

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

of Medicine Hat and District Newsletter



Archives Image 0935.0001

Victoria Cross Presentation, 1918

President's Message

Medicine Hat and District Historical Society

Next Meeting:

November 15th, 7pm
SALH Regimental Museum
120 Cuyler Rd SE

For our meeting in November the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District is going to be doing things a bit different – we are straying from what we would consider to be our norm for meetings and speakers.

On **Wednesday, November 15th**, our meeting will take place at the **Patterson Armories** which are located at **120 Cuyler Road SE**.

The timing of our event will be our usual 7:00 p.m. to be followed by tours of the museum conducted by docents provided by the our past President, Wes Krause. The Regimental Museum is happy to be hosting the Historical Society for an unguided tour of the Regimental Museum. The Museum illustrates the long history of the South Alberta Light Horse and the units it perpetuates. The Museum Docents will be available for questions.

Wes has worked extremely hard making this museum a pillar of the community and we welcome the opportunity to become a bit more familiar with our military history.

We are delighted to have the opportunity to become familiar with this museum. From 1885 to today a Military presence has been a huge part of the development of Medicine Hat as a vibrant community. The contributions of local citizens serving in the Regiment during times of conflict and emergency are noted through displays and information placards.

You will see an accurate depiction of a World War One Trench system. There are Uniforms worn by soldiers of all eras. Personal stories of men who served overseas and their contributions to the Regiment and the soldiers they served with. Our very own Major David Vivian Currie is highlighted as the only Victoria Cross winner from the South Alberta Regiment. You will see radio equipment used by the Regiment as well as see how the Regiment nearly ceased to exist. There will be a small memorial for local soldier lost in Afghanistan as well as members of the Regiment who served there. Through several emergency events in the City the South Alberta Light Horse stepped up to help protect our community.

We look forward to our members welcoming this change in format. Thanks go out to Bruce Shepard for making the arrangement for this.

In this Issue

- President's Message* · 1
- Christmas Dinner* · 2
- Christmas Debate* · 2
- Mervyn Brown* · 3
- Cover-Up, con't* · 4
- Remembrance Day* · 5
- Membership* · 6
- Board of Directors* · 6

Historical Society's Christmas Dinner

We Welcome you to Attend our Soiree!

Sheila Tiegs & Executives

We are excited to welcome you to our upcoming Historical Society Christmas Dinner, 2023! Again this year, we will be hosting a wonderful Christmas Dinner at the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club on December 5th.

The Dinner will be at 6:30pm, and will include a wonderful meal made by the expert chefs at the Golf and Country Club.

The cost will be \$35 and is payable to Sheila Tiegs. You can call Sheila if you are interested in joining us for dinner on December 5th. Tickets will be available for purchase at the next Historical Society Meeting, on November 15th, or contact us to make alternative arrangements.



Image Courtesy of Esplanade Archives 1070.0630

We hope you have a wonderful holiday season, and look forward to seeing you soon.

Sheila Tiegs

My telephone number is 403-580-8283

Remembrance Day vs. Christmas

An Ongoing Debate - Let us Let Joy Shine

by J. Barrientos

There is much debate about Christmas and Remembrance Day. There are some who would decry any mention of Christmas before November 11th - and some who feel that sentiment is ill-informed. This newsletter certainly couldn't begin to contain that entire "debate" due to lack of space (and perhaps, lack of sanity)!

Yet, I will mention that the discussion itself has been around for quite some time. The Medicine Hat News published an article November 1918 stating: "Celebrate Christmas. We behold a moment unexampled in the ragged history of our races. Many of our soldiers are back again and our tortured prisoners are coming home. Gayety at last is realized and glows like fire in our hearts. At this season, of all, let joy shine." So, whatever your penchant, have a wonderful, respectful, holiday season.



1093.0066, November 1918

A 1918 postcard celebrating both the end of the First World War, and an upcoming Christmas.

Bad, Bad, Mervyn Brown

Uncovering a Cover-Up, 100 years later

by J. Barrientos

As an interesting turn of events, I have some scandalous and salacious news to share, almost 100 years after the fact. Indeed, as I mentioned above about Remembrance Day and the end of the First World War, our Mayor at that time in 1918 was none other than Mervyn A. Brown.

One of the more well-known images in the Archives is the gathering of the huge crowd outside of City Hall during the signing of the armistice to end the First World War. The image itself is magnificent - full of movement and life that is unusual for a still photograph. At the centre, with his hat removed out of respect, sits Mayor Mervyn Brown at the signature table. A mere 9 years after this photograph was taken, Mervyn Brown was about to be on trial.

Of course, Brown was no stranger to controversies and scandals. He had already been in hot water about the management (or, mismanagement) of the City's funds. He had generated a debt of \$275,000 which caused Brown himself to describe the City as "broke". Yet despite this, and a strong anti-Brown campaign by his adversaries, he was re-elected, and served as Mayor for two more tenures between 1917 and 1920; including as Mayor during J.P. Robertson's posthumous Victoria Cross presentation (front of Newsletter), Brown is at the centre of the image near flag, beside Lt. Governor Robert Brett.

November 11, 1918



Archives Image 0518.0001

So when I received notice from a Professor in Manchester, U.K. about a "scandal" around Mervyn Brown, I presumed it would be about the well-known mismanagement of City funds. The professor, Dr. Eloise Moss, is a Senior Lecturer in Modern British History at the University of Manchester, U.K., and her email subject line shocked me.

Far from simple financial crimes in 1912, her email detailed a scandal, a trial and a cover-up so sophisticated that we had never heard of it, even almost 100 years later. This was far more grievous than debts: in 1927 Mervyn Brown was convicted of multiple sexual assaults in England.

What's worse is the grandiose lengths that Brown conspired to, to ensure that his name was left out of the press. He used political clout as a previous Mayor of Medicine Hat, to ensure that close friends and benefactors kept his crimes under wraps. Indeed, so complex was the cover-up, that "Mervyn Brown" was reported as "Martin Brown" and his occupation as a mere "clerk" rather than man of political means.

Cover-Up, con't

The Crimes Uncovered of Mervyn Brown

by J. Barrientos

Mervyn Brown conspired with his close friend, a British MP by the name of Lt. Col. Walter Grant Morden, to keep his good name as far away from the scandal as he could. As well as being a Canadian-born Member of Parliament, Morden was also a large-stakes newspaper proprietor.

Morden ensured that the newspapers at the time reported the crimes as being perpetrated by "Martin" Brown.

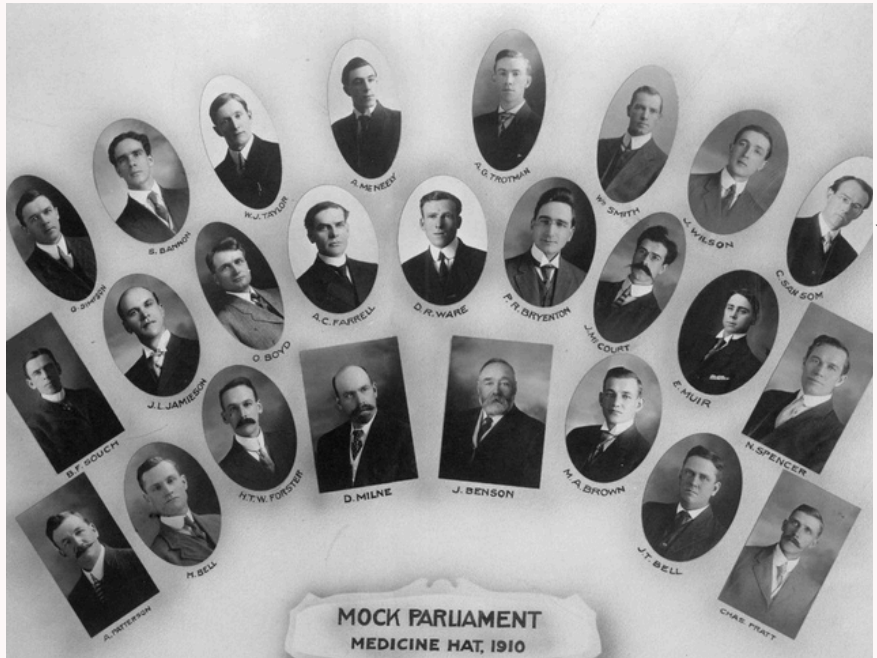
With friends in both the political and the financial realms, Mervyn Brown erased his involvement in the crimes as swiftly as possible. This certainly does not mean that he was found innocent; in fact, quite the opposite. He was sent to trial under his assumed name, and Dr. Moss was able to use the National Archives in the U.K. to view the court documents. "Martin" Brown plead guilty to a lesser

charge in an attempt to receive a more lenient sentence.

You can read the full articles about the trial and cover-up, written by Dr. Moss on the Active History website. The two part series is available online here:

<https://activehistory.ca/blog/2023/10/03/hunting-down-an-interwar-criminal-mervyn-brown-sexual-violence-and-an-anglo-canadian-cover-up/>

While shocking, it shows the importance of the Archives across the world. Gone now are the days that Brown enjoyed his anonymity, (though he passed away in 1955). Certainly, a case of: let history never be forgotten!



"Mock Parliament, 1910" 0222.0001



Mervyn Brown, Armistice Day, 1918

Image 0055.1230.03

Memorials to Our Veterans

In Memory of Lives Lost

by J. Barrientos

There are many ways to pay your respects to our Veterans in the coming days. As usual, there will be the Remembrance Day event which is hosted at the Cenotaph and at the Esplanade.

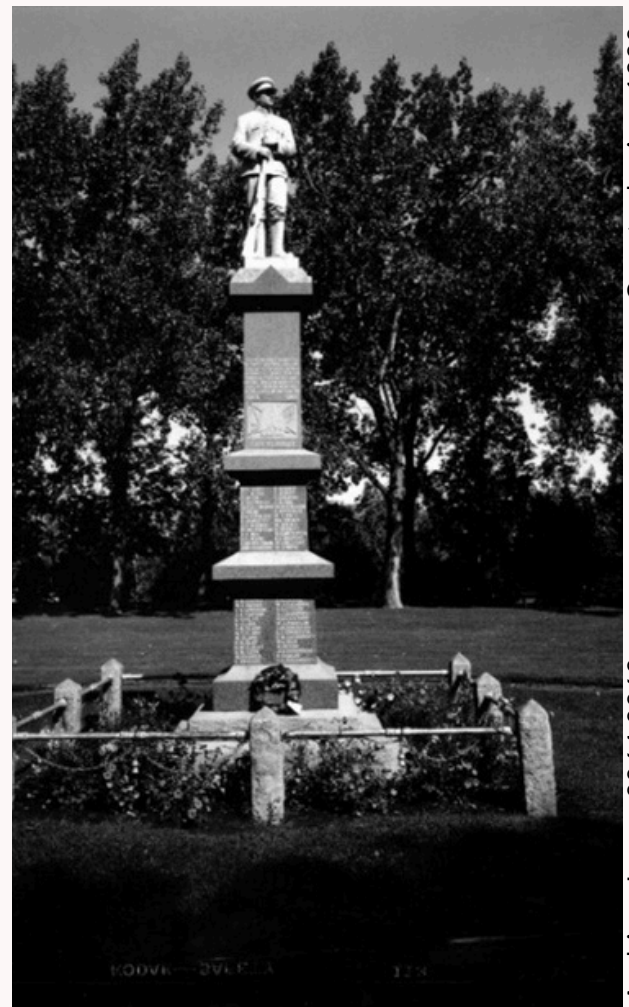


The Legion will be meeting at the Cenotaph in Riverside Veterans' Memorial Park, previously known as "Riverside Park" or "Memorial Park" as well as a few other names. The public is welcome to attend.

The Park was officially renamed in 2005, which coincided with the appointed "Year of the Veteran", the 60th Anniversary of the Second World War, the City's 100th Anniversary and Alberta's Centennial, all happening in 2005. This is one of the oldest parks in Medicine Hat, appearing on the subdivision maps in June, 1902. The only older park would be the CPR Gardens Park in 1900, but this park no longer exists.

Each November 11th, veterans, military groups and citizens come to the park to pay their respects. The cenotaph was placed in the park in the 1920s, and the marble statue of the soldier on the top was carved by Albert J. Hart. It is believed that the model for the soldier is Hart's son, Reginald Hart. The marble soldier stands 1.67m (5'6) in height on top of the cenotaph and watches over the names of the lives lost during times of conflict.

However you celebrate, we wish you a safe and serene Remembrance Day.



Cenotaph, circa 1920s

Archives Image 0064.0069

Membership Dues

Join the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District

Membership dues for 2023-2024 are now due.

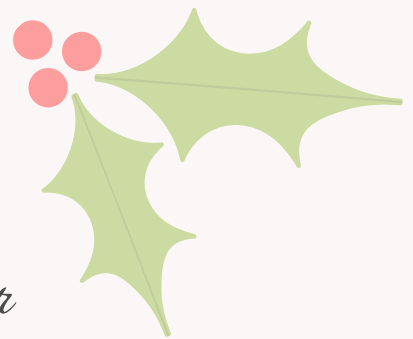
Your \$10 membership to the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District allows you to cast your vote on deciding factors at our meetings, as well as receive 5 editions of our Historical Society Newsletter via email or printed copy.

You can pay your \$10 membership dues by cheque by mail to the address below:

Please make cheques payable to:

The Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District

401 1 Street SE
Medicine Hat, AB
T1A 8W2



*Please join us for our
Christmas Dinner on December 5th at 6:30pm
At Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club*

Word of Thanks

The Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District partners with the Esplanade Archives in preserving and promoting our rich heritage. The Archives are a valuable resource for family research and local historical information. To make an appointment at the Archives, please call 403-502-8582, or email Jennifer Barrientos at jenuatr@medicinehat.ca. The Archives are located at 401 1 Street SE, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8W2, and as always, are free for you to use.

The Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District website: www.histsocmedhat.ca



Executives

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Judy Morris | President |
| Tom Hamp | Past President |
| Bruce Shepard | 1st Vice President |
| Earl Morris | 2nd Vice President |
| Leahandra Peterson | Secretary |
| Nick Martin | Treasurer |

Board of Directors

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Bruce Shepard | Programs |
| Sheila Tiegs | Book Sales |
| Lynn Rance | Membership |
| Lorine Marshall | Director-At-Large |

Jenni Barrientos Newsletter Editor