With affection and gratitude this little volume is

dedicated to

The Pioneers of Red Deer and Central Alberta

by

The Red Deer Kiwanis Club

ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

In September 1953, delegates of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce visited Red Deer. Their assessment of the town's importance in Alberta affairs is given in a newspaper report. "Red Deer is about the half-way mark in the two hundred miles separating Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta's biggest cities. The choice farmlands of Central Alberta and oil and gas discoveries have created a need for another hub between Calgary and Edmonton and Red Deer apparently is it.

"Its population now is approaching ten thousand, three times what is was at the end of the war."

"Red Deer is blessed in its location. Downtown its wide, busy streets are typically western, but its location on the Red Deer River, with its broad, rising banks and woods gives the residential area the appearance of parklands.

"If Red Deer has a rival as the hub of Central Alberta it is probably Ponoka to the north."

Red Deer is not only blessed in its location, as the report says, but owes its very existance to its position, which is ninety-three miles from Calgary and ninety-eight from Edmonton. The present city occupies parts of sections 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, township 38, range 27, west of the fourth meridian. As yet there is very little building east of 40th Avenue, which is the road allowance between sections 15 and 16. However, informed opinion is that the city will grow to the east and south.

The fifth survey meridian, which is 114 degrees west longitude, just touches the eastern outskirts of Calgary, and passes through Burnt Lake, which is eight miles west of Red Deer. If a straight line is drawn from Calgary to Edmonton, Red Deer lies about four miles west of the point at which this line crosses the Red Deer River. This fact may have some bearing on recent proposals to re-route Number Two Highway, although the primary purpose of any diversion would be to avoid the traffic of a growing centre.

Many lakes lie close to Red Deer. Among these is the popular summer resort of Sylvan Lake, with a permanent population of more than a thousand people, and between five and ten thousand during July and August. This resort is fifteen miles west of Red Deer on Number Eleven Highway which runs to Rocky Mountain House. Gull Lake, a much larger body of water than Sylvan Lake, is twenty-five miles to the north-west of Red Deer, and Pine Lake, which is said to resemble Windermere in the English Lake Country, is thirty miles to the south-east of the city. Smaller bodies of water are Jackfish Lake and Blackfalds Lake, both about six miles to the north, and the two Gaetz Lakes which are in the Wildlife Park on the eastern outskirts of the city.

The altitude of down-town Red Deer is 2,819 ft., while the surrounding hills on which part of the city is built have an elevation of approximately 3,000 feet. This difference in elevation has a bearing upon the Weather Bureau's official temperature readings, which usually give a Red Deer temperature four or five degrees lower than at Edmonton. However, Red Deer readings are for the valley, and readings taken on the hills correspond closely to those reported for Edmonton. With regard to temperatures it should be mentioned that during the first period of settlement in the 1890's the Red Deer district acquired a bad name for frost, even oats failing to mature in frequent occasions. Discouraged by these setbacks many of the first settlers left the region and established themselves elsewhere. The mean temperature now is given as thirty-six degrees. On the average rain falls on eighty days in the year, although frequently the showers bring very little moisture, as is shown by the fact that the mean annual precipitation is only twenty inches. Hail occurs occasionally in the area, but severe storms have not struck the city itself for many years.

From the standpoint of geology the underlying rocks in the Red Deer area belong to the Paskapoo formation of the early Tertiary Age. These rocks are shales and sandstones with some quartzite. In the region of the East Bridge, which is seven miles straight east of town, the impressions of leaves and branches are clearly defined in the strata. A small deposit of volcanic ash is found near the bridge but although this material is exactly the same as "Dutch Cleanser" it is too small a deposit to have any commercial significance. Oil exploration has been carried out extensively in the East Bridge area, and production has been obtained at a number of wells.

In the Red Deer district the ancient glaciers left definite evidence of their work. "The Divide", a long, high ridge about six miles east of the city, is a glacial moraine. East and north of the city the river has cut its way through this ridge. A small stream has cut a deep gorge a short distance from the river channel itselft. Between these two canyons is a high, narrow ridge of land about one-half mile long and in places only thirty feet wide. This feature, known as "The Hogsback", has long been a landmark in the area, and John McDougall has mentioned it in one of his books.

The black soil of the area has a depth of at least a foot and is very fertile. This soil has three times as much nitrogen and organic matter as is found in the brown or gray wooded soils of the province. On two occasions, in 1947 and 1948, J. S. Alsopp won the world wheat championship with grain grown on a farm close to Red Deer.

Deposits of coal are found in the area, especially along the river. For many years coal has been brought in by wagon or truck from Ardley. In the depression years of the 1930's a number of small mines were operated along the river, sometimes by only one or two men, who sold the coal to truckers for as little as one dollar per ton. To-day farmers buy local coal from the Johnston and the Lynesse Mines, but there is no longer a market for solid fuel in the city itself because in 1947 the North-West Utilities brought in gas from the Viking field. At present Red Deer is the southern terminus of the company's pipe line.

The natural vegetation consists of grasslands, interspersed with clumps of poplar and willow. Large spruce, sometimes with a diameter of three feet at the base, grow along the rivers and on most steep north slopes. In early times that is, before 1900, many areas which are now densely wooded were clear of trees. The change has resulted from the building of roads which act as checks to the spreading of fires. In pioneer times forest and prairie fires were very common. The Hospital Hill, now well covered with a grove of poplars, was open land in the early days of the settlement. Another example was given by a farmer near Pine Lake who said tha forty years ago his father cut hay from a part of the farm now overgrown with trees and underbrush. On the north slope of Michener Hill fire-blackened stumps are testimony of ancient fires, although this part of the district has not been burned over within the memory of the oldest settler.

The name Red Deer comes from the river which traverses the town. Because a large number of deer were found along its banks, this river was known to the Crees as the Waskasoo Seepee or Red Deer River. The creek which flows through the town still bears the Indian name, as does Waskasoo Avenue, one of the chief thoroughfares of the town. The Indians had a legend which accounted for the beautiful valley where the creek and the river join. They said it was the resting place of Napia, the deity who created all beautiful things in this Western land. Because he was going to sleep there Napia took great pains to create the clear lakes, the tree-clad hills and the winding streams which still mark the Red Deer country.

The Red Deer River has a length of 385 miles in its winding course from the mountains to the point at which it joins the South Saskatchewan. The lower part of the river, near Drumheller, cuts through the Bad Lands, and it is there that the great beds of dinosaur bones are found. Here sixty million years ago roamed the

duck-billed dinosaurs, the tricerotops and the chasamosaurus. No one, however, has found any fossils of importance in the Red Deer district itself.

The Blindman, an important tributary, joins the Red Deer a few miles downstream from the city. This river received its name from an incident in very early times. A party of Cree hunters suffered so severely from snow blindness that they had to camp beside the stream until their eyes were healed. The Indians gave the river the name "Blindman" because of this happening. On the first survey map of the region the stream is named "Blindman's River".

Morton places the Red Deer district well within the range claimed by the Blood Indians. To the north of the river lay the area dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company, and to the south of the stream was the region in which the whiskey runners and other free traders from the United State carried on their operations. "North of the Red Deer the Hudson's Bay Company and some free traders controlled the trade and commerce of the whole land. South of the Red Deer, and within recent years, Americans, or Long Knives, as they were called, had established some trading posts and wolfers' headquarters, and, as rumor had it, at these southern posts made-on-the-spot whiskey was the chief article of trade. North of the Red Deer river the pacific and humane policy of the Hudson's Bay Company made a wonderful difference in conditions."

John McDougall's books have several references to the Red Deer region. On one occasion he speaks of travelling south on the "Blackfoot Trail" and crossing the Red Deer at the location of the present city. On this trip John and his father visited the Hogsback in the canyon region. The grandeur of the scenery greatly impressed the two men as they gazed down from the steep banks which towered six or seven hundred feet above the river. While hunting ducks in the area John dropped his gun, which fired on impact, the charge of shot wounding the elder McDougall. The two men spent some time in the vicinity of the mouth of the Blindman while the father recovered. During this interval they prospected for gold. "We found quite a quantity of colors, but as this was dangerous country, it being the theatre of constant tribal war, a small party would not be safe to work here very long; so it will be some time before this gold is washed out."

As a point of interest, no one has ever obtained any quantity of gold from the Red Deer. In the years of the depression a number of unemployed men made an attempt to earn a few dollars by washing for gold. Like John McDougall they found colors, but not enough of the precious metal to enable them to earn more than fifty cents per day each.

The original site of the Red Deer settlement was about three miles upstream from the present city. At this point there is a ford which can be used safely at nearly all times. Here the Indians crossed the river on their journeys north and south, or west to Rocky Mountain House. For generations this old trail had been in use, running from Southern Alberta to Lone Pine, a solitary tree about three miles east of present-day Olds. The Cree name for this well-known Lone Pine was Minnie-hay-gwak-pask-wasksut". From Lone Pine the trail ran north to The Spruces, a grove of trees just north of Innisfail. From this point is continued on to the Red Deer Crossing. An intersecting trail ran from Buffalo Lake to about the point at which Number Two Highway now crosses the Blindman, and then west to Rocky Mountain House. The first survey maps refer to the Calgary Trail as the "Bow River Trail", but north of the Red Deer the route is described at the "Edmonton Trail".

Although the country along the Red Deer was frequented by tribes who were generally at war with each other, there seems to have been no battles fought in the immediate vicinity of the town. According to old stories, however, one fight did occur at Pine Lake about thirty miles to the south-east. There in about 1812 a Cree camp was surprised and its inhabitants massacred by the Blackfeet. Only one Cree escaped the slaughter, a man who had been out of the camp when the attack came. On his return he found the dead and mutilated bodies of his relatives

and friends. Determined on revenge, he stalked the Blackfoot war party, killing six of them before they managed to slay him. After this incident the Indians avoided the lake, which they said was haunted by the spirits of the murdered Cree tribesmen, and which was known for many years as Ghost Pine Lake.

Mr. Hugh Bower, whose farm touches the highway just south of town, has made a hobby of collecting Indian relics, especially arrow points and scrapers. He has several boxes of these objects, all collected within a short distance of Red Deer, and most from his own farm. From the places in which he found these flints, the region along Waskasoo Creek, must have been a favorite camping ground in early times.

The Indians sometimes disposed of their dead by placing them on platforms built in the trees. Although this custom had been abandoned by the time the white settlement began, the platforms were still to be found. The bodies themselves were gone. Just after the Gaetz family came to the district, a severe small-pox epidemic swept through the Indian camps, and many people died of the disease. The graves of some of these small-pox victims are on the Opie farm north-east of the Red Deer Crossing, and some are on the Convent Hill near Number Two Highway.

A map of the areas inhabited by the Canadian aborigines shows Red Deer well within the range of the Blood band of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The custom of burial scaffolds, mentioned by Mrs. Gaetz, was a characteristic of this tribe. In 1858 the Blood band was estimated at 250 tents, or about 2,000 people, but by the time of the settlement in 1884 their numbers had fallen considerably. In addition to the Bloods the area seems to have been visited frequently by the Crees and by the Stoneys' with whom Mr. Raymond Gaetz traded frequently at Red Deer Crossing.

By Mr. Gaetz's time most of the Indians were outwardly Christian, but they continued to pay some respect to their old deities. Even today the Indians hold an annual Sun Dance at Rocky Mountain House, showing that the traditions of a race die hard. In and around Red Deer itself the Indians have almost disappeared. A few are found mingled in with the general population. They have no peculiarities of dress to distinguish them from the whites, but because they lack training they tend to fall into the lower paid manual labor jobs.

Some years ago the writer observed an Old Indian sitting on the hillside just west of the Training School. It was nearly sunset, and the old man was gazing steadily at the town in the valley, and at the sun just touching the mountains in the west. The alien was strong in the land of his fathers; the scene symbolized the decline of his race.

The first white man to visit the Red Deer region, so far as is known, was Anthony Henday. In 1574 this Englishman was sent out by Governor Isham of York Factory on Hudson Bay in an attempt to encourage the Western Indians to trade with the Company's forts on the bay. On December 23, 1754 Henday on his return from the vicinity of present-day Rocky Mountain House crossed a branch of the Waskasoo River, probably the Blindman and continued southward to a high knoll, from which on the next day he bade farewell to the Rockies. "I had a fine view of Arsinie Watchie at a far distance, it being the last sight I ever shall have of it this year." From his route it appears likely that the elevation from which he had the fine view of the Rockies was Antler Hill, east of Innisfail. As the distance from the Blindman to Antler Hill is about twenty-five miles, Henday probably used the Red Deer Crossing on December 23 or 24, 1754.

With the establishment of Rocky Mountain House by the North West Company in 1799 at the confluence of the Saskatchewan and Clearwater Rivers, the old Indian trail to the north gained importance in the life of the region. The crossing of the Red Deer, therefore, became more and more of a landmark. Red Deer still is a junction point for north and south traffic with that going west to Rocky Mountain House, sixty miles distant.

The first building at Red Deer Crossing was a small cabin which had been built, according to local tradition, by Addison McPherson, who used it as a temporary headquarters when he was hunting and trading with the Indians in Central Alberta. When Dr. Leonard Gaetz came to the area in 1884 this building was still standing, and served as temporary accommodation for settlers' families.

In 1878 Angus McPhee, Dominion Land Surveyor, visited the Red Deer area and was greatly impressed by the agricultural possibilities of this district. Five years later he made an official survey of the region, making it possible for homesteaders to register their lands by legal description. In 1881 before the survey was made, John T. Moore of Ontario visited the district as an agent for the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead Company, a group of Eastern business men who proposed to buy Western land and sell it to settlers. Mr. Moore bought for the company at a price of two dollars an acre the odd-numbered sections in a tract thirty miles long and eight miles wide. Red Deer city lies almost exactly in the centre of the land purchased by Mr. Moore. In accordance with government policy of that day the even-numbered sections were left open for homesteaders, unless reserved for some special purpose. By way of contrast with the price paid by Mr. Moore the same land today sells for a price of about seventy-five dollars an acre, and even in depression years unimproved land near the town brought a price of over thirty dollars an acre. The survey maps of 1883 describe the land as "first class, covered with poplar and willow". These township maps also show numerous large marsh areas, but with the opening of the country most of these low-lying places were drained.

In 1882, just the year before the survey, the first agricultural settlers, Daniel Dobler and his wife, came to the valley of the Red Deer. They spent only a few months on the land they selected before they returned to Ontario, making the trip across the plains by ox team. They came back to the district in 1885, and remained until the 1890's when they sold out and returned to Ontario. The next settlers were four single men, Bob McClelland, Bill Kemp, and two cousins, George and Jim Beatty, who reached the Red Deer Crossing on September 29, 1882. It must have been a very early winter for there were over two feet of snow on the ground. These men chose sites for their homesteads and then went on to other occupations. The Beatty cousins joined a survey party which was working north of Edmonton, while the other two men found employment freighting for the I. G. Baker concern. About a year later all four men returned to Red Deer Crossing to establish settlers' rights on the land they had chosen.

Mr. James Youmans, a long-time resident of Red Deer, was in 1883 a missionary stationed at Whitefish Lake. In the summer of that year he travelled from Edmonton to Calgary by Red River cart, and in all that journey south he saw no white habitation other than that of Mr. E. B. Glass, a missionary at Bear's Hill, ten miles south of Wetaskiwin. On the return trip, however, when he came to Red Deer Crossing he saw a log barn under construction. The building was about one-half mile south of the fording place on the land chosen by McClelland. In that same year George Beatty established himself about two miles south of the Red Deer Crossing on land which is still known as the Beatty Flats. In the winter of 1883 George and William Byers arrived in the district, and in January, 1884 Sage Bannerman, who later operated a ferry, came to the Crossing. There were, therefore, several other settlers in the vicinity when Dr. Leonard Gaetz brought his family to the site of the present city in the spring of 1884.

The Canadian Pacific Railway reached Calgary in August, 1883, and soon afterwards two partners, Leeson and Scott by name, established a horse-drawn stage to take mail and passengers to Edmonton. Leeson and Scott were experienced stage-coach operators, having established a successful business of this kind at Prince Albert. Although they managed the Calgary-Edmonton service themselves, they hired others to do the actual driving. Even at the best of times travel was slow, and the stage which left Calgary on Monday did not reach Edmonton until Friday, but the settlers were pleased that they could expect a regular mail service

from Calgary once every two weeks. Because people from a very wide area received their mail at the Crossing, many settlers living a places far distant from the present city were often described as residents of Red Deer. The stage operated until the coming of the railway in 1891.

In the summer of 1885, after the Second Riel Rebellion, travel was greatly facilitated when the government established a ferry at the crossing of the Red Deer. Sage Bannerman operated the ferry until the coming of the railway in March, 1891. After that date any travellers who came along the old route had to ford the river. Construction was started on a traffic bridge, which was completed two years later.

With the establishment of the stage service from Calgary to Edmonton, G. C. King, a Calgary merchant, erected a small log building in December 1883 at the Crossing. Mr. King did not plan to operate the Red Deer business himself, but hoped to be able to hire someone to manage it for him. However, he found absentee proprietorship impracticable under the transportation conditions existing in the early days, and after a few months he sold the business to Dr. Leonard Gaetz. This building, which served as a combined store and post office, was the first permanent trading post between Calgary and Edmonton, and its establishment was the beginning of Red Deer as a distributing centre. The location of the building is marked by a cairn which the Old Timers' Association erected in 1951. The plaque bears the following inscription: "This marks the site of the first trading post between Calgary and Edmonton, and the Old Red Deer Crossing. Erected by the Old Timers' Association in memory of those who pioneered the Red Deer District. Yr. '51."

The first buildings which the settlers erected were mainly of logs, although rough-sawn lumber became available after 1884 when a small, portable sawmill was imported and placed in operation. The typical log house in the region was constructed from spruce or poplar. A skilled axman was able to dovetail the corners of the house, but an average builder normally used a simple, notched type of corner. In the very early times the logs were used in the round state, but later it became customary to smooth both the inside and the outside surfaces with an adze. The pioneer often used moss or clay for chinking, but if he could get it he preferred to use a lime mortar. At Sylvan Lake the writer examined one small house which had been built by a Frenchman named Gerrard. The chinking in that building had been done by means of strips of folded newspapers held in place by small sticks nailed along the crevices between the logs. The date on the newspapers was 1900.

The floor was generally of packed earth which was covered by cowhides or deerskins. A simple roof was constructed by making one wall higher than the other and placing long poles across the top. If the settler wanted a building of greater than average width he used a ridge pole and built an A-shaped roof. He then covered the poles with a layer of hay. Long strips of sod, grassy side down, were placed directly on the hay. Then the builder placed to second layer of sod grassy side up. This last layer he overlapped in the manner of shingles. The settler considered himself lucky if a rain occured soon after he finished the job, because the moisture caused the sods to grow together, making the whole mass almost impervious to rain. A properly constructed sod roof was very good insulation against the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Its disadvantage was that a prolonged spell of wet weather generally caused it to leak.

In 1884, in anticipation of the needs of settlers for lumber two halfbreeds, Mackenzie and Wishart by name, began to operate a small portable sawmill on the river flats about three miles downstream from the present city. One may still recognize the old mill site which is on the present Northey farm. Trees of considerable size grow up the steep bank, but one may easily discern the trail even after seventy years.

In 1884 Thomas Lennie and his wife built a stopping house at Red Deer Crossing, just across from the combined store and post office established by Mr. King. Mrs. Lennie was a native of the Red River country, the daughter of a free trader and an Indian woman. She helped Ray Gaetz a very great deal when, at

the age of eighteen, he took over the management of the little store which Dr. Leonard Gaetz, as mentioned previously, had bought from Mr. King in August 1884. Mrs. Lennie, who had experienced the uncertainties and fears of the Red River Rebellion, prevailed upon her English husband to leave Canada for the United States when word reached Red Deer Crossing in the spring of 1885 of the Second Riel Rebellion.

Because stopping houses played an important part in early Alberta life, an account of their rough but welcome accommodation may be of interest. The one at Red Deer Crossing was apparently typical, and of considerable importance. There were others at Lone Pine, (near Olds) and five miles south of Penhold. The proprietor provided a number of rough wooden bunks which were fastened to the walls. These bunks were filled with hay for a mattress but the proprietor provided no bedding. Firstcomers reserved this superior accommodation for themselves by placing their blanket rolls in the bunks. Usually there were only about six bunks, which meant late-comers had to content themselves with a place on the floor on which they could spread their bedding. Women travellers could secure privacy by hanging a blanket in front of one of the bunks. Many travellers had tents of their own which they pitched near the buildings for protection and company. The proprietor charged fifty cents for a night's accommodation, which included one meal. Because most of the stopping-house owners were bachelors the bill of fare was simple and rough. A course, fatty bacon, which had green steaks through it, giving it the name of "rattlesnake bacon", bannocks, beans, tea and coffee were all that were usually served to the traveller.

The first settlers within the present city limits arrived in 1884 when the Reverend Leonard Gaetz and his family came to the district. Their coming has been well described by the eldest son, Ray, who was eighteen at the time of their coming, and had just finished high school. A keen observer, he had the academic training necessary to record his experiences. The Gaetz family had a long tradition of pioneering in Canada. In 1751 the founder of the family in the New World crossed from Hanover to Nova Scotia, settling at Lunenburg. In the midnineteenth century a great grandson of the original immigrant moved to Upper Canada, where, in 1883 his son, Dr. Leonard Gaetz, was the pastor of a Methodist church in London. The nervous strain of his work was too great for Dr. Gaetz, and in the summer of 1883 his physician warned him that he must for a time at least give up active public life.

In the Ontario of that day a spirit of restlessness was in the air. Most of the good farming land of the province had already been settled. The young men, especially from the rural communities, found an outlet for their energies in the United States and in the Canadian West. Dr. Gaetz, although not a young man, decided to investigate the possibilities of obtaining suitable land in the North-West Territories, through which the Canadian Pacific Railway was building. Accordingly in September 1883 he travelled to the end of steel, which at that time was somewhere between Moose Jaw and Medicine Hat. There he had the good fortune to meet Chief Factor Richard Hardisty of the Hudson's Bay Company, who, with traditional Western hospitality persuaded Dr. Gaetz to accompany him from the end of steel to Calgary and thence north to Edmonton. The visitor was willing and even anxious to make this trip because he had received very favorable reports of the country from John T. Moore who had visited the region as an agent for the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead Company. The intermingling of prairie and woodland in the vicinity of Red Deer Crossing appealed greatly to Dr. Gaetz, and he gave it the name which it still bears, "The Parklands". He determined that somewhere in the region he would make his home.

Dr Gaetz returned to his family in London, and on April 1, 1884 they loaded their stock and goods for the long trip to the West. Because there was no line around the north shore of Lake Superior the journey had to be made through Minnesota and Dakota. They made good time, and on April 8 reached Calgary, at that time "a little frame station in a little village, whose houses were constructed

chiefly of boards and tar-paper. But the glorious Alberta sun was bright with all its accustomed power in a wonderfully radiant sky, and seemed to beckon the newcomers to a great heritage in a mighty land".

The three older boys (there were ten children) Ray, Halley, and Clarence, left for the Red Deer River with their outfit. Some half-bred freighters with whom they travelled promised to look after them. Horses drew all of the Gaetz wagons except one, which was drawn by an ox team, and these beasts gave their driver, Halley, endless trouble and delay. Fortunately the weather continued bright and sunny, and by the afternoon of the seventh day they reached Red Deer Crossing. When they were only a short distance from their destination they looked back and saw a cloud of dust over the trail. "Shortly, out of this dust emerged the Reverend John McDougall, who had got it into his head to bring father up from Calgary, and a little hundred mile jaunt for the Reverend John was as nothing!" The Reverend John took the father and the three boys to the Beatty shack, whose occupants made them all most welcome. They fed the animals and gave the visitors a meal of ducks and prairie chicken. Next morning when they set out in a democrat to find a suitable homesite they gradually explored their way down along the river to the region where Waskasoo Creek joined the Red Deer. Raymond Gaetz said later, "I really think what decided father on the location was the sight of the river with its beautiful trees along the banks and of the well-wooded hills which made such a charming background."

Near the river, about where the traffic bridge is today, some trapper or squatter had built a ten by twelve shack, but he had abandoned it. The Gaetz boys moved as many of their possessions as possible into this shelter. Next morning they started to construct a home of their own. The boys set to work getting out logs, while the father went to George Beatty to secure advice on how to build. Beatty at once offered to look after the whole affair. "The next morning who should we see coming across the flat but four men of sacred memory—George and James Beatty, Bill Kemp and Bob McClelland. To make a long story short they laughed at the logs we had been getting out, went down the river about a mile, took out some fine spruce, hewed them, and put up the house in an unbelievably short time." The lumber for the roof and interior finish was secured from the recently started sawmill of Mackenzie and Wishart. The workmanship may have been rough, but the newly milled spruce gave the air in the first home in Red Deer an unforgetably pleasant tang.

An incident in the construction of the Gaetz home typifies the Western attitude of the day. "One afternoon when all the work was done, father called these heroes about him (I really must repeat their names again, George and Jim Beatty, Bill Kemp and Bob McClelland) and said to them, now men, how much do I owe you for your work, and then I heard one of them swear fiercely for the first and only time before father; they were indignant because father asked them to accept pay for their work."

When the men had completed the house Dr. Gaetz and Clarence started off with two wagons for Calgary. On their return they brought with them Mrs. Gaetz and the rest of the children. The first family had settled in Red Deer.

During the first summer Dr. Gaetz and his sons accomplished a great deal of work such as breaking land, building corrals and shelter for the stock, and erecting fences. The oxen proved especially valuable for the chore of breaking. The family had brought large supplies of non-perishable foods, flour, beans, rice, and sugar with them, but the country itself provided a good deal. No closed season existed and wild birds and animals were a source of fresh meat. Duck eggs could be found around the sloughs. Gardens did well on the breaking.

At the end of August Mr. G. C. King, who owned a store in Calgary, and who, as we have seen, had established a trading post on the Red Deer in 1883, came to visit the Gaetz family, who he had met previously. Mr. King wished to dispose of his store at the Crossing as it was too far from Calgary for him to manage. He

persuaded Dr. Gaetz to purchase the business, paying for it as the stock was sold. The eldest son, Ray, as already mentioned, took charge of the post. "At that moment I was the only white trader between Calgary and Edmonton, an honor I assumed with great timidity, for I knew nothing whatever about trade, naturally, having just come out of high school. However, everyone of us had to do his bit, and this seemed to be mine."

A few days after Ray had taken charge a half-breed brought in three small skins. The youthful trader had no idea of what they were worth, but wanted to disguise his ignorance. He boldly offered twenty-five cents per skin. The half-breed accepted so quickly that Ray realized that something was wrong. He hurried across the trail to the stopping house where Mrs. Lennie told him that he should have paid five cents per skin for the furs, which were muskrat. Ray, realizing that the Indians would be almost his only customers during the winter, arranged with Mrs. Lennie to assist him in his trading deals. She also taught him the Cree language, and by spring he had mastered the native tongue sufficiently well to graduate into the Indian trading class.

Incidentally, shortly before Mr. Gaetz's death the writer asked him what furs he had obtained from the Indians. Mr. Gaetz enumerated the common ones, mink, beaver, muskrat, wolf, lynx, fisher, coyote, and then hesitated for some time, saying, "There was another one. I remember the Indian name for it perfectly, but I cannot think of the English term." The name actually was the wolverine but the incident shows how much of his trade had been with the Indians because after the lapse of half a century the Indian term was recalled.

Frequently the Indians would come on a cold, still night in winter when the temperature was ten degrees below zero, or even colder. Sounds would carry enormous distances but generally the silence was so complete that it was almost oppressive. The Stoneys had developed the habit of establishing a camp for their women and children some distance from the post while the men and older boys came on alone to do the trading. When Ray heard the crunching of snow under the feet of the horses he knew that his customers would soon be with him. Therefore, he hurriedly filled the stove to capacity with wood, placed on a huge kettle filled with water, and laid out a large supply of tobacco. The members of the Indian band unsaddled their horses and set the packs of fur against the walls of the post. The headman waited until all his party were ready, and then he led them, twenty or so in number, into the store. Etiquette demanded that all shake hands ceremoniously, and that each person, even down to boys of ten or twelve, be given a plug of tobacco. After these formalities had been complied with the natives sat down on the floor, as close as they dared to the stove, which by now was red hot.

"While they were silently filling their pipes (we felt that they were really too chilled to speak) we were exceedingly active, for our duty was to serve supper to them, which we did with a hearty good will, for although red men, strangely clad, were they not humans and our brothers, and had they not had a bitterly cold day's journey without a bite to eat all through the day? Great slices of bacon cut from such sides as we don't see nowadays, were put in the heavy iron frying pans, and presently the store dimmed with the gathering clouds from the sizzling pans. Our nostrils were regaled with a most delicious smell from the cooking sowbelly, and other smells emanating from about the stove that were not quite so pleasing."

Sacks were spread on the floor to serve as tablecloths and on them were placed the dishes, huge quantities of hard-tack biscuit, tins of thick treacle, and occasionally even butter. When the latter was available it was generally very strong and "self-reliant". After the tea had been thoroughly boiled, the Stoney word for "eat", phonetically "ho-mun-dink-touch", was pronounced, but not with the results one might expect.

"These half-starved men did not rush at the food, as some of their white brothers might have done, but with a good deal of dignity gathered around the food and partook of a real meal."

their proposed line through the heart of Alberta, they called Dr. Gaetz east to testify as to the value of the land. After hearing him a parliamentary committee decided that the land was potentially valuable for settlement, and that MacKenzie and Mann should be given assistance to enable them to build the Calgary-Edmonton line without further delay.

The Department of Agriculture published and distributed Dr. Gaetz's evidence in the form of a thirty-five page booklet entitled **"Six Years' Experience of a Farmer in the Red Deer District"**. The pamphlet bears the date February 26, 1890, and no doubt was influential in dispelling the opinion that land in Northern Alberta, as it was then called, was worthless. Dr. Gaetz described weather and crop conditions at some length. He stated that he had been warned not to go to Alberta because it never rained there. However, when he reached the location he had chosen, he wondered if the rain would ever stop, bcause it rained at short intervals from early June to August 17. Streams and sloughs were full to overflowing. Crops and gardens planted on that year's breaking did exceptionally well. The following winter, that of 1884-85, the time of the Rebellion, was very mild with little snow. He had seeded land in March, and a heavy snowfall gave abundant moisture for germination. The next winter was very severe, with snow lying on the ground until April. Although the summer of 1886 was drier than the preceding one, crops did well. The next two years were good growing years, although a severe frost on July 11, 1887 caught the barley when it was just heading out. The winter of 1888-89 was the mildest he had ever experienced, with no snow. This resulted in a lack of spring moisture, and the seed did not germinate. Rains finally did come that year at the first of July, but they were too late to produce good crops. The next winter 1889-90, Dr. Gaetz considered to be the coldest he had experienced in Alberta. He was confident, though, that the heavy snow would produce good crop conditions in the spring.

Dr. Gaetz's efforts, along with other factors, produced results, and in 1890 the first sod was turned on the Calgary-Edmonton Railway. Leonard Gaetz attended the opening ceremonies, and indeed was one of the chief speakers. The contractors pushed the grading forward rapidly, and by winter the work had reached the Red Deer River, where, during the cold months, men built a bridge. By June, 1891, steel had reached to Red Deer and the construction trains carried some freight and passengers as well as the loads of building materials.

It seemed certain that a townsite would be established at the point at which the railway crossed the Red Deer. In true Western fashion to inhabitants of the tiny hamlet at the Old Crossing dreamed of fortunes from the sale of building lots. The engineers had surveyed three possible routes, one at the ancient crossing, one at the Leonard Gaetz farm, and one downstream at the site of the Northey farms of today. The settlers were sure that the Old Crossing would be chosen, because it already had a nucleus of settlement, but the contractors permitted a "leak" of information that they actually favored the downstream route. A meeting was held with MacKenzie, Ross and Mann at Dr. Gaetz's house. Dr. Gaetz, his son, Halley, and his brother Isaac, offered the builders six hundred acres of land to cross at their holdings. This grant induced the contractors to put the station and the bridge in their present location.

In 1953 the only building at the Red Deer Crossing, the "Old Crossing" as it came to be called after the coming of the railway in 1891, is a restoration of Fort Normandeau. This old log building played a part in the Riel Rebellion of 1884-85, and, although no shots were ever fired at an enemy from it, it helped to maintain peace in the troublesome days of the Rebellion. Its very location indicated the fundamental importance of Red Deer in western development. It was and is in the centre of the developed part of Alberta, and the Red Deer River is a natural dividing line between the north and the south.

The basic causes of the rebellion were apparent to the early settlers before any actual outbreak occurred. The half-breeds foresaw the inevitable end of the

life which they understood and the establishment of a new order which they did not understand if the trickles of white settlement became a flood. Economic distress added to their discontent. The feeling of unrest spread from the half-breeds to the tribes.

The settlers began to notice a change in the Indian attitude some months before violence occurred. In 1883 relations in the Red Deer region had been very good, the Indians helping the settlers to find strayed animals, and the settlers providing the natives with meals on frequent occasions, but by April 1885 a large number of Indians had camped on the north bank of the river, opposite the tiny trading post, and their attitude had become distinctly menacing. Some of the more belligerent ones openly boasted that they would kill the settlers and appropriate their possessions. The more intelligent, though, realized that they could not win a war in which their only source of arms and ammunition would be their white enemies.

An example of the change in attitude occurred on the afternoon of April 11, 1885 when Mrs. Gaetz was terrified by the sight of a dozen horsemen, all decked in war paint, all chanting the war cry, and all shooting off their muzzle-loaders, approaching her farm home. The men of her family were all away engaged in breaking land. The Indians walked into the house without knocking and demanded food in a belligerent manner. Fortunately a large pot of beans was already cooking on the stove, and Mrs. Gaetz was able to serve the natives a meal of beans, bread, meat and tea. Etiquette and custom among the Indians demanded that they leave their weapons away from the table when eating, but on this occasion they kept them right at hand. However they made no attempt to molest Mrs. Gaetz and voiced no threats. After they had eaten they rode off quietly.

Late that day a rider from the north, his horse nearly dead from exhaustion, came to the trading post where the young Ray was alone. He was a government courier going south to Calgary. His duty was to warn any settlers that they should proceed to the southern town without delay. A few days previously the white settlers in the Red Deer region had discussed the matter of leaving Red Deer Crossing, but had decided to wait until the situation became clear. The courier's news and advice decided the matter for them and by noon of April 8th the Gaetz family, Emily Parry, George and Hatty Galloway, John Stewart, George Beatty and Bob McClelland, the total white population remaining in Central Alberta at that time, met at Red Deer Crossing to begin the trip south. They decided to leave in full daylight rather than to try to sneak away under cover of darkness. Their bold front was successful. Although a number of Indians gathered to watch the departure, no attempt was made to attack the whites. As the party travelled south to Calgary they passed through a land from which all settlers had fled. Elaborate precautions were maintained to guard against surprise. The only hostile act they encountered was one night when some half-breeds fired rifle shots in an unsuccessful attempt to stampede the horses. Although the trip to Calgary normally took five days, the refugees did not spare their animals, and completed their journey in three days. By way of contrast even a slow train goes from Red Deer to Calgary in three hours, and automobile drivers cover the distance in about two hours. Emily Parry, later Mrs. T. A. Gaetz, was fifteen in 1885 when she made the trip to Calgary. She died in November 1953. The improvements in transportation in Alberta which she saw in her lifetime are almost beyond belief. In 1885 the population of the valley where she lived consisted of one family. In 1953 there were ten thousand people in the same area.

Although the men from Red Deer Crossing stayed at Calgary for only three days, the women and children remained there for several weeks. Before they returned to the Red Deer River the men obtained a supply of government ammunition to use to protect themselves if they should be attacked. After the rebellion the Gaetz boys tried these cartridges, and found them worthless. During the absence of the settlers from Red Deer Crossing half-breed scouts broke into the trading post to secure supplies for which the federal government afterwards paid

Dr. Gaetz. Except for this trifling incident no property loss occurred in the wide area centering on the Red Deer Crossing.

On April 25th the First Division of the Alberta Field Force, with a train of one hundred and fifty-six wagons reached the Red Deer and forded the river without incident, although the stream was rising rapidly. Three days later the Second Division of the force, somewhat handicapped by a nine-pounder gun of which they inordinately proud, could not make the crossing of the wide, swift-flowing and treacherous stream, as they described it. They hastily built a raft from logs which they found on the spot, and two men swam to the north bank, taking with them a long rope made by tieing picket lines together. By means of this raft the men crossed the stream. On the last trip the gun was the main part of the load. The rope broke and the raft drifted about three miles before it grounded on the north shore. In 1940, in a gravel pit which would be about five miles downstream from the Old Crossing workers found a four-pound cannon ball several feet from the surface. At first people accepted the theory that this was a shot lost in 1885. However, this explanation is not likely, because the shot is the wrong size and there is no record of the 1885 forces having any cannon other than their nine-pounder. Military men have pointed out that in 1885 the artillery did not use solid shot. It is probably a relic of a still earlier era when fur traders mounted small brass cannon on some of their forts as at Rocky Mountain House.

The Mounted Police decided that the Red Deer Crossing was an excellent place to attempt to capture any possible fugitives who might seek to escape from Northern Alberta to the United States. Therefore, twelve members of the Mounted Police and twenty soldiers of the 65th Regiment from Montreal were stationed at Red Deer Crossing where the soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Normandeau built a fort. This building, which was named Fort Normandeau in honor of the young commanding officer, served to overawe any possible troublemakers in Central Alberta. The authorities also stationed at the fort twelve Mounted Police who were to conduct extensive patrols throughout Central Alberta.

By the end of June the soldiers had finished building the fort, which stood about a quarter mile south and a quarter mile east of the actual fording place. In size the sod-roofed structure was twenty-eight feet by twenty-four feet, two storeys in height. The soldiers built an eight foot palisade around the fort, and also dug a moat eight feet deep and ten feet wide about the place. The ditch was kept filled with water from the river. Because of its position and strength the fort was considered by many to be potentially as important as Edmonton. It was, however, never tested in action. Shortly after they had completed the construction of the fort the soldiers left for Edmonton, but the police detachment remained at Fort Normandeau. In 1899 the fort building was moved to the Cornett homestead in the Waskasoo district, south of Red Deer. The palisade was destroyed by a prairie fire, and the moat was filled in by silt from the river.

The Old Timers, in 1934, held a rally in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the settlement. At that time the association decided to establish a permanent meeting place for the future. The Canadian Pacific Railway sold the group three acres of land at the site of the old Red Deer Crossing, and the Municipality of Pine Lake donated a similar amount. Tom Gaetz organized a group to move the remains of the old fort, by then badly dilapidated, to the Old Timers' property. The task was done, and the old building restored as much as possible to its original appearance. In 1934 the Old Timers had the ancient Indian trail leading down to the Crossing made useable again. They placed the old fort very close to where the trail crosses the river. This trail, incidentally, is the oldest one still in use in Alberta.

The late James Dawson, who came to Red Deer in 1889 with the Mounted Police, had been in that service at the time of the Rebellion. His comment on life at Fort Normandeau is worthy of repetition. "We had a very quiet time of it—mostly little duties around the barracks, such as grooming the horses and keeping

the equipment in order, just waiting for something to turn up. This was a law-abiding community because there was a good class of people here." The Police actually remained at Red Deer Crossing for six years, until, with the coming of railway, they shifted their station to the new hamlet in October 1891. For the fall term of 1892 the Crossing School took up quarters in the Burch store in the new settlement. Previously, the entire civilian population of the crossing, all eighteen of them, had moved to the new townsite.

Chapter II

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF RED DEER AND ITS TRIBUTARY AREA

Red Deer is a very prosperous community. In 1953 purchases in the city's retail stores amounted to $18,200,000, which was an increase of 20.4 per cent over sales for 1952. In Alberta as a whole the increase in the same period was only .4 per cent. In 1953, 2,600 Red Deer families had a net disposable income after taxes of $10,086,000 for an average of $3,879, a substantial increase over the average of $3,695 in the preceding year. With retail sales much larger than local income Red Deer must be the centre of a large trading area. The tributary districts are one of the best mixed-farming regions of Western Canada, producing large amounts of wheat and coarse grains, sheep, hogs and dairy products. To the west of Red Deer lie the lumber towns of Rocky Mountain House and Caroline, while to the east of the city are the ranching areas of Pine Lake. Coal is mined at Nordegg in the mountains and at Ardley on the banks of the Red Deer River. With regard to the province as a whole Red Deer's position midway between Calgary and Edmonton has made it a distributing centre of importance.

Red Deer's economy has developed with that of the province. In the first two decades of its existence, 1891 to 1911, the town grew rapidly, reflecting the great influx of settlers to the West. Then from the beginning of the First Great War until the beginning of the Second there was a period of consolidation, which resulted in a slowing down of the rate of growth in the town itself, although the rural area continued to develop fairly rapidly. Statistics tell the story.

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Red Deer	323	2,118	2,328	2,344	2,389	2,924	4,042	7,575
Alberta	73,000	374,000	588,000	732,000	750,000	796,000	803,000	939,000
Red Deer as Per Cent of Total	0.44	0.56	0.40	0.32	0.32	0.37	0.50	0.81

In 1953 Red Deer had an estimated population of 10,000, which was one per cent of the population of Alberta.

An examination of the figures given in the table shows that the greatest increase, both in actual numbers and in relation to Alberta generally, has been since the Second Great War. The cause of this increase has been the realization by many firms of the advantages which Red Deer offers as a shopping centre and distributing point. Some of the newly established business concerns are the Chrysler Corporation, with a large warehouse just south of town; the Union Tractor plant; the Cadbury Chocolate Company's warehouse; the T. Eaton retail store; the F. W. Woolworth store and the Simpson-Sears mail-order office. In the period before 1914 many Red Deer business men hoped that industries would establish themselves in the town. Today, with fifty thousand people in the immediate trading area, most business people feel that Red Deer has a prosperous future as a market town, but not as a manufacturing centre.

The oldest continuous business enterprise in Red Deer is the Springbett Blacksmith Shop, which William Springbett established in 1890 in the old shack of