

Report on Moose Jaw Agricultural Society

The Moose Jaw Agricultural Society was organized on June 26, 1884, at a meeting of Moose Jaw and District Citizens for the purpose of advancing the interests of the farmers in the Moose Jaw District and of Agriculture in general. J. W. Suchomel of the Robin Hood Mills wrote, "The foundation of the Moose Jaw Agricultural Society has been so well laid and the old-timers of the district did their work so thoroughly that their efforts continue to dominate the quality of wheat in the Moose Jaw District, which continues to market the highest percentage of pure strain wheat in the western Provinces." In his opinion this was primarily due to the effective teaching of the Agricultural Society.

Professor John G. Rayner of the University of Saskatchewan noted that the society was one of the first five organized in the province in 1884 and for continued support of a diversified program had probably no peer. A vigorous program, undertaken from the beginning, had been accorded fine support from both country and city.

Many community enterprises have been promoted by the Agricultural Society. Through its efforts the Robin Hood Flour Mills were established here. It brought the need of a Community Hospital before the Town Council. As a result a twenty-eight bed hospital was officially opened on April 17, 1906. It was instrumental in having the C. P. R. plough fire-guards along the right-of-way to prevent prairie fires. After the frost in 1884, the society successfully negotiated with C. P. R. authorities for a supply of seed grain, on credit, for the following year. Again in 1890, it procured and distributed seed to needy settlers. It petitioned that farmers be allowed to take up second homesteads on cancelled lands, without going forty miles from their first one. It brought in new varieties of cereals and vegetables to improve the quality of the produce grown and in many other ways worked to improve conditions in the community.

Through the years the society has sponsored Summer, Fall and Seed Grain Fairs, Plowing Matches, Stallion Shows, Seed Drilling, Standing Fields of Grain, Summerfallow and Better Farming Competitions, joint shows with the Horticulture and Poultry Associations as well as Agriculture Short Courses and Extension Meetings. Its relations with the city and surrounding districts has been most cordial. Financial assistance has been accorded by the City Council, Chamber of Commerce, the adjacent rural municipalities, business firms and individual rural and urban donors.

As early as 1884, exhibits of sheaves, grains and roots were sent to the London Exhibition. In 1893, two bushels each of wheat, barley, oats and peas and one-half bushel of flax, rye and beans were forwarded to the Chicago Fair. Local exhibitors have been consistent winners at the Provincial Seed Grain Fair in Saskatoon. The J. H. C. Shield donated to the Agricultural Society winning the Aggregate Number of Points was won on thirteen occasions. Many prizes and Championships have been won for grain and livestock at the Toronto Royal, Chicago International and many other fairs and exhibitions.

In 1930 speeches on "How to make the Cow Pay the Store Bill," "Soil Drifting" and a debate on "Resolved that Horse Power is more suitable than Mechanical Power for Farms" denoted the problems of the day.

The members believed that education is the real work of progressive societies and not the money to be made. It fostered the spirit of doing better in all farming operations and having better home surroundings. To this end, boys were trained for the Farm Camps in Regina and Saskatoon, where they won individual prizes, medals, shields and scholarships. Beginning with the Turford Swine Club in 1927, Boys and Girls Clubs were sponsored. These became 4-H Clubs in 1952 and the list included Grain, Dairy, Beef, Homecraft and Poultry Clubs. Recently, the emphasis in 4-H Clubs has been training in Citizenship.

In this, the Centennial year of our country, we the present members of the Moose Jaw Agricultural Society, wish to express our appreciation for the solid foundation laid by the pioneers for the past eight-three years of Agricultural Achievement in the Moose Jaw District. May we be worthy to follow in their footsteps.