

then & now

The Alberta Pacific Grain elevator at Meeting Creek is a classic example of a wood-cribbed prairie grain elevator. Perhaps more than any other building, these distinctive structures have come to represent western Canada to the world. Despite the link with our history, the number of grain elevators has been drastically reduced across the prairies over the last decade as a result of rationalization and a move to modern high-throughput facilities.

Built in 1917, the Meeting Creek elevator had a capacity for approximately 40,000 bushels of cereal grain. The office, attached by a walkway to the main driveway, served as a location for the elevator agent to conduct company business and settle payments to farmers for their deliveries of grain. A hydraulic engine is located in the back portion of the office that drove the main conveyor (or "leg") of the elevator.

Originally, horses and wagons delivered grain to the elevator inside the main driveway, located between the office and the cribbed portion of the elevator. A hoist system tipped the wagon at an angle to allow grain deliveries to be efficiently offloaded. Eventually wagons gave way to trucks.

Grain delivered to the elevator was weighed, graded, and dumped into a pit. It was then elevated by a vertical conveyor (a "leg"), which consisted of a series of cups on a belt, to the top of the elevator (the cupola). Using a "Gerber wheel" the agent could select bins in which to store the grain. Eventually, grain would be emptied from the bins, re-elevated, and loaded into rail cars for movement to market.

Originally constructed by the Alberta Pacific Grain Co. Ltd, the Meeting Creek elevator became part of the Federal Grain Company system as a result of early grain industry consolidation in 1972. Later, Federal Grain would be sold to the Alberta Wheat Pool. Although the elevator was repainted in the 1970s in Federal Grain's off-white colours, it never was lettered for its last owner, Alberta Pool. The elevator served the farming community in the district until 1984 when it closed. After sitting empty for a number of years, it was donated to the Canadian Northern Society for preservation in 1990.

Today, the elevator is a Registered Historic Resource. Together with a privately owned wooden elevator next door, these elevators remain against the prairie skyline in a beautiful setting that once was so common in western Canada.

The Canadian Northern Society, in its 20th anniversary year also recognizes three other grain elevator preservation projects in central Alberta. Through the dedication and efforts of the Big Valley Historical Society, Big Valley's last Alberta Wheat Pool grain elevator, built in the early 1960s, was preserved in 1998. In



Meeting Creek elevators before restoration work started, 1987.

then



Painting of the Big Valley elevator, June 1999.



Restoration work started in the Meeting Creek AB Pacific elevator, 1999.



addition, the Stettler P&H Elevator Group, led by Stan Eichhorn, has done an excellent job in completing the first stages of preserving the classic P&H elevator and accompanying feed mill at Stettler. Lastly, three “prairie sentinels” remain south of Big Valley on the old Canadian Northern Railway Battle River Subdivision at Rowley. Preservation of these structures will ensure that future generations will understand the importance of our agricultural heritage, and will provide a lasting indelible impression to those of us with a passion for the history of the Canadian prairies.



Thanks to the talents of our contractor, Graham Chillingworth, the walkway at the Meeting Creek elevator is virtually complete. The society is now searching for enough specialized tin siding to sheath the lower portion with. It looks excellent and will add greatly to the elevator. Summer, 2007.



Stettler P&H elevator, c. 1940s.

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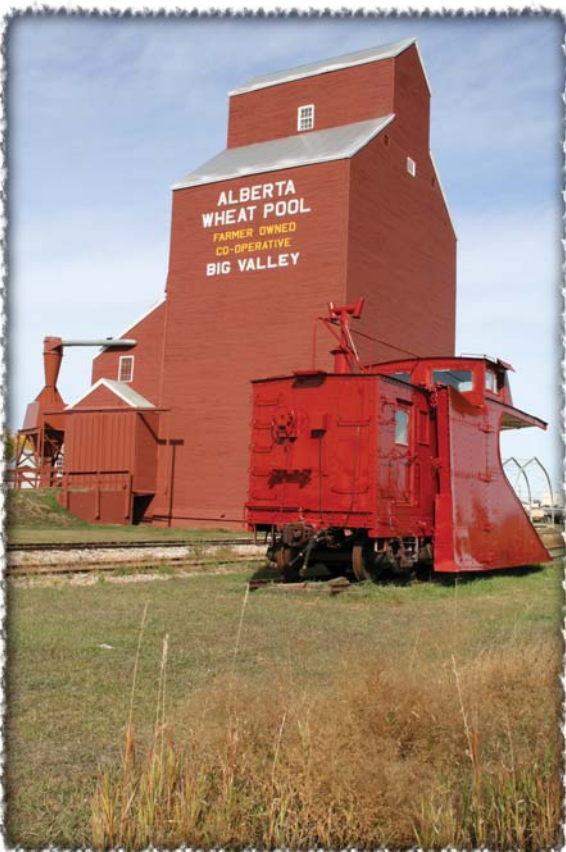


Rowley elevators, 2006.



now

Above and below: Meeting Creek Alberta Pacific Grain elevator, restored. July 2007.



Big Valley elevator as it sits today, September 2007.

