

Lethbridge Firsts

Over the past few years, several students have come into the Galt with a list of questions on who was it that did such and such first. We have started to compile a list of Lethbridge Firsts for students. It is by no means complete. As we get more questions (and answers), our plan is to continue adding to the list.

First Mayor: Charles Magrath

- First Mayor of Lethbridge (1891)
- Surveyor, worked with Galt companies
- Elected by acclamation (only one who ran for mayor)
- Later a member of the Territorial Government and Member of Parliament
- Businessman

First Coal Miner: Nicholas Sheran

- Moved to area in 1874
- Started first coal mine in Lethbridge
- Ran a ferry service across the Belly (Old Man) River
- Drowned in river, body never recovered.

First Coal Mine in Lethbridge: Sheran's Mine, 1874

- Located at the bottom of Whoop Up Drive, to the North of the Road and West of the river
- Opened in 1874
- When Sheran died in 1882, his sister, Marcella Sheran McFarland took over the mining operation
- Coal from this mine was sold to the NWMP at Fort Macleod and to American merchants who hauled it along the Whoop Up Trail to Fort Benton, Montana, for sale
- Prior to opening this mine, Sheran had a mine at the original Fort Whoop-Up site south of Lethbridge



First School Teacher: Edith Emma Coe

- Originally from England
- Arrived in 1885 and taught school for one year
- School was located in a coal mine house
- Married a NWMP officer (Falkland Warren) and moved to Iron Springs

First Newspaper: *Lethbridge News*

- Started as a weekly paper,
- competition from the *Lethbridge Herald* forced it to become a daily paper; returned to a weekly format and shortly after stopped publishing

First Newspaper Printed: December 4th, 1885 (a Friday!)

First Milkman: Mr. Alexander

First Electric Light plant: installed 1893 by private enterprise

First Fire Chief:

- W.D. (Curly) Whitney – A volunteer hook and ladder company was formed on 16 February 1887. W.D. (Curly) Whitney was elected Chief.
- Its successor was a volunteer fire brigade formed on 4 August 1891, with William Colpman elected Chief. The fire brigade was equipped with a new No. 2 Lindgren chemical fire engine purchased by the Town of Lethbridge.
- The second bylaw passed by the Town Council, on 13 March 1891, was for better protection against fire.

First Brewery: Noel's Brewery

- Made beer in ten days; not pasteurized and not sediment free
- Location just south of Whoop Up drive
- Lost in a fire

First Company: North Western Coal and Navigation Company (Galts)

- Started as a business interest of Elliott T Galt and Sir Alexander Galt (E.T Galt's father)
- This company (and other Galt companies) took advantage of Coal mining, irrigation, and railway opportunities in the region



First Coal Miners in a NWC&NCo mine: Jim Conn, Dan McLean, James J. McKay, Peter Watson, Andy Anderson, Jim Ashcroft, John Bulmer, J.W. McDonald, Robert Todd, George Bezanton, and two Emery Brothers.

- 1st mine manager was William Stafford

First Coal-Ship in Lethbridge: The *Baroness*

- Launched on June 2, 1883
- 210 tons
- 173 ft long, and 30 ft at the beam wide
- 49.08 Horse Power Engine

First Doctor:

- “Dr. Byers” was a medical student who provided medical service here (he later completed his medical training but did not return to Lethbridge)
- Dr Frank Hamilton Mewburn was the first MD to practice in Lethbridge

First Police Officer/Sheriff:

- In 1885, Corporal Eli Hodder lead the NWMP detachment when it was set up in Lethbridge
- In 1897, Thomas Lewis was hired by the town to act as Town Inspector and Poundkeeper (these duties were in addition to his regular duties as a NWMP corporal)

First Lawyer: Charles Frederick Pringle Conybeare

First Nurse: there were four!

- Miss H. Ingram was the first nurse appointed to administer the new hospital in 1892
- Miss Chapman – married E.N Higginbotham
- Miss Prime – name may have been Annie Sophia (married 1895)
- Miss Hersey

First European Woman to settle in Region: Marcella Sheran McFarland

- Moved to Coalbanks area to help her brother Nicholas Sheran in his house
- Moved from New York City to be with him



First Grain Grower in area: Joseph McFarland (husband of Marcella Sheran)

First woman alderman: Lillian Perry

First Principal: Bruce Latimer

- Bruce Latimer is also the first public school teacher in Lethbridge. Edith Emma Coe, while before Latimer, taught privately before the Public School Board was formed

First Hospital: Terrace Hospital (1886)

- Was replaced by the 1891 Galt Hospital on the same site
- Galt Museum still remains on this site, and makes use of the 1910 Galt Hospital Building

First Post Office: Higinbotham's Drug Store

First Bank: Union Bank of Canada

First Postman: Howard F. Greenwood

First Resident Priest: Father Leonard van Tighem OMI relocated to Lethbridge from Macleod in 1888

First Railway: narrow gauge railway from Dunmore (near Medicine Hat) built by North Western Coal & Navigation Company

First Lumber Yard: Owned by Frank and William Colpman

First Train to Lethbridge: 24 September 1885

First Marriage in Lethbridge: Hodders (First in the Townsite)

- Miss Alma Isabella Forbes married Eli Hodder
- First marriage in new Presbyterian church
- Presided over by Rev. Angus Robertson

First Car Owner: Elliott Galt

- Considered the Father of Lethbridge, it was he who convinced his father, Sir Alexander Galt, to invest in coal mining in Lethbridge



First Hotel: Lethbridge House, run by William Henderson

First Recorded Burial: Henry Stafford, son of William Stafford, died of typhoid, age 17

First School Inspector: Rev. Charles McKillop

First Store Owner: Harry Bentley

First Taco Time in Canada: Lethbridge!

First Park: The Square

- Now known as Galt Gardens Park but is still located in same area downtown.

First Settler's Baby Born in Coalbanks: Henrietta Stafford to William and Jane Stafford

First President of the Coal Company: William Lethbridge

First 3-story brick building in Lethbridge: Harry Bentley

- This building still stands as part of Catholic Charities on 5th Street South



Compiled by Kelti Boissoneault, 2009

