

Homecoming 1980

by Sally Jackson

This is the 75th anniversary of Alberta becoming a province. They've been busy and exciting years which will be celebrated in every city, town and village throughout the year.

Visitors will have an unrivaled opportunity to join the stampedes, fairs, exhibits, athletic events and pageants and see Albertans at their exuberant best. Nothing small seems to happen in the Princess Province whether it's oil strikes, vast fields of grain or giant herds of cattle. As they look back over the years they have many unique things to commemorate.

For example, when the white men first came to the foothills they were met by the Blackfoot at the edge of a huge territory which stretched from mid-Alberta to Yellowstone. White traders, hunters and adventurers who attempted to penetrate their land were harshly dealt with. Yet, in the end, this ambitious and ferocious people capitulated to the threat of full-scale war and gave themselves over to the white man's rule.

Like many an Indian race, they discovered too late that trade led to economic domination and eventual breakdown of a vigorous and successful Indian empire. The long period of economic prosperity which reached its peak after the Hudson's Bay Company founded Fort Edmonton on the North Saskatchewan River in 1795, was succeeded by a rush for ranch land in the 60s and 70s. A decade later the sod busters arrived in a rush and by the time the stampede for homesteads had reached its peak in the 1890s, large sections of the province were already settled. Today's farmers and ranchers produce over one billion dollars in foodstuff annually.

The Provincial Legislative Buildings now stand on the original site of Fort Edmonton. But an extensive reconstruction of this early trading post complete with a pioneer town's main street are open daily to visitors in nearby Fort Edmonton

Alberta



Top: Waterton Lakes National Park. 2nd from top: Klondike Days, Edmonton. 3rd from top: Calgary Stampede Rodeo. Bottom: Chicken Dance, Calgary, Alberta.

Park. Be prepared to spend the best part of the day in this stimulating and brash restoration of frontier days.

Two hundred km southwest of Edmonton at Rocky Mountain House, stands all that remains of a string of fur trading forts established by the rival fur trading companies, Hudson's Bay and the Northwest Company. Now, a Parks Canada historic site contains replicas of the famous York boats and the Red River carts which brought settlers thousands of miles across the plains.

Pioneer missionaries and evangelists brought religion to Indians and settlers alike. The original St. Charles Mission, established in 1866, has been restored as a museum with artifacts of all kinds can be seen at Dunvegan, north of Grande Prairie on Highway 2. At St. Albert, near Edmonton, one of the oldest communities in the province, the original R.C. log church, built in 1861, still stands.

Traders from the south crossed the border near the Cypress Hills and set up, in the 19th century, a series of forts to conduct a whiskey trade with the Indians. A replica of one of the most notorious, Fort Whoop-up, stands in Indian Battle Park on the outskirts of Lethbridge. Visitors can see relics of a rowdy past in this museum. The success of this trade aroused the federal government which founded the North West Mounted Police and dispatched them 4 800 km on foot and on horseback to put a stop to it.

The new force, which was eventually to become the RCMP founded Fort Macleod just west of Lethbridge overlooking the Old Man River. They weren't long in chasing the whiskey traders out of the country. You can experience these exciting days through a visit to Fort Macleod which contains a fine museum.

The coming of the CPR which reached Calgary in 1883 really opened up the country and by the time the young territory became a province in 1905, its population had reached one million. Today, modern, prosperous and hustling Alberta is home to two millions.

If you would like more information concerning Alberta vacations in this homecoming year write: Alberta Tourism, Capital Square, 10065 Jasper Ave., Edmonton, Alta. T5J 0H4. □