



# SOUTHERN ALBERTA PIONEERS

## AND THEIR DESCENDANTS NEWSLETTER

Southern Alberta Pioneers Memorial Building • 3625 4th Street SW Calgary Alberta T2S 1Y3 • Phone 403-243-3580

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Jan. 2024

## President's Message

I hope everyone has survived the recent "Polar Vortex." It reminds me of the kind of cold I experienced on the farm in the 1960s. We lived in the farmhouse my Dad's family built after arriving in Alberta from Iowa in 1907. In 1957, my Dad traded grain to Keith Homes for a house package and we literally had a building bee to get it built. My point is, the house was heated with propane, and it was so cold at times the propane wouldn't flow from the tank to the house. Now that is cold. Mind you, we were told there was a coming ice age and we must prepare for it!

My mother's family were the "Pioneers." Her grandfather/my great grandfather was Joseph H. S. Moss whose [profile](#) can be found on the Southern Alberta Pioneers' and their Descendants website. Kudos to David Ballard for doing an excellent job profiling Joseph. Coincidentally, Elizabeth Shortt, who married Joseph in 1888 in Calgary, was also a pioneer. They homesteaded at the mouth of Pine Creek where it emptied into the Bow. In 1901 they moved from Pine Creek to what is now Mossleigh. Joseph said it was getting too crowded where they were.

I am excited to share developments from recent SAPD and SAPF meetings. Why two you ask? The SAPD (Southern Alberta Pioneers' and Their Descendants) and the SAPF (Southern Alberta Pioneers' Foundation) function from two perspectives. (See the President's Report in the SAPF newsletter.)



**Dexter Nelson**  
**President Southern Alberta Pioneers' and Their Descendants—2023-2024**

The SAPD essentially directs programming and volunteer committees to keep our pioneer history alive. This would also include volunteers who lead and guide our [Library](#) and [Initiatives](#) (e.g., Historical Display, Stampede Parade).

### **Business and Board Meetings**

To give you a flavor of what type of business topics we covered at our recent SAPD Board meeting, allow me to share.

- Treasurer's Report allows us to keep a finger on the financial pulse
- Membership Report gives us insights into how changes in membership may affect programming and membership revenues.

Continued on page 2

- Committee Reports, which include
  - Fundraising (including a Casino)
  - Historical
  - Membership (new members, renewal of members and the status of our Gold Key members)
  - PR and Communication
  - Social and Records Management.

I will wind up this note wishing you all the very best and asking for your continued support and participation in our scheduled activities.

### Forthcoming

The SAPD will be hosting a historical Rendezvous at our Memorial Building on March 13, 2024. We will be inviting sister organizations from all over Southern Alberta. In broad terms, we can build relationships and share best practices on what and how we preserve our history.

We will also be hosting an International Food and Wine Tasting event in the Memorial Building on February 24. Please consider attending.

## 2024 MEMBERSHIP FEES — \$40/annum — ARE DUE NOW

Send **cheques** to: SAPD 3625 - 4 St. SW, Calgary, Alberta T2S 1Y3, Attn: Membership.

Send **e-transfers** to

[membership@pioneersalberta.org](mailto:membership@pioneersalberta.org).

E-transfers to this email address are now auto-deposited so no security questions/answers are needed.

Please write the names of members for whom the fees are being paid either on your cheque or the message space in the e-transfer.

Thank-you to all that have already paid your 2024 Membership Dues!!

## QEII Award Winners!

submitted from **Lynne Hoosier, Past President**  
and **Lorretta Stabler**

**C**ongratulations to nine local community volunteers who were recently awarded **Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medals**.

These medals are given to outstanding Canadian individuals who have dedicated their lives to family, community, and country.

The winners who are also SAPD members, Bill Jackson, Cathie Scatterty and Pearl Laycraft, were recognized with the other seven winners at [Millarville Historical Society's](#) celebrations last September.

MLA's from each volunteer's residential area presented their award to them.



Bill Jackson



Cathie Scatterty



Pearl Laycraft

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# Membership Report

by Sharon Hoiland  
Membership Secretary

In 2023 the Membership Committee:

- Sent birthday cards each month to all Gold Card members over 80 years
- Sent 142 Christmas cards to Gold Card members
- Located members who had no mailing address, phone number or email address in our records
  - Four members still need to be located
    - Margaret (Peggy) Rodway
    - Audrey Whiteley
    - Olga Bateman
    - Anne Fitzpatrick
- Eliminated a CiviCRM<sup>1</sup> as a membership management program to pilot
  - Found three other membership management programs to research
    - Neon One
    - Wild Apricot
    - Communal

In 2024, the membership committee will continue the initiatives started last year and will be focusing on:

- Choosing and piloting a new membership management program to determine if it meets our needs;
- Reviewing, updating and writing the Membership Secretary and Membership Committee Policies and Procedures for presentation to the Board of Directors for approval;
- Cleaning and preparing the data in the current membership database for export to the new membership management program;
- Ensuring member deaths and obituaries have been sent to the historical committee for update in the Black books in the vault.

If you are interested in joining the Committee, or if you have ideas or have time to volunteer please contact Sharon at [membership@pioneersalberta.org](mailto:membership@pioneersalberta.org).

The current Membership Committee is made up of:

- Sharon Hoiland (Chair and Membership Secretary)
- Joan Christianson (Telephone Tree)
- Lynne Marquess (Cards and Remembering)
- Megan Ballard (Administration), and
- Maureen Peckham (Guidance and Wisdom).

<sup>1</sup>CiviCRM is software designed to manage information about an organization's donors, members, etc.

## Membership update since the last newsletter

### Welcome to New Members

#### Descendant

- Elaine Pallister - Descendant of Guy & Evelyn PALLISTER, High River 1888
- Kaitlyn Black - descendant of John BLACK, Fort Macleod 1889

#### Associate

- Sandy Mackie

#### Friend

- Laura Walton
- Calvin Robb

### Welcome Back to Returning Members

#### Descendant

- Peter Jull - Descendant of Samuel Hamilton, Red Deer Lake, 1884
- Susan Jull - Descendant of Samuel Hamilton, Red Deer Lake, 1884
- Scott Hendry - Descendant of Samuel & Helen Shaw, Calgary 1883
- Kara-Lynn Scott - Descendant of James O'Connor & Caroline Ann (Clement) Mooney, Shepard 1885

### New Gold Card Members

- Beryl Sibbald
- John Wilcock
- Ruth Jackson

### In Memorial

- York Shaw
- Donald Moore

We'd like to belatedly mark the following member who passed away prior to 2022, but was not previously noted:

- Grace McClennan

Please notify any member of the Membership Committee of member deaths, changes to mailing or email addresses or to phone numbers. We can be reached at [membership@pioneersalberta.org](mailto:membership@pioneersalberta.org).

### Membership Numbers at December 31, 2023:

Descendant – 259 members with 46 in arrears

Descendant Gold Card – 115 members

Associate – 32 with 5 in arrears

Associate Gold Card – 30 members

Friend – 18 members with 3 in arrears

Honorary – 5 members

**Total: 459**

# Christmas Luncheon Report

By Lynne Marquess  
Luncheon Convenor

For the second year in a row, we had a day-time Christmas Luncheon rather than the traditional evening dinner, which is really appreciated by our out-of-town patrons and Gold Card members who came out in droves with family and friends. It was a sunny day with highs of around 0C and fresh snow on the ground.

We had 97 people attend including three people under 18 and some over 90; there were three no-shows. We had seven round tables upstairs, which held 42 people, and eight rectangular tables downstairs, which held 55 people. The bar was located downstairs.

The room was very festive with lovely decorations and table settings. Each table had a lovely centre piece graciously prepared and donated by Pamel Hilton. Guests were greeted by our Pioneer Lady & Gent, Leanne Bateman and Neil Brown.

The party started at Noon and lunch was served buffet style at

1:00PM. A delicious traditional Christmas dinner with all the fixings was provided by Alpine Catering. The caterers set up the buffet upstairs and nobody went home hungry.

Russell Moore emceed the proceedings with Cheryl Lyn Hendry providing grace upstairs and Marcel Hebert providing grace downstairs.

Once lunch was over, everyone gathered upstairs for the draws for door prizes and Christmas Carols.

Thank-you to the following people who donated the prizes:

- Rhonda Hutchings – a box of short bread & Virginia Christmas peanuts
- Lynn Hoosier – two bottles of wine, two boxes of chocolates and a bottle of Bailey's

After the door prizes were awarded the traditional singing of the carols commenced. Our regular pianist, Cheryl Lyn



Hendry, was back this year and Russell Moore led the singing: *what a great duo.*

Food Bank donations amounted to \$255.00: thanks to those who contributed, which included eight people who purchased table centre pieces. These funds were part of the donation.

Such functions cannot be possible without volunteers to help. We would like to recognize the following people:

- John and Rhonda Hutchings for managing ticket sales, table assignments, and for buying and setting up the bar stocks.
- Val McKinney for preparing the e-mail advertising for the function.

Continued on page 5

## Volunteer Decorators made the Building so Festive!



- Sharon Hoiland for receiving the e-transfer payments.
- Gabrielle Leah for decorating the room.
- Pamela Hilton for donating and preparing the table centre pieces.
- Dan & Cindy Shaw for moving the piano and general setup and cleanup.
- Tom and James Hindle for helping set up and clearing snow.
- Robin Arthurs for helping in the setup and cleanup.
- Kathleen Rogers for setting up the reception table for Lynne and Joan.
- Lynne Marquess and Joan Christianson for checking people in.
- Lana Jones and Dan Shaw for bartending.
- Marcel Hebert for distributing the Christmas carol books plus shooting photos and saying grace.

- Russell Moore for emceeing and leading the singing, plus being “best dressed.”



- Cheryl Lyn Hendry for her festive piano playing and saying grace.
- All the other people who helped set up and cleanup.

### Notes and Lessons Learned

Assigning each person to a table worked very well. There was only one instance where we had a group of four assigned to a downstairs table who needed to sit upstairs due to mobility issues. Thanks to the Shaw clan for

accommodating with the Van Hereweghe group by switching places. This is why it is important to let the organizers know upon purchasing the ticket of any mobility issues or seating needs.

The downstairs was set-up with tables to accommodate a buffet line. However, the caterers were unaware we had two levels of patrons and did not have enough supplies to outfit two buffet stations, so the decision was made to set the buffet upstairs, which slowed things down. Lesson learned for future events to advise the caterer of the layout.

Would say 100 would be the maximum attendance for this event.

There were several positive comments on the food quality and the timing of the event.

**Save the following Tentative Date** for the 2024 Christmas Luncheon: Saturday, November 30 at noon.

## The SAPD Historical Committee is pleased to announce the start of the Monthly 2024 Speaker Series

### Get up close and personal with SAPD and Southern Pioneer History

Our first presentation is on the evening of February 28, 2024 and will feature Past President **Kathleen Rogers**. She will regale us with the history of the Southern Alberta Pioneers’ and their Descendants, including how we transitioned from the Calgary Old Timer’s Association (1901) and the Women’s Pioneer Association of Southern Alberta (1922).

We are finalizing speakers and topics for the remaining months, and will issue our announcement poster before the end of January.



# The Shaws of Midnapore

by R. Neil Brown

**S**amuel William Shaw (“S.W.”) and his wife **Helen Maria Shaw**, nee York, (“Helen”) emigrated from Kent, England in early 1883.

They came with eight children and provisions, including apparatus and machinery for a complete woolen mill, tents, bedding, furniture, clothing, china, silverware, yard goods, sewing machine, medicine, food, photography supplies, a large supply of chemicals and medicines, dental instruments, cobblers’ tools and leather, chess boards, a library of books and magazines, 16 guns, and kegs of gunpowder.



They landed at Gros Isle, near Quebec City where they quarantined, before sailing to Montreal, Boarding a train, they travelled through Chicago, to Winnipeg, where they took on provisions including four teams of oxen, four wagons and carts, harnesses, several milk cows, chickens and geese, grain, farm implements, a wood stove and food sufficient to last for two years.

They journeyed to the end of the C.P.R. line, near present day Swift Current, Saskatchewan and set off westward with wagons and carts, on a rough, dusty trail, covering 10-15 miles a day. They encountered no Indians and no buffalo during the journey, arriving about a month later in the small settlement of Fort Calgary, consisting of the North West Mounted Police fort, a Hudson Bay post, an I.G. Baker store, a few log cabins, and

numerous tents and teepees. S.W. was persuaded by John Glenn, an Irish settler on the banks of Fish Creek, to homestead at that location.

## **Life at Fish Creek (Midnapore), North West Territories**

Arriving at Fish Creek, the family erected a large marquee tent, and began acquiring logs to construct the first sod roofed log home, which leaked muddy water. In 1884, the sod roof was replaced with a wooden one.

After settling at Fish Creek, S.W. applied to Ottawa for a post office to be established at “Fish Creek, North West Territories”. However, there was already a Post Office established in the name of Fish Creek in the North West Territories, in present day Saskatchewan, so it was necessary to choose a new

name. He decided on a rather amusing way to choose the name. He tacked a map of the world on the wall of their home and blindfolded his youngest daughter and had her put a tack in the map. It landed on a place called “Midnapore” in the State of West Bengal, India, which was then part of the British Empire and at that time the only place on earth with the name “Midnapore”. S.W.’s further application was approved and thus, the post office at Fish Creek was officially established as “Midnapore, North West Territories” on February 1, 1884, and Samuel William Shaw was appointed the first postmaster.

At their home on Fish Creek, in 1884 the family experienced a dangerous cattle stampede, and in the Spring of 1885, Fish Creek flooded, causing considerable

damage to the homestead, forcing the family to construct another home on higher ground.

In 1885, S.W. and a group of area residents organized construction of a building which would serve as a church, and during the weekdays, as a school house. St. Paul's Anglican Church, Midnapore is now either the oldest or second oldest building extant in the City of Calgary. (The oldest *may be* the Hunt House, which was possibly built in 1876, however, according to Alberta Historic Resources, adequate documentation for this date is lacking, while one other Calgary building the Major Stewart House was also built in the same year as St. Paul's, 1885).



In 1889, the family began construction of the long planned woolen mill. The machinery had been stored for years in Winnipeg and was rusted from the long delay in getting it to Fish Creek. In 1890 the Midnapore Woolen Mill began production, taking raw wool, which was scoured and washed, carded, spun into yarn, and woven into a variety of woolen goods, including blankets and finer fabrics like tweeds and fine wool suitable for making suits. It was Alberta's first heavy industry.

To market the products from the mill, Helen opened a tailor shop on Stephen Avenue (now 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.W.) between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets West on the north side, specializing in suits. The Mill was operated by the family until 1905 when

it was sold to Buchan and Berry, who defaulted on payments and after three years the Shaw family repossessed the Mill, although it was never in production again. The mill was being used for storing hay at the time it burned down in 1923 or 1924.

S.W. constructed the first telegraph line between the store on Stephen Avenue in Calgary and Midnapore. This line was later transformed into a telephone line which linked the Calgary store with the Midnapore store, the Shaw home and the Father Lacombe Home in Midnapore. We believe that this was the first telephone system in the Calgary region, if not the Province of Alberta. S.W. was a keen photographer and kept accurate meteorological records from the time of his arrival in Midnapore and weather records for the City of Calgary in the years before 1890 are likely the product of his records.

S.W., the adventurous eccentric, who crossed the sea with his wife and eight children to the wilds of western Canada to start a new life, was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the North West Territories. He died at Midnapore in 1919 at the age of 79 years.

Helen served as President of the Women's Section of the Southern Alberta Pioneers and Oldtimers Association and after leaving a life of wealth and privilege in England for a life of hardship and adventure on the western frontier, died on April 15, 1941, after a brief illness, at the age of 95 years.



# SAPD Shows Its Appreciation

by David S.A. Mackie  
Past President

The Volunteer, New Member and Donor Appreciation Night was held on Saturday, September 30, 2023, at 7:00 pm. at the Memorial Building. This was a new event that I conceived and hosted to thank all those individuals who have helped us out in their own way and to get acquainted with the New Members and Donors.

It was a beautiful fall evening, and the weather was fine, although most of the activity was indoors. I wanted this event to be casual, fun and easy to organize.

I invited a long list of guests by email and personal phone calls, or by leaving a voicemail if they did not answer the phone. The event invitation was made personally so we could receive RSVP's; a needful count so we would know how many people would be attending.

The list included: volunteers, new members, executive, board, committee chairs, committee members, and donors.



Guests appreciated the event and many of us sang along with Russell.

- Russell Moore came through with a great performance and thoroughly entertained the guests. Thank you very much Russell!
- Tom Shaw (Dan Shaw's Nephew) kindly donated a generous assortment of Molson beer and other products.
- I donated all the food and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Carla Begalke and her daughter Lane did an excellent job picking up and organizing all the food, which was excellent and was set out beautifully on tables. Thank you very much for that Ladies!
- Special thanks to Dan and Dylan, who set up a Bar in the Kitchen and managed it for most of the evening.
- And thank you to our usual helpers plus all the other volunteer helpers who set up tables and ran the Bar, etc. on this exceptional day.

Overall, the feedback was positive, with most guests showing that they enjoyed the event and had a good time. One comment that was received was that there should have been Wine as well as Beer.

The evening was well attended. However, since there were no tickets as the event was free to attend, it is hard to say exactly how many people showed up. My guess is there were around 50 or 60 people enjoying the event.

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# 27<sup>th</sup> International Wine Tasting

Saturday, February 24, 2024 — starts at 7 PM  
SAPD Memorial Building

## Featuring Wine from Australia, Spain & Argentina

This event is hosted by your board and is a great opportunity to sample wonderful appetizers with wine pairings, and to socialize with your new board, old acquaintances as well as old and new friends.

**TICKETS: \$45 per person**

Ticket can be purchased by:

1. E-transfer to [membership@pioneersalberta.org](mailto:membership@pioneersalberta.org). In the message box, write “**Attention: Nancy Thompson, Wine Event.**”
2. Cheque payable to SAPD.
  - Mail or Drop cheque to SAPD Memorial Building, 3625 - 4 St. SW, Calgary, AB T2S 1Y3
  - Mark on the envelope: “**Attention: Nancy Thompson, Wine Event.**”



**Hurry!**

This event is popular. The venue will only accommodate 70 people!

Please ensure payments are received by SAPD by February 19, 2024. Whichever type of payment used, please also list the names of the attendees. Tickets are non refundable. They can be picked up at the door on event day. Event does not include full meal.

**Convenors:** Nancy Thompson, [n.thompson@shaw.ca](mailto:n.thompson@shaw.ca)  
Steph West, [stephmcs333@gmail.com](mailto:stephmcs333@gmail.com)  
Lana Jones, [lejones@telus.net](mailto:lejones@telus.net)

## Save these dates on your Social Calendar

Here are coming events up to July 13, 2024. Most events will be held at the SAPD Memorial Building. Watch for additional details in upcoming newsletters and/or E-News. We reserve the right to change dates, times, venues, or contact names or to cancel events if needed. If you want to volunteer your help, contact us at [volunteer@pioneersalberta.org](mailto:volunteer@pioneersalberta.org).

|          |           |  |               |                |                     |
|----------|-----------|--|---------------|----------------|---------------------|
| March 13 | Wednesday | Historic Rendezvous  | 10 AM to 4 PM | Gene Blakely   | 403-931-2264        |
| TBD      |           | Elbow River Casino   | TBD           | Gene Blakely   | 403-931-2264        |
| April 27 | Saturday  | Building & Yard Spring Clean Up                                    | 10 AM to 2 PM | John Hutchings | 403-613-9798        |
| May 3    | Friday    | Jane's Walk  | 6 PM          | Alan Lynas     | 250-551-1450        |
| May 5    | Sunday    | Gold Card Tea  | 2 to 4 PM     | Karen Clark    | 403 641-2106        |
| July 5   | Friday    | Pre Parade Breakfast (Participants)<br>Rotary House, Stampede Park | 6:30 AM       | Sandy Pedlar   | 403-991-8586        |
| July 6   | Saturday  | Stampede BBQ   | 5:30 PM       | Dylan Viste    | <b>403-854-8978</b> |
| July 8   | Monday    | Pioneer Tea  | 2 to 4 PM     | Pamela Hilton  | 403-934-2637        |
| July 13  | Saturday  | Stampede Breakfast   | 9 AM to noon  | Steve Foote    | 403-938-6350        |
|          |           |  |               | Jeff Hill      | 403-225-2397        |

# Pioneer Days in the Foothills

By Howard Sibbald. Edited for space by Val McKinney

One of the most unassuming and likable men in the Canadian Rockies was **Howard E. Sibbald**. For some time, he was the Indian Agent at the Stoney and Blackfoot Reservations, for many years chief Warden of Banff National Park, and latterly Superintendent of Kootenay Park, he was recognized by Indians and Caucasians as being a government official endowed with much common sense and as a man of sterling character.

During two summers, it was my good fortune to serve under him as fire warden. While camped with him on Ghost River, where we were storm-stayed for two days, he beguiled the hours by recalling some of his experiences of bygone years in the West. His story of early travel across the great plains and of pioneer days in the foothills of the Rockies was to me entrancing, and there and then in the glimmer of a campfire, I made record of what he said. Here it is:

“Early in 1875, my father, Andrew Sibbald, had been offered a position as teacher in a school about to be established amongst the Blood Indians in the far west. This offer he accepted and so, on June 10, I, at the age of nine years, in company with the other members of the family, left Stroud, Ontario. The party consisted of my father and mother, my brother Frank (6), and my sister Elsie (3). Travelling by way of Duluth and Moorehead and descending the Red River, we presently completed the initial stage of our journey by reaching Fort Garry. There we met David McDougall, the trader, with his cart train.

“My father bought a horse and a wagon for us to ride in and also secured a cart and an ox to haul it. In the ox cart were loaded our household belongings, among which were a sewing machine and an organ. This instrument was, I think, the first of its kind brought in to the North West, although the McDougall family had previously imported a folding melodeon.

“Leaving Fort Garry, we set out across the prairie, our faces turned toward

the setting sun. To me, it was an adventurous journey and a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Father travelled most of the way on foot and, with his gun, kept the family supplied with food. There was no dog in the outfit and so I was frequently obliged to act as retriever, wading into the sloughs for ducks which had fallen to the gun. At that time, games of all kinds was plentiful and we had an abundance of fresh meat.

“Travelling on the old Edmonton trail we saw no white man until reaching Bird-Tail Creek (now Birtle) where we encountered a survey party in which was Mr. Allan Patrick, later of Calgary. This chance meeting was on a Sunday, which was a resting day and thus we had opportunity to learn much about the country through which these men had recently passed.

“Long before reaching Fort Ellice, our freight ox had become exceedingly footsore and weary and my father traded him off for a partly broken steer. The part which was broken must have formed but a small portion of the animal, because he proved an unruly fractious beast, upsetting the cart several times and otherwise causing us much trouble and annoyance. After this experience, trader McDougall was paid to transport our freight in his train.

“My mother drove the horse and looked after her children who, sheltered from sun and rain inside the covered wagon, gazed in wide-eyed wonder at the apparently endless sea of grass and at the various forms of wild life then so abundant on the plains.

“Somewhere in what is now Saskatchewan, we saw our first Indian. He came into our wayside camp one evening when mother was busy preparing supper. Being somewhat of a curiosity to us, he was asked to stay and partake of the pancakes which were in the making and which formed the main part of the meal. This he did, bolting the hot cakes as fast as the astonished cook could turn them out of the pan, while we hungry youngsters watched with awe the rapacious man

greedily devouring our supper. This incident was indelibly stamped upon my memory, and I can still recollect that, after dark on that evening, I lay watching the stars and speculating on just how many pancakes an Indian, given opportunity, could hold.”

Here Howard paused in his narrative, gazing long and thoughtfully at the embers.

“It is almost unbelievable the difference a few years makes. Settlers such as we were plodded across the plains from dawn till sunset and at the pace of a slow-moving ox; a calendar was more useful to us than a clock. We were over a hundred days on the trail before we finally reached the foothills and made preparation to spend the nearing winter in the little settlement at Morley. The untimely death of Rev. George McDougall, which occurred in a January blizzard some few miles north-west of Calgary, was an irreparable loss to our small community and delayed for several years the founding of a mission school amongst the Blood Indians to the south. So, my father remained at Morley where he taught school and, between times, was otherwise employed.

“He had much to do with preparing the lumber and with building the church, which stands by the side of the Trans-Canada highway near Morley. He also floated logs down the Bow River to the new settlement at Calgary. From this timber, at least one church on what is now Sixth Avenue, and several other buildings were constructed. That was a few years after we took up residence in Morley.

“In those early days, all our supplies had to be fetched from Fort Benton on the Missouri River over four hundred miles distant. As but one trip was made annually a large train of carts was needed to export buffalo hides and furs and to bring back the necessary foodstuffs and other materials on which the Morley settlers depended. In the spring of 1876, I was greatly excited over the prospect of

going to Benton with the teamsters. Our caravan was formed of some forty vehicles and had attached to it, in addition to the animals in harness, a number of unbroken steers. These were to be occasionally yoked and gradually accustomed to work so that on the homeward journey they would provide haulage for our more bulky and weighty imports.

“These wild steers at the outset could only be successfully handled when coupled with a steady old ox long used to the hauling. I was appointed tutor to an animal hailing from Texas. Its horns were long but a list of its good qualities when we first met would have been very short. I commenced the training by giving it a lesson in behaviour when being led. Hitching the prosaic old ox to a cart, I tied the steer to the rear end of the vehicle by a rope. I was then only 10 years old, and fear had a mortgage on my soul and body. When the cart ox started ahead, Mister Longhorn reared violently on his hind legs and first thing I knew he was beside me in the cart. After recovering from fright, I persevered with the clumsy brute and before long had him as docile as any draught animal in the outfit.

“An ox team consisted of six animals hitched in a string and driven by one man. Its progress depended largely on the behaviour of the leader. Crossing rivers which were too deep to ford on the hoof proved a tedious undertaking on such a trip as that to Benton, and with such a large outfit. The carts, with their contents, had to be ferried on a raft fashioned from cart wheels covered over with buffalo hides. By means of long rawhide ropes, this primitive ferry boat was pulled to and fro until the crossing was completed, usually an arduous task.

“On this trip, which to me was novel and thrilling, I was left, together with two teamsters, on an island in Sun River where the oxen were turned loose to graze while the other members of the party proceeded to Helena. There they hoped to procure material necessary for building the additional carts needed to freight our goods home to Morley. This island was the home of large numbers of

skunks which, to while away the time and to impress the teamsters with my prowess as a hunter, I proceeded to exterminate. The men were impressed all right and said so plainly in no uncertain terms whenever I got to windward of them.

“When our people returned from Helena, they brought with them a number of used cannon wheels upon which we made and mounted cart bodies. With our augmented caravan, we went on to Fort Benton, which was a bustling frontier town that depended almost entirely for its prosperity on the Missouri River, which was navigable up to that point. It also formed a base for prospectors scouting the Black Hills country in search of mineral wealth. While we were at Benton, news was received of the Custer massacre. Consequently, on the return journey, we were all armed. My weapon was an old rim-fire rifle, almost as great a menace at the butt as at the muzzle.

“By this time, the buffalo had already dwindled rapidly and the vast herds were no longer to be seen. I recall an experience on this trip through the Sweet Grass Hills, one that still remains vivid in spite of the passing of many years. One morning at very early dawn, I sleepily went out with one of the men to round up the oxen. On locating the animals, we were somewhat surprised to see an old bull bison quietly feeding in their midst. I ran quickly back to camp and got an Indian of our party to come and shoot the great shaggy beast. One of our cart wheels had given way and so the hide of this bull was put to good use in repairing the damage. The green pelt was stretched and bound over the fracture and, when the rawhide had shrunk and dried, the wheel was again serviceable. We took with us part of the meat of this buffalo, but hot and sultry weather soon spoiled it.

“On another occasion I went to Benton to meet my mother and, on the

return trip, had a real mishap. We had bought a large can of coal oil, enough to light the Sibbald family lamps for a year. Unfortunately, the jolting and jarring of the spring-less cart caused the can to spring a leak, with the result that, when we reached Morley, the oil was somewhere along the Benton Trail. All that winter we were entirely dependent on homemade candles for night-light. Nowadays, with great electric power plants on the Bow River and at Morley furnishing light for half the province of Alberta, the loss of a can of coal oil seems a small matter, but to us it was a calamity.

“Howard spoke of his mother in a wistful way which I could well understand. She died when he was but a lad of fifteen. Typhoid, then a scourge in primitive settlements, had broken out in Morley and she was amongst those stricken. There was no doctor nearer than Fort Macleod far to the south and no means of communication other than by courier. A young man named Boyd rode post-haste to the southern Police post for medical help. Despite a long detour made necessary by a prairie fire, the return journey in a buckboard and with relays of horses, an estimated distance of one hundred and seventy-five miles, was made in eighteen hours and that over rough ungraded prairie trails. It was an heroic journey but, unfortunately, without avail. By the time the doctor arrived at Morley, the beloved wife of the Mission teacher and friend of all the Stoney was beyond all aid. When the storm had cleared and the September sun was rapidly melting the sodden snow, we broke camp, dried our canvas shelter,

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stacked away the tipi poles and presently wended our way homewards across Aylmer Pass and along the hillsides above Minnewanka Lake."

Sibbald's flood of recollection remembered taking part as a jockey in a horse race on open prairie where Hudson's Bay Store, Central United Church, the Herald and other prominent Calgary buildings would stand. The year 1882 found him freighting supplies for the engineers, then surveying the route of Canadian Pacific Railway through the foothills of the Rockies. Three years later, war broke out on the Western plains and Sibbald joined the transport division of Steele's Scouts, a force which took active part in quelling the Riel Rebellion. Then followed a tranquil period of ranching and a long term as Indian Agent at Morley and Gleichen.

The notebook then used to store these pioneer memories is open before me now, the yellowing pages somewhat foxed and considerably smudged with ash from a camp fire long gone cold. It still exhales the faintest whiff of wood smoke whose odour conjures up undimmed vision of a good companion and a trust-

worthy friend. During the latter part of his long and useful life Andrew Sibbald lived in Banff where, as at Morley, he was greatly respected.

On the occasion of his ninety-seventh birthday, he was guest of honour at a special meeting of the Southern Alberta Old Timers Association in Calgary. This organization boasts of many members of Scots birth or ancestry, and it was significant that, at that gathering, they made the venerable gentleman a Life Member. However, it proved no belated tribute because the recipient lived for several more years and, even after becoming a centenarian, he remained keenly interested in the affairs of the Association and in all current events.

He died in Banff and was buried on the Indian Reservation at Morley where, in 1875, he founded the first school established in Southern Alberta. During the service in the nearby church, of which he had been architect and builder, there came an unexpected interruption, one which was profoundly touching. While the resident missionary offered a simple prayer and read a familiar chapter, an aged Indian, William Twin, walked slowly down the

hill and across the meadow towards the building. In one hand he held a compact little bunch of foothills flowers, in the other he carried a single pinion feather. Pressing through the throng in the doorway and advancing up the narrow aisle, he halted beside the coffin and in the hush of the crowded sanctuary, gave voice to the sorrow of his tribe and paid tribute to the worth of the Good Teacher who had gone to sleep. Present on that occasion and though quite unfamiliar with the Stoney language in which William spoke, I was nevertheless as deeply moved by his eloquence as by his dignity. Having ended, he laid the humble floral token on the casket and placed the feather, native symbol of immortality, on the breast of his departed friend. Then, gathering his smoke-stained and tattered blanket about him, he silently took his leave. Outdoors a gentle wind stirred the prairie grass and rippled the quietly flowing river. William walked slowly up the hill and over the ridge where the old fir trees stand sentinel.

Taken from the February and May  
2008 SAPD Newsletters