

The Megaphone

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meg·a·phone [meg-uh-fohn] –noun

1. a cone-shaped device for magnifying or directing the voice, chiefly used in addressing a large audience out of doors or in calling to someone at a distance.

www.dictionary.com

Hello everyone!

In this week's *Megaphone*, we're sharing information about a great event held in August in Maple Creek.

Hugh Henry, of the Swift Current Museum - who was a member of the event organizing committee and provided this information to *The Megaphone* - says more than 200 people attended the *76 Ranche Round-up* on August 15, 2009. It sounds like a great time was had by everyone in attendance!

“The idea was initiated by a couple of ranching ladies whose families own land that was part of the 76 Ranch. I got involved because it fit well with the mandate of our museum,” Hugh wrote to me recently. “The event was held in 2009 because it marked the 100th anniversary of the final sale of the original 76 property.”

The one-day event was organized and presented by staff and volunteers from Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre, Southwest Saskatchewan Oldtimers' Museum, Swift Current Museum, and Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre (Medicine Hat), along with several people from the region who had direct connections to ranching history and culture.

Aside from all the great participation by MAS members in this event, the 76 Ranch's story is an interesting piece of Saskatchewan's history, which Hugh shared with us:

The Canadian Agricultural, Coal and Colonization Company, a British syndicate, purchased ten 10,000-acre land holdings adjacent to the CPR mainline in 1888. The properties were located from Rush Lake, just east of Swift Current, to Langdon, just east of Calgary. The company was founded by Sir John Lister Kaye, and he became its first manager.

Many men, and some women, were recruited in Britain to work on the ranches. While farming was attempted in the early years, it met with poor success. The ranches had many difficulties to overcome, including prairie fires, diseases, predators, poor commodity prices and unpredictable weather.

The various holdings were soon converted to horse, sheep and cattle ranches. The initial purchase of a large herd of cattle from Wyoming bearing a “76” brand, gave the company its more familiar name.

“The 76 ranches were important components in the economic development and settlement of southwest Saskatchewan and southeast Alberta,” Hugh says. “A number of employees began their own ranches in southwest Saskatchewan following the final sale of the 76 Ranch holdings in 1909.”

The *Round-up* event celebrated this interesting bit of Canadian and British history in a number of ways; organizers even added an “e” to the end of the Ranch’s name for the event to give it an English connotation!

“The day began with an illustrated overview of the buildings on the Crane Lake ranch and a visit to the ranch site, east of Piapot, just south of No. 1 Highway,” Hugh says.

“The Jasper Centre housed an exhibition of archival photographs of the various 76 ranches. The exhibition was mounted by the Esplanade. Other collections were on display at the Jasper Centre throughout the day and visitors were directed to the Oldtimers’ Museum for additional information and exhibits on ranching history.”

Illustrated presentations on 76 Ranch history were given at the Legion Hall in the afternoon, and a supper banquet followed, with entertainment by local singers and a dramatic presentation of excerpts from Sir John Lister Kaye’s diary, c.1890.

The evening concluded with the presentation of heritage certificates to descendants of 76 Ranch employees in attendance.



The *Round-up* was attended by people from the three prairie provinces and the United States. Unfortunately, the present-day Sir Lister Kaye, from Scotland, was unable to attend due to ill health.



“The event wasn't intended to raise money, but we did have a surplus of cash at the end,” Hugh says.

Donations were made to the Oldtimers’ Museum and Jasper Centre in Maple Creek. The committee has discussed other possible uses, including support for a second reunion in 2010, which will look at the post-1909 period for the ranch - which includes a completely different set of family connections, and geography - and the possibility of starting a 76 Ranch website, he says.

A tour of the 76 Ranch exhibition is currently being organized for Saskatchewan and Alberta. Right now, the exhibition is in Medicine Hat, which will be exhibiting it for most of 2010. It will travel in Saskatchewan in 2011, and Alberta after that. Jean Leebody of Exhibit Junction (St. Albert) is handling tour bookings, Hugh says.

There are also a couple of published sources of information about the ranch: *Grassland Settlers*, by Don C. McGowan (out of print but available through libraries), and *The Lands, Brands and Hands of the 76 Ranch*, by Dave Spencer, published in 2008. A number of copies of his book are in southwest Saskatchewan libraries. It can also be purchased from the author in Medicine Hat.

Thanks for an interesting look at Saskatchewan’s settlement history, Hugh, and congratulations to all MAS members and organizers for their involvement and success! -Lisa