It has been the greatest advertisement Calgary ever had. It has

---

<sup>155</sup> "Prize List for 1908 Dominion Exhibition" published by the Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition Company, 1908. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F20, p.13.

<sup>156</sup> "Wild West" by Wallace D. Coburn in "Programme for 1912 Stampede" published by the Directors of the Calgary Stampede, 1912. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F29A, p.18.

raised Calgary's reputation as a metropolitan city a hundred-fold. It has proclaimed to a hundred thousand people, by proof of the eye, the manifold resources and bounteous wealth of Alberta, British Columbia, and the entire country."<sup>158</sup>

No previous fair in Calgary history rivaled the 1908 Dominion Exhibition in attendance and scope. The exhibition attracted over a hundred thousand visitors. On its opening day alone, the afternoon and evening gate admissions exceeded the city's entire population of approximately twenty-five thousand persons.<sup>159</sup> The *Herald* aptly reported, "Taking the population of Calgary, man, woman, and child, as they were counted in the census of last year, there were more people on the ground at the opening of the great Dominion fair of 1908 than there are people living in the city."<sup>160</sup> For Calgary, a new era of exhibitions had begun.

Each year, the federal government designated one of the country's larger fairs as the Dominion Exhibition and provided it with a generous \$50,000 grant for buildings and prizes. With so much at stake in the pending battle for Dominion fair status, the various exhibitions across Canada competed vigorously for the honor.<sup>161</sup> In addition to the federal grant, the Calgary fair was awarded \$35,000 from the provincial government and \$25,000 from the city. With supplementary funds from gate receipts and exhibitors' entrance fees, the Calgary Dominion Exhibition had a budget of \$145,000 from which to operate and offer as prize money.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>157</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 13 July 1907, p.6.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 July 1908, p.4.

<sup>159</sup> Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.185.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 July 1908, p.1.

<sup>161</sup> Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.50.

<sup>162</sup> Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.24. *The Calgary Herald*, 6 July 1908, p.1. "Prize List for the 1908 Dominion Exhibition", p.12.

According to its promotional material, the management of the 1908 Exhibition had to exert every influence to induce visitors to believe its fair would be as full of interest and as well attended as exhibitions held in other cities four or five times larger than the city of Calgary.<sup>163</sup> Indisputably, the Herculean task was accomplished. The *Morning Albertan* stated that nothing ever gave such universal satisfaction as the Dominion Exhibition or excited so much local pride. The Dominion fair made history in Western Canada, establishing a high mark and educating visitors to the city's worth as nothing else had previously done.<sup>164</sup>

To pay respect to the Calgary district's past, fair organizers opened the festivities with a historical pageant in which the Aboriginal population from Southern Alberta played a significant role. In his book, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Daniel Francis asserted that Natives represented the barbaric past against which the progress of White settlers could be judged.<sup>165</sup> Their primitive heritage was contrasted with the latest technological innovations. The *Morning Albertan* observed, "The dim and distant past joined hands with the latest and most modern. In the most picturesque pageant that has ever been witnessed in America, and in many respects the most unique pageant that has ever been seen in the world."<sup>166</sup>

Approximately one thousand Natives were gathered together by Methodist Missionary, Reverend John McDougall, to participate in the Dominion Exhibition's

---

<sup>163</sup> "Alberta Provincial Exhibition Premium List" published by the Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition Company, 1909. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F21, p.12.

<sup>164</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 9 July 1908, p.3.

<sup>165</sup> Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, p.97.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 July 1908, p.1.

opening parade.<sup>167</sup> In his article on parades in Victorian Canada, Peter G. Goheen observes that, "Parades, like all ceremonial occasions, are passing pageants, moments of release from ordinary routine and hence charged with meaning."<sup>168</sup> There was no doubt in the media coverage that the parade marked the end of an era and it was, indeed, 'charged with meaning'. As the *Herald* reported:

Never again probably will such a gathering of Indians be witnessed. No Dominion Exhibition ever before contained so wonderful a sight and those who saw it were indeed privileged. In their glorious blaze of color, their traditional war paint, their gorgeous feathers and their many blankets, the Indians brought back vividly the long and romantic history of Canada's western land, the struggle of barbarism with civilization, the eternal contest between what has been and what is to come.<sup>169</sup>

The passing of the frontier from the Native population to the European settlers was a reality echoed in the *Herald's* contemporary, the *Morning Albertan*. The *Albertan* affirmed, "Indians in war paint, decorated for battle, gorgeously garbed in raiment as radiant as the rainbow, after the fantastic manner of the red men, passed in parade, perhaps for the last time."<sup>170</sup> It was precisely this perception of the Natives in their battle garb that the Indian Department took issue with. Rather than the 'warring-savage' image, the Department fostered the idea of the progressive Native evolving towards a civilized state. Their participation in agricultural fairs concerned Indian Department officials because of their desire to move the Natives forward rather than cling to their past. Federal government attempts to eradicate displays of traditional Native culture were part

---

<sup>167</sup> According to the *Herald*, "Rev. John McDougall has been untiring in his efforts to make it a success and there is no man in the West better calculated to conduct and arrange an affair of this kind...In the early days when he was in close touch with the savage his foresight was the means of saving many a clash between white man and savage." The *Calgary Herald*, 30 June 1908, p.1.

<sup>168</sup> Peter G. Goheen, "Symbols in the Streets: Parades in Victorian Urban Canada," *Urban History Review*, Vol.XVIII, No.3 (February 1990), p.237.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 July 1908, p.1.

of a larger agenda aimed at eliminating all practices which the Indian Department believed stood in the way of assimilation of Native people.<sup>171</sup>

Ultimately, the Indian Act was altered to include a punishment for Native participation in fairs.<sup>172</sup> The Department of Indian Affairs conducted an inquiry through its Ottawa head office in 1914 in order to determine the effect of exhibition attendance on agricultural productivity and morality. It also explored possible solutions to the growing popularity of these types of events among the reserve population. The Department solicited opinions from those in the field and briefs were presented by a number of organizations, including the Alberta chapter of the Methodist Church. Guided by the reports sent into the head office from these sources, officials concluded that the Native people were incapable of using sound judgment in determining their own 'best interests' in relation to exhibition participation. Thus, legislation was added to Section 149 of the Indian Act which stipulated that participation in indigenous forms of activities at White-sponsored events was subject to the approval of the Department. The penalty for participating without official approval was a rather hefty fine or imprisonment for one month, or a combination of both.<sup>173</sup>

At the 1908 Dominion Exhibition, parade spectators were treated to the grand and noble 'swan song' of the Native race, according to the *Albertan*.<sup>174</sup> In sharp contrast to the primitive Aboriginal was the airship Strobel, a propeller-driven dirigible, which

---

<sup>170</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 2 July 1908, p.1.

<sup>171</sup> Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, p.98.

<sup>172</sup> See Regular's "On Public Display", p.1-10.

<sup>173</sup> Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind*, p.149.

<sup>174</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 2 July 1908, p.1.

hovered in the air like a pillar of cloud followed by an automobile procession.<sup>175</sup> In essence, the pageant's theme was both a tribute to a defeated culture and a celebration of modern technological advancement—the convergence of the past with the future. However noble the tribute, the perception was that the Native's eminence had indeed come to an end and that the spoils went to the victors. The *Albertan* contended that the Natives represented a different civilization and were the people who figured in the story—who were at one time a significant factor in this great country.<sup>176</sup> However, at the time of the 1908 Dominion Exhibition, the Natives were no longer perceived as an important factor. Perhaps the significance of the passing of the frontier for both fair organizers and spectators alike was not found in the past, but in the present. Between the years 1906-1912, the city experienced the long-awaited influx of immigrants and the 'boom' was on. The parade of the Aboriginal past served to accentuate the progressive strides of the two previous decades and point to an exciting and limitless future. By manipulating images, fair organizers demonstrated how far the city had come from its modest 1883 beginnings—from 'barbarism' to the height of civilization.

It is worthwhile to note that these same themes were revisited in the following year's Provincial Exhibition. Calgary obtained the right to host the 1909 Alberta Provincial Exhibition which was again opened with an elaborate historical pageant. Under the headline, 'Historical Pageant Shows Past, Present and Future', the *Albertan* reported that, though the Dominion Exhibition's pageant was surprisingly interesting and had the additional charm of being exotic and new, the 1909 show was even more

---

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. There is a discrepancy between the spelling of 'Strobel' in the two newspapers. The *Albertan* spells it Stroebel, while the *Herald* uses Strobel. The latter is used throughout this discussion.



interesting and attractive.<sup>177</sup>

The paper suggested that the three features of the pageant might be described as the past, the present, and the future. The *Albertan* wrote, "The past showed the red man, who swept the plains not more than thirty years ago, who has some years now ceased to be a factor in Western life."<sup>178</sup> The present was symbolized by the bearers of civilization and cultivation who came pouring into the newly formed country, the English, Irish and Scots, the Italians, the Russians, and quite fittingly, the most recent arrivals, the Americans. As in the Dominion Exhibition, the future was represented by an automobile procession.<sup>179</sup>

In both 1908 and 1909, exhibition organizers sought to distinguish the event with a gala pageant representing various aspects of Western life, past and present. The perception of progress was still the key to promoters. In earlier periods, the fair showcased the Calgary area's agricultural potential. The 1908 Exhibition highlighted the progress of the district's settlers—they overcame the barbarism of the Native inhabitants and shaped the Western frontier into a paragon of modernity. Calgary's potential was unlimited and such exuberance typified the newspapers' coverage of the city's Dominion Exhibition. On the 1908 fair, the *Herald* exulted, "With joyous hearts and cheerful countenance the people of Calgary and their visitors by thousands are joining in a demonstration of thankfulness for and delight in the prosperity of their country and the magnificent progress it has made since, as a nation of builders, it came out to take its

---

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1909, p.1.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

place among the great peoples of the earth.”<sup>180</sup>

The Calgary area’s ranching heritage also merited special tribute from fair management. They recognized the importance of the region’s cowboys to Southern Alberta’s past. Although cowboy races had been featured at the exhibition since 1891, the Dominion Exhibition offered an extensive Western venue with the addition of cowboys and Natives from the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show. Stampede historian James Gray noted that this production was one of the most famous of the traveling American shows. It rolled across North America in a special forty-five-car railway train and had performed recently at Madison Square Garden in New York.<sup>181</sup> Significantly, Guy Weadick, a participant in the show, approached a Canadian Pacific Railway official about the possibilities of presenting an annual Frontier Day Celebration which would include World Championship cowboy competitions. Harry McMullen, General Livestock Agent with the C.P.R, told Weadick that it was a fine idea but it was about two years too soon.<sup>182</sup> A few years later, Weadick’s pitch proved far more successful.

In the days before the Dominion fair’s opening, the *Herald* honored the ranching tradition by naming certain exhibition features for aspects of ranching. The ‘round up’ referred to the exhibition’s midway and the ‘corral’ was the section of the fair where various societies set up exhibits. At the 1908 Exhibition, for example, both the Sons of

---

<sup>180</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 1 July 1908, p.1.

<sup>181</sup> Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.27

<sup>182</sup> Transcript from a C.B.C. broadcast by Weadick on July 10, 1948. “The Origin of the Stampede at Calgary Alberta”. Glenbow Archives, the Guy Weadick Fonds, M4571, p.2. The majority of the broadcast was published posthumously in the *Alberta Historical Review*, see “The Origin of the Calgary Stampede” by Guy Weadick, *Alberta Historical Review*, Vol.14, No.4 (Autumn, 1966), p.20-24.

England and the Independent Order of Oddfellows erected displays in the 'corral'.<sup>183</sup> The *Herald* reported that the names it chose for society row and the amusement quarter had caught on with a vengeance on the grounds.<sup>184</sup>

The popularity of cowboy events continued to attract fairgoers at the 1909 Provincial Exhibition. That year's 'Western Day' attractions included a variety of cowboy contests as well as 'Indian' races, an exhibition staple since 1891. What constituted 'Western' for fair promoters? Cowboys and Aboriginal contests, of course. The *Albertan* suggested that the bronco-busting exhibition was one of the best that had ever been seen locally. Riders from the district provided a particularly good show, winning both the first and second prizes. However, some excitement arose during the contest when one of the horses jumped over the fence and into the crowd scattering them both right and left. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt and the competition continued without anymore incidents.<sup>185</sup>

Not surprisingly, press reports on the 1908 fair were almost steadfastly positive. As agents of civic promotion, Calgary newspapers rarely criticized enterprising local institutions. Certainly, after two decades, the Calgary Exhibition had emerged as a permanent annual city institution and promotional event. In its editorial on the Dominion Exhibition, the *Albertan* maintained that the machinery of the Calgary Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition Company was perfect. Everything was well arranged and there was

---

<sup>183</sup> Henry C. Klassen discusses the formation of such societies in Calgary as agents of cultural assimilation. He notes, "The social advantage of belonging to the friendly benefit societies appealed to many men, and every class from a caretaker to a medical doctor was represented in organizations like the Masons, Oddfellows, Foresters, and the Sons of England Benevolent Society." Klassen, "Life in Frontier Calgary", p.54.

<sup>184</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 26 June 1908, p.1. Ibid., 25 June 1908, p.1.

<sup>185</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 10 July 1909, p.1.

just enough of everything and not too much of anything.<sup>186</sup> From an examination of the fair's media coverage, one would be hard pressed to find any flaws or mishaps during the Dominion Exhibition. However, it was not a flawless affair.

Two serious accidents occurred on American Day—a day in which over thirty thousand people passed through the exhibition gates. American Day's popularity can largely be attributed to the huge influx of American visitors from farms north and south of Calgary. As well, special trains brought excursionists from Spokane to participate in the day's events. Thus, U.S. citizens and ex-U.S. citizens joined hands with Canadians in celebration of the July 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day holiday. The *Herald* asserted that two unfortunate occurrences marred an otherwise ideal day at the Dominion Exhibition. In the early afternoon, a furious windstorm swooped down on fairgoers and tore banners to shreds, flattened tents, lifted roofs from booths, injured a number of people, and left one man dead. The *Herald* recounted the grisly events, "The wind lifted the roof of one booth, composed of inch boards and 2 x 4 scantling, and hurled it over the fence on the heads of the spectators in the bleachers. An old man named Walter Scott, of Innisfail, was struck on the head by a mass of the flying timber and crushed to the ground." Sadly, the report continued, "When rescued from the debris it was found that his head was badly cut, his back was broken and his leg also broken."<sup>187</sup> Later that night, Scott died of his injuries at Calgary's General Hospital.

At the same time as the above accident, the Strobel airship, which was featured in the opening pageant, burst into flames. The airship was piloted by Captain Jack Dallas

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1908, p.3.

who fought in vain to protect the airship from the violent windstorm. The canvas of the tent in which the airship was enclosed kept blowing against the poles and threatening to snap them. The Captain and his assistant strove hard to keep the airship in the centre of the tent, as they realized any pressure placed on it would cause it to explode. However, after a sharp gust of wind struck the canvas, a muffled explosion was heard and a burst of flame confirmed that the airship had indeed blown up.<sup>188</sup>

The American Day windstorm and the tragedies that ensued did not, however, impair the Dominion Exhibition's reputation as a successful fair. The day itself drew adjectives like 'great' and 'splendid' from both daily newspapers. In fact, the *Albertan's* coverage primarily focused on the speeches delivered by R. B. Bennett, S. P. Strong, head of Calgary's American Society, and various American dignitaries.<sup>189</sup> Unfortunately, another calamitous accident occurred on Citizen's Day during a parade of champion stock from the district. A Cochrane man, W. D. Kerfoot, was fatally struck down by a wayward horse.<sup>190</sup> Needless to say, the 1908 show had its share of tragedies, despite being portrayed as an overwhelming success.

The exhibition's triumph was credited to the indefatigable efforts of the manager of the Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition Company, E. L. Richardson, and the fair's president, S. G. VanWart. According to the *Albertan*, behind the 1908 Exhibition was a

---

<sup>187</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 6 July 1908, p.1. In its account of the accident, the *Albertan* cited the victim's name as Gordon Scott, otherwise the reports were the same.

<sup>188</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 6 July 1908, p.1

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* The speeches focused on repatriation to Canadian laws and institutions. Strong described the aims of the American Society which were, "to make better Canadians of the American settlers in Alberta."

<sup>190</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 8 July 1908, p.1. William Dupean Kerfoot was an American-born rancher who, in the early 1880s, worked as manager of the British American Ranch, a Cochrane ranch. Ironically, Kerfoot was a superb rider. According to MacEwan, "Kerfoot liked horses—saddle horses, draft horses and even bad horses—and kept a chestnut outlaw in the corral for occasional entertainment, especially for those

master hand, a perfect master of detail, who shaped everything grandly. That master was E. L. Richardson. The editorial noted, "The credit is due to E. L. Richardson, the manager of the exhibition. He fashioned it, directed it, created it, and made it. He worked out the details and labored long and hard, sometimes under distressing physical condition towards its success."<sup>191</sup>

Richardson's meticulous attention to detail and businesslike approach prompted the *Herald* to state: "For months he worked unremittingly to ensure the success which has now crowned his efforts. With unfailing courtesy and consideration he has met the countless demands upon his patience inseparable from his task, and has with equity and good judgment decided the many problems that came up."<sup>192</sup> The fair management, especially Richardson, emerged as the heroes of the Dominion Exhibition. The *Albertan* noted that the director's badge of the 1908 Exhibition was a mark of high honor, which would be kept as a souvenir of a wonderful success.<sup>193</sup>

Calgarians demanded that their local heroes continue to deliver exhibitions the caliber of the 1908 fair. Shortly after the Dominion fair concluded, the *Albertan* stressed that Calgary must never step backwards: "Calgary can have a fair as good or better than that of 1908, every year, is not only possible, but now is very probable. The people of Calgary are enthusiastic about it. The merchants are confident and every person expects

---

times when some buckaroo with an exalted opinion of his riding skill came that way." MacEwan, *Calgary Cavalcade*, p.32.

<sup>191</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 9 July 1908, p.3. Richardson came to Calgary at the behest of the Exhibition's first full-time manager—C. W. Peterson. Richardson graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College in 1897 and managed an Ontario dairy farm for several years. When Peterson needed an assistant in 1903, he sent for Richardson. In 1906, Peterson left the Exhibition and E. L. Richardson took over the position of general manager. James H. Gray, "Unlikely Partners in a Grand Vision: Guy Weadick and E. L. Richardson", in *Citymakers*, p.61-62. For similarly positive reviews of Richardson's management of the fair see the *Farm and Ranch Review*, 5 July 1910, p.449.

that this must come."<sup>194</sup> Of course, future exhibitions would not receive the Dominion Exhibition's \$50,000 federal grant and additional provincial and civic government funding. It was an obstacle that exhibition directors assured Calgarians they could overcome. In conjunction with Calgary's Board of Trade, a resolution was passed by the exhibition company to maintain the 1908 standard for the years to come.<sup>195</sup> Indeed, after becoming accustomed to 'thinking big', fair management could hardly contemplate returning to the modest affairs that characterized the earlier period.

Due to such expectations, public scrutiny of the 1909 Provincial Exhibition was exceedingly close. However, with the success of the 1909 fair proclaimed in the two daily newspapers, Richardson and company could breath a sigh of relief. Although poor weather affected fair attendance, the *Herald* declared that both the pageant and the exhibition were in many respects better and more interesting than the previous years.<sup>196</sup> The 1909 Exhibition boasted a feat beyond those of its 1908 predecessor—the introduction of street cars onto the fair grounds. Accompanied by cheers from onlookers, cars No.1 and 2 rolled down Eighth Avenue and proceeded into the Victoria Park fair grounds. In commemorating the historic event, Mayor Jamieson stated, "This is an epoch in the history of the remarkable progress in the growth of the city of Calgary."<sup>197</sup>

In 1908 and 1909, fair officials developed a successful itinerary of attractions,

---

<sup>192</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 9 July 1908, p.4.

<sup>193</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 9 July 1908, p.3.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 July 1908, p.1.

<sup>195</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 11 July 1908, p.1.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 July 1909, p.1.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July 1909, p.1. Before being elected mayor, Reuben R. Jamieson worked for the C.P.R. He began working for them in 1883 as a telegrapher and reached the position of general superintendent before his retirement in 1908. Following his retirement, Jamieson permanently settled in Calgary and he was elected mayor of the city in 1909. Foran and Foran, *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis*, p.85.

preceded by an extravagant pageant showcasing Calgary's past, present, and future. However successful the formula, there was always room for innovations and, in the years that followed, exhibition organizers tinkered with diverse themes and promotions. In the 'Prize List for the 1910 Alberta Provincial Exhibition', organizers boasted that never in the history of the Calgary Exhibition had they offered such a splendid list of features to instruct and interest visitors.<sup>198</sup> The diverse features included an art and china loan exhibit, a milking machine demonstration, the Navassar Ladies' Band, and a reproduction of the signing of the Indian Treaty No. 7 of 1877.<sup>199</sup>

As had become an annual tradition, the headlines for the 1910 Exhibition declared it an overwhelming success and noticeable improvement over the previous year. The *Albertan's* headline announced that the 1910 Exhibition "Far Surpasses Any Previous Exhibition in Western Canada."<sup>200</sup> The *Herald* proclaimed, "Alberta's Greatest Fair Had a Great Attendance—Quarter of a Hundred Thousand Crowded the Grounds All Day and Evening."<sup>201</sup> To emphasize the point, one newspaper compared the 1909 total attendance of 55,475 persons with the staggering 76,813 visitors to the 1910 Exhibition, an increase of 38.4 percent.<sup>202</sup>

In an editorial on the fair, the *Albertan* ascertained that the 1910 offering was the best that had ever been put on in Calgary and probably the best that had ever been put on

---

<sup>198</sup> The 1910 fair was also staged as the Alberta Provincial Exhibition, but when the directors asked the province to designate Calgary as the site of the permanent Alberta Provincial Exhibition, the government refused. Thus, the 1910 designation was the last of the 'provincial' exhibitions. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.33.

<sup>199</sup> "Prize List for the 1910 Alberta Provincial Exhibition" published by the Inter-Western Pacific Exhibition Company, 1910. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F35, p.1.

<sup>200</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 1 July 1910, p.1.

<sup>201</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 2 July 1910, p.1.



in Western Canada. It had captured the 'spirit of the West'. According to the *Albertan*, "It was interesting without being frivolous. It was instructive as well as entertaining. It was characteristic of the West. It had plenty of atmosphere. It was a Western exhibition, showing in full view many of the interesting features of the Western country."<sup>203</sup> In the same issue, the paper claimed that, "It was typical of the West. From the time the gates were opened on Friday morning until they closed last night, the fair throbbed with Western life and Western energy."<sup>204</sup> As perceived by the local press, the West had an identifiable character which was alive and 'throbbing' at the 1910 Provincial Exhibition.

While all the opening evening attractions were interesting, the large crowd that filled every space in the grand stand, and the intervening space between it and the race track, awaited with anxious anticipation the main event of the night, the commemoration of the signing of the treaty of 1877, generally known as Treaty No. 7.<sup>205</sup> Once again, the exhibition featured a tribute to Southern Alberta's past which required the participation of the Aboriginal population. The tribute, as in previous years, fascinated fair visitors and drew thousands of curious onlookers.

According to the *Morning Albertan*, much had been expected from this event and the immense audience demonstrated their appreciation of the manner in which it was carried out by a prolonged applause. There was not a mishap in the whole affair. Everything had been splendidly arranged and the Natives carried out their role flawlessly, "As if they thoroughly appreciated the importance of the event of thirty-three years

---

<sup>202</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1910, p.1.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 July 1910, p.1.

ago.”<sup>206</sup> The ceremony included the Lieutenant-Governor, Colonel James Walker as commissioner, in his North West Mounted Police uniform, and a company from the Canadian Mounted Rifles. As in the pageants of 1908 and 1909, the Native chiefs were led by Reverend John McDougall. The signing went as followed:

The treaty was read and explained to them by Col. Walker, as commissioner, and they departed in silence to consider it. This part was carried out in all the Indian’s stoic and dignified manner. After their council had been held they returned and affixed their signatures while a brilliant display of fireworks shot up in the air from each of the twenty lodges in the encampment.<sup>207</sup>

The ceremonial signing of Treaty No. 7 followed by the fireworks display dramatically concluding the events continued throughout the exhibition. On the fourth day of the fair, however, the treaty signing was moved to the afternoon in order to entertain fair visitors who could not stay till the evening. Though the representation without fireworks would be less attractive in effect, the *Albertan* maintained, it would be nearer to the real scene that took place.<sup>208</sup> In the second day of its 1910 coverage, the paper professed that as a drawing card for the exhibition, the ‘signing of the treaty’ was proving to be a great success.

In relation to the Native participation in Calgary’s early exhibitions, it is necessary to consider the matter of ‘exploitation’. One perception is that the tributes to the Natives suggest a great deal of admiration on the part of fair organizers. However, appreciation does not tell the entire story. Strewn throughout the media coverage of the Calgary Exhibition is the attitude of patronization and unmitigated bigotry towards the Natives. In a *Herald* article titled ‘The Calgary Fair—An Impression’, the writer

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

condescendingly described the 'redman' on the midway:

Strangely out of place they seemed. The bucks, some dressed in buckskins and white hats, others in white men's clothes; somehow lacking anything of that romance that still to many minds is wrapped about them. And the squaws that tramped at their sides, dressed in red shawls and skirts of screaming gingham were loaded with fans and a dozen advertising souvenirs of the white man's progressiveness.<sup>209</sup>

There are many stories of Native abuses of alcohol, but perhaps the most egregious comment is the *Herald's* assertion that, "Unlike the rest of the Midway, your Indian is free, it cost nothing to look upon him or even approach him, so all hail to poor Lo."<sup>210</sup> Without a doubt, the Natives, who had agreed to participate in the festivities, were construed as spectacles by many fairgoers and, to some degree, side-shows. In his article, "On Public Display", Keith Regular confirms, "Indians in paint, feathers, and buckskin were historic, colourful and entertaining and so they were ideal for this purpose."<sup>211</sup> Because Natives were used for their entertainment value, exploitation is an apposite term; however, there was also a concerted effort on the part of fair management to honor the Native's proud history.

In his speech opening the 1911 Exhibition, the Honorable Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, addressed Calgary's prosperity and its role in Canada's agricultural economy, "If Calgary is great today it is because, while years ago it depended upon one branch of agriculture only, today it has the advantage of two great branches of agriculture—to cattle raising has been added farming."<sup>212</sup> Oliver went on to add that,

---

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July 1910, p.1.

<sup>209</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 4 July 1911, p.24.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July 1911, p.22. For reports of alcohol abuses by Natives on the grounds, see *The Calgary Herald*, 6 July 1910, p.1 and *Ibid.*, 4 July 1910, p.1.

<sup>211</sup> Regular, "On Public Display", p.1.

<sup>212</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 3 July 1911, p.8.

“Calgary has been made by the wheat fields which surround her. The wheat fields have been the making of Calgary.”<sup>213</sup> Oliver’s statements reflected the federal economic and immigration policy to populate the West with enthusiastic grain growers. Oliver, and his predecessor Clifford Sifton, promoted Western Canadian agricultural opportunities in the United States and overseas and sought experienced farmers to help cultivate the Canadian prairie. They did not encourage the movement of immigrants to populate Canada’s cities.<sup>214</sup>

In this regard, the interests of Calgary conflicted with federal initiatives because the city needed immigrants to augment its industrial workforce. According to census data, Calgary’s population in 1911 was a flourishing 43,704.<sup>215</sup> It had emerged as a veritable Western centre with the likes of Winnipeg and Vancouver. While Calgary valued its agricultural hinterland, it was trying to build its burgeoning industrial sector. Calgary was moving rapidly away from its role as a mere service centre for the surrounding farming community and becoming, as far as it was concerned, the primary commercial and industrial centre for Southern Alberta. Consequently, on December 29, 1910, the name of the fair’s management company changed to the Calgary Industrial

---

<sup>213</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 3 July 1911, p.14.

<sup>214</sup> G. Friesen, “Immigrant Communities 1870-1940: The Struggle for Cultural Survival” in *Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith (Canada: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1986), p.161. On Sifton, Friesen wrote, “He worked to encourage the immigration of experienced farmers by spending considerable sums in the agricultural districts of the United States, Britain, and Europe, and he tried to discourage others, such as blacks, Italians, Jews, Orientals, and urban Englishmen, who could not, he believed, succeed on farms and would thus end up in the cities.”

<sup>215</sup> This is figure most quoted by historians from the Dominion census of 1911, see James Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, Appendix, or Dempsey, *Calgary: Spirit of the West*, p.86. The general census figure includes the surrounding electoral district and is listed at 60, 502. *Census of Canada, 1911: Volume 1*.

Exhibition Company, Limited.<sup>216</sup> The new name reflected the fair management's desire to focus less on the agricultural component and more on the exhibition's under-emphasized industrial aspect. This development suggests that the industrial/urban interests had become a formative element in the fair's composition—along with the farming and ranching components.

The Calgary fair's counterpart on the West coast, Vancouver's Industrial Exhibition, had successfully premiered in 1910 with a decidedly commercial focus. In their book, *Vancouver's Fair: An Administrative and Political History of the Pacific National Exhibition*, Breen and Coates assert, "That the exhibition was primarily oriented towards the promotion of industry was widely evident, and the Vancouver Exhibition Association, far from hiding the fact, highlighted it."<sup>217</sup> In Vancouver, the dominance of the area's agriculturally focused New Westminster Exhibition forced organizers of Vancouver's fair to emphasize the industrial aspect. In Southern Alberta, Calgary's fair reigned supreme as the principal agricultural attraction. Clearly, the situation in Calgary differed from that of its West coast contemporary.

Since its inaugural fair in 1886, the commercial and industrial exhibits at the exhibition had become increasingly diversified and sophisticated. By 1911, the densely packed Industrial Building was a huge draw in its own right. The *Albertan* reported that the building was taxed to its utmost capacity with exhibits from a host of Calgary businesses, including W. E. Younger, Alberta Rubber Supply, Co., L. T. Mewburn &

---

<sup>216</sup> "The Early History of the Calgary Exhibition" published by the Stampede Committee, 1931. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F35, p.10.

<sup>217</sup> Breen and Coates, *Vancouver's Fair*, p.26.

Co., the T. Eaton Co., and many more.<sup>218</sup> The following day, the publication added, “The Industrial Building was thronged throughout the day and the exhibits of merchants and others in that building was a centre of attractions for hundreds of sightseers.”<sup>219</sup> Perhaps, the 1911 industrial exhibits enjoyed such success because there were less distractions in other parts of the fairgrounds.

Unlike the three previous years, exhibition management did not offer a historic pageant or ‘treaty signing’ ceremony to its fairgoers. The principal features of the 1911 Calgary Industrial Exhibition were demonstrations from the airship, Strobel, and the introduction of pari-mutuel machines for betting on the horse races—two technological innovations. Thus, in conjunction with the industrial focus, the exhibition featured a forward-looking entertainment venue without the retrospective shows that distinguished the previous years. Missing from the description of the 1911 fair was any reference to agricultural exhibits or the educational mandate of the fair. Perhaps this oversight accounts for the statement which appeared in the *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture* for 1911 which announced, “Every society should endeavor to make their fairs educational, and keep this feature of the work to the front. No pains should be spared to provide good accommodations for spectators to watch the judging.”<sup>220</sup>

Unfortunately, the Strobel airship tended to disappoint rather than entertain fair visitors. According to the *Herald*, the Strobel was scheduled as one of the big draws of the 1911 Exhibition and was to fly twice each day of the fair. However, the slightest

---

<sup>218</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 3 July 1911, p.8.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 July 1911, p.1.

<sup>220</sup> The Report of the Superintendent of Fairs and Institutes in the *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta*, 1911 (Edmonton: J. W. Jeffery, Government Printer), p.184.

breeze proved sufficient to deter the pilot from his anticipated flight. The *Herald* quipped, "The first day, when there was no wind, he did not fly because it was too muddy. Other times, when there was nothing approaching a hurricane blowing, he did not fly, because it was too windy. In his tent, adjoining the track, however, he gathered considerable money, charging ten cents per look at the mechanical bird."<sup>221</sup> On the floundering airship, Manager Richardson stated:

"The one feature, however, which caused the greatest worry to the management, was the aeroplane. The exhibition management have consistently lived up to the advertising matter published in connection with the exhibition. It was confidently expected that the aeroplane would be able to make flights both afternoon and evenings, with the exception of the days when the weather was most unfavorable. Owing to the location from which the aeroplane had to start the aviator could only make flights when the wind was favorable for that location."<sup>222</sup>

Though the Strobel was disappointing, other attractions at the 1911 fair proved far more successful. The adoption of pari-mutuel betting machines drew remarkably little criticism from religious groups, at least in the press coverage. The mechanized machines were used on a trial basis, in addition, to the 'live' betting agents. In 1905, Reverend Kerby waged a moral war against a gambling syndicate which set up shop on the grounds. The ensuing controversy merited front page coverage in the press. Perhaps, because the machines in part seemed to eliminate the shady element from the process, the newspapers reported no such outrage with the inclusion of mechanized gambling at the 1911 Exhibition.<sup>223</sup> Since, the total attendance of the 1911 fair was 92,013 compared to

---

<sup>221</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 7 July 1911, p.7.

<sup>222</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1911, p.1.

<sup>223</sup> Pari-mutuel betting machines were also adopted at the Brandon Exhibition, however, during the war years they came under attack. According to Coates and McGuinness, "Pressure from within and without the organization challenged the legitimacy of this prime attraction. Moral purity groups across Western Canada petitioned the fairs to eliminate gambling." Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.66.

the 1910 attendance of 77,123, the Calgary Industrial Exhibition was declared a marked success.<sup>224</sup>

At the close of the 1912 show, the *Morning Albertan*'s headline read, "Calgary's Big Exhibition Came To An End Last Night: Attendance 96,000—It Was The Best In The West By A Handsome Lead".<sup>225</sup> Despite the greatest attendance in years, the Calgary Exhibition was not the big story of 1912. Under the management of Guy Weadick, the city held its first ever Frontier Days' Celebration in September of that year, 'The Stampede at Calgary, Alberta'. Weadick was an American showman who had traveled to the city in 1908 with the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Show.<sup>226</sup> After four years, he triumphantly carried out his notion for a world class cowboy competition in the Southern Alberta city.

The Stampede imparted an importance to the ranching past as no other exhibition in the city's history had. It was a tribute to an industry in transition—cattle ranching. Under the *Herald*'s headline, 'History of Range Herds and How They are Fast Being Depleted by the Coming of the Grain Farmer', L.V. Kelly wrote, "Although ranching is still carried on to a limited extent and cowmen can handle rope and the branding iron with as much skill as they did in the olden days, the range is getting cut up by railroads and the

---

<sup>224</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1911, p.1.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July 1912, p.1. The 1912 Exhibition's opening day saw 36,727 visitors to the fair, over ten thousand more than the previous two years.

<sup>226</sup> Weadick was born in 1885 in Rochester, New York. He and his wife, Florence La Due, performed in the 'grand-daddy of all wild-West acts', Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. In early 1908, the couple joined the newly launched Millers Brothers 101 Ranch Show, an enterprise of the massive 110,000 acre Oklahoma cattle empire of Colonel Zack Miller and his brothers. Later that year, Weadick and the show toured the Canadian West—performing at Calgary's 1908 Dominion Exhibition. Gord Tolton, "The Dreams of a Western Showman: Guy Weadick and the First Calgary Stampede" in *Canadian West*, Vol.9, No.31, (1993), p.36-39.



barbed wire fences of the wheat growing farmers."<sup>227</sup> Stampede organizers were cognizant that agricultural diversification was taking place in Southwestern Alberta—ranching now shared the agricultural limelight with flourishing farming businesses. Though there were still hundreds of small ranches in existence, the time of the 'all-powerful' large-scale ranching conglomerate was fading in Alberta. It seemed appropriate to, "hold a reunion of old-timers to show what the country had come to and what from, and to bring the finest ropers and rough-riders of the North American continent in competition."<sup>228</sup> Further, a *Herald* editorial maintained, "A Stampede is typical of the West, it smacks of the soil; it is the pageantry of the plains."<sup>229</sup>

According to Hugh Dempsey, the golden age of the Canadian cowboy did not come to a sudden end. Rather, a sequence of events wreaked havoc with the ranching industry, destroying many of the larger ranches and altering the role of the cowboy. The primary reason for the decline in big cattle ranches was the losing battle ranchers waged against settlers.<sup>230</sup> Since the turn of the nineteenth century, Southern Alberta had experienced a tremendous influx of homesteaders, especially from south of the border. In his book, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier 1874-1924*, David Breen notes:

In all, the changes within the cattle empire during the decade 1900-1910 were fundamentally the consequence of massive agrarian settlement. The dramatic increase in population which resulted in creation of two new provinces introduced a new political framework and at the same time changed the region's economic base.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>227</sup> Supplement to the *Calgary Herald*, 6 September 1912, p.3.

<sup>228</sup> L. V. Kelly, *The Range Men: The Story of the Ranchers and Indians of Alberta* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), p.431.

<sup>229</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 31 August 1912, p.6.

<sup>230</sup> Dempsey, *The Golden Age of the Cowboy*, p.139.

<sup>231</sup> Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier*, p.179.

In addition to the shift in emphasis from ranching to wheat farming, the life of the rancher was further complicated in 1903 when cattle prices fell so low in Britain that certain companies were unable to sell their stock profitably. Some of the biggest names in Alberta ranching were affected by the market drop, including the Bar U, the Oxley, and the Cochrane Rancho, which were all sold to new owners.<sup>232</sup> The final straw was the devastating winter of 1906-07.

The season started with prairie fires that had taken their toll on the land, with the result that hardly any good grass was available for winter grazing. Autumn began with horridly cold periods compounded by rains that turned to sleet. The lack of food and the poor condition of the cattle (due to a lingering presence of mange) spelled disaster when the district was hit with extremely cold weather. Cattle losses were estimated at over \$10 million dollars. In the Calgary area alone, total herd depletion was believed to be over sixty percent.<sup>233</sup> By 1912, the above circumstances had left the ranching industry bruised and beaten except in the hearts of the district's cattlemen.

It was to four prominent Calgary cattlemen, later known as 'the Big Four', that Guy Weadick directed his campaign for an international cowboy competition. Weadick initially spoke with George Lane, a well-known pioneer rancher, then the 'Cattle-king', Pat Burns, and A. E. Cross, another leading pioneer cattleman, ranch owner and financier.

---

<sup>232</sup> Dempsey, *The Golden Age of the Cowboy*, p.144. Interestingly, in this period of ranching upheaval, Calgary entrepreneur, Pat Burns, was aggrandizing his operations, especially his ranching acquisitions. In 1902, Burns purchased Bow Valley Ranch from William Roper Hull and expanded its holdings. In his biography of Burns, MacEwan writes, "He bought adjacent ranch properties until Bow Valley Ranch comprised over 9,000 acres between the river and Macleod Trail, and became continuous with the big Burns feedlot with a capacity for 5,000 animals." In 1905, he acquired another of the big ranches, the CK Ranch and, five years later, he took over the Col. A. T. lease of more than 150,000 acres. Grant MacEwan, *Pat Burns: Cattle King* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1979), p.140.

Signed on without his knowledge, Archie Mclean completed the foursome.<sup>234</sup> According to Weadick, the Big Four financed the Stampede, not to make money, but to give tribute to their ranching heritage:

All were impressed with the idea of recreating an atmosphere of the frontier days of the West as they really were, devoid of circus tinsel and far fetched fiction in an annual re-union of truly Western pioneers, which would also include competitions of the daring sports of the real cowboys of the Western ranges. I might add that each of these men were true pioneers themselves. They grew up with the country and had helped with the development of what had been formerly a wilderness. They were men of vision and had great faith in the possibilities of this country for the future.<sup>235</sup>

With a \$100,000 credit line, bankrolled by the Big Four, the Stampede debuted on September 2, 1912. It is interesting to note that throughout the Stampede propaganda references to the Big Four emphasize their ranching connection. In the 'Programme for the 1912 Stampede', the biographical sketch of Pat Burns opens with, "From the Atlantic to the Pacific, wherever the language of the range is spoken, in legislative halls, in hotel lobbies, at conventions, banquets, and cowcamps, the name of Pat Burns is familiar to all..." Similarly, on George Lane, the programme read, "Away back on what was then the outer fringe of civilization in a little crossroads hamlet, close to Des Moines, in the year 1956, George Lane was born, the 'Cattle King' of Alberta."<sup>236</sup> The prevailing perception was that the Big Four were inherently linked to ranching and their involvement in the Stampede was solely to honor the ranching tradition.

In an all-too-familiar formula, the 1912 Stampede opened with a gala parade highlighting Southern Alberta's past. According to the *Calgary Herald*, Calgarians took

---

<sup>233</sup> Foran and Foran, *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis*, p.96. Ibid., p.144.

<sup>234</sup> Tolton, "The Dreams of a Western Showman", p.42.

<sup>235</sup> Transcript from the C. B. C. broadcast with Weadick, p.3.

a step backward in time and witnessed the successive phases of Western development. The pageant opened with a parade of the district's Aboriginal population, followed by real cowboys, Hudson's Bay traders, real veterans of the Mounted Police, in short, real Westerners of every historic type. The *Herald* asserted, "This was no circus parade of actors tricked out to tawdry and unauthentic trappings of a pseudo-picturesque nature, but an assemblage of the real, genuine characters, clothed in the very costumes which were worn in the days before civilization wiped them out."<sup>237</sup> The idea propagated by the local press was that the Stampede was 'authentic' to the region and not simply borrowed from south of the border folklore.

The great procession was headed by Manager Weadick and his wife, Director-General Harry McMullen, Glen Campbell, Goldie Sinclair and several other cowgirls. The large assembly of Aboriginal participants followed. Fully eight thousand people saw the Stampede parade, according to the *Herald*.<sup>238</sup> The paper reported that by eight o'clock in the morning the crowds began to filter along Eighth Avenue and before 9:30 every vantage point was packed with spectators. Indeed, "Only those who were in hospitals or jails missed the opportunity to review the wonderful procession of Redskins, cowmen, police and labour organizations", declared the *Herald*.<sup>239</sup> The Calgary Stampede parade involved either as participants or spectators virtually all members of the community—ranchers, cowboys, elites, organized labour, the Aboriginal population, and many more.

---

<sup>236</sup> "Programme for the 1912 Stampede", p.19 and p.26.

<sup>237</sup> Supplement to the *Calgary Herald*, 3 September 1912, p.3.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

The *Herald* also stated that, "Near Seventeenth Avenue the cowboy contingent was reviewed by Pat Burns, H. C. McMullen, Archie McLean, George Lane and other old-timers, who received a great ovation and waving of hats from the cowmen and cowgirls."<sup>240</sup> The popularity of the Big Four with the Calgary public can not be overstated and their presence in the festivities drew much applause from the crowds. In her book, *Braehead: Three Founding Families in Nineteenth Century Canada*, Sherrill MacLaren noted that A. E. Cross's son, Jim Cross, traveled back to Calgary from Victoria to ride beside his dad in the Stampede Parade. Besides his son, a number of Cross's friends also ventured back to city to enjoy Calgary's first Stampede. MacLaren wrote that many of his old round-up pals came, although one acquaintance, H. B. Alexander, was off organizing an expedition to the North Pole.<sup>241</sup>

As in past exhibitions, the Natives, adorned in their traditional costumes, left spectators awestruck. Warpaint and feathers, apparel that had seen the light of day for dozens of years, and, the *Herald* added, "trinkets of a barbaric past were called into service for the occasion. The result was awe inspiring and wonderful."<sup>242</sup> Whether it was in the parade or the competitions themselves, the Natives left an indelible impression in the minds of Stampede spectators. In her recollections of the 1912 Stampede, Okotoks resident, Elma DesBrisay, wrote, "The Stampede was a real thrill; the most exciting thing as I remember it, was the Indian race. They raced bareback and to win, no lagging there! It was a modest beginning of the Stampede but everyone supported it, from all of

---

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> MacLaren, *Braehead*, p.350.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p.2.

Southern Alberta, it was a way of life."<sup>243</sup>

In a letter addressed to Guy Weadick, manager of the Stampede, an Indian agent from the Blood reserve wrote:

There is one Indian here who has made up his mind to enter and he wants to enter for the two bucking contests. He would like to know if the Stampede management provides the horses as it is impossible for him to get real bad ones down here and also has his entrance money to be in there by the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. His name is Tom Three Persons of this reserve.<sup>244</sup>

Significantly, on the final night of competition, Tom Three Persons' championship ride won the admiration of the crowd and emerged as the highlight of the 1912 Stampede. The *Herald* provided the details of the bucking horse final. As the horse was thrown to the ground, Tom jumped across him, placed his feet in the stirrups and with a wild "whoop" 'Cyclone' was up and away with his rider. Bucking, twisting, turning, and generally resorting to every artifice, Cyclone swept across the field. The rider was jarred from one side of the saddle to the other, but held on and waited for the next twist. At one point, it looked as though Tom was going to follow the fate of his 129 predecessors who had been thrown off the wild horse. However, he recovered rapidly and from that time forward Cyclone bucked until he was tired. Tom Three Persons had mastered him. In response, the *Herald* observed, "The thousands created a pandemonium of applause that was not equaled all week."<sup>245</sup> The Albertan's victory conjured up feelings of intense pride in Calgarians—Tom Three Persons had captured the championship of the world for himself and for Canada. Indeed, the toast of the first

---

<sup>243</sup> Elma DesBrisay, "Things I Can Remember About My Childhood in Okotoks" in *A Century of Memories 1883-1983: Okotoks and District* (Okotoks and District Historical Society, 1983), p.364.

<sup>244</sup> Letter to Weadick from the Blood Agency, Macleod, Alberta dated July 26, 1912. Glenbow Archives, the Guy Weadick Fonds, M1287, F2.

<sup>245</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 9 September 1912, p.7.

Stampede was an Aboriginal champion from Fort Macleod's Blood Reserve. By 1912, the Blood Tribe had amassed years of experience in the ranching industry. In his book on the Aboriginal population in Alberta, Hugh Dempsey noted that a big change in the Blood Tribe's economic life occurred in 1894 when the first Native-owned cattle were introduced. By 1900, the Bloods owned almost 1,500 head of cattle.<sup>246</sup>

Native participation in the 1912 Stampede was secured in agreement with the Department of Indian Affairs. In a letter to Guy Weadick, Department of Indian Affairs official, Glen Campbell, wrote, "As you know there are many abuses accruing to the red man when brought in contact with a certain class of whites and to obviate these the fair and city authorities must be prepared to cooperate with the Department."<sup>247</sup> The magnificent spectacle of thousands of North American Natives was the wonder of all who observed the 1912 pageant. According to the *Herald*, Calgarians owed the Department, and specifically Campbell, thanks for allowing the Natives to participate. While the federal government made this possible by granting to the Indians the necessary permission to attend the festivities, the *Herald* asserted, "that all the credit for the amazing spectacle must be given to Glen Campbell, inspector of Indian agencies, for the Dominion."<sup>248</sup> Once again, Calgarians extended their appreciation to Rev. John McDougall for his role in organizing the parade of First Peoples. The *Herald* noted that to McDougall, "may be attributed a big share of the splendid Indian turnout, which was

---

<sup>246</sup> Hugh A. Dempsey, *Indian Tribes in Alberta* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, p.1979), p.24. Dempsey also discusses other Aboriginal tribes involvement in the ranching industry. On the Sarcees, he asserts that, "In 1896, six men took government cattle on a loan basis and started a budding ranching industry. The Sarcees found ranching to be more like their old buffalo hunting experiences and gradually built up their herds until 1911 they had 304 individually-owned cattle.", p.40.

<sup>247</sup> Letter to Weadick from Glen Campbell from the Department of Indian Affairs in Winnipeg dated July 24, 1912. Glenbow Archives, the Guy Weadick Fonds, M1287, F1.

undoubtedly the finest of its kind ever seen in the Dominion."<sup>249</sup>

While the Natives 'stole the show' in the opening gala, it was the competitions themselves that carried the program in the remaining days. The Stampede graduated from the visual spectacle of the parade into a throbbing extravaganza, pulsating with excitement and highlighted by world class riding and roping. Amidst the commotion was a timely visit by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught who graciously consented to partake in select Stampede venues. The *Herald* asserted that the presence of the Duke at the Stampede conferred a distinction upon the proceedings that would give them tone and significance.<sup>250</sup> The presence of the royal family at various Stampede events was, in itself, a drawing card. The *Calgary News-Telegram* announced, "There will be many opportunities for all who wished to see our royalties to gratify their curiosity, for during his but too brief sojourn in our midst, the Duke will be a very busy man."<sup>251</sup>

A controversy arose during the Duke's inspection of Calgary's cadets, boy scouts, and veterans of former campaigns. The inspection took place in the Horse Show building situated on the Victoria Park fairgrounds. In what was considered the worst 'sting' of the whole week, Stampede organizers charged the public one dollar for admission to the grounds to see the Duke's inspection of the local Calgary regiment. According to the *Herald*, inspections the world over were occasions when the public was allowed access to the royal family, "The Duke of Connaught is himself a soldier—is he to be made part of a Stampede attraction."<sup>252</sup> On the money-making scam, the *Calgary News-Telegram*

---

<sup>248</sup> Supplement to the *Calgary Herald*, 5 September 1912, p.3.

<sup>249</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 11 September 1912, p.16.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 September 1912, p.1.

<sup>251</sup> *The Calgary News-Telegram*, 5 September 1912, p.5.

<sup>252</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 6 September 1912, p.1.



quoted one 'old-timer' as stating:

"No!", said the Old-Timer sadly, "Never again the Calgary Stampede for mine under the present auspices. When it comes to charging a dollar to see the king's representative in the Dominion review the volunteers and veterans and the boy scouts; when the representative is utilized as are the attractions in a peep show—then I draw the line and back up...It will sour the whole of Canada on Calgary and will be the cause of this city being held up to ridicule."<sup>253</sup>

The inspection scandal was not the only critique of Weadick's Stampede and, in particular, his management style. During the bulldogging finals, at the proverbial eleventh hour, Stampede authorities altered the terms of the competition.<sup>254</sup> The understanding was that each competitor should have one steer and, had this stipulation been adhered to, Senor Estevan Clemento of New Mexico would have won. Clemento caught and threw his steer in the impressive time of 7.25 seconds, beating his competitors by a substantial margin. He was soundly acclaimed the winner by the onlookers who were astonished to hear that to win the title—a second round was necessary. Unfortunately, Clemento was unable to repeat his initial feat.<sup>255</sup> The *Herald* commented, "Such a change of front on the part of the management is open to many unfortunate reflections that will tend to mar the success of the celebration in the eyes of spectators, who are out to see fair play, and will condemn in unmeasured terms anything that looks

---

<sup>253</sup> *The Calgary News-Telegram*, 7 September 1912, p.18.

<sup>254</sup> The bulldogging competition itself drew criticism from Calgarians concerned about the unnecessary cruelty of the event. In an article for the *Herald*, Genevieve Lipsett-Skinner asserted that there was one event of the Stampede that every woman ought to protest against. She asked, "Have you witnessed the tussle betwixt a man and a dumb frightened animal, the manner in which the human, but not the humane, being grabs the steer by the horns and struggles with the beast for supremacy? Have you noticed the man tear the horn out of the dumb creature?" Supplement to the *Calgary Herald*, 4 September 1912, p.7. However, Weadick was of the opinion that the odds were all against the man in the struggle, and that there was comparatively little danger of painful injury to the steer. *Ibid.*, 5 September, 1912, p.6.

<sup>255</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 9 September 1912, p.6 and p.7.

like a frame-up.”<sup>256</sup>

Press coverage of the 1908 Dominion Exhibition was almost uniformly positive. Since the 1912 Stampede drew a total attendance over one hundred thousand, would it not merit a similarly positive review in the local newspapers?<sup>257</sup> Apparently not. Criticisms were not sweeping in their nature but tended instead to be directed at a particular individual—Guy Weadick. Unlike the glowing accolades given to the Calgary Exhibition’s manager, E. L. Richardson, every mishap or shady dealing that surfaced during the 1912 festivities somehow found its way back to Weadick.

In a front page article on the Stampede, the *Herald* suggested that, although the citizens of Calgary deserved the heartiest congratulations on the successful result of their efforts, “In fact, if there is anything of which Calgary feels a little bit ashamed today it is the management of the Stampede itself.”<sup>258</sup> According to the article, as the days passed, the impression that became prevalent was that those at the centre of the affair did not care about anything except making money. Stampede management broke faith with the public on several occasions.<sup>259</sup> If the Stampede was to become an annual event, the defects in management would have to be ironed out. Under the heading, ‘What Will the Future Stampede Be?’, the *Calgary News-Telegram* observed, “Desirable as is the Stampede in the future, equally so is a change in the methods of treatment accorded to those whose presence is necessary if it is to be a success.”<sup>260</sup>

Doubtless, the fact that Weadick was not a local businessman but essentially an

---

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>257</sup> The total attendance during the entire week, including the evening performances in the Horse Show Building was 100,294, being an average of 16,716 daily. Ibid., 10 September 1912, p.1.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 7 September 1912, p.1.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

entrepreneur from the United States contributed to the public's reproach. One paper reported a local as saying, "This Stampede is a big celebration and it should be in the hands of men of broad gauge of ability, tact and intelligence who are citizens of Calgary. A small man has no business trying to run the Stampede."<sup>261</sup> According to this 'old-timer', the problems were entirely due to one man and why the Big Four would have let him interfere with the pleasure of several thousand patrons was a mystery. Apparently, the flaws in the Stampede did not rest with the generous four cattlemen who financed the events. The *Herald* acknowledged, "The names of Messrs, P. Burns, George Lane, A. E. Cross, and A. J. Mclean will long be remembered in connection with this affair. The good that has been done to Calgary will remain to their credit as their only reward for their remarkable and generous action."<sup>262</sup>

Weadick's flagrant personality did not mesh with the desired businesslike approach taken by men in similar positions, specifically E. L. Richardson.<sup>263</sup> Weadick was a promoter while Richardson was seen as an astute businessman. Perhaps, the fact that Weadick did not maintain an occupation traditionally considered as admirable and honest, like a businessman or cattle rancher, impaired his ability to draw respect from the greater public. In his analysis of Kansas cattle towns, Robert Haywood noted that an elite group (or class) of merchants and stockmen controlled the emerging economy, aided and

---

<sup>260</sup> *The Calgary News-Telegram*, 7 September 1912, p.12.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 September 1912, p.4.

<sup>262</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 7 September 1912, p.1.

<sup>263</sup> Historians of Victorian world's fairs have addressed the issue of cultural biases regarding managerial styles. According to David Nasaw, "The world's fair were paeans to progress, concrete demonstrations of how order and organization, high culture and art, science and technology, commerce and industry, all brought together under the wise administration of business and government, would lead inevitably to a brighter, more prosperous future." David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusement* (New York: BasicBooks Ltd., 1993), p.66.

abetted by such professionals as lawyers, editors, doctors, and ministers.<sup>264</sup> The Calgary situation was not much different. As a showman and a promoter, Weadick did not fit the paradigm of a responsible administrator. The event was not expected to be a get rich-quick scheme for a traveling showman, but rather a celebration of the city's cowboy heritage. The local old-timer added, "It is safe to say that, if Mr. Richardson had been in charge of the Stampede, it would have been far more successful in every department than it is proving to be."<sup>265</sup> If properly managed, the event could be the source of great distinction for the city of Calgary. If poorly managed, the Stampede could sully the city's reputation. The *Calgary Herald* affirmed, "It is the hope of the Calgary people that if this performance is repeated another year it will be placed in the hands of those who will see this is observed with the public after the public's money is taken just as well as before."<sup>266</sup>

The lukewarm assessment of the Stampede in the public imagination coupled with dissatisfaction of some of the backers with the event's financial arrangements eliminated all hopes for a 1913 Calgary Stampede.<sup>267</sup> Dejected, Weadick staged a far less successful Stampede in Winnipeg in 1913. The Winnipeg show was a scaled-down version of the 1912 Calgary Stampede and proved to be a financial flop. In 1916, he staged a Stampede in New York City and, though it was a fairly good show, it also did not make any money.<sup>268</sup> At any rate, Weadick was not finished with Calgary and he returned triumphantly in 1919 with the city's Victory Stampede.

\*\*\*\*\*

---

<sup>264</sup> Haywood, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns*, p.38.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 7 September 1912, p.1.

<sup>267</sup> The 1912 Stampede's financial transactions are outlined in Tolton's "The Dreams of a Western Showman", p.43-45.

A recurring theme in the years between the 1908 Dominion Exhibition and the 1912 Stampede is the celebration of Southern Alberta's historical development, from the Aboriginal population to the great ranches—a tribute to their fading glory. The tribute defined an era and laid claim to a uniquely Western spirit; after all, 'a Stampede was typical of the West, it smacked of the soil; it was the pageantry of the plains.'<sup>269</sup> The heritage motif conjured up civic pride in the district's past and the progress already under way. What would the future hold? However, beneath such noble tributes and honorable intentions lies one pragmatic reality, the gimmick. Parades of thousands of Southern Alberta Natives, attired in all the regalia of their traditional dress, bucking broncos, and rugged cowboys attracted enthusiastic spectators by the thousands. Without a doubt, organizers knew how to draw a crowd. Lost amidst this spectacle was the stress by fair organizers on the agricultural and educational purposes of the fair. Instead, they experimented with alluring amusements designed to enthrall the increasingly non-agricultural fairgoers.

With over a hundred thousand visitors, the Dominion Exhibition and the first Stampede were indisputable successes. While other years have quietly faded from memory, the 1908 and 1912 affairs remained in the civic consciousness. Calgary did not forget the triumph of those years. As the city struggled to establish its own identity within the Canadian mosaic, the 1908 Dominion Exhibition and the 1912 Stampede emerged as historic benchmarks. It was not the 1911 Industrial Exhibition or the airship Strobel that remained in the public's imagination, but rather the tributes to the past, the

---

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> See citation #72.

crowds, the hoopla—in short, the gimmick.

### CHAPTER THREE INTEGRITY: FOR THE BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY, 1913-1919

*The Calgary Industrial Exhibition Company is doing its part towards carrying out the commendable motto, "Business as Usual". At no time in the history of the Dominion of Canada and the British Empire has the necessity for using every possible endeavor to keep business going as usual been so urgent as during the present world war.<sup>270</sup>*

In many ways, the aims of the 1913 Calgary Industrial Exhibition corresponded more with the 1886 inaugural fair than with the shows between 1908 and 1912. In 1913, exhibition management abandoned the elaborate pageants and gimmicks that distinguished the previous period and opted for a simpler approach. According to the *Calgary Herald*, the excellence of both the exhibits of livestock and the high standard of the racing events constituted the main features of the 1913 fair.<sup>271</sup> While enjoying a certain level of popularity over the years, it had been sometime since the livestock and racing programs headlined the entertainment venue. The fair's prosaic offerings prompted criticisms from the *Morning Albertan* which contended that the Calgary Exhibition was at a critical juncture. It had to broaden its horizons or risk losing momentum: "The distinguishing feature of the exhibition has been its originality. But

---

<sup>270</sup> "Prize List for the 1915 Calgary Industrial Exhibition" published by the Calgary Industrial Exhibition Company, 1915. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F21, p.1.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 June 1913, p.1. The article stated, "The main attraction of the whole exhibition however, is the horseflesh and a glance at the stock shows at once that the pick of the stock for which this province is known far and wide will be on view both on the race tracks and in the show ring."

that was less noticeable than in past years, because there is usually a limit to that sort of thing. There was nothing very much new about it in 1913." Further, the *Albertan* added, "In years past, the management succeeded in getting some attractions which were educative as well as interesting."<sup>272</sup> Evidently, the management was less successful in its 1913 enterprise.

Perhaps considered bland by some critics, the livestock exhibits were important to the Southern Alberta economy. The *Albertan* acknowledged that since agriculture was at the foundation of the success of the province, and agriculture depends largely upon stock, "this same stock parade bore testimony which could not be disputed that the Calgary Exhibition gives the very best and highest service to the province and to the West."<sup>273</sup> So while the agricultural exhibits appeared lackluster in comparison to other amusements, they held unrivaled value in view of the fair's underlying purposes—the promotion of the district's agricultural prowess. Over the years, the exhibition's agricultural foundation maintained its importance. However, the fair's priorities became blurred in the boom period between the 1908 Dominion Exhibition and the 1912 Stampede. Dictated by economic circumstance, the 1913 Calgary Exhibition returned the fair to its economic and educational roots.

The renewed emphasis on the fair's agricultural focus can largely be attributed to the downturn in the prairie economy. According to historian John Herd Thompson, agricultural expansion in the prairie West had temporarily ceased, and had, in fact, exceeded its limit in places. In 1912, a stabilization of agricultural production

---

<sup>272</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1913, p.3.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July 1913, p.1.



corresponded with a drop in prices which reduced the value of the wheat and oats crop by sixteen million dollars. Depressed prices continued through 1913 and by 1914; for the first time, an actual decline in the acreage devoted to the chief grain crops occurred.<sup>274</sup>

During the slump in the grain economy, the perception of exhibition success proved crucial. References to the economic situation appeared throughout the media accounts of the 1913 show. The *Herald* asked its readers, "Why worry about the stringency in the money market, or deplore the fact that you lost five dollars on the horse that didn't finish in the first three?"<sup>275</sup> In essence, visitors could forget all the troubles and tribulations of this world by immersing themselves in the hullabaloo of the fair's amusements.

On the success of that year's fair, the *Albertan* announced, "This year is something more than four thousand better than on the evening of the third day last year. That is quite satisfactory, particularly as some people say that times are hard and the festive dollar bill is not as friendly as it was last year."<sup>276</sup> A few days later, the paper observed that the attendance, considering that it was supposed to be an off year, was quite good.<sup>277</sup> Since fair attendance exceeded the one-hundred-thousand mark, the year was labeled a financial success. The tightness of consumer money hampered concession sales. However, gate receipts more than offset the deficit.<sup>278</sup> The viewpoint propagated in the press was that a successful fair indicated that perhaps the situation was not so dire. Through a successful exhibition, the 1886 organizers demonstrated the strength of the

---

<sup>274</sup> Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, p.13.

<sup>275</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 3 July 1913, p.22.

<sup>276</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 3 July 1913, p.1.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 July 1913, p.3.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

Calgary district's agriculture. With an economic depression looming, the 1913 fair pursued a similar goal.

Under the headline, 'Horse, Cattle and Dog Exhibits of Excellent Quality at Exhibition', the *Herald* reported on the first day of the 1913 Calgary Exhibition that judging from the abundance and quality of the stock exhibits, the year's fair was already a success. Apparently, there were more than 200 stock horses of all classes over the previous year's showing and the cattle exceeded the 1912 Exhibition's by seventy-five. According to the *Herald's* reporter, "A walk around the cattle pens showed an excellent group of bulls and cows. There were some real good specimens of the Ayrshire, Jersey and Holstein breeds, and in all the cattle seen, there were none that were poorly bred."<sup>279</sup> The *Albertan* affirmed its contemporary's findings and noted, "The judging of the dairy cattle was a long drawn out affair owing to the large number of entries and it was nothing uncommon especially in the classes of Holsteins to see more than a dozen animals in the ring competing for the same prize." The paper added, "This was certainly a thing unseen at any other fair in the West and something for Calgary to be proud of."<sup>280</sup>

Next to the livestock displays which were 'unsurpassed', the *Herald* asserted that the chief interest at the fair would be in the products of the soil. After all, the paper contended, Alberta's grain has won prizes in many of the large international exhibits and the best of her yield would be on display in the agricultural building. The article predicted that spectators would not be disappointed with the 1913 exhibits.<sup>281</sup>

On the question of judging, David C. Jones observed that in the early days there

---

<sup>279</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 30 June 1913, p.1.

<sup>280</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 2 July 1913, p.1.

were many problems with judging which included favoritism, absence, and outright ignorance on the part of judges. There was a concerted effort on the part of the provincial government and the editors of the agrarian press, asserts Jones, to regularize and to improve judging standards at annual fairs.<sup>282</sup> Press accounts of the judging at the Calgary Exhibition appear to be generally positive. In its summary of the 1914 Exhibition, the *Grain Growers' Guide* stated that, "the judging in practically every instance gave entire satisfaction."<sup>283</sup> It was a point reiterated by the Superintendent of Fairs and Institutes, Alex Galbraith. In his *Annual Report* for 1916, he noted, "The most complete satisfaction has come from the continued employment of government-appointed judges. Not only in livestock but in all other branches connected with the Department, expressions of appreciation have frequently been made in regard to the capability and the integrity of the judges and the entire satisfaction given by their rewards."<sup>284</sup>

Despite the emphasis on the agricultural displays, fair visitors enjoyed a host of amusements including impressive performances by a military tattoo, in which four bands composed of musicians from the East and the West played both individually and en masse. As well, spectators saw demonstrations of intricate marching drills by fifteen hundred of the province's cadets.<sup>285</sup> The fair concluded with a display of the city's fire-fighting force. In front of the grandstand crowd, a house was intentionally set on fire and

---

<sup>281</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 28 June 1913, p.25.

<sup>282</sup> Jones, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs*, p.19-29.

<sup>283</sup> *The Grain Growers' Guide*, 15 July 1914, p.3.

<sup>284</sup> Report of the Superintendent of Fairs and Institutes in the *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta, 1916* (Edmonton: J. W. Jeffrey, Government Printer), p.87. For similarly positive statements, see the *Annual Reports* for 1913, 1914, 1915, 1917, 1918. On the subject of judging, the *Farm and Ranch Review* observed in 1908 that some onlookers did not agree with the judges ruling; however, the paper stated that, "no one judge can please all. Such, from the nature of his duties, is an utter impossibility, and onlookers should realize this." *The Farm and Ranch Review*, July 1908, p.12.

extinguished by the Calgary Fire Brigade. The final night's demonstration proved more successful than that of the previous evening when eager firemen hosed down the house before it ever was truly ablaze. The *Albertan* reported that, "By dint of holding in the firemen and sending their streams wide of the mark the house did at last burn to the satisfaction of all concerned."<sup>286</sup> While the *Herald* remarked, "With flames licking the remains of the frame building and the fire brigade standing by to see the demolition safely completed, the curtain was rung down Saturday evening on the most successful Industrial Exhibition yet held in Calgary."<sup>287</sup>

At the opening of the 1914 Exhibition, the didactic nature of the fair was stressed by both the *Herald* and the ceremony's guest speaker, R. B. Bennett. In an editorial, the *Herald* acknowledged that the value of the fair both to Calgary and the province could not be estimated in dollars and cents. Educationally, the exhibition was a splendid event for the people of the city. It was an aid to agriculturalists and stock growers in the opportunity it afforded for friendly competition along better farming and breeding lines. It also had a wonderful value as an advertisement for both Alberta and the city.<sup>288</sup> Bennett, a Member of Parliament for the city, also spoke of the value of such fairs from the educational standpoint. He remarked that the number of entries were far in excess of any other year and that, "oil and real estate were great things to make money but they were very poor things when a man was hungry. The fair assisted the country greatly from

---

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 28 June 1913, p.24.

<sup>286</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1913, p.12.

<sup>287</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 7 July 1913, p.13. In the year between the 1913 and 1914 Exhibitions, fair organizers planned for a massive expansion of facilities and asked electors for a grant of \$360,000. The grant squeaked out a victory with 33 votes to spare. However, plans for expansion were put on hold with the real estate collapse in the city and the war. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.45-46. *The Morning Albertan*, 29 August, 1913, p.3.

the matter of agriculture which was the great bastion of the wealth of the country."<sup>289</sup> Consequently, Calgary's local exhibition had a responsibility to promote agriculture for the betterment of all of Canadian society.

Before the kick-off of the 1914 summer fair circuit, the *Grain Growers' Guide* similarly stressed that the educational aspect was the chief purpose of any successful fair. There was a danger of the amusement features playing too strong a role. However, the *Guide* did admit that, "A certain amount of healthy amusement and frivolity is a desirable part of the summer fair, for the farmer and his family have little enough of relaxation on the farm, and when they do go to town they can enjoy a little innocent fun as much as anyone else."<sup>290</sup> Indeed, extensive amusements thrilled those rural visitors who came to the fair to promote their goods and take in the sights and sounds of the city. Amusements also appealed to the thousands of urban residents who did not have agricultural ties to the fair. Entertainment was necessary but to what extent? Ultimately, this question would need to be decided by fair organizers.

While the integrity of the fair was being publicly addressed by politicians and the press, gambling on the horse races was gaining in popularity at Calgary's 1913 and 1914 Exhibitions. At the same time in Brandon, the situation was reversed. Fair historians Coates and McGuinness noted that the recently introduced pari-mutuel machines to the Brandon Exhibition were by 1914 increasingly coming under attack. They wrote that moral purity organizations across the West petitioned the fairs to eliminate gambling.<sup>291</sup>

---

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 30 June 1914, p.6.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>290</sup> *The Grain Growers' Guide*, 1 July 1914, p.9.

<sup>291</sup> Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.66.

While in Calgary, the *Albertan* declared that the pari-mutuels, for the first time in local horse racing history, were given a fair chance at the 1913 Calgary Exhibition because of the exclusion of bookies from the track. Though introduced in 1911, the machines had to compete with the more traditional betting agents. Though it took Calgarians some time to get acquainted with the machines, they proved to be a big success in the end.<sup>292</sup> In 1914, the *Herald* admitted that, while the machines were unpopular with traditional backers of horses, they had the good effect of ridding the sport of kings from the seedier elements involved in betting.<sup>293</sup> Noticeably absent from the press coverage was any moral criticism of gambling at the fair. Subsequently, horse betting remained a popular feature of the exhibition's program for the entire period under analysis.

According to its literature, the Calgary Industrial Exhibition gained fame not through elaborate gimmicks, but through the sheer number of agricultural entries it boasted by 1914. In a letter to its stock holders, exhibition manager Ernie Richardson asserted that the figures proved the exhibition to be the largest in Western Canada. According to Richardson, "The world's greatest annual exhibition in Toronto and only four of the great state fairs in the United States can equal the entries at the Calgary Industrial Exhibition."<sup>294</sup> In the same vein, the *Herald* wrote:

The Calgary Industrial Exhibition is an institution that our city can well feel proud of, for its stands fifth among all the great fairs held on this continent

---

<sup>292</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 2 July 1913, p.1. On July 7, 1913, the *Albertan* asserted, "The revenue from the pari-mutuels was greater than last year, and much business was done there", p.1. According to MacEwan, pari-mutuel machines were purchased to be used for the first time at Edmonton's Exhibition of 1913. The machines proved to be a profitable investment and in their initial year, showed a net return of \$6,781. MacEwan, *Agriculture on Parade*, p.73.

<sup>293</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, Second Section, 3 July 1914, p.13.

<sup>294</sup> Open letter to stockholders by E. L. Richardson regarding improvements to the grounds for the 1914 Calgary Industrial Exhibition. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F35.

in the number of entries. In Canada, it is exceeded only by Toronto. There are over 7,000 entries this year, as compared with 5,910 last season, convincing evidence that there will be much of interest and value to those who attend next week.<sup>295</sup>

While the fair had strong representation in its industrial and women's departments, it was livestock exhibits that swelled the fair's numbers—over half of the 7,000 entries were livestock.<sup>296</sup> Despite an economic slump, the 1914 Calgary Industrial Exhibition was also deemed a decided success by the local newspapers. On August 4, 1914, less than one month after the close of the 1914 fair, Britain declared war on Germany. Almost immediately, Colonel Sam Hughes began the ineluctable call-up of the country's troops. Canada was at war.<sup>297</sup>

In his article, "Life in Frontier Calgary", Henry Klassen wrote that the cultural life of the burgeoning city was predominantly English Canadian and British in character and roughly eighty per cent of its residents had come from Ontario, the Maritime provinces, and the British Isles.<sup>298</sup> The ties to Eastern Canada and the 'mother country' were exceedingly strong. Wilfrid Laurier had stated in 1910, "When Britain is at war, Canada is at war," so when the call came to join their British compatriots overseas, Canadians dutifully responded.<sup>299</sup>

The war years proved to be a rather difficult time for many Western Canadian fairs. While many turned over their facilities to the military for use as mobilization or

---

<sup>295</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 27 June 1914, p.26.

<sup>296</sup> Op. Cited, letter to stockholders by E. L. Richardson.

<sup>297</sup> Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.59.

<sup>298</sup> Klassen, "Life in Frontier Calgary", p.43.

<sup>299</sup> Desmond Morton, *Canada and War: A Military and Political History* (Toronto: Butterworth & Co., 1981), p.54.

training centers, others, like the Vancouver Exhibition, opted to push on.<sup>300</sup> The organizers of Vancouver's 1914 fair had a difficult decision to make. The Calgary Exhibition for that year had already come and gone a month before war was declared on Germany. However, Vancouver's fair was scheduled for the first week in September, only weeks after the grave announcement.

Despite opposition, the Vancouver Exhibition Association decided to go ahead with the anticipated fair. According to Breen and Coates, exhibition management's decision generated opposition from the Vancouver Board of Trade, an organization which had only reluctantly accepted the exhibition in Vancouver. The Board opposed the fair despite the fact that they had been reassured by fair organizers and the militia that holding the exhibition would not impede military training. A host of patriotic organizations joined the Board of Trade in opposition to Vancouver's 1914 Exhibition, but the protests did not prevent the show from proceeding.<sup>301</sup>

In other prairie cities, the 'business as usual' policy met with varied success. The Winnipeg Exhibition collapsed during the war years. Although attendance was strong in 1914, consistent financial losses and less than enthusiastic support from city officials resulted in the cancellation of the 1915 show. According to Kenneth Coates and Fred McGuinness, it would be years before a serious attempt was made to resurrect the previously vital Winnipeg Exhibition.<sup>302</sup> In Brandon, fair directors continued the exhibition, but did so only in conjunction with a special agreement with the Canadian army. The management agreed in November 1914 to turn over the fairgrounds, free of

---

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p.60.

<sup>301</sup> Breen and Coates, *Vancouver's Fair*, p.44



charge, to the government for use as a prisoner-of-war camp. The provision was that the grounds were to be released from governmental duty in time for the annual exhibition. Considerable damage to the grounds resulted from the military occupation, but the government provided full compensation to organizers at the cessation of the war.<sup>303</sup>

In Calgary, exhibition management forged ahead with plans for a 1915 fair. However, it was not the conventional offering. In regards to the 1915 event, the *Herald* reported, "The 'Khaki Fair', as the exhibition has this year been so aptly named, will be opened in true military style by Colonel E. A. Cruikshank, D.O.C., M. D. 13, and the ceremony will be attended by thousands of troops from the big camp on the Sarcee Reserve."<sup>304</sup> The military would be the main feature of the 1915 Calgary Industrial Exhibition and all patriotic Calgarians were expected to attend. Each day of the fair was dedicated to a particular regiment. Dominion Day, for example, was declared 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion Day, followed by 56<sup>th</sup> Battalion Day, and so on. Thus, in recognition of the war in Europe, the Calgary Exhibition of 1915 adopted a special role—supporter of Canada's military effort.

In an editorial on the fair, the *Herald* noted that apart from the usual program, the people of Alberta would be greatly interested in the program to which the various military regiments from the Sarcee camp would contribute. The 'boys' had been assiduously training and deserved some public recognition. The *Herald* added, "Friends from all over the country will doubtless come to the fair to say good-bye before their friends leave for

---

<sup>302</sup> Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.60.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 30 June 1915, p.1.

the front, which in some instances at least, will not be long.”<sup>305</sup> The fair had moved quite beyond a mere amusement venue; it was a forum showcasing brave soldiers who would soon fight for the democratic cause.

The agricultural focus of the fair was still of crucial importance; its central aim was to promote agricultural productivity and innovation. More than any other time it was imperative to assist the farmers with their work. Wheat, in abundance, was required on the front to feed the allied soldiers. The West’s staple crop was absorbed by Britain in whatever quantities it could be produced and, fortunately, the harvest of 1915 was the largest in short history of the Canadian prairies.<sup>306</sup> Thus, an agricultural exhibition could make an important contribution to the war effort. On the heels of the economic depression, in itself the high demand for wheat must surely have been seen by some as a blessing.

The war’s demand for wheat brought temporary prosperity to Southern Alberta. However, the city of Calgary buckled under the pressure of the collapse of the real estate boom and rising unemployment. As local commerce and industry declined in response to the depression, unemployment increased in the city. Calgary historian Max Foran asserted that in September of 1914, for example, over 1,200 men were let go by employers in the city, particularly in the construction industry, which was hit hard by the collapse of the real estate boom.<sup>307</sup> Although few would acknowledge it, the presence of a summer fair provided the opportunity to escape the horrors of war and economic depression, at least for a few days.

---

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 26 June 1915, p.6.

<sup>306</sup> Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, p.59.

According to the Sarcree camp's Colonel E. A. Cruikshank, "On Thursday, July 1, every man in camp who is not on duty will march to Calgary under arms and take part in the opening of the Khaki Fair, Calgary's annual exhibition."<sup>308</sup> The soldiers reigned supreme at the opening of the 1915 fair. Under the headline, 'Soldiers the Feature of Opening Day at the Fair--Great Success', the *Herald* reported:

Backed by four thousand of Canada's khaki-clad citizen soldiers, men who will shortly start on their journey overseas to take part in the fight of the Empire, and faced by a holiday crowd which filled the grand stand and enclosure to almost an uncomfortable extent, Colonel E. A. Cruikshank, D.O.C. M. D. 13, commandant of the Sarcree military camp, yesterday afternoon, sharp at two o'clock, formally opened the 1915 Calgary Industrial Exhibition.<sup>309</sup>

Undisputedly, the ubiquitous military demonstrations were the principal draw of the fair. Calgary citizens were required to attend the fair as an indication of their pride and patriotism for the boys in khaki. According to the press coverage, following their arrival in the city and their march down 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the Victoria Park exhibition grounds, the troops were marched into formation in front of the crowds of onlookers. First came the cavalry, the 12<sup>th</sup> mounted led by Colonel George McDonald. Next came the 13<sup>th</sup> mounted, led by Colonel Kemis. The infantry followed until all members of city's armed forces were assembled in front of the grandstand.<sup>310</sup> Then, Cruikshank began his opening address to the crowd, "You have before you a sample of the Canadian expeditionary force. They are a good example. They will reflect credit on their cities and on the Dominion of Canada."<sup>311</sup> With Cruikshank's speech concluded, the Khaki Fair of 1915 was officially opened for business.

---

<sup>307</sup> Foran and Foran, *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis*, p.156.

<sup>308</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 30 June 1915, p.5.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 July 1915, p.18.

In addition to Dominion Day's grand military parade, the Canadian armed services were scheduled to perform at a variety of fair events. Arrangements were completed to have a separate regiment take part in each program on a specially dedicated day, giving exhibitions of bayonet exercises, physical drills, rifle drills, and marching demonstrations. All the military bands were engaged in the military tattoo each evening. Soldiers also took part in the grand fireworks production, which was 300 feet long, and depicted the scene 'the forcing of the Dardenelles'.<sup>312</sup> On the latter point, the *Calgary Herald* stated, "The forcing of the Dardenelles in fireworks was the climax of the evening's entertainment. This representation was presented on a specially prepared background and proved very effective."<sup>313</sup>

On the second night of the exhibition, fair visitors were given the opportunity to observe the military's approach to actual warfare. The *Herald* announced that the citizens of Calgary would be treated to seeing what a soldier's bivouac was like. Bivouac was a word that had been used in the press since the war broke out, however, few people knew what it actually meant. Exhibition organizers sought to rectify that. A military encampment was set up in front of the grand stand and companies A, B, C and D enacted a typical evening on the front. Shortly after their arrival, companies B and C set up their bivouac, while company D guarded the outposts. Company A acted as the attacking forces and attempted to rush the bivouac after 'lights out' had sounded.<sup>314</sup> The demonstration allowed onlookers a small glimpse of life overseas.

---

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> "Prize List for the 1915 Calgary Industrial Exhibition" published by the Calgary Industrial Exhibition Company, 1915. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F21, p.1.

<sup>313</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 2 July 1915, p.1.

The military tattoo consisted of five military bands accompanied by a band composed of civilians. Each night of the fair, the bands provided a moving rendition of several patriotic numbers before the enthusiastic crowd. On the second evening of the exhibition, the *Herald* commented that the military tattoo proved very interesting and the sight of the different bands marching in to meet each other to stirring tunes brought loud cheers from the spectators. As the bands massed in the centre of the field, they played the National Anthem and one or two well-known songs.<sup>315</sup> Between the military tattoo and the 'forcing of the Dardenelles', the evening presentation conjured up a great deal of patriotism and support for the Canadian military effort.

On the final evening of the 1915 Calgary Exhibition, the 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion held the spotlight and dazzled the crowd with a show of their military competence. According to the *Herald's* coverage, the feature of the evening performance was the military maneuvers by the 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Mason. Headed by the regiment's band, the soldiers entered from the south track and lined up in front of the grandstand. They were then greeted by prolonged cheers from the thousands who gathered to witness the final performance of the boys in khaki. The *Herald* recounted, "The entire battalion formed two deep the length of the campus, and following the order 'Port arms for inspection', fired three volleys into the air, which proved quite a novelty and no less excitement. The boys then gave three rousing cheers which were heartily echoed by spectators."<sup>316</sup> Following their performance, the regiment returned to the Sarcee camp to continue their preparation.

---

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

As visitors entered the fair's main gate, just in front of the Industrial Building, they saw displayed a large flag bearing the emblem of the Red Cross. In light of the activities on the other side of the Atlantic, booths for the Red Cross Society became fixtures at Canadian fairs throughout the war. The Red Cross ladies, reported the *Herald*, with their usual initiative, decided that the public should have a chance to see what the organization was doing for the soldiers on the front. They displayed the different articles which they either made or gathered together through donation. Of course, there was always someone on hand to answer questions and, most importantly, to take contributions for the boys overseas. The article in the *Herald* encouraged that a visit to the Red Cross booth would prove interesting and a contribution could not be given to a better or more practical cause.<sup>317</sup>

With a grand total attendance of 77,640, the Khaki Fair of 1915 came to an end.<sup>318</sup> Indeed, the fair management had done their utmost to demonstrate their support for Canada's war effort. Perhaps, the exhibition could resume its traditional itinerary in the following year. There was a belief on the part of many Canadians that the war would be a short-term confrontation.<sup>319</sup> In fact, in the 'Prize List for the 1915 Calgary Industrial Exhibition', promoters wrote, "While this prize list is in the process of preparation we earnestly hope that before the dates of the exhibition the war will have been terminated satisfactorily to the Allies."<sup>320</sup> Of course, when the war continued into 1916 and beyond, the directors of the Calgary Industrial Exhibition had to decide what the role of the

---

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1915, p.4.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 2 July 1915, p.1.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1915, p.4.

<sup>319</sup> Breen and Coates, *Vancouver's Fair*, p.44.

<sup>320</sup> "Prize List for the 1915 Calgary Industrial Exhibition", p.1

military would be in its future enterprises.

The impetus for sweeping social reform came during the first years of the war. If the boys were risking their lives overseas, Canadians had a moral responsibility to improve the situation at home. The prohibition of alcohol was one of the greatest objectives of social reformers. The majority of electors in Alberta voted in favor of total prohibition and it was implemented on July 1, 1916.<sup>321</sup> Calgary's 'wild and woolly' days, which had been steadily waning since the turn of the century, came to an abrupt halt. The second major reform campaign to significantly alter the country's moral fabric was the movement for women's suffrage. Thanks to efforts by such women as Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Edwards, Alberta's 'Famous Five', each Western province granted its women the provincial franchise in the opening months of 1916.<sup>322</sup> Thus, the social reform movements successfully staged campaigns towards the betterment of society. It should be noted that the *Farm and Ranch Review* argued in a 1915 editorial that the social reform campaigns should take aim at cleaning up the moral infractions that were taking place at the fairgrounds. According to the *Review*, "One of the most repugnant experiences which can befall the average man or woman is afforded by a tour of the midway at any of our Western agricultural exhibitions." The moral degradation of the midway had long been ignored by fair organizers, claimed the publication. Thus, it declared, "the matter of abolishing the unquestionably immoral effect of the midway should commend itself to our social reform

---

<sup>321</sup> Dempsey, *Calgary: Spirit of the West*, p.107.

<sup>322</sup> Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, p.112.

leagues.”<sup>323</sup>

In an interview on the success of the 1916 fair, manager Richardson stated, “It was unquestionably the best show we ever had. The exhibits were better, the attractions were better, and the attendance was very nearly better.”<sup>324</sup> Throughout the media reports of the event the rhetoric focused on attendance, exhibits, entertainment and prosperity—familiar themes over the years. Playing only a minor role in the entertainment, the military was considerably less prevalent in 1916 than in the previous year. Perhaps, after nearly two years of fighting, there were less reservations associated with holding a summer celebration in the middle of the war. With no end to the war in sight, life in Canada had to go on.

The issue of the economy and its intrinsic link to the fair’s success drew the attention of Calgary’s local newspapers. The *Morning Albertan* affirmed:

If anyone doubts the prosperity of this province, a walk down Eighth Avenue yesterday in the rain, would have been convincing evidence. Every incoming train was packed to its capacity, and the stations constantly disgorged scores of suitcases laden visitors from the towns and outside municipalities. The C.P.R. train from the south brought in the largest excursion of visitors ever received in Calgary in fair week. About half the population of High River boarded the northbound train yesterday morning.<sup>325</sup>

Attendance at the 1916 fair exceeded the 1915 Exhibition by over twenty thousand persons.<sup>326</sup> Once again, management declared the fair a triumph. The show never failed to serve as a prime ticket for rural residents. While many were genuinely interested in either frequenting or conducting business at the agricultural exhibits, others

---

<sup>323</sup> *The Farm and Ranch Review*, 6 September 1915, p.499.

<sup>324</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 6 July 1916, p.14.

<sup>325</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 4 July 1916, p.1.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 July 1916, p.5. The paper reported that the total attendance for the five day affair was 103,725, 21,000 better than the year before.



were drawn solely to the midway. The event catered to all interests—entertainment, education or otherwise. In an editorial on the fair, the *Albertan* asserted, “The Calgary Exhibition of 1916 was a very successful one, surpassing for the most part any previous exhibition in this city. The attendance was very good, a very encouraging sign of conditions in Calgary and district.”<sup>327</sup> The *Herald*’s report was even more optimistic, “There is no doubt about it, the exhibition which closed last night was the best Calgary ever had. Not only were the exhibits, especially in the animal classes, better than ever before, but the attractions provided exceeded in number and surpassed in quality and variety anything of the kind previously attempted in Calgary.”<sup>328</sup>

In 1915, Alex Galbraith identified the official position of the Department of Agriculture on the purpose of agricultural fairs, “The real mission of fairs being the improvement of livestock and other farm products through the rivalry engendered by competition...”<sup>329</sup> As part of this agricultural mandate, the Department set up a demonstration train designed to instruct fair visitors on a host of practical subjects. There were model dairy barns, small hog houses, wool exhibits, and even a household science car.<sup>330</sup> The reviews of the demonstration car were favorable. The *Grain Growers’ Guide* reported on the 1917 exhibit that, “During the show the Alberta government demonstration train remained two days at the fairgrounds and gave opportunity for much valuable instruction to the visitors.”<sup>331</sup> On the success of the demonstration train, Jas McCaig, editor of publications for the *Agricultural Gazette of Canada*, estimated that no

---

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1916, p.3.

<sup>328</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 6 July 1916, p.14.

<sup>329</sup> Report of the Superintendent of Fairs and Institutes in the *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta, 1915* (Edmonton: J. W. Jeffery, Government Printer), p.111.

<sup>330</sup> *The Farm and Ranch Review*, 5 July 1915, p.412-13.

less than 5,000 people visited the train at both Calgary and Edmonton in 1916.<sup>332</sup> By disseminating techniques and stressing the importance of agriculture, the government was able to participate in popularizing the idea that agriculture was the key to Western prosperity.

In addition to the prominent educational features of the fair, the directors endeavored to provide the most interesting entertainment program ever presented at the Calgary Exhibition and assured patrons they would be surprised and delighted with the venue.<sup>333</sup> The feature attraction of the fair was an aerial presentation by Miss Katherine Stinson, a renowned female aviator. The fair's literature read, "We have been most fortunate in arranging with Miss Katherine Stinson, the world's most famous women aviator, who will loop the loop, fly up-side-down, with many other extraordinary flying feats twice daily, using smoke-pot fireworks effects."<sup>334</sup> Miss Stinson had flown her bi-plane to the Brandon fair in 1915 and had landed it at the city's Exhibition Park. In 1916, she returned to perform at the Brandon Exhibition before making her way to Calgary's show.<sup>335</sup>

Poor weather grounded Miss Stinson on the first of her scheduled performances. As a result, she added an extra flight to the final day of the exhibition. The press was quick to point out that the suggestion for the extra performance did not emanate from management, but came from Stinson herself.<sup>336</sup> During her stint at the 1916 Calgary

---

<sup>331</sup> *The Grain Growers' Guide*, 18 July 1917, p.3.

<sup>332</sup> *The Agricultural Gazette of Canada*, Vol. III, No. 9 (September, 1916), p.814.

<sup>333</sup> "Prize List for the 1916 Calgary Industrial Exhibition" published by the Calgary Industrial Exhibition Company, 1916. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F21, p.1.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.62.

<sup>336</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 5 July 1916, p.1.

Exhibition, Stinson was cast in what the *Herald* described as a 'pretty little comedy'. The exhibition aviator was to fly to the Sarcee camp after her usual performance. At the military camp, the staged performance would begin. The *Herald* outlined the events:

Miss Stinson, on alighting on the camp grounds, will promptly be placed under arrest for flying over a military camp. She will be taken before General Cruikshank and formerly sentenced to eat dinner with the general and his staff. After she has completed her sentence, Miss Stinson will fly back to Victoria Park in time for her night exhibition at the fair.<sup>337</sup>

In addition to Stinson's air show, fair directors offered visitors to the 1916 Exhibition a demonstration of the 'March of the Allies'. Organizers asserted that one of the most interesting features on the program at the previous year's Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto was the 'March of the Allies', illustrating a review of the armies of the Allied forces.<sup>338</sup> They intended to recreate the spectacle at Calgary's show. The *Albertan* described the review as one of the most successful attractions of the fair.<sup>339</sup> For one afternoon, the 'Marching of the Allies' demonstration returned the military to a featured role in the Calgary festivities, a role it had dominated in 1915.

The *Albertan*'s headline read, "Eight Thousand Men in Khaki March Through City—An Imposing and Memorable Spectacle; Troops Paraded at the Fair and Were Reviewed."<sup>340</sup> The publication reported that a seemingly interminable column of khaki rolled through the streets on 'Citizen's Day', the sixth day of the 1916 fair, to perform the 'Marching of the Allies'. Eight thousand soldiers from Sarcee camp marched into the city to the Victoria Park fairgrounds creating an imposing and noteworthy spectacle.<sup>341</sup>

---

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 July 1916, p.1.

<sup>338</sup> "Prize List for the 1916 Calgary Industrial Exhibition", p.1.

<sup>339</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1916, p.3.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 July 1916, p.1.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

Though in a diminished capacity, the boys in khaki reminded fairgoers of the events in Europe and the need for continued support.<sup>342</sup>

Visitors could also pledge their support for the Canadian war effort by donating to one of the appropriate charities. The *Herald* noted that visitors to the fair on 'American Day', July 4<sup>th</sup>, could purchase a 'lucky soldier' or 'Red Cross nurse' tag, which were made of two-toned khaki wool and were "most interesting to admire". They were sold by members of the Samaritan Club who donated part of the proceeds to the Red Cross and the remainder to other philanthropic concerns. The intricate items apparently represented months of each member's time and effort. The paper declared, "It will be the fashion to wear a 'lucky soldier' or a 'Red Cross nurse' when you go to the fair on 'American Day' and besides your money will be spent for worthy and patriotic objects."<sup>343</sup> Dressed in white and donning the symbol for the Red Cross on their sleeves, the ladies of the Samaritan Club worked the exhibition crowds. At the close of the fair, the *Herald* reported that the charity earned about three hundred dollars from the sale of their products, which worked out to roughly twenty-five hundred soldiers and nurses.<sup>344</sup>

By the 1917 Exhibition, the Canadian armed services were hardly a factor in the festivities. Representatives of the military did march in a Dominion Day parade; however, that was the extent of their participation in the festivities. Clearly, their attention lay elsewhere. During the 1917 event, approximately two thousand soldiers and

---

<sup>342</sup> As if to accentuate the morality campaign, the *Farm and Ranch Review* reported on the 1916 show, "The amusements were also very good, and afforded everybody real enjoyable relaxation, special mention being made of the khaki element, the splendid spectacular aerial flights of Miss Katherine Stinson, the March of the Allies, and other good, clean, wholesome performances." *The Farm and Ranch Review*, 5 July 1916, p.533.

<sup>343</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 3 July 1916, p.16.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July 1916, p.8.

civilians participated in a twenty-minute parade. In that procession, there was about 600 men from the Sarcee camp, 400 men from the 103<sup>rd</sup> Calgary Rifles regiment, 200 members of the Reserve Militia, 200 cadets, 300 representatives from the Red Cross, 100 to 150 marchers from various societies, and roughly 150 veterans.<sup>345</sup>

The highlight of the parade, according to the *Herald*, was a number of decorated floats depicting Red Cross work. The first float represented wounded men on the battlefield receiving first aid. Next came the Red Cross ambulance with a detachment of men bearing stretchers and nurses followed by a float portraying a military hospital. In the ensuing float, a scene in a recreation hut was depicted, followed by a glimpse of prisoners of war, reminding parade watchers of the horrors overseas. Finally, accompanying a dray of Red Cross boxes, three hundred Red Cross workers paraded in uniform.<sup>346</sup>

By and large, women worked the charitable booths on the fairgrounds. Representatives from city churches as well as charitable organizations manned the booths and set up make-shift restaurants and refreshment stands. The *Albertan* stated that the military chapter of the I.O.D.E. (Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire) had an attractive display where 'home-cooked' lunches and beverages were being sold. The chapter had devised the scheme in order to raise enough funds to purchase a stock of wool for socks for the boys on the front.<sup>347</sup> Apparently, the various Red Cross groups of the chapter were in charge of the popular stand and alternated shifts over the duration of

---

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 29 June 1917, p.18.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 25 June 1917, p.10. On the subject of women and charities, Thompson wrote, "Women's organizations often co-operated with one another on Red Cross or Patriotic Fund campaigns or in 'bees' to knit and sew for the troops on the front." Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, p.109.

the fair.<sup>348</sup>

A familiar theme resurfaced in the press accounts of the 1917 Calgary Exhibition—the superiority of the district's livestock capabilities. According to the *Albertan*, that year's fair demonstrated clearly the absolute supremacy of Alberta in stock, dairying and every branch of the livestock industry. If anyone doubted that Alberta lead Canada in every branch of these activities, even a cursory examination of the showing at the 1917 Exhibition was convincing.<sup>349</sup>

Evidence of the district's livestock supremacy was the defeat of championship cattle that were shipped in from all over North America to compete at Calgary's agricultural fair. The *Herald* asserted that the sensation of the 1917 Exhibition was the defeat of Frank Collicut's prize \$12,000 two-year-old bull, 'Gay Lad', the junior champion of America at the previous year's International Show at Chicago, as well as, from Girvan, Saskatchewan, Fuller's \$17,000 bull, 'Martin Fairfax'. This paper noted, "This puts Alberta in the front rank in North America for this class. Both 'Gay Lad' and 'Martin Fairfax' are international champions of this continent, and the supremacy of the Courtice herd is a triumph which is the glory to the industry in the province."<sup>350</sup>

On the subject of livestock, the *Herald* reported that the 1917 livestock exhibits far surpassed those of any other year. Stampede financier George Lane's Percherons

---

<sup>348</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 5 July 1917, p.4.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 July 1917, p.10. In a peripheral note, 1917 is the year in which Medicine Hat staged a Stampede of its own. The Medicine Hat Stampede was held in mid-July of 1917. Large advertisements appeared in Calgary's two major newspapers in the weeks before the event. See the *Herald*, 30 June 1917, p.10 and the *Albertan*, 5 July 1917, p.8. The *Albertan* read, "Medicine Hat forms the natural confer of one of the largest ranching districts on the continent, and it is proposed to make the Medicine Hat Stampede the largest of its kind ever held."

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 July 1917, p.5. The quote refers to the Courtice Cattle Company of Indus, Alberta—near Calgary.

were singled out by the paper as indicative of the quality of horse stock in the province. "There are some magnificent animals among the Percherons of George Lane, W.B. Thorne and others, while in the Clydes the veteran David Thorburn is in with some world-beaters."<sup>351</sup> Despite the challenging economic times, according to the perception disseminated in the press, Alberta stock had never been better.<sup>352</sup>

Once again, slated as the super-attraction of the exhibition, Katherine Stinson returned to Calgary with her bag of exciting aerial tricks. In 1917, it was advertised by fair promoters that Stinson would race Elfrieda Mais, "champion woman auto race driver of the universe". In the auto-aeroplane competition, the two champions would race for a special purse of \$500 dollars during the auto races at the Calgary Industrial Exhibition.<sup>353</sup> Two factors thwarted the race before its scheduled date. Mais was unable to attend the festivities and strong winds and mechanical problems plagued Stinson's flights during fair week. On the final day of the 1917 Exhibition, the race was on again with race car driver George Clark stepping up to fill Mais' role. However, the winds returned during the competition and prevented Stinson from making the sharp turns needed to keep pace with Clark's car. The automobile emerged triumphant.<sup>354</sup>

---

<sup>351</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 28 June 1917, p.4.

<sup>352</sup> In his book *The Harvests of War*, Thompson discusses the challenging economic times that burdened the West during World War I. In an effort to meet the demand for wheat overseas, farmers increased their crop size by acquiring more land and often borrowed to do so. By the time wheat prices returned to normal levels, many farmers were left with a mountainous burden of debt. Thompson asserts, "Most of the profits from high wartime prices were used to finance further expansion rather than to reduce the existing burden of debt.", p.65-66.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 June 1917, p.10. Automobile races were a major attraction at the 1917 Exhibition. A group of touring race car drivers from the United States were hired to do the racing. However, two locals petitioned to join in the fun, George Webber and Fred Seigel. Unfortunately, tragic results ensued, Seigel was killed when he crashed into a fence. See the *Herald*, 4 July 1917, p.10 and Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.46-47.

<sup>354</sup> For accounts of Stinson's experiences at the 1917 Exhibition see the *Calgary Herald*, 3 July 1917, p.9 and 5 July 1917, p.5, the *Morning Albertan*, 5 July 1917, p.1, and 6 July 1917, p.5, as well as Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.46.

Before the 1918 Calgary Exhibition, promoters announced that the livestock entries would be the biggest feature of that year's fair. According to the *Herald*, "The exhibits of livestock at the exhibition this year will be much better than ever before and while, as a matter of fact, in actual numbers they are not very much larger than last year, the entries in the larger classes, comprising the cattle and horses, are much heavier."<sup>355</sup> So despite the addition of aerial acrobatics and automobile races, exhibition organizers continued to accentuate its livestock exhibits.

The *Herald* stated that from a livestock standpoint Calgary's 1918 Exhibition surpassed anything every attempted. The paper noted that, "In point of numbers the Shorthorn excels. Such an array of the popular red, white and roan breed has never been equaled at a Western Canadian show."<sup>356</sup> Calgary T. Bertram Ralphs had a particularly impressive display of younger stock. His bull calf, Kinmel Champion, a six-month-old youngster sired by Missie's Prince was, according to the *Herald*, "one of the finest specimens of Shorthorn worth we have seen anywhere."<sup>357</sup>

Realistically, the 'claim to fame' of the Calgary fair lay predominantly in its stock exhibits. The extravagant Aboriginal parades and world-class cowboy competitions held in the earlier period played no role in the fair during the Great War. The fair offered little in the way of frivolity and extravagance, as an air of 'seriousness' characterized the period between 1913 and 1919. Coates and McGuinness asserted that it seemed rather incongruous to celebrate at home while thousands died on the battle field. As a result, a new morality prevailed at the Brandon Exhibition and critics became more insistent that

---

<sup>355</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 27 June 1918, p.9.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 June 1918, p.12.



'undesirable elements' be removed from the midway.<sup>358</sup> Enthusiasm was further dampened by the difficulty farmers faced financially in the latter stages of the war. Admittedly, for the few days it ran, the Calgary Exhibition lightened the intense atmosphere that hung over the city; however, there is little evidence of unabashed ebullience. Amusements and 'senseless fun' took a back seat during the war years to the sober practicalities of the agrarian interests.

The military did not participate in the 1918 Exhibition in any official capacity; however, on 'Veterans' Day', returned veterans were considered the guests of the fair management and were invited to take in either the day or evening grandstand show, free of charge.<sup>359</sup> The war, inadvertently, made its way into the midway offerings. In venturing down 'Funshine Alley', as the midway was called, one could see a complete miniature model of a German U-boat offered by Captain G. W. Simpson in his exhibit titled 'The World's Fighting Navies'. The *Herald* noted, "The main feature of this exhibition is the complete model of a German 'U' boat, of which we have all heard so much and which but few have been privileged to see. The model is made in brass and is complete, in every respect, everything from the propellers to the periscopes being seen in actual working shape."<sup>360</sup>

Between the amusements offered by Johnny J. Jones shows, the livestock exhibits, and a return visit by aviatrix Katherine Stinson, the 1918 Exhibition was penned

---

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Coates and McGuinness, *Pride of the Land*, p.60.

<sup>359</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 3 July 1918, p.5.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 29 June 1918, p.27.

an overwhelming success.<sup>361</sup> The story of the exhibition, as far as the media was concerned, was the enormous attendance figures. 'American Day' proved to be one of the best of that year's exhibition as 24,617 patrons passed through the main gates. On 'American Day', the *Calgary Herald* reported:

That it was American Day was evident to all, as the stars and stripes were here, there and everywhere and, in addition to this, Ralph Trotter of the Canadian War Bureau, addressed the crowded grandstand and in a few words extended the welcome of the Calgary people to the Americans in attendance and also congratulated them on the excellent showing that had been made by our neighbors to the south since their entrance into the war.<sup>362</sup>

Under the headline, 'All Previous Records For Attendance Broken at Fair Just Closed', the *Herald* declared that a whopping 115,665 persons visited the 1918 Calgary Exhibition. It affirmed, "The big 1918 fair is over, and the main feature this year was the record attendance, which was larger than that of any previous exhibition. The total paid admissions were 115,665, which is more than 5,000 greater than the attendance of last year."<sup>363</sup> The record attendance of the 1918 show exposed one interesting fact. Despite a slumping economy and a four-year war, the Calgary fair continued to grow—in terms of both exhibits and attendance. By the cessation of the war in Europe, rather than crumbling under the arduous conditions, the Calgary Industrial Exhibition emerged strong and prosperous. On November 11, 1918, an armistice ended the conflict and, for Canada and her allies, the Great War was finally over.

---

<sup>361</sup> The Johnny J. Jones exposition of 1918 consisted of some 22 separate and distinct shows and three riding devices. Simpson's 'The World's Fighting Navies' was just one of the attractions. *The Calgary Herald*, 27 June 1918, p.5.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July 1918, p.12.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.* It is interesting to note that the *Farm and Ranch Review* prefaced its 1918 coverage of the summer fairs with an article titled, 'The Value of Fairs in War Times', written by Alex Galbraith, Superintendent of Fairs and Institutes. The article stressed the importance of competition in maintaining a high standard for Alberta stock during the war. *The Farm and Ranch Review*, 20 June 1918, p.677.

With the formal opening of the 1919 Exhibition, the first of the year's *two* big tributes to Canadian veterans was underway. Management declared the opening day of the fair 'Veterans' Day' and thousands of the men in khaki took advantage of the special concessions awarded to them by organizers.<sup>364</sup> The military motif was literally carried into the 1919 Calgary Exhibition on the wings of local aviator Captain Fred McCall's Curtis airplane.<sup>365</sup> McCall flew Brigadier General H. F. McDonald into the Victoria Park fairgrounds to open the year's exhibition. In anticipation of the event, the *Herald* remarked:

For the first time in the history of the world, an official will arrive by aeroplane to open an out-door exhibition, and on Monday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock General H. F. McDonald, D.S.O, officer commanding Military District 13, will land in the centre field at Victoria park in Capt. Fred McCall's Curtis aeroplane and officially open the greatest exhibition Calgary has ever held.<sup>366</sup>

Unlike the venue for the previous years, the management went all out to attract crowd pleasers for the 1919 show. It attained one of the most famous American touring ensembles, John Philip Sousa's band of highly talented musicians. Sousa's band delighted fair audiences with both marches and classical selections. The *Albertan* professed that the band's rendition of 'O Canada' rivaled the French Anthem in beauty and dignity.<sup>367</sup> On the 'Citizen's Day' performance, the *Herald* asserted, "The spirit of happiness which comes with real enjoyment on a bright, sparkling day permeated the

---

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 30 June 1919, p.1.

<sup>365</sup> McCall was an effective and revered pilot of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Military historian S. F. Wise recorded that, "Lieutenant F. R. McCall of Calgary, with 13 Squadron, drew attention to himself when credited with four victories while flying the inoffensive RE8." S. F. Wise, *Canadian Airmen and the First World War: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Volume I* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in cooperation with the Department of National Defense, 1980), p.483-484. Wise also noted that, "McCall, on an offensive patrol over Bray, got into a dogfight and shot down two more enemy machines, one from only ten yards range.", p.536-537.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 28 June 1919, p.7.

whole gathering.”<sup>368</sup>

The other big draw of the 1919 fair was the aerial stunts performed by McCall and his fellow aviator, Captain Wilfred May of Edmonton. McCall and May provided fair visitors with days of ‘hair-raising’ exhibitions as the flyers promised to do all the tricks the ‘bird men’ of the front did in battling the Huns, except drop real bombs or fire real bullets.<sup>369</sup> Undoubtedly, one of the most spectacular events in the history of the Calgary Exhibition was the July 5, 1919 crash landing of McCall’s airplane on top of the midway’s merry-go-round. McCall displayed amazing coolness and presence of mind in avoiding a possibly horrific accident. The *Albertan*’s headline read, “Airplane Suffers Mishap While Rising From Grounds; Driver Drops It Safely on Top of Merry-Go-Round; No One Hurt.”<sup>370</sup> With the close of the exhibition, fair organizers could once again claim record attendance as over eleven thousand more visitors frequented the 1919 event than in the previous year. The total attendance of the 1919 Exhibition was an impressive 127,248.<sup>371</sup>

Smack in the middle of the 1919 Calgary Industrial Exhibition, newspapers introduced huge advertisements announcing the return of the Stampede to Calgary.<sup>372</sup> It had been sometime since the word ‘cowboy’ had been penned in any local publications. However, the cowboy returned in full force with ‘the Victory Stampede’, slated to run from August 25 to 30, 1919. According to its managers, the mandate of the Victory Stampede was to hold a grand celebration for the returned soldiers. It would be the

---

<sup>367</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 2 July 1919, p.1.

<sup>368</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 3 July 1919, p.7.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 June 1919, p.1.

<sup>370</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1919, p.1.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

largest sporting event ever held in Canada and the proceeds of the show were to be donated to various charitable organizations.<sup>373</sup> In the introduction for the 'Official Programme for the Calgary Stampede, 1919', the Stampede Committee outlined their motivation for the event:

Knowing that a real exhibition of this style of work has always appealed to natives not only of the West, but to the dwellers of the East and foreign countries alike, this form of entertainment was considered the most logical for this section of the country—to demonstrate in typical Western style the joy and exuberance felt here in knowing that the Great War had concluded victoriously for the Allied armies. It was also deemed the most expressive method of holding a real Victory celebration and at the same time expressing the unanimous appreciation of the wonderful work done by the Great War Veteran's Association, Y.M.C.A. and Salvation Army towards the successful ending of the great conflict.<sup>374</sup>

The Stampede Committee consisted of the four financial backers of the 1912 Stampede, George Lane, Pat Burns, A. E. Cross, and the Honorable A. J. Mclean. The 'Big Four' renewed their pledge of one hundred thousand dollars for the competition. Each of the four put up twenty-five thousand dollars to cover costs, promotions and prizes. They would be reimbursed with tickets sales and entry fees. Interestingly, E. L. Richardson occupied the important and visible positions of Secretary-Treasurer and Manager of Admissions for the 1919 Victory Stampede. At the conclusion of the 1912 event, many felt Richardson, not Weadick, should have played the primary role in the administration of the Stampede. Guy Weadick was, however, engaged by the Stampede Committee to manage the 1919 competition and arrange for contestants, cattle and

---

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 2 July 1919, p.14.

<sup>373</sup> Waiver signed by Calgary hotels guaranteeing rates for the upcoming Stampede. Glenbow Archives, the Guy Weadick Fonds, M1287, F7. On this subject, the *Herald* noted, "Regular agreements are being signed by proprietors of places providing beds and meals that prices will not be increased—list of those subscribing to covenant will be published in Stampede literature." *The Calgary Herald*, 8 July 1919, p.12.

horses.<sup>375</sup>

According to Stampede historian James H. Gray, the idea of holding a Stampede to celebrate the victory of the Allies in the First World War belonged to E. L. Richardson. So as not to conflict with the exhibition's dates, Richardson's idea from the beginning was to stage Calgary's Victory Stampede in the late summer or fall. He contacted the Big Four to gauge their interest in financing the event. Ultimately, Lane located Weadick and negotiated a deal with him and, a few months later, the Victory Stampede was announced to the public.<sup>376</sup>

Before the Stampede, the newspapers reiterated the familiar images of the passing of the frontier and the need to honor the province's heritage. A *Herald* editorial read, "Frontier times are becoming year by year further distant, and the time is soon coming when it will be difficult to reproduce them. It may be that never again in Calgary will such an affair be staged upon such imposing lines."<sup>377</sup> Besides commenting on the passing of the frontier, the *Albertan* urged citizens to attend the Stampede for charitable reasons, "Calgarians are asked to turn out by the thousands for the last three performances which will be staged today, Friday and Saturday. One-third of the net profits derived from the big venture is being turned over to the local branch of the Great War Veteran's Association, one-third to the Salvation Army, and the remaining third to the Y.M.C.A."<sup>378</sup> Therefore, Calgarians should attend the Stampede to honor both the Great War veterans and the district's closing frontier.

---

<sup>374</sup> 'The Official Programme for the Calgary Stampede, 1919' published by the Stampede Committee, 1919. Glenbow Archives, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds, M2160, F29A, p.7.

<sup>375</sup> See citation #85, waver.

<sup>376</sup> Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.51-52.

<sup>377</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 20 August 1919, p.28.

On the third day of the Victory Stampede, organizers provided the city with an elaborate parade, conjuring up images of days gone by. The *Herald* reported, “Representing the Indians, the Mounted Police, and the white pioneers—three great facts in the early history of Western Canada—the Victory Stampede parade, which passed through the streets of Calgary Wednesday morning typified the spirit of the great event and constituted a striking historical pageant.”<sup>379</sup> According to the press coverage, the Natives, attired in their tradition costumes, were the main feature of the parade. Headed by Manager Weadick and Chief Yellow Horse of the Blackfoot Tribe, the moving pageant represented the various factions in the history of the West—first came the Natives, then the Mounted Police, then the old-timers, followed by the Stampede’s contestants. Close on the heels of the Mounted Police, amidst the group representing the area’s old-timers, rode the Big Four.<sup>380</sup> Interestingly, the media reports of the event quite easily could be exchanged with those of the 1912 Stampede—the images were virtually identical.

In *Braehead*, MacLaren included the recollections of A. E. Cross’s daughter, Mary Cross, on her visit to the 1919 Victory Stampede. Mary Cross, who was fourteen at the time and home for the summer remembered, “It was my first Stampede, and the first time I ever saw a barbecue. Daddy took me over there, and they were roasting a whole steer in a pit filled with hot stones, right in front of what is the present grandstand. Everybody was given a sandwich—anybody who came by.”<sup>381</sup>

---

<sup>378</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 28 August 1919, p.1.

<sup>379</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 27 August 1919, p.6.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> MacLaren, *Braehead*, p.371.

Designated a civic holiday by council, parade day, August 27, 1919, recorded the best attendance of the entire event. However, attendance for the Victory Stampede was rather disappointing.<sup>382</sup> The *Albertan* asserted that representatives of the Big Four felt that Calgarians, with the exception of the holiday, had not rallied around the occasion nearly enough.<sup>383</sup> On Friday, the second to last day of the competition, Richardson issued a public statement in the *Morning Albertan* pleading with citizens to attend the Stampede so that the event could at least break even. In his press release, Richardson noted, "We had hoped that the Stampede would be the means of providing a considerable amount of funds for the organizations that were to receive the profits. Whether or not we are successful in this regard depends on the patronage on Saturday." He concluded his request, by stating, "It must be remembered that this is likely to be the last great Stampede to be held in the West."<sup>384</sup> Unfortunately, Saturday's totals did not reach expectations and there were no profits to split between the three organizations.<sup>385</sup>

The failure of the Victory Stampede to meet its goals was the prime subject matter of a letter written by Weadick and addressed to Stampede Committee Chairman, George Lane. The letter was submitted as Weadick's final report on the 1919 event. Weadick reminded Committee members that he had expressed reservations about holding a Stampede that year, "When Mr. W. H. Fares asked my opinion, as to the advisability of holding the Stampede in Calgary this season, I told him I thought that 1919 was just about a year too early...A week later I expressed the same opinion to Mr. Cross here in

---

<sup>382</sup> The attendance for the civic holiday was reported as 15,490, exceeding the two previous days of 5,678 and 7,354 respectively. Total attendance figures were under 60,000. See the *Morning Albertan*, 28 August 1919, p.1 and 2 September 1919, p.1.

<sup>383</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 28 August 1919, p.1.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 August 1919, p.1.



Calgary and also to yourself.”<sup>386</sup> Clearly, Weadick did not want to be cast as the scapegoat for the disappointing attendance.

In the report, Weadick attributed the perceived failure of the Stampede to the apathetic response of several Calgary institutions. He maintained that, “Among the many things that your Committee should have received from sources, who financially derived a great amount of good, was the moral support. (I mean by actions of the majority of the citizens of Calgary).”<sup>387</sup> Weadick criticized City Hall and the merchants and owners of Calgary businesses for not decorating in the spirit of the event, the press for not devoting more enthusiastic coverage to the Stampede, and the C.P.R. for not issuing specialized rates. In the end, however, he expressed his admiration of the Stampede Committee’s worthy effort to do something for others, at a risk of losing a large sum of their own money.<sup>388</sup>

While the 1919 Victory Stampede fell short of its expressed goals, it was hardly considered a futile venture. In a follow-up issue on the show, the *Albertan* surmised, “The Stampede which was held during the past week here, fully justified itself in the number of visitors brought to the city and the amount of business done, according to business men interviewed in the matter.”<sup>389</sup> As a civic promoter, drawing thousands of visitors to the city, the 1919 Victory Stampede was an incontrovertible success.

<sup>385</sup> Saturday’s attendance was a lackluster 11,281 persons. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.53.

<sup>386</sup> Letter addressed to George Lane Chairman, The Stampede Committee, dated Sept. 12, 1919 and written by Guy Weadick. Glenbow Archives, the Guy Weadick Fonds, M1287, F2, p.1.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid. Gray adds that the one dollar admission fee undoubtedly played a role in the poor attendance. While the exhibition charged a mere twenty-five cents, the Stampede, as it had done in 1912, charged visitors one dollar for admission and an additional fifty cents for the grandstand show. In a period of trying economic times, few could afford such a luxury. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.53.

<sup>389</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 2 September 1919, p.1.

\*\*\*\*\*

Except for one day during the 1919 Victory Stampede, the exhibitions between 1913 and 1919 lacked the extravagant pageants and hoopla that characterized the preceding period. Challenging economic circumstances forced organizers after 1912 to modify their venues and highlight the Calgary district's agricultural supremacy. Fair success offset the perception of a depressed provincial economy. Beyond mere entertainment, the exhibition performed the more sobering task of reassuring the public that 'everything was okay'. In the war years, agricultural interests directed the mandate of the fair—not those whose interests were non-agricultural in scope, such as the entertainment factions.

In many ways, the persistence of the Calgary Industrial Exhibition during the war years served the same purpose—to perpetuate the notion of 'business as usual'. While agriculture consistently maintained its significance to the district, the increased demand for wheat during the First World War amplified that importance ten-fold. If thousands of lives were being lost in a fight for democracy and liberty abroad, citizens at home ought to do their part. The exhibitions during the Great War, especially the Khaki Fair and the 1919 Victory Stampede, provided the forum for patriotic Calgarians to honor their heroes in uniform. A caption from the *Calgary Herald* read, "Patriotic Calgarians can spend Dominion Day in no better way than by attending the Exhibition. The holiday will see the fair running in every department and it will also be the occasion of the biggest military demonstration of the entire week."<sup>390</sup>

These were not frivolous undertakings but rather opportunities to contribute to the

betterment of society. The effectiveness of the temperance and women's suffrage movements suggests that Canadian society was open to the idea of moral improvement. As a vital center in the Canadian mosaic, Calgary was no different. The somber effects of the economic depression and the war to some extent deflated the levity of the summer celebration. Even during fair week, Calgarians never lost sight of the situation overseas. By 1919, the purposes of the Calgary Industrial Exhibition had intensified—indeed, it played no small role in the development of the city, economically, educationally and morally.

---

<sup>190</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 30 June 1915, p.6.

**CONCLUSION:  
THE 1923 CALGARY STAMPEDE, EXHIBITION  
AND BUFFALO BARBECUE**

*In recent years that part of the fair known as 'the attractions' has been imported, and the vaudeville features were in no different from similar attractions at the other fairs. But this year the addition of the Stampede will make the exhibition characteristic of the West and of this city in particular.*

*-The Morning Albertan, 9 July 1923, p.4*

The Calgary Industrial Exhibition persevered throughout the war years and boasted record attendance. However, the postwar economic depression eventually caught up to the resilient Calgary enterprise. Attendance at the Calgary Exhibition plummeted from 127,248 in 1919 to just over a 100,000 in 1920.<sup>391</sup> Between 1921 and 1922, attendance rose only slightly from 96,120 to 97,732.<sup>392</sup> According to fair management, dropping attendance figures could be directly related to the slumping grain economy, "Whether it is a financial success we don't know yet. We may be behind a few dollars. Our fair, I feel, was too good a fair for the condition of the country. The people simply didn't have the money."<sup>393</sup> Such statements were reiterated in an *Albertan* editorial on the fair, "Whether or not it was a financial success is very doubtful, because the public is economizing in expenditure of this nature and is not as lavish with its money as it was a

---

<sup>391</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 7 July 1919, p.1. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.60.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 July 1922, p.3.

<sup>393</sup> The comments belong to E. J. Dewey, president of the fair's board of directors. Dewey made his comments after the 1922 Exhibition in an interview with the *Morning Albertan*, see *Ibid.*

few years ago.”<sup>394</sup> Money was tight for farmers largely due to a sustained period of drought in the early 1920s which drastically affected crops. The situation was complicated by lower grain prices and by higher production costs.<sup>395</sup> Grain farmers were not alone in suffering, however. Alberta’s cattle ranchers were also afflicted—steadily falling prices for stock, combined with high feed prices, resulted in major herd reductions and many liquidations.<sup>396</sup> In an effort to revitalize fair attendance, Richardson turned to his 1919 Stampede cohort, Guy Weadick. Thus, fair organizers needed the assistance of the entertainment interests in conjunction with the farming and ranching interests.

On the 1923 event, the *Herald* declared that the management of the Calgary Exhibition conceived a bold plan for that year’s fair—a plan that might have put the fair in deep financial trouble. However, the management’s boldness was rewarded by a great success.<sup>397</sup> After years of losing money and still facing a deficit, Richardson united with Weadick to stage the grandest Stampede ever held in the city. The Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue amalgamated the Calgary Industrial Exhibition with Weadick’s Stampede.

The gamble paid off. Under the headline, ‘The Greatest Success’, the *Albertan* asserted, “The Calgary fair this year was perhaps the most successful in the history of the city. It was successful financially, as an exhibition—and perhaps most of all, in its influence on the people. It was successful because it broke away from the beaten path

---

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 8 July 1922, p.4.

<sup>395</sup> Foran and Foran, *Calgary: Canada’s Frontier Metropolis*, p.155. In a *Herald* account, the paper stated, “Southern Alberta had had three years of insufficient moisture. Low yields and low prices had combined to rob the city and country alike of prosperity.” *The Calgary Herald*, 16 July 1923, p.8.

<sup>396</sup> Foran and Foran, p.155.

<sup>397</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 16 July 1923, p.8.

and showed some originality.<sup>398</sup> The event triumphed despite the economic malaise that still hung over the city and its annual celebration. The *Albertan* observed that the phenomenal success of the Stampede, which was so essentially a Calgary enterprise, revived the old spirit of confidence, the old community spirit.<sup>399</sup> In a similar vein, a *Calgary Herald* headline read, 'Stampede's Success Heralds The Return of Good Times to Prairie Country of the West.'<sup>400</sup> During the 1923 festivities, cowboys offered free morning performances of their spine-tingling thrills for spectators along Eighth Avenue. According to the *Herald*:

The 'morning stampedes' are responsible for putting new life into the citizens of Calgary. Visitors were the first to appreciate the significance of these displays. Then the inhabitants began to wake up to the fact that after four years of slumber things were happening in their little old town. They donned their glad rags, took a hitch in their belts, and joined in the fun. The Stampede, coupled with the prospects of a good crop, brought Calgary back to what the people remember of the city of 1912. Old Man Gloom was last seen going north, chased by long-horned steers, howling cowboys, and biting horses.<sup>401</sup>

The fair was successful, according to the *Albertan*, because it carried with it the genius of originality. It was unique because it made use of the raw material of the city and country itself.<sup>402</sup> As no other venue could, the Stampede of 1923 captured the very essence of the city—only Calgary could host such an event. Mayor George Webster confirmed that the Stampede's future firmly belonged in the city, "Calgary is the logical place, not only in Western Canada, but for the entire West of the American continent, the old West, which is passing before our eyes, for the holding of such an event. The

---

<sup>398</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 16 July 1923, p.4.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 July 1923, p.4.

<sup>400</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 11 July 1923, p.6.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 July 1923, p.1.

<sup>402</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 16 July 1923, p.4.

Stampede 'belongs'; it is typical and characteristic of our own Western country."<sup>403</sup>

By introducing innovative features, the 1923 Stampede proved not to be a carbon copy of the two previous events held in the city. The festivities concluded with a free buffalo barbecue for all those who attended the final night. The buffalo barbecue was intended to remind participants of the hospitality of the range where no person went away from the ranch house hungry or in want. According to the press coverage, although nothing of this size had ever been attempted in the city, the barbecue was staged without a hitch, "Neatly wrapped buffalo meat sandwiches were distributed to the crowd shortly after 9:30 and thousands of Calgarians tasted for the first time the meat which old-time white pioneers and the Indians used to subsist on for months on end."<sup>404</sup> Despite the popularity of the closing night barbecue, it appeared only intermittently over the next few years and did not become a permanent Stampede feature.<sup>405</sup>

The *Herald* reported that the outstanding attraction of the Stampede's evening performances was the chuckwagon races. Chuckwagons made their first appearance at the 1923 Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue and, unlike the closing night buffalo barbecue, their popularity has persisted for over seventy five years. Unlike today's offering, the inaugural chuckwagon races required the wagons to be filled to capacity and then pulled around the track as fast as four horses could muster.<sup>406</sup> Under the guidance of its rider, Jack Morton, one chuckwagon joined in the fun of the 'morning stampedes' by setting up camp along Eighth Avenue and offering a free breakfast to

---

<sup>403</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 14 July 1923, p.13.

<sup>404</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 16 July 1923, p.1 and *Ibid.*, 14 July 1923, p.4. *The Calgary Herald*, 11 July 1923, p.10.

<sup>405</sup> Gray, *A Brand of Its Own*, p.68.

<sup>406</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 12 July 1923, p.5.

hungry onlookers. After lumbering down the busy street, Morton's wagon came to a halt and, as the *Herald* reported, "Out came the old cookstove, and soon the pungent odor of wood smoke filled the air, to be followed shortly by the inviting aroma of sizzling hot cakes."<sup>407</sup> Indeed, Morton's impromptu Stampede breakfast has also showed astonishing resilience over the years.

Reminiscent of past Stampedes, the 1923 festivities were kicked off with an elaborate parade which paid tribute to Southern Alberta's waning frontier days. It was more than merely a parade, the *Herald* asserted, it was a historical picture.<sup>408</sup> Along the streets of Calgary, while big airplanes from the High River air station flew overhead, the pioneers who settled Southern Alberta paraded before the throngs of enthusiastic spectators. In the procession, seven hundred representatives from the district's Aboriginal communities, dressed in their traditional garb, followed behind nearly two thousand cowboys and cowgirls, decked out in their own flashy costumes of gaudy colored shirts and Stetson hats.<sup>409</sup> According to the *Herald*, the old-timers deserved special recognition, "To them we bow. To them the thousands offered homage."<sup>410</sup> In a meeting of the old with the new, Calgarians honored those "who made everything now here possible."<sup>411</sup>

With Richardson's announcement that the total attendance of the 1923 Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue reached 138,950, a new record had been

---

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 13 July 1923, p.1.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 10 July 1923, p.8.

<sup>409</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 10 July 1923, p.2. *The Calgary Herald*, 9 July 1923, p.9.

<sup>410</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 10 July 1923, p.8.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid. The editorial continued, "Strong in courage were those early years, strong in faith, strong in body. Men and women of great character, to their qualities of mind and heart, and to the work of their hands, do we owe the Alberta and the Calgary of today."



achieved.<sup>412</sup> The affair was an emphatic success. On the closing day of the show, Mayor Webster expressed a strong plea for the continuation of the Stampede as an annual event.<sup>413</sup> Over seventy-five years later, the legacy continues and bears remarkable similarity to the 1923 formula.

The decision to amalgamate the Calgary Exhibition with the Stampede resolved years of grappling with the format and focus of the annual event. Early on, organizers recognized that, in addition to the farming and ranching exhibits, interesting attractions were required to draw record crowds. Indeed, even the agriculturally-oriented *Farm and Ranch Review* recognized that, “the science of conducting an exhibition consists of reconciling educational competitions with sensational amusements.”<sup>414</sup> The Stampede offered more than mere crowd pleasing amusements—Weadick’s shows captured the public’s imagination. According to the media rhetoric, the event revived the city’s spirit and reflected the true character of Southern Alberta. For one week, the ‘wild West’ was alive and well and living in Calgary.

In the years under consideration, the press maintained a key role in creating and manipulating the public perception of both the Calgary Exhibition and the Stampede. Consistently, the perception conveyed by the city’s local publications was that exhibition success equaled economic success. A good showing of grain and livestock exhibits at the annual fair suggested stability and prosperity in the district’s agricultural industries. In

---

<sup>412</sup> *The Morning Albertan*, 16 July 1923, p.1.

<sup>413</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 14 July 1923, p.13. The *Herald* reported, “A decision to continue the Stampede annually should be made at once,” said his worship, “for the reason that it may then be thoroughly advertised for a year in advance. The Eastern newspaper and magazine writers have assured me that if the Stampede is continued annually, it will attract thousands of tourists from all over the country.”

<sup>414</sup> *The Farm and Ranch Review*, 20 June 1912, p.540. Also see the *Grain Growers’ Guide*, 26 June 1912, p.12.

times of economic uncertainty, exhibition success reassured struggling Southern Alberta agriculturalists. It provided confidence, comfort and, most importantly, optimism. In 1886, the Calgary Agricultural Society sought to improve the district's agricultural reputation. Almost thirty years later, organizers of the 1914 Calgary Industrial Exhibition showcased the agricultural feats of both district farmers and ranchers, despite a slump in the prairie economy. The message disseminated was that 'everything was okay'.

Paralleling the growth and sophistication of the annual exhibition, in the four decades under examination, Calgary evolved from a modest frontier town into one of the largest cities on the prairies. Despite the fundamental connection between the city and its agricultural hinterland, urban interests became increasingly more diversified and extended beyond livestock and grains into burgeoning industrial and commercial sectors. Between 1886 and 1907 alone, industrial exhibits grew from merely a handful to displays that filled two buildings. In conjunction with the growth in industrial displays, as the years passed, the Calgary Exhibition's management repeatedly augmented their entertainment program with 'cutting edge' amusements designed to enthrall fair visitors. Urban interests included the thriving industrial sector and an expanding population of diversified non-agricultural interests.

Few, if any, 'imported' acts featured as part of the exhibition's entertainment venue surpassed the popularity of the thrilling stunts performed by cowboys during Weadick's world class cowboy competitions. The Stampede typified the West and captured the frontier spirit of the city. The extent to which the cowboy, specifically the American cowboy, influenced the region is contentious amongst historians. Hugh Dempsey and Warren Elofson contend that the American cowboy performed a key role in

shaping the Canadian ranching industry, especially in its early years. However, David Breen minimizes the American contribution and argues that the industry was largely shaped by British and Eastern Canadian interests. By the 1923 Stampede, the local press popularized the idea that Southwestern Alberta had a long tradition of cowboys, rodeos and, of course, stampedes. Indeed, there is cogent evidence that such traditions solidly existed in the region in connection with the ranching industry. While the degree of the cowboy influence is polemical, when it came to the Calgary Stampede, area residents embraced such traditions with open arms. As an excerpt from a 1912 *Herald* editorial suggested, "A Stampede is typical of the West, it smacks of the soil; it is the pageantry of the plains."<sup>415</sup>

In the years between the 1908 Dominion Exhibition and the 1912 Stampede, the agricultural focus of the exhibition appeared less prevalent than it was in either the period before or the period after those years. Gala parades and elaborate historical tributes, such as the commemoration of the 1877 signing of Treaty No. 7, captured the headlines in the fair's press coverage. However, a slump in the prairie economy and the outbreak of war in Europe brought the more somber agricultural focus back to the forefront of the annual event. Consequently, the extravagant years between 1908 and 1912 seemed to veer from the conventional formula of the annual show.

Those years proved critical, however, to the formula of the 1923 Calgary Stampede, Exhibition and Buffalo Barbecue. A tribute to the district's ranching pioneers, a world class cowboy competition, and an elaborate parade became the mainstays of the production after the two events unified. Since these elements were noticeably absent in

---

<sup>415</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, 31 August 1912, p.6.

the years between 1913 and 1918, their inclusion in the 1923 Stampede must be traced back to the earlier period. Of course, livestock and grain exhibits continued to be deemed important in promoting the district's agricultural foundation. The successful formula capitalized on all the lessons of the four previous decades. Since the promotion of agriculture was beneficial to the district's economy, those exhibits maintained their prominence in the exhibition's program. The rodeo competitions which conjured up great civic pride in the area's history and, most importantly, drew a multitude of visitors from all over North America ultimately shared the pedestal with the agricultural focus.

In the end, the marriage between the Stampede and the Calgary Exhibition produced a happy union that catered to all factions—ranching, farming, and urban interests. From an economic perspective, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampedes performed the utilitarian task of promoting the district's critical industries. Further, it provided the forum for collective civic pride in the region's past and the present accomplishments. Over the years, the event has distinguished the city—provincially, nationally, and internationally. Could the ambitious organizers of the 1886 Calgary fair ever have envisioned that their modest endeavor would evolve into the phenomenally successful Calgary Exhibition and Stampede? In 1998, the *Herald* reported that the city's annual Stampede had continuously swelled, topping the one million mark steadily since 1986.<sup>416</sup>

---

<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1998, p.2.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

#### ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

The A. E. Cross Family Fonds. Glenbow Archives, M1543, F508, F527, F593, F605, F646.

The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Fonds. 1884-1923. Glenbow Archives, M2160, F1, F5, F20, F21, F22, F29A, F35, F188, M2906, M3161.

The Guy Weadick Fonds. Glenbow Archives, M1287, F1, F2, F7, M4571.

"Calgary, Alberta: Her Industries and Resources" pamphlet compiled by Burns & Elliott (March, 1885) reprinted by Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1974.

Kelly, L. V. *The Range Men: The Story of the Ranchers and Indians of Alberta*. Toronto: William Briggs, 1913.

#### GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Alberta, The Report of the Superintendent of Fairs and Institutes. *The Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta*, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918. Edmonton, printed by J. W. Jeffery.

Canada, Department of Agriculture. *The Agricultural Gazette of Canada*, Vol.III, No.9 (September, 1916), p.814.

Canada, Department of Agriculture and Statistics. *Census of Canada, 1890-1891*, Volume I. Ottawa, 1892.

Canada, Department of Agriculture and Statistics. *Census of Canada, 1900-1901*, Volume I. Ottawa, printed by S. E. Dawson, 1902.

Canada, Department of Agriculture and Statistics. *Census of Canada, 1911*, Volume I. Ottawa, printed by C. H. Parmalee, 1912.

## NEWSPAPERS

*The Calgary Herald*  
*The Calgary Tribune*  
*The Calgary News-Telegram*  
*The Farm and Ranch Review*  
*The Grain Growers' Guide*  
*The High River Times*  
*The Macleod Gazette*  
*The Morning Albertan*

## Secondary Sources

## BOOKS

Breen, David H. *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier 1874-1924*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983.

Breen, David and Kenneth Coates. *Vancouver's Fair: An Administrative and Political History of the Pacific National Exhibition*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982.

Coates, Ken and Fred McGuinness. *Pride of the Land: An Affectionate History of Brandon's Agricultural Exhibitions*. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers Limited, 1985.

Dempsey, Hugh A. *Indian Tribes of Alberta*. Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1986.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Calgary: Spirit of the West*. Saskatoon: Fifth House Ltd., 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy: An Illustrated History*. Saskatoon: Fifth House Ltd., 1995.

Evans, Simon M. *Prince Charming Goes West: The Story of the E. P. Ranch*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1993.

Foran, Max and Heather MacEwan Foran. *Calgary: Canada's Frontier Metropolis*. Canada: Windsor Publications Ltd., 1982.

Francis, Daniel. *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992.

- Gray, James H. *A Brand of Its Own: The 100 Year History of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985.
- Haywood, C. Robert. *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991.
- Jones, David C. *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt*. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs: The Illustrated Story of Country Fairs in the Prairie West*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983.
- Knupp, Lillian. *Life and Legends: A History of the Town of High River*. Calgary: Sandstone Publishing Ltd., 1982.
- MacEwan, Grant. *Agriculture on Parade: The Story of the Fairs and Exhibitions of Western Canada*. Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons (Canada) Ltd., 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Calgary Cavalcade: From Fort to Fortune*. Edmonton: The Institute of Applied Art Ltd., 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pat Burns: Cattle King*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979.
- MacLaren, Sherrill. *Braehead: Three Founding Families in Nineteenth Century Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1986.
- Morton, Desmond. *Canada and War: A Military and Political History*. Toronto: Butterworth & Co. (Canada) Ltd., 1981.
- Nasaw, David. *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*. New York: BasicBooks Ltd., 1993.
- Palmer, Howard. *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985.
- Peterson, C. W. *Wake Up, Canada! Reflections on Vital National Issues*. Edited by David C. Jones. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1989.
- Pettipas, Katherine. *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994.

Rutherford, Paul. *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late-Nineteenth Century Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.

Sharp, Paul F. *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada: A Survey Showing American Parallels*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1948. Reprinted by Canadians Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1997.

Stephenson, Bonnie. *Agribition*. Regina: Canadian Western Agribition, 1990.

Strathern, Gloria M. *Alberta Newspapers 1880-1982: A Historical Directory*. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1988.

Thomas, L. G. *Ranchers' Legacy: Alberta Essays by Lewis G. Thomas*. Edited by Patrick A. Dunae. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986.

Thompson, John Herd. *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1978.

Waiser, W. A. *The Field Naturalist: John Macoun, the Geological Survey, and Natural Science*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.

Walden, Keith. *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Ward, Tom. *Cowtown: An Album of Early Calgary*. Calgary: The City of Calgary Electrical System, 1975.

Wise, S. F. *Canadian Airmen and the First World War: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Volume I*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press in co-operation with the Department of National Defense and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1980.

## ARTICLES

Braden, Thomas B. "When the Herald Came to Calgary." *Alberta Historical Review*, Vol. 9, No.3 (Summer 1961). 1-4.

Breen, David. "Review of Hugh Dempsey's *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy*." *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol.79, No.3 (Summer 1998). 603-604.



- Collett, J. H. "Calgary's First Principle of Mount Royal College: Dr. George W. Kerby." In *Citymakers: Calgarians After the Frontier*, edited by Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson, 281-289. Calgary: The Historical Society of Alberta, Chinook Country Chapter, 1987.
- DesBrisay, Elma. "Things I Can Remember About My Childhood in Okotoks." In *A Century of Memories 1883-1983: Okotoks and District*, 363-364. Okotoks and District Historical Society, 1983.
- Elofson, W. M. "Adapting to the Frontier Environment: The Ranching Industry in Western Canada, 1881-1914." In *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol.VIII, edited by Donald H. Akenson, 307-327. Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1992.
- Friesen, G. "Immigrant Communities 1870-1940: The Struggle for Cultural Survival." In *Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith, 158-184. Canada: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1986.
- Goheen, Peter G. "Symbols in the Streets: Parades in Victorian Urban Canada." *Urban History Review*, Vol.XVIII, No.3 (February 1990). 237-243.
- Griffiths, Naomi E. S. "Craft, Judgment and Belief." In *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Sixth Series, Vol.III (1992). 73-83.
- Harris, Neil. "Great American Fairs and American Cities: The Role of Chicago's Columbian Exposition." In *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America*, 111-131. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Jameson, Sheilagh S. "The Social Elite of the Ranch Community and Calgary." In *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region 1875-1914*, edited by Anthony W. Rasporich and Henry C. Klassen, 57-70. Calgary: University of Calgary, McClelland and Stewart West, 1975.
- Klassen, Henry C. "Entrepreneurship in the Canadian West: The Enterprises of A. E. Cross, 1886-1920." *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol.XXII, No.3 (August 1991). 313-333.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Life in Frontier Calgary." In *Western Canada, Past and Present*, edited by Anthony W. Rasporich, 42-57. Calgary: University of Calgary, McClelland and Stewart West, Ltd., 1975.
- MacEwan, Grant. "The Town-Country Background at Calgary." In *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region 1875-1914*, edited by Anthony W.

Rasporich and Henry C. Klassen, 1-5. Calgary: University of Calgary, McClelland and Stewart West, 1975.

Regular, Keith. "On Public Display." *Alberta History*, Vol.34, No.1 (Winter 1986). 1-10.

Stave, Bruce M. "Interview: Urban History in Canada—A Conversation with Alan F. J. Artibise." *Urban History Review*, Vol.8, No.3 (February 1980). 110-143.

Tolton, Gord. "The Dreams of A Western Showman: Guy Weadick and the First Calgary Stampede." *Canada West*, Vol.9, No.31 (1993). 36-45.

Voisey, Paul. "In Search of Wealth and Status: An Economic and Social Study of Entrepreneurs in Early Calgary." In *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region 1875-1914*, edited by Anthony W. Rasporich and Henry C. Klassen, 221-241. Calgary: University of Calgary, McClelland and Stewart West, 1975.

Weadick, Guy J. "The Origin of the Calgary Stampede." *Alberta Historical Review*, Vol.14, No.4 (Autumn 1966). 20-24.