



# Sylvan Lake

& DISTRICT

## ARCHIVES

*Preserving the Past ~ For Future Generations*

### ARRIVAL OF THE TRAIN TO SYLVAN LAKE

In the early nineteen hundreds transportation from Red Deer to Sylvan Lake was a major challenge. In October 1899 the first settlers Alexander Loisselle and Adelard Faucher took 3 days with horse and wagon and hacked a trail from Red Deer to Sylvan Lake creating an initial route to the lake area. The area around Sylvan Lake was very low and travelling was especially difficult during wet years. A trip that should take a day could take upwards of three days when wagons got mired in the mud.

Mr. Faucher didn't have a horse, but he did bring a boat which was used many times for transportation to Red Deer. Mrs. Faucher would walk down to the lake shore, row across to the creek running into Burnt Lake (Cignet Lake), across Burnt Lake to another creek that flowed into the Red Deer River and to Red Deer. Mrs. Faucher with her sons at the oars would row back up the Red Deer River and bring supplies and food to the small community.

The arrival of the railway made travel to Sylvan Lake significantly better.

When the much-needed coal to fuel the steam engine trains was found at Nordegg, the A.C.R. (later CPR) and the C.N.W.R. (later CNR) built railways west from Red Deer to the mountains. February 1912 the first Canadian National Western Railway (CNWR/CNR) passenger train passed through Sylvan Lake. In 1914 the Alberta Central Railway (ACR – later CPR) track was completed bringing a second train line through Sylvan Lake.

The railway brought new people to the village and created jobs for many people. People could travel by rail even when the weather was bad. The mail soon came daily by train. Farmers were able to ship out their grain and livestock. The stores ordered groceries and dry goods.

At the train station people bought tickets to ride in the passenger cars to Red Deer and beyond, sent telegrams to faraway places and took their eggs and cream there to ship to markets. Dray men went to the station to pick up the boxes of groceries and other supplies and deliver them to the businesses. Hotel owners and cab drivers picked up people arriving with trunks and suitcases coming for the summer. Students rode the train to Red Deer on Sunday evening and returned Friday evening so they could attend high school.

Both train lines provided significant economic benefits to the community and convenience for travelers before vehicle transportation brought tourists and goods. The CPR line was abandoned in 1980. Today we can still hear the whistle blow when the CNR train comes through town to and from Nordegg.



c. 1930. CNR Station located on 50th Avenue between 44th and 43rd Street where Railside Plaza now stands.



Sydney Byers, Station Agent (1934 - 52), watching for the arrival of the CNR train



Evaline Byers (middle) Lillian Byers (right), daughters of Sidney Byers, at the train station

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