

# Sunnybrook Farm Museum NEWSLETTER

## FALL 2024

Hello, dear friends. What an incredible summer and fall it has been at the museum! Pioneer Days was a resounding success, with plenty of activities for our visitors to enjoy. We extend a heartfelt thank-you to our events committee and our amazing volunteers for making it all happen. This year, we deposited over \$11,000 from gate receipts, silent auction sales, and cinnamon bun sales (\$3,300 of that total). The ladies achieved over \$7,000 in food sales.



When you add up the preparation, cleanup, and volunteer activity during the weekend, it totals about 1,000 hours of staff and volunteer time. But Pioneer Days is not just about the funds raised—it's an opportunity to welcome new families and visitors to the museum, showcasing our site and celebrating Red Deer's rich history. We have so many visitors who attend this event that say they've lived in the city for 50 years and never come to the museum, so that's a big win for us.

We are celebrating some significant donations to the society this year. Susan Eileen Deering, a Red Deer teacher who frequently brought her classes to the museum, left us a generous bequest gift in

her memory after her untimely passing last year. We were honoured to meet her parents, Gerry and Mary Jane Hepworth, who are already well known to many of our volunteers for their community support. They donated an additional amount toward our future development projects.

Additional heartfelt thanks go to Carol and Rene Weber, Dru Christensen, Hugh and Carole Kellough, Ian Spearing, and Gerry and Loretta Winia for their donations to the museum this Fall; and to the Central Alberta Vintage Automobile Association for their \$500 contribution from their summer auto show.

These remarkable gifts have opened doors to new development opportunities. Our Board of Directors has been diligently planning future projects. As always, our philosophy is to keep significant donations in reserve until we can multiply them through matching government grants. For example, the \$185,000 Ladimer Novak Estate gift in 2014 became the \$540,000 Calder School Restoration Project by 2018. An anonymous gift of \$250,000 in 2019 for a church restoration project became the \$580,000 Willowdale Presbyterian Church in 2023. Currently,





we've submitted a proposal to the City and Province for a new snow plow and mower to help with year-round groundskeeping. We have lots of time to consult with all of our members and start working on plans before pursuing new building projects in a few years, but what an exciting time for us!

Most of you have heard about Dorothy and Ruth Bower's generous donation of 13-acres of land to the museum this year. While most of it is environmental preserve, there is a 1.8-acre portion at 10 Stanley Crescent that is open for residential development. We're working with local developers and the City on what kind of opportunities this opens up, but for the time being the entire parcel is zoned agricultural and we are using it for hay.

We also wrapped up an exceptional year for our cash raffle, with 16 books sold at the Red Deer Rebels game on October 19 and over 20 books sold on the final day of the Agri-Trade Show, November 13–15. This year's raffle brought in \$15,040, plus \$1,310 from the quilt raffle—our best year ever! A big thank-you to all our members who sold tickets in their own communities. The \$5,000 cash prize went to Doug Shepherd, a 92-year-old retiree from Red Deer, and the quilt was won by Lesvia Manciq, also of Red Deer. Doug was very excited about writing a few extra cheques to his grandkids this Christmas!



Our farm families continue to gather and celebrate with us over food. Our Turkey Supper event, held October 8–10, was sold out again and a tremendous success. We continue to have power issues in the concession building where we cook the turkeys, so next year we'll be looking at upgrading our power services to the building so we can stop having brown-outs. It was great to see Pat Setters at one of the dinners!

The ladies came together for our fall pie sale on November 19 & 20 and sold 575 pies, most of them picked up by Noon on the first day. Thanks to all of the volunteers that spent time picking up materials, making pie dough and filling pies over multiple days. A few visitors were upset that we ran out on the first day, so we'll continue to push for people to reserve in advance.

Finally, we ended the season with a volunteer potluck on November 21 at Bower Kin Community Hall. During this event, we recognized George and Shirley Gaetz with the Golden Furrow Award for their family's service to





the original settlement of the area. Lavila Lang, Gerry Winia, and Bill Hanrahan were also honored for their dedicated volunteer service and presented with copies of Shane Young's historic prints of Sunnybrook Farm in the 1900s.

In staffing news, we received a Community Initiatives Program grant to continue our volunteer recruitment and retention efforts. I'm please to report that we have hired Nicole Johnson starting on October 1 as our new Curator and Volunteer Experience Manager. Nicole is building on the work Crystal did last year.

As the year comes to a close, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a warm holiday season. Thank you for your dedication to making Red Deer a better place for everyone.

Our next event is the Family Day sleigh rides on February 17, 2025—we look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

*Ian Warwick, Executive Director*  
*Robin Larsen, President*



## History Snapshot

[Article reprinted from Motor In Canada, November, 1940]

### FIRST TRACTOR SALE IN THE WEST.

James Bower, Red Deer, Alta., farmer, purchased an International "15 H.P. Famous" in May, 1907, and thus introduced power farming in the West.

*PIONEERS settlers in the Province of Alberta and pioneer tractor farmers are the Bower family of Red Deer, Alberta.*

In 1899 James Bower came out from Orangeville, Ontario and settled in the Red Deer district. He was one of the few farmers in those days who were mechanically inclined. He had operated a sawmill



and sash and door factory in Orangeville but after a succession of hardships which culminated in his steam boiler blowing up and severely injuring himself, he decided to come West.

After settling in the Red Deer District which was then heavily wooded, he soon came to realize that clearing and breaking the land by means of hand and horse labor was an almost insurmountable task. For a long time he pondered the idea of constructing some sort of gasoline farm tractor to do the job and finally commenced the

construction of an experimental tractor, using a heavy mountain wagon with wide gauge wheels and 5-inch tires. On this he proposed to mount an old 8 h.p. gasoline engine and contrive some means of transmitting this power to the wheels.

About that time his local Harvester dealer, Mr. Botterill, informed him of the efforts of the International Harvester Company towards development of a practical gasoline farm tractor. The first shipment of tractors had arrived at Calgary, where Mr. Bower promptly went to inspect them. An order was taken subject to demonstration on the Bower farm, ½ mile South of Red Deer. The order, dated May 14, 1907, bears this clause:

“If engine meets reasonable requirements in pulling 2, 14-inch Plows after 2 days’ trial, same to be accepted, otherwise engine to be returned to Calgary, freight prepaid by purchaser.

Two days later, on May 16, the historic demonstration took place on the Bower’s Sunnybrook farm at Red Deer. The tractor successfully pulled 3, 14-inch Sulky plows, and so the first sale of an International gasoline tractor in Western Canada was made.