



# GROWING **farms** AND **communities**

Agriculture was the main reason that European settlers came to the land that was later to become Alberta. This means that the history of agriculture is strongly connected to the history of European settlement.

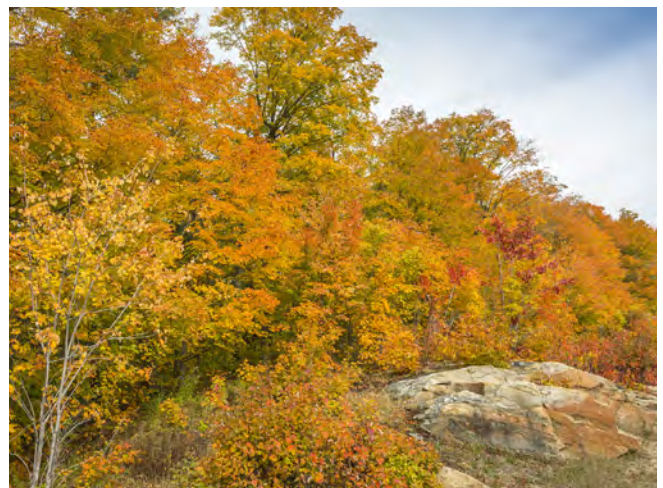
Fur traders grew crops of grains and vegetables near their posts, in flat areas such as those found by the Peace River. Other Europeans, including missionaries, also grew crops and encouraged agricultural activities.

Between 1871 and 1921, the Canadian government made treaties with different First Nations peoples. The government wanted to promote agriculture, settlement and resource development in the west and north.

Treaties 6, 7 and 8 were signed with First Nations people across different areas of what is now Alberta so the government could offer the land to new settlers. First Nations people were promised their own land, free education, medicine and farming animals and equipment. However, many of these promises were not completely kept.

First Nations people and the government representatives who signed the treaties understood these agreements differently. First Nations people saw the treaties as agreements to share the land and its resources. The government saw the treaties as a way to claim land for settlers and impose Europeans' ways of life on First Nations people.

As settlers arrived and started to build homesteads and farms, Alberta's rural ways of life took shape. Early **homesteads** were areas of land that families claimed by building a home and farming the land.



The rush for homestead land resulted in the development of new rural communities. Stores, post offices, churches and community halls were found in these small communities.

Wheat was an important agricultural crop during the time of early settlement. The sale of wheat to communities across Canada and other countries around the world encouraged the growth of many prairie communities.

Dairy farming was important to Alberta's and Canada's agricultural history. Most early dairy production took place on small family farms. Some of these continue to operate today. Dairy production in Alberta still takes place on family farms.



### Cattle Ranches Too



Agricultural history was also connected to large ranches. Cattle were brought by early European settlers. Most of these cattle were used for beef. In 1896, the government of Canada broke up the large cattle ranches to provide more land for settlement.

Photo Credit: Glenbow Archives NA-237-11



## Advertising the West



Photo Credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta A7537

Before Alberta became a province in 1905, it was part of the Northwest Territories. This territory covered a large amount of land in western and central Canada. The Northwest Territories was divided into many districts. The Districts of Athabasca, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Assiniboia covered what is now the province of Alberta.

The government used advertising to persuade farmers to consider making the trip to these western districts. Posters were used to show the fertile land and a rich way of life. Settlers often found that life was not as easy as the advertisements said it would be.



How do you think different types of agricultural activities influenced what was found in early communities? How did these activities change the land?

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

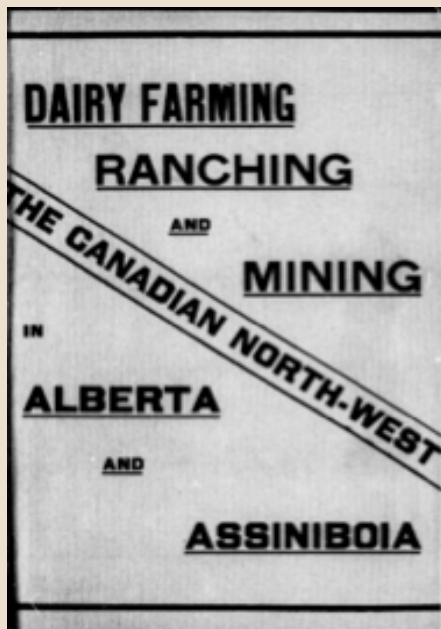


## An Account by James Ruby, Calgary, November 17th 1888

James Ruby farmed near Calgary in the late 1800s. In a pamphlet about farming in the districts of Alberta and Assiniboia, he wrote about the advantages of dairy farming.

You ask would I advise new settlers in Alberta to begin dairy farming at once?

Most decidedly I do, as it is the surest road to success and wealth. No matter how small his beginning, let him get a few cows, as many as possible, as many as he can milk and properly care for.



**For instance** (*for example*), a settler arrives here [with enough resources] to [build] a small house on this 160-acre homestead..., with horses, a **plough** (*a tool used to prepare soil for planting crops*) and **harrow** (*a tool for breaking up and smoothing out soil*), and with enough of seed to plant a few acres.

Then, if he has a wife, and \$100 left, let him buy two cows; if more money... more cows — say five cows the first year.

From these he will be able to make butter daily during five months, worth in our market 25 cents.... This will support himself and wife. The milk will also feed three calves and a couple of pigs.

Now, it must be remembered that the care of these should not prevent him from **cultivating** (*growing*) a good garden and attending to a **goodly** (*large*) number of **acres** (*hectares*) of crops besides.

And it must be also remembered... that no matter how **favourable** (*pleasant*) the season may be, the garden and the cultivated acres may be a failure, but neither hail-storm nor frost affect the **returns** (*payments*) from properly attended milk cows.

[These activities will result in] **cooperative dairy farming** (*when farmers work together and combine their resources*), when the **creamery** (*a place where dairy products like butter and cheese are made*) will be established in the town. In this creamery, a... butter-maker... will produce from the best cream of Alberta the best creamery butter... in the world.

Source: *Dairy Farming, Ranching and Mining in Alberta and Assiniboia*. Accessed from Internet Archive: p. 39. [www.archive.org/details/cihm\\_30354](http://www.archive.org/details/cihm_30354)