

## Time travel by horse

While horses are popular in Strathcona County today, they were essential to getting anything done in the early days of settlement. Horses now play largely a recreational role, while in the past, their role was pivotal in virtually every daily activity—from agriculture to coal mining to building roads and railways, to just getting from place to place. Following are some examples:

- Early settlers transported essential household effects by wagons pulled by oxen or horses.
- Horses, essential to homesteading and early settlement, were used to:
  - haul logs and firewood, water and ice, coal and gravel
  - remove stumps and field rocks
  - plow, harrow and disc the fields
  - plant grain and cut hay
  - pull hay wagons and hay binders
  - dig wells
  - herd livestock
  - clear snow
- Horses hitched to buggies, wagons or sleighs provided the main means of transportation to school, church, market and neighbours.
- With the help of horses, transportation was greatly improved when the Canadian Northern Railway was built in 1905 through Fort Saskatchewan, and the Grand Trunk Pacific in 1909 through Deville, North Cooking Lake, Ardrossan, Bremner and Clover Bar.
- Horses were also used in building Highway 14 along the original Cooking Lake Trail in 1920, Wye Road in 1929 and the Cooking Lake Seaplane Base in 1935.
- With the break out of World War I in 1914, many ranchers raised horses for the war effort as the military provided a ready market. Draught horses for farm work, then, were in short supply, and farmers began to consider machinery to do the work. The war changed how farmers operated.
- Between 1915 and 1920, Model-T Fords became common and roads were improved to accommodate car and horse traffic. Even after the introduction of steam engines and tractors, horses continued to be used for many work activities. Tractors became common for some work in the 1920s but during the '30s, with no money for gas, a demand for good horses returned.
- As early as 1917, farmers and ranchers used the Cooking Lake Forest Reserve as summer pasture for their livestock. Pressure on the grazing land forced the government to limit the head of cattle and horses on the reserve to 6,000. The Blackfoot Grazing Reserve was carved out of the Cooking Lake Forest Reserve in 1920.
- Deville Cooking Lake picnics included horseback races and activities. Colchester, Josephburg and Ardrossan agricultural societies built gymkhana and outdoor arenas for horse events.

Following is a selection of photos, showing many ways horses contributed to daily life 100 or more years ago. The core of this research was provided by Wendy Zelt, president of the Strathcona All-Breed Horse Association (SAHA). The association—a non-profit organization that promotes education and safety in the care, handling and enjoyment of horses—received a grant to create the History of Horses photo exhibit displayed for the 10th annual Horse Showcase and Strathcona Celebrates event in 2013.



Ferry at Fort Saskatchewan, 1906

—Glenbow Archives, NA-303-54

In 1875, the North West Territories Council authorized brothers Joseph and Francois Lamoureux to operate a toll ferry across the North Saskatchewan River, across from Fort Saskatchewan. Tolls were \$.08 for foot passengers, \$.20 for horse or mule and rider, and \$.50 for a vehicle drawn by one animal plus a driver.



Coyote hunt, 1926

— Glenbow Archives

Coyotes and wolves were a nuisance, taking out sheep, older cattle and weaker horses. Some people use staghounds to chase down and kill coyotes. Others trapped or poisoned coyotes.



North-West Mounted Police parade, G Division in drill order, c.1895

— Glenbow Archives

The North-West Mounted Police, formed to eradicate the whiskey trade and maintain law and order across Western Canada, chose a site for their new barracks at Fort Saskatchewan in 1874-75.

## Enclosure 6



Hay wagon, date unknown

— Strathcona County Museum & Archives



Cutting ice from Boag Lake, circa 1910

— Strathcona County Museum & Archives



Buffalo drive at Elk Island Park, 1934

— Strathcona County Museum & Archives



Four-horse team pulling binder on Fred Lang's farm in the Colchester area, 1938

— Glenbow Archives

### Horses in Strathcona County today

- With over 6,200 horses (Horse Count 2011), Strathcona County has the second highest number of horses of any municipality in Alberta and has one of the highest per capita in Canada. Horses and horse-related industries provide millions of dollars to the County's economy.
- While the three most common breeds in the County are Quarterhorse, Arabian and Thoroughbred, there are over 30 additional breeds represented here.
- A large variety of horse activities take place in the County. These include: Thoroughbred and Standardbred race training, horse shows, jumping, dressage, reining, rodeos, 4H horse clubs, pony club, gymkhana, breeding, harness racing, plowing contests, driving, ranching, chuck wagon racing, vaulting, trick horses, sleigh rides and trail rides.
- Local riders and horses in all disciplines have won provincial, national and international acclaim.

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2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park, Alberta T8A 3W7

780-464-8111  
www.strathcona.ca  
info@strathcona.ca

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