

HISTORY OF PONOKA, ALBERTA

In 1890 the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company was formed. The right of way through this area was completed in the spring of 1891 and named Siding 14.

Siding 14 was where the 2nd station north of Red Deer, would be placed. In August 1891 a railway official put a name opposite Siding 14 – “Ponoka”. Ponoka is the Blackfoot word for Elk. Following the departure of the Blackfoot tribe in 1830, the Cree tribes arrived, which makes it peculiar that a Blackfoot word was used.



The station was built in 1892 and housed the section crew and windmill caretaker. In 1895 Fred Algar was granted use of the station for a store and living quarters until his own store was built. Algar’s store was the first store in Ponoka.

1900 saw Ponoka incorporated as a village and obtained official town status on October 15th, 1904.

The Battle River afforded a great passage way for floating saw logs to the 3 working saw mills at Ponoka. Several million board feet of lumber were cut annually at the Ponoka mills until the lowering of the Battle River in 1905.

This site was in for rapid development in the next 6 years. This was the era of cheap land and great dreams. Many new businesses were started and lasted for many years and some are still around today.

1911 saw the completion of the main building for the Insane Asylum and the arrival of the first 164 patients. The Mental Hospital became the focal point for much of the economic development which the community enjoyed and today, Alberta Hospital, Ponoka continues to be a very important part of the community and its progress.



Population in March 1901 was 256 residents and by June 14th the population was over 300. The surrounding farm area boasted over 1000 residents.

For a complete history of Ponoka, visit the Fort Ostell Museum.