

The Saskatoon Heritage Society Newsletter

Heritage Connections

June 2024, Volume 15, number 1

**The Saskatoon Heritage Society's
2024 Annual General Meeting
Thursday, July 4th, 2024 at 7.00 p.m.**



To be held at



601 Taylor Street

Following the official AGM Meeting, Patti McGillivray will give a brief presentation on the-

'History of the Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Centre'

**A tour of the building, and grounds, will also be conducted by the Facilities
Manager.**

**Take advantage of the opportunity to visit this long-standing Saskatoon facility, and
its wonderful surroundings, before it's permanent closure!**

Light refreshments will be available!



**The Saskatoon Heritage Society
Board Members**

President: Lenore Swystun

Vice-President: vacant

Past-President: Peggy Sarjeant

Treasurer: James Wood

Secretary: Terry Hoknes

Directors:

Claire Bullaro, Linda Dietz, Roland Dumont,
Patti McGillivray, Al Morton, and Barbara Shawcross.

Notice to our members:

We would like some help on the Board.

If you are interested or want to know more, please contact Peggy (306 652-9801) or another Board member, leave a message via our website or talk to us at the AGM.

From the President...

Dear Members,

Welcome to the Spring/Summer issue of our Saskatoon Heritage Society Newsletter. On behalf of the board, I want to thank you for your dedicated involvement. Your active participation is crucial, especially now as we face several key issues, including the development of a downtown entertainment district, zoning changes, updates of our municipal heritage plan and the upcoming municipal election.

Our advocacy in historic neighbourhoods and throughout the city is stronger because of your insights. Your perspectives are essential as we tackle these and other important matters.

Looking ahead, there are many ways to engage further with our work. Whether by joining us at events, participating in tours, or becoming a part of our committees or the board, your contributions are valued and needed.

Thank you for all that you do. Together, we are making a significant impact.

Best regards,

Lenore Swystun
President, Saskatoon Heritage Society

From the Local History Room, SPL...

Saskatoon Public Library's Local History Room wants to hear about your experiences living, working and playing in Saskatoon today. To ensure we fulfill our mandate of collecting a living history of this place we all share, we need your help!

Visit <https://saskatoonlibrary.ca/collections/local-history/current-donations/> today and share your photos, videos, drawings, and thoughts about Saskatoon.

Stevie Horn, Special Collections Librarian

306.975.3284

s.horn@saskatoonlibrary.ca



From the City Archives, Jeff O'Brien...

The City of Saskatoon Archives is currently on the move, from our old digs at 224 Cardinal Crescent into a new space on the main floor of the old Post Office Building (“Civic Square East” as they now call it, a civic office building since 2014). We have been closed since April and don’t expect to be open to the public until after the July 1 long weekend.

It has been a monumental undertaking to this point, with Jeff and Ken working tirelessly to strip off the shelves, get everything on pallets and supervise the move to CSE. Now we’re putting it all back up again. As of this writing, we have everything on pallets in the new space, still waiting to be unloaded. What it will look like when you read this is anyone’s guess.



From the research desk of Terry Hoknes...

The Metropolitan Store

95 years ago this summer one of Canada's greatest department store chains came to Saskatoon. F.H. Brewster started the business in 1908 under his own name in Winnipeg as a five and dime store. As the franchise grew the company became the Metropolitan Stores on May 11 1920. As the economy grew during the 1920's the chain expanded into Saskatoon and Regina opening in 1929. By 1928 the chain had 130 stores throughout North America. The chain was taken over by SAAN in 1997 (which folded in 2008).¹

The southern half (50 feet) of the Helgerson Block at 115-119 2nd Ave South (up and downstairs) was sold for approx \$1,800 per foot on November 5 1928.² A.W. Heise Company was hired to do \$40,000 renovations to the Helgerson Block reported on May 31, 1929.³ The frontage of the building was extended out 2 feet into the sidewalk. A full basement was constructed. Retail would be featured on the main floor and basement with offices upstairs.⁴ The grand opening of the Saskatoon store was held on August 30, 1929 carrying a line of products from 5 cents to a dollar.⁵ A very positive review was published on August 31st. Large crowds lined up for the grand opening. The interior color scheme was red and black. There were 21 counters to help customers.⁶ F.E. Wouch was the store manager. The store had 35 clerks plus office and warehouse staff. The general department store carried products from clothing to cosmetics, hardware and toys.⁷ Numerous advertisements during opening week included Brassieres for 39 cents, Infants rubber pants for 15 cents and curling irons for \$1.00 on August 28.⁸ Amazing interior photos of the many long rows of displayed merchandise were advertised on December 31.⁹ The Royal Shoe Store had been located at 117 2nd Ave South but was forced to move to a new location prior to the building renovations.¹⁰ The Met opened just two doors north of the stunning Capitol Theatre which had just opened on May 11, 1929.¹¹

The store was renovated in 1956 and included a new modern 30 stool lunch counter.¹² The store was purchased by Bank of Nova Scotia and was demolished in November 1977 to make way for a new \$2 million, four-storey building replacing the entire Helgerson Block, at the SW corner of 22nd Street and 2nd Ave South.¹³ The current Bank of Nova Scotia bank was at 135 2nd Ave South which was one door south of the Capitol Theatre. The demolition of the Helgerson Block and the moving of the Bank set off a chain events which led to the destruction of the Capitol Theatre at 127 2nd Ave South



(Left) Metropolitan Store, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, December 31, 1929, page 24.

(Right) 1939: King George VI and Queen Elizabeth parade on 2nd Avenue. Stores from left to right: Capitol Theatre, Paramount Shoes, Hearn, and Metropolitan. SPL Local History PH-2014-354.



(Left) 1961. Stores from left to right: Burton Shoes, Vern Welker Ltd., and Metropolitan Store. SPL Local History, B-13541.

two years later in 1979 (2 doors south of the Metropolitan). It is very likely that if this building was not demolished the Capitol would have survived. The Metropolitan department store was located in prime real estate on 2nd Ave South and was a major shopping spot for Saskatoon residents for 48 years.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Stores

² Star Phoenix, Nov 5 1928, page 3

³ Star Phoenix, May 31 1929, page 3

⁴ Star Phoenix, May 4 1929, page 3

⁵ Star Phoenix, Aug 26 1929, page 6, large ad for grand opening.

⁶ Star Phoenix, Aug 31 1929, page 3, photo and review of store opening

⁷ Star Phoenix, Aug 28 1929, page 14, article and photos of staff

⁸ Star Phoenix, Aug 28 1929, page 15, large ad for grand opening

⁹ Star Phoenix, Dec 31 1929, page 124, ad with photos of store interior and main staff

¹⁰ Star Phoenix, Apr 13 1929, page 2, ad for closing out sale of Royal Shoe Store

¹¹ Star Phoenix, May 9 1929, page 15, grand opening ad for the Capitol Theatre.

¹² Star Phoenix, Oct 24 1956, page 21, ad for renovated store

¹³ Star Phoenix, Nov 18 1977, page 4, photo sketch of the new Bank of Nova Scotia.

From the research desk of Barbara Shawcross..

Are you lucky? Some of us are, to have historical landmarks be a part of the streetscapes of our neighbourhoods. Some of us have memories associated with a theatre, a place of worship, a storefront. But what about the rest? The majority of Saskatoonians that have no clue, and no connection to the history of our city? How can we encourage their curiosity?

Saskatoon has been home to many. There is evidence of First Nations peoples inhabiting the area thousands of years before immigrant settlements began to be built in the late 1800s. The Marr Residence, built in 1884, is still standing and is an immersive example of history. Homes are something that we all can relate to, a commonality amongst all cultures. It is this relatability to historic homes that can encourage the imagination of travelling back in time.

Museum exhibits are a great source of immersive experiences. Wanuskewin Heritage Park hosts seasonal Tipi Sleepovers available to the public. To live temporarily in this iconic structure is a unique opportunity to visit the past. The Western Development Museum located in Saskatoon has recreated the streetscape of "Boom Town". A replica of a 'Soddie' home continues to have lasting effect on me. Small in size, typically occupied by a large family, sitting in a dusty farmyard is unsettling. I reflect at how lucky I am to have modern day conveniences.



(Left) Tipis. Courtesy of SPL Local History Room, B-5112



(Right) Family in front of sod house (soddie). Courtesy of SPL Local History Room, B-12615.

The progress of the City of Saskatoon brought benefits to its citizens. Access to transportation and the development of infrastructure supported growth. The “City of Bridges” provided the means to deliver superior building materials to establish the early neighbourhoods. As the population increased, so did the economy. Permanency and home ownership was considered a symbol of personal success. Residents were inspired to incorporate global architecture styles to not only personalize their homes but also to demonstrate wealth. The City of Saskatoon includes unique houses and their related stories of generations that have called them home.

(Right) Houses. Courtesy of SPL Local History Room, LH-833.



Local information is available through walking tours guided by the Saskatoon Heritage Society and the annual event of Doors Open Saskatoon. Another community partner can be found with the Saskatoon Public Library. The local history collection, including photographs and newspapers, is available to view both online and at the Frances Morrison branch.

Education is integral to the preservation of history. Topics of interest vary by the individual. Discovering and sharing facts is an effective way to inspire others. Educators within the province of Saskatchewan have been successful in doing just that within their classrooms. Our youngest citizens are an impressive bunch. I was recently a judge at the Saskatoon Region Heritage Fair that was hosted by the Western Development Museum. Children presented their projects that ranged from Gordie Howe to the Canadian Pacific Railway. I was dazzled by their research, their poise, and their enthusiasm. This event was a great reflection of our amazing Saskatoon educators. The origin story of my passion for history was as a young student. My class participated in a program, now discontinued, at the Government House in Regina. Each child was assigned a character based on politicians and dignitaries. Role playing as a Duchess in the historical interiors was magical. I wanted to know more. I asked questions. I read books. I watched movies. The history bug had taken a big bite out of me. Developing an appreciation for history is possible for anyone. They just need to walk through the right doorway.

Saskatoon History Review



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Available on 4th July 2024:

For \$20.00 via e-transfer (preferred) or PayPal on our website: www.saskatoonheritage.ca or by mailing an order with a cheque using the form below. Please note that postage will be \$5.00 extra. Back issues are also available via our website or by contacting Peggy at 306-652-9801. The Saskatoon History Review is also available at the following locations: McNally Robinson, Turning the Tide Bookstore, WDM Gift Shop, and SaskMade Marketplace.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

Please make cheques payable to the Saskatoon Heritage Society and mail to:
Saskatoon History Review, c/o 604 Main Street, Apt. 302, Saskatoon, SK, S7H 0J7