



Short History  
of  
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan  
CANADA

## **SHORT HISTORY**

—OF—

### **MOOSE JAW, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA**

Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan's third largest City has come a long way since the first C.P.R. train steamed into its boundaries on December 10, 1882. It has a population approaching 35,000 and is strategically situated for both railway and highway transportation. Moose Jaw is known as "The Friendly City", "The Mill City" and "The Buckle of the Wheat Belt", the latter being well understood in view of the great fertility of the wide farming area surrounding the City.

Farming, and a substantial railroad payroll, chiefly greased the wheels of Moose Jaw's early commercial life but the growth of other industry has shown healthy development through the years. These industries, together with a modern business section, serve the surrounding area of 40,000 square miles.

Industries located at Moose Jaw include a meat packing plant, two oil refineries, grain elevators, a seed cleaning plant, a large garment factory, two millworks, three window manufacturers and a grease manufacturing plant. Moose Jaw also manufactures insecticides and weed sprays, roofing materials, aluminum windows and steel buildings. There is an abattoir, an engine rebuilding plant, a large commercial greenhouse and Saskatchewan's first and only winery.

The City's industrial base continues steadily to increase and diversify, providing steady employment for hundreds of skilled workers who take pride in their work and have faith in the community. This faith was clearly demonstrated in 1966 by the construction of a \$300,000 Labour Temple which is conveniently located, beautifully appointed and a credit not only to the Moose Jaw and District Labour Council but also to this thriving community.

One of the picturesque features of this charming City is the Wild Animal Park which every year draws thousands of visitors to see the buffalo, deer, elk, lions, monkeys and other wild animals housed in a 500-acre site — one and one-half miles South of the City. American visitors will be especially interested to learn that when Sitting Bull led his Sioux warriors North to Canada, after the battle of the Little Big Horn, they camped on what is now the site of the Wild Animal Regional Park. To mark this link with history, the Moose

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Jaw Lions Club stages a Pow-Wow each May officially opening the popular park for a new season. The service club which has been active in the development of the park invites Indians from Sioux and Cree bands to camp at the park and stage their traditional dances. The colorful events attract thousands on the Victoria Day holiday.

The Kinsmen International Band Festival, held each year in May, has gained a reputation for excellence throughout all of Canada and the United States. Bands from centres large and small in Canada and United States are attracted to the festival.

Crescent Park, in the heart of the City, is 28 acres in extent. In this park are located the Public Library, the Art Museum, the City and District War Memorial, tennis courts, band shell, bowling greens, garden and a paddling pool. The Natatorium complex consists of a new olympic-size outdoor pool adjacent to the well-known indoor swimming pool. The swimming pools are surrounded by lawns, trees and flowers. Serpentine Lake winds through the centre of Crescent Park and comes within a stone's throw of the Natatorium. The Lake valley provides a beautiful setting for masses of blooms, rock gardens, bridges and terraced landscaping. It is here that great numbers of residents and visitors to Moose Jaw spend many leisurely hours watching the graceful swans and the noisy ducks.

In 1968 golf and curling enthusiasts combined their resources and built a half-million dollar Country Club containing 14 sheets of curling ice, an 18-hole golf course, licensed dining room and lounge. In the same year, a new 26-lane bowling centre was added to the City's outstanding recreational facilities. The bowling centre is accommodated in a locally-manufactured, mass-produced straight-wall steel building.

Peacock Auditorium, which seats 850 has outstanding features making it a cultural facility that is the envy of other communities. The Civic Centre accommodates up to 6,000 persons for concerts and 3,700 for winter sports. Moose Jaw operates its own tourist camp, trailer court, camping grounds and picnic areas on the river bank—all in River Park. Some of the best fishing grounds in the West are located within 60 miles of the City and sportsmen have long recognized that the Moose Jaw area is unequalled for upland and migratory game bird shooting. A large summer resort and Saskatchewan's finest ski run, complete with snow machine and ski-lift, are situated 20 miles to the north at White Track on Buffalo Pound Lake.

Jet Pilot Training is the chief function of the Canadian Forces Base located two miles south of the City. Students from various NATO

countries, as well as Canadians, are trained here. Kalium Chemicals Limited, the world's first potash mine using the "solution method", was built 12 miles east of Moose Jaw on Trans-Canada Highway, at a cost exceeding \$40,000,000. Another boon to our economy is the Saskatchewan Technical Institute, sponsored Federally and Provincially, which has an annual enrolment in excess of 2,000 students. Location of the South Saskatchewan Dam and Power Plant, North-West of Moose Jaw, in due course will provide many economic benefits to our City.

The Moose Jaw retail market in 1966 was 85% above the national average. This means that there is money to be made by wholesalers and retailers in this prosperous community.

The City has two well-equipped hospitals — Moose Jaw Union Hospital (254 beds), and Providence Hospital (161 beds). Also, there is the Saskatchewan Training School for retarded children.

No picture of Moose Jaw would be complete without a tribute to its alert and enterprising Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has played a major role in the City's development and is active to all phases of community activity.

Moose Jaw, ideally located at the confluence of the Moose Jaw River and Thunder Creek, has an area of 9,760 acres within the City limits and its elevation varies from 1,778 feet to 1,840 feet. It is located 100 miles from the international boundary, 400 miles from Winnipeg on the east and the same distance from Calgary on the west. The Provincial capital is 40 miles east of Moose Jaw on Trans-Canada Highway.

In 1881 no building of any kind broke the vast, grassy expanse now occupied by the City of Moose Jaw, nor was there a single building in what is now generally recognized as Moose Jaw territory. The only signs of human life were traces of Indian camps along the Moose Jaw River, near what is now known as Kingsway Park. The wooded valley was a favorite camping ground for the Crees and Sioux. Two years later, one ambitious Moose Jaw lumber dealer offered ready-made houses for sale. Perhaps that small item, better than anything else, tells the Moose Jaw story—a story of the founding of a fine, modern city; a story as courageous as Saskatchewan itself.

Any sign of the white man's way of life in 1881 lay in the survey pegs which marked the Fort Qu'Appelle to Fort Walsh trail and it was over that trail in July, 1881, that J. H. Ross (later Senator Ross) and Hector Sutherland drove along on an exploratory trip from

Winnipeg. Ross and Sutherland liked what they saw and the next January, with three others, they returned to establish the new community. The promised land also had been seen that fall by Henry Battell who was on a survey trip further south. Battell went back to Toronto to spread the good word of limitless land and on May 24 arrived at the settlement with his brother, Jud. The fact that they had to freight their chattels from the end of steel near Brandon did not worry them. That year Henry Dorrell, R. K. Thompson, E. N. Hopkins and F. W. Green arrived to take homesteads, while Arthur L. Davies first saw Moose Jaw on Sept. 22, 1881. At that time, of course, the route that the C.P.R. would follow along the prairies was a favorite guessing game. Manitoba was a small square-shaped province of about one-third its present size and the remainder of the western territory was lumped together under the name North-West Territories.

Early settlers could get homesteads free and were offered an additional 160 acres at \$2.50 per acre. It soon was recognized that the value of the land would skyrocket if it was adjacent to the railway line and in 1882 Moose Jaw felt it had a good chance to be both a divisional point for the C.P.R. and the capital of the inevitable new province. Regina won out in the contest for capital honors but Moose Jaw got the divisional point.

By 1883 there were 4 stores and 30 houses in Moose Jaw. Construction activity proceeded night and day but there is no record of the order of construction of the first stores. However, the Moose Jaw News of May 4, 1883, commented: "Two months ago Moose Jaw was distinguishable from the boundless prairie only by its natural beauty and two buildings. Today it contains upwards of 100 buildings, many of which are handsome and substantial structures."

It said that there were 30 general merchants, representatives of all the big eastern agricultural agencies, 5 lumber yards, 3 livery stables, 2 bakeries, a drug store, 2 furniture dealers, barber shops, lawyers, doctors, architects, 2 churches and "about a dozen hotels and cafes".

Moose Jaw suffered some growing pains but it certainly developed in a hurry! In February 1884, it was incorporated as a Town with J. A. Ross being elected Mayor by a single ballot after a red hot election campaign. First Councillors were Thomas B. Baker, George G. Gagen, D. McLean and J. T. Simpson. On Nov. 20, 1903, Moose Jaw attained status of a City.

Business flourished but a bad fire on December 11, 1891, wiped

out many establishments. Traces of the blaze were soon cleared and townfolk moved steadily forward - so much so that by 1900 the "Moose Jaw 1885 Old Timers' Association", with James Campbell as President had been organized. Other officers were G. M. Annable, Vice-President; W. C. Sanders, Secretary-Treasurer, and Committeemen E. N. Hopkins, A. Dalgarno, Thomas Bennie, George Might, Hugh Thompson and J. G. Beesley.

By October, 1903, just prior to achieving a City status, Moose Jaw's population was estimated 2,500. The early settlers had built wisely and bravely; they built a city of fine wide streets on a very beautiful location. They had first used electric lights around 1890. In 1893 there were 23 telephone connections in the town".

In the early days Moose Jaw had an exceptional claim for recognition in Western Canada. On December 5, 1884, in an area occupying more than a million square miles, the "School District of the Town of Moose Jaw, Protestant Public School District No. 1 of the North-West Territories" was organized. Even earlier, some private classes had been conducted in a house near the present site of the Grant Hall Hotel and in 1885 classes were held in a hall at Main and Manitoba Streets where the Churchill Hotel now stands. The first permanent school was built in 1889, following a vote to approve a By-law calling for the borrowing of \$5,000 for the erection of the school.

Perhaps the best description of Moose Jaw in 1903 is taken from a newspaper article penned in November of that year: "During the past 20 years the growth has been rapid, the buildings are substantial and, on the whole, the town is said to be the best built in the Territories...The Canadian Pacific Railway station is the finest between Montreal and Vancouver. Some \$30,000 is paid out monthly by the railway in wages which are spent in the town furnishing thereby a good local market for farm produce". 800 miles of railway are operated from this point, its being the headquarters of the Superintendent and Officials of the Western district.

"The population is 2,500 and growing rapidly. Railway and other lands, both wild and improved, can be purchased at prices ranging from \$6.00 to \$15.00 per acre".

Prospective settlers were told that the fare on the Soo Line from Portal (American border) to Moose Jaw was \$1.70 and that settler's effects were admitted free. Coal from lignite mines cost \$4.00 a ton.

In 1903 Moose Jaw was a town of wooden sidewalks but the Town Council wanted something better for the coming "City". So they decided experiment with concrete: "The rapid growth of our Town, in the past few years has brought the sidewalk question very much to the fore and ratepayers are much interested as to the best class of sidewalks to lay. Heretofore, plank walks have been the rule but it now is being discovered that plank walks are very unprovable where there is any great amount of traffic. Attention is being directed to the more permanent cement walk. The action of the Town Council in putting down a short piece of this walk is to be commended. If this experiment is successful, the chances are that it will be the sidewalk of the future in this country".

Here are some market prices in November, 1903, when Moose Jaw was incorporated as a City:

Wheat, No. 1 Hard, per bushel.....	62 cents
Oats, per bushel.....	25 cents
Hay, loose per load.....	\$5.00
Potatoes, per bushel.....	75 cents
Butter, dairy, per lb.....	15 to 20 cents
Eggs, per dozen.....	20 cents
Bacon, per lb.....	12½ to 17 cents
Coal, per ton, delivered.....	\$3.75

The origin of the City's name has not been determined exactly. A number of legends, inspired by Indians and early explorers, give various explanation for the choice of "Moose Jaw".

One legend claims that the name was associated with the course taken by the Moose Jaw River which was thought to resemble the jawbone of a Moose.

Another legend attributes the name to the Indian word for Moose Jaw, Moosochapiskun. The literal translation is said to be: "The place where the white man mended the cart with the jawbone of the Moose". The white man was said to be Lord Dunmore or the Earl of Mulberry.

There is yet another legend which probably is closest to the truth, Moose Jaw, in winter, is warmer than most of the surrounding territory. Legend has it that the native Indians named this location Moosgaw which, loosely translated, means "warm breezes". With the arrival of the white man, the settlement soon became known as Moose Jaw.

