

the CPR. Events, however, would show that the HBC was more interested in selling land at inflated prices than in the long term promotion of Edmonton's development.

Chapter Two (1900-1913) discusses the formation of the Edmonton Real Estate Exchange in 1909. While the Exchange did not last long, it laid the foundation for the future of organized real estate. It was established during a boom sparked by the actual arrival of transcontinental railways. The Canadian North Railway (CNoR) arrived in 1905 and the Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) in 1909. The CNoR was provided with land for a terminal while the GTP was given a cash bonus and tax concessions.

However, its effectiveness as an industry association was limited by the onset of the Depression. The Association also did not offer any real benefits of membership, and so most real estate agents had little reason to join.

Chapter Four (1940-1950) discusses World War Two, and the economic developments of that period. The Second World War was a mixed blessing for the real estate industry. It ended the Depression but it brought about the regulation of the economy. The restrictions on the real estate industry were the catalyst for the organization of national and provincial associations. The one restriction which was of particular concern was the clause in the Veterans' Land Act, which prevented real estate agents from charging commissions on land sold to veterans.

Thirty years of success and expansion followed for the real estate industry in Edmonton. The subject of Chapter Five (1951-1981), is the "golden age" for real estate in Edmonton. The achievements in the golden age included the creation of the Edmonton Real Estate Board Co-operative Listing Bureau, which superseded the Edmonton Real Estate Association as the vehicle for organized real estate in Edmonton. The Board acquired permanent offices, culminating in the building of its present facilities. A full time staff was also hired to oversee the wide range of new

services offered, which made membership in the organization desirable for any real estate professional.

Chapter Six (1982-1995) looks at the decade following the 1982 recession and the effects it has had on the real estate industry. The cancellation of some northern developments projects, the implementation of the national energy policy, and the downsizing of government has meant another adjustment for the Board and its members. On the positive side, an ever-increasing use of computers and other technologies, and a greater demand for professionalism and education for its members has meant that the industry has continued to grow and change.

Land speculation and grossly inflated prices and plans soon followed. Neither the real estate industry nor the government dealt with the problems that arose.

The First World War and the interwar period are the topics of Chapter Three (1914-1939). This period was another cycle of boom and bust. The economic expansion of the late 1920s was not reflected in the re-emergence of land speculation. The recovery was, however, sufficiently strong to prompt the real estate industry to create the Edmonton Real Estate Association. Its main accomplishment was bringing about the passage of the first legislation requiring the licensing of real estate salesmen. In this way the industry hoped to protect real estate agents and the public alike.



*Settlers in search of farm land were important customers for Edmonton's early real estate agents.*

(Glenbow Archives, NC-6-576)

## Real Estate and the Birth of Edmonton 1870-1899

**P**roperty rights and real estate preoccupied Edmontonians during the period from 1870 to 1899 when Edmonton made its transition from a fur trade outpost to a modern urban community. Everyone seemed involved in the process of

making and protecting land claims and agitating for the necessary policies to speed up land transfers. Surveys of the Hudson's Bay Co. Reserve and individual land claims had to be made and deeds issued. When the Dominion Government delayed in dealing with land claims, a settlers' rights movement began where citizens of Edmonton protected their perceived property rights with vigilante action.

The Dominion Government eventually responded by creating the North Alberta Land Registration District, and appointed Thomas Anderson to be the first Dominion land agent in Edmonton. He regulated land transfers, issued titles, and registered subdivision plans so that an orderly transfer of property could take place. The North Alberta Land Registration District continues to operate on the basis of the Torrens system of land registration.

Almost as important to the citizen's actual land claim was the land's potential for increasing in value. Up to 1900, the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Calgary and Edmonton Railway were the most potent influences on property values in the Edmonton real estate market. Railway companies could cause a boom simply by indicating their intention to build through to a particular location. The first Edmonton real estate boom of 1882 is evidence of this influence.

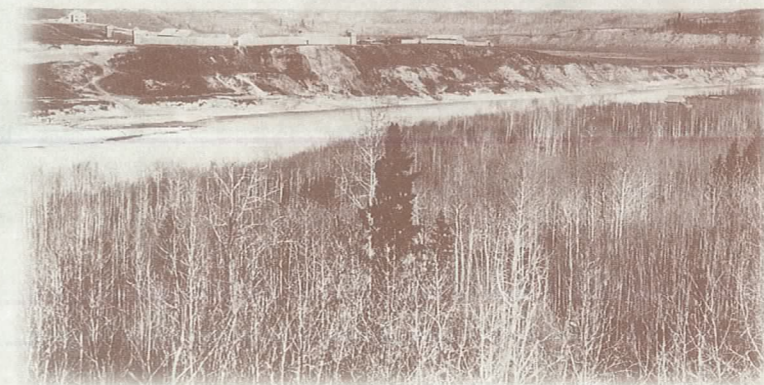
This interest in real estate did not, however, produce a sufficient number of land transactions up to 1900 to create the need for a separate industry. Real estate was handled by insurance agents or by general merchants who also purchased grain and sold merchandise to settlers.

### *Fur trade post to urban community*

Fort Edmonton and the land surrounding it was officially under the control of the Hudson's Bay Co. by virtue of its 1670 royal charter from England. The end of Hudson's Bay Co. rule came with the transfer of Rupert's land to the new government of Canada in 1870.

After 1870 the Hudson's Bay Co. had a 3,000-acre Reserve left in the Edmonton area. The precise location of the Hudson's Bay Co. Reserve's boundaries were not known until 1876 when it was officially surveyed by the HBC.

The Hudson's Bay Co. Reserve was bounded on the south by the North Saskatchewan River, on the west by 121



*Fort Edmonton (pictured here in 1879) declined as the centre of commercial activity after the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada in 1870.*

(City of Edmonton Archives, EA-10-71)

Street, and on the east by what is now 101 Street. It extended as far north as 122 Avenue.

### Creation of the Edmonton Settlement

Reverend George McDougall was one of the first men to claim land privately in the Edmonton area. He arrived in June 1871, and claimed land on behalf of the Methodist Church to the east of the Hudson's Bay Co. Reserve, while his son David claimed the adjacent property. By 1873 a church and house had been built on these properties, and so began the building of a town outside the walls of Fort Edmonton.

Employees of the Hudson's Bay Co. also made land claims at this time. Unlike the Methodist property, their lots were located on both sides of the river. An official survey was

carried out in 1883 and the Edmonton Settlement, as this survey area was called, consisted of forty-four lots. The process of subdividing the Edmonton Settlement into urban land began in 1879 when Colin Fraser, an employee of the HBC, sold a small portion of his claim to Frank Oliver for \$25. In February 1881, he sold a further two lots, fifty by one hundred feet in size, for \$890.

The river lot or settlement plan was a rural form of land survey used to accommodate existing communities in the west, often those established by Metis.

### Edmonton's first land boom

The Hudson's Bay Co. was the first land owner to undertake the large-scale subdivision and promotion of its property. On October 29, 1881, the company announced the creation of

the "City of Edmonton." Their advertisement in the *Edmonton Bulletin* said the townsite was at the centre of the gold, coal, timber, and mineral region of the great North-West, and was surrounded by the richest wheat-producing country in the world. The most important aspect of the new townsite, it said, was that it was on the projected Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR).

The Hudson's Bay Co.'s high expectations were shared by Frank Oliver, the publisher of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, Alberta's first newspaper. He wrote in his paper: "There is a possibility that the syndicate have decided to build the CPR via Edmonton, crossing the river here, and uniting with the H.B.Co. in building upon their property the metropolis of this far North-West. If this surmise should prove correct, and it is at least reasonable, all the booms that have taken place yet in Manitoba or elsewhere will be nothing compared to that which the tumble-down walls of Fort Edmonton will see during the next year or two."

After its advertisement appeared, the Hudson's Bay Co. called a public meeting to explain its plans and invite participation in designing certain aspects of the town. Terms of the land sales were one-third cash and the balance in two equal instalments. Buyers were required to erect a building within eighteen months from the date of purchase on at least every second lot. Lots were free for schools and churches.

Plan B, the subdivision that covered the southern portion of the Hudson's Bay Co. Reserve, contained 2,137 lots.

Edmonton's first legal subdivision found a ready market when



offered for sale. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported on February 3, 1882, that the moment the land went on sale "there was a rush for lots that would have surprised even a Winnipeg auctioneer, and in three or four days \$12,000 worth, or about 400 lots were sold subject to building conditions." The selling price averaged \$32 per lot. Hudson's Bay Co. Land Commissioner Charles Brydges then assumed control of future land sales because he considered the price too low. Brydges' pricing strategy was to withhold the land from the market and to deal only with Winnipeg or Eastern Canadian investors. This approach brought immediate results when the Scottish, Ontario, and Manitoba Land Co. purchased 300

The central business district of Edmonton in 1890 developed east of 101 Street in order to avoid the Hudson's Bay Co. Reserve. (Provincial Archives of Alberta, B 4756)

The Edmonton Settlement was made up of river lots along both sides of the North Saskatchewan River.

(City of Edmonton Archives, EAM 85)



Malcolm Groat was one of the Hudson's Bay Company employees who claimed land outside Fort Edmonton, thus initiating the creation of the Edmonton Settlement. He claimed land west of the Hudson's Bay Co. Reserve, which became River Lot two in the Edmonton Settlement.

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, B 7118)



The Methodist church property was located at the corner of 101 Street and College Avenue in 1902. This is the current site of McDougall United Church.

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, B 3677)

lots at \$110 per lot. This sale prompted enquiries about Edmonton land from people in Toronto, London, and Hamilton. Given the rising demand, Brydges was able to raise the price as high as \$250 for lots in choice locations. Even at these inflated prices, about 500 lots were sold.

The interest in Edmonton lots prompted Brydges to subdivide additional land. It was sold by public auction. The Hudson's Bay Co. auction in Winnipeg was two days of frantic activity where about 500 people participated in one day alone. Total sales of property during this auction amounted to between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

Interest dwindled in the company townsite, however, by the spring of 1882. The CPR had decided on a southern route. With the end of the boom, the Hudson's Bay Co. lost interest in their Edmonton property, as did most people who had purchased land during the boom. In Brydges' opinion: *"The great bulk of the sales made at Edmonton will not be carried out. There is no railway projected at present to Edmonton, and until that is done the sale of lots will not amount to anything."*

Frank Oliver, however, disagreed. In the *Edmonton Bulletin* on June 17, 1882, he wrote that:

*Outside of the boom the prospects of Edmonton are second to those of no place in Manitoba or the North West except Winnipeg. The boom as far as it has gone left a large amount of money here of which every dollar has been invested and if it has burst utterly and lots can now be sold in Winnipeg for a cent a piece that matter will concern very few people here. They have not been in the real estate business. The boom started suddenly and went ahead too rapidly for them to invest.*

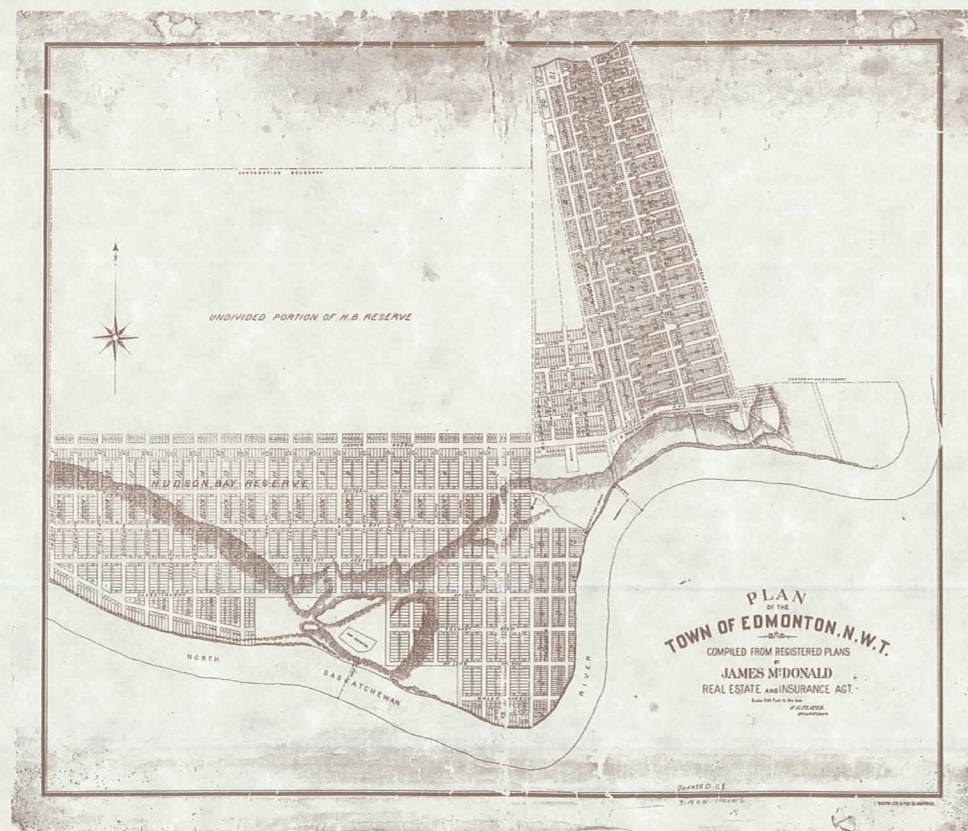
The collapse of Edmonton's first land boom did not stop the subdivision of land. It simply shifted the activity back to the river lots in the east where the town of Edmonton had begun.

### Land claims

The land claims of the Hudson's Bay Co. and others during the 1870s and 1880s led the settlers to request an official survey of the settlement and recognition of their claims. On January 15, 1880, Frank Oliver warned that if the land claims issue was not solved then it

*This is a map of the Town of Edmonton at its incorporation in 1892. The Hudson's Bay Company subdivision, which caused all the excitement in 1881, is included.*

(City of Edmonton Archives, EAM 17)



would create discord in the community. His prediction came true on February 4, 1882, when the community discovered that L. George, an American working as a clerk in the Villiers store, was trying to take over land

was ordered by the Court to pay Bannerman \$40 to cover the cost of the lumber destroyed. Following these events, the government moved to survey the individual land claims and issue titles.



*Calgary and Edmonton Railway Station was constructed in 1891. It was replaced in 1907 by the brick structure currently being used by the CPR.*

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, A 2996)

### The Calgary and Edmonton Railway

claimed by Thomas Anderson. George had driven in boundary stakes around the property he claimed and hired carpenters to build a house at this location. The community saw this as a test case for the security of other claims that still did not have the benefit of a legal survey and official title. On the morning of February 6, 150 people gathered and asked George to remove the building. Upon his refusal, the crowd overpowered him, and the house was dragged to the river bank and thrown over the edge.

Following this episode a vigilante committee was organized to protect claims in the future. No sooner was it formed than J. H. Bannerman wrote to the vigilantes that he intended to occupy the former mission lot that was claimed by Matthew McCauley. His house was dealt with much as George's had been. Bannerman, unlike George, was not prepared to suffer in silence. Warrants were issued for the arrest of the seven people involved in the "house moving." The trial took place on June 15, 1882. All defendants were acquitted since it was proven that McCauley had the right to the land. Bannerman's civil suit against McCauley was heard the next day. McCauley

In 1890 the construction of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway prompted Frank Oliver to write an editorial entitled "Brightening Prospects": *"Ever since work began on the Calgary and Edmonton Railway, with every mile added to the grade, outside interest in this district has risen and every week the arrivals of land prospectors has increased. Land is being taken up in all directions with the town of Edmonton as the centre, and in another year, from present appearance, the taking which are now by quarters or sections will then be by township and blocks of townships."*

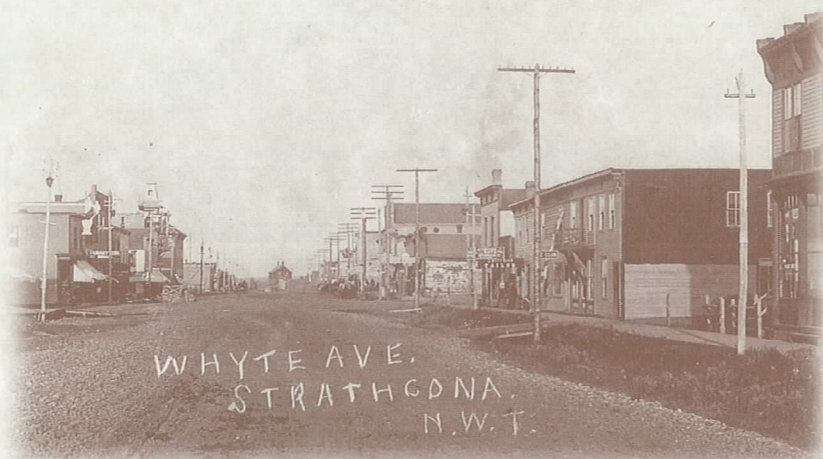
Construction of the Calgary-to-Red Deer section began on July 8, 1890, and was completed by early December. By March 28, 1891, the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Co. had registered the plans and profile of the line to approximately two miles south of the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. The *Edmonton Bulletin* observed that this *"ensures the location of the terminus at Edmonton, although what is to be the actual site of the*

*terminus is yet a secret, but will be made known in a few weeks at most."*

The *Edmonton Bulletin's* confidence that the Calgary and Edmonton Railway would cross the river ended when route information was made public in March 1891. At the same

*Whyte Avenue, seen from the CPR tracks at the turn of the century, was the main street of Strathcona. It was incorporated as a separate town in 1899.*

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, A 3002)



time that these documents were being filed, the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Co. was secretly acquiring land for the new terminus on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River. The new townsite was originally called South Edmonton but the name was changed to Strathcona when it was incorporated as a town in 1899. The Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company created a new townsite rather than crossing the river into Edmonton in order to monopolise the benefits of future land sales.

In March of 1891 the company had negotiated agreements with Joseph McDonald, owner of river lot eleven, Frederick H. Sache, owner of river lot fifteen A, and Alexander McDonald, John Cameron, and Malcolm and Sarah McLeod, owners of the southern 103 feet of river lot seventeen plus the fraction west half of section twenty-eight. An agreement dated April 6, 1891, covering river lots thirteen and fifteen completed the land arrangements for a townsite by the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Co.

The terms of these agreements for all parties were the same: the owners agreed to provide the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Co. with sufficient land up to a maximum of thirteen and one-half acres for right-of-way and station grounds, plus a half interest in the remaining portion of land, in return for a

station and engine shed built by the railway.

The agreements stated that the railway company would survey the townsite with the cost shared equally among the parties. Once the survey was completed, the land could be divided or an agent appointed for the joint sale of all townsite properties.

The Calgary and Edmonton Railway Co. moved quickly to fulfil the terms of the agreement when the steel reached the location of the proposed townsite in July 1891. By July 25, the survey of the townsite had begun.

Plan I, registered in the Land Titles Office on September 25, 1891, was Edmonton's first south side subdivision.

The streets at the new townsite were named by the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Co. to honour

railway and local officials, the original land owners, and prominent citizens of Edmonton and area.

Streets named after railway officials included Whyte (82nd) Avenue and Niblock (105th) Street. Anderson (81st), Sache (88th) and McDonald (83rd) avenues were named after three of the original owners of the townsite land. Main (104th) was the main street running north and south. West (103rd) and East (102nd) Railway streets were located to the west and east of the railway right-of-way. An avenue was even named after Frank Oliver (86th), despite his intense dislike of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway.

### *Edmonton's first real estate agents*

Despite the flurry of activity in 1881 and 1891, the comparatively small number of land transactions in the Edmonton market before 1900 was not enough work in itself for a group of real estate agents. They worked at other jobs, including the fur trade and general merchandise. This group included Walter Scott Robertson, Alexander MacDonald, and John Cameron, who were partners in the general merchandise and trading company called A.

MacDonald and Company. When Robertson, MacDonald, and Cameron arrived in Edmonton in June 1882 they invested about \$30,000 in an interest in river lots twelve and fourteen in the Edmonton Settlement and other property at Fort Saskatchewan. The property acquired in Edmonton was subdivided in November 1882. The subdivision created 1,594 lots, generally thirty-three by one hundred feet in size.

Other pioneer merchants who also sold real estate as part of the company operations were McDougall and Secord, and William Wilke, whose general store was located in South Edmonton.

The first real estate agency to advertise its presence in the community was operated by Messrs. McKay and Blake, who in the January 7, 1882, *Edmonton Bulletin* invited "parties in the East wishing to invest in real estate in Edmonton or vicinity . . . to correspond with . . . them." They remained in business only a short time. That same year Blake became auctioneer and farm equipment salesman while McKay left the area.

In August 1882 William Stiff advertised that he bought and sold property on commission, collected accounts, managed estates for nonresidents, and furnished information to intending settlers. He continued in this line of business until 1884.

The real estate agent active for the longest time in the 1880s was Stuart Mulkins, who arrived in the Edmonton district in the fall of 1881 as the census commissioner for the Edmonton and Bow River districts. By July 1882 he had established himself as a notary public and conveyancer. Initially he concerned himself with the location of coal claims and timber limits but by December 1882 he had become

the sole agent for the subdivisions in river lots ten, twelve, and fourteen. He moved to Red Deer in 1887.

By 1899, only three individuals were identified in the directories as real estate agents. They were P. Heimnck and Co., Isaac Cowie, and T. A. Stephen. Philip Heimnck was the Edmonton agent for the Hudson's Bay Co. and Cowie was the agent for the Scottish, Ontario, and Manitoba Land Co. Stephen is listed in the directory without any company affiliation.

By 1900 private land ownership had become an established institution in

Edmonton with the creation of a Land Titles office. There was an oversupply of subdivided land on both sides of the river because the expected growth in population did not materialise. Selling real estate, therefore, employed just a few people. Events after 1900 would, however, dramatically improve Edmonton's prospects, as the second wave of transcontinental railway construction and the increased pace of land settlement would bring a decade of spectacular growth — when Edmonton would become one of western Canada's larger metropolitan areas.



*Edmonton real estate agent Philip Heimnck was the Edmonton land agent for the Hudson's Bay Co.*

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, B 8043)



*The first ferry that crossed the North Saskatchewan River at Edmonton was established by John Walter and was located west of where the 105th street bridge is today.*

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, A 3004)