




**ALHI TOUR**  
**OF EDMONTON**  
**WORKING**  
**CLASS HERITAGE**  
**BUILDINGS**



ALHI Alberta Labour History Institute  
CEA City of Edmonton Archives  
GL Glenbow Archives/University of Calgary  
PAA Provincial Archives of Alberta  
SP Sister of Providence Archives, Edmonton, Alberta  
UofA University of Alberta  
GN The Grey Nuns of Montreal

Designed by **Irina Edwards**



# ALHI TOUR OF EDMONTON WORKING CLASS HERITAGE BUILDINGS

by Cathy Roy



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**Boom**

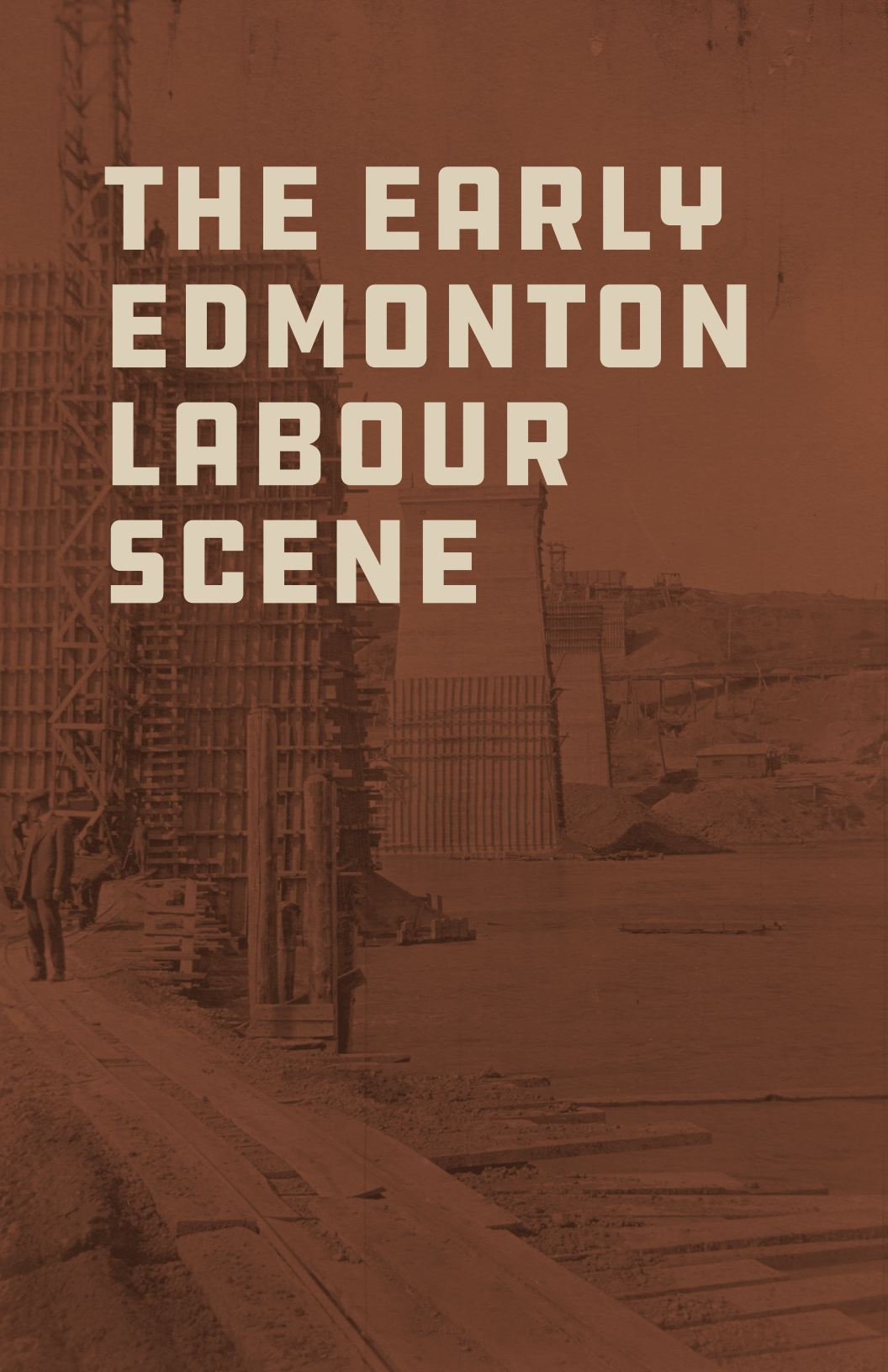
**Bust**



**EDMONTON** has lived through many cycles of “boom and bust”. Rapid economic growth can lead to poor living conditions, including housing shortages and the exploitation of workers. The periods of economic downturn that follow are characterized by even worse conditions, particularly high unemployment.

The continuing boom/bust cycle has led to the destruction of many of our Edmonton heritage buildings.

# THE EARLY EDMONTON LABOUR SCENE







Men looking for work at the International Land and Employment Agency, 1908. CEA EA-500-400. The buildings pictured were on the west side of 101 Street, near 102 Avenue, where the Manulife tower is today.

There were many unions in Edmonton by the early twentieth century. The Edmonton Trades and Labour Council (ETLC), which was formed in 1903, had 13 member unions by 1908 and 36 member unions in 1919.

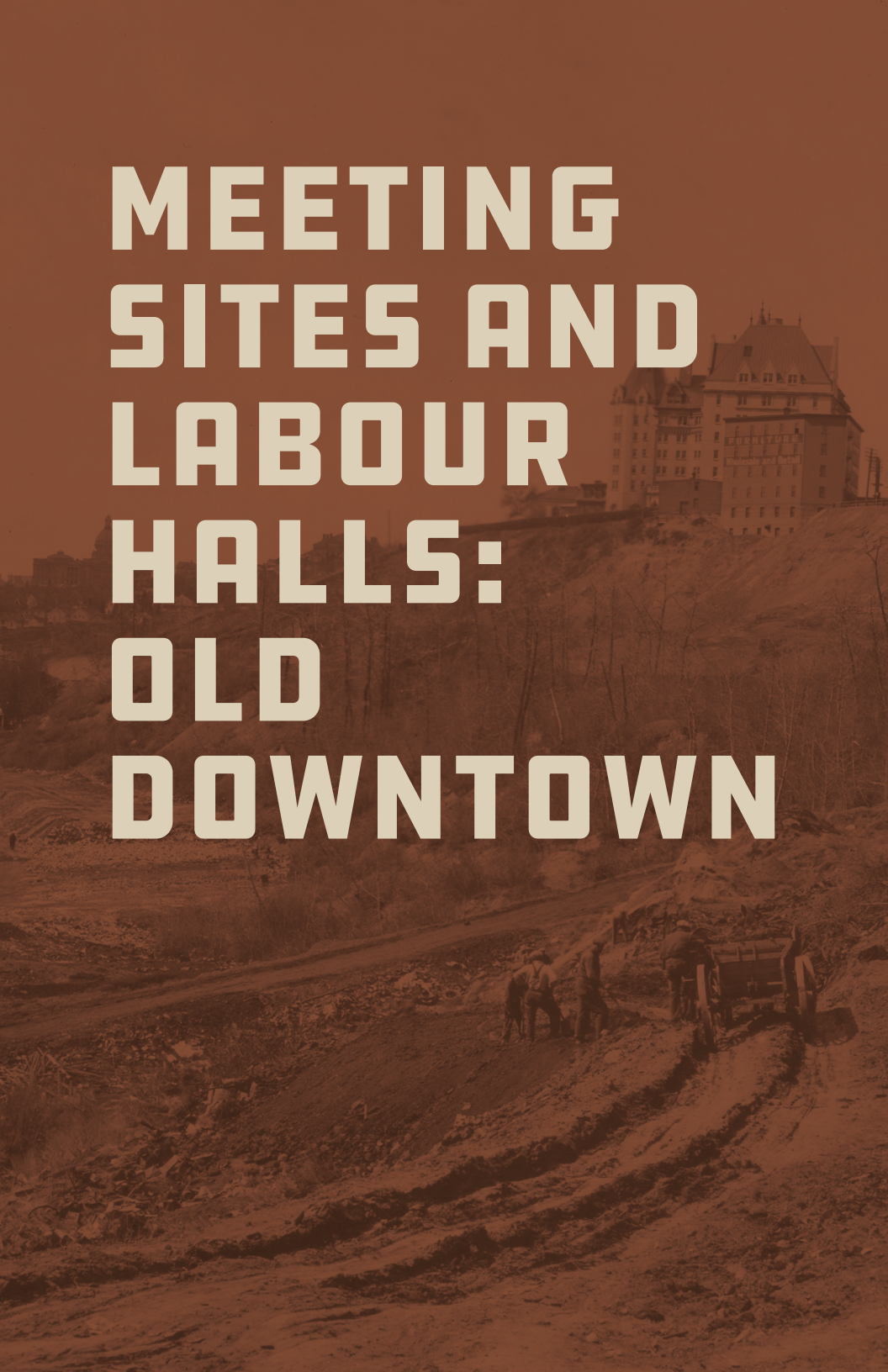


Trades and Labour Council officers at September celebration at the Edmonton Exhibition, 1911. *Edmonton Bulletin* Special Edition. CEA EB-26-373

In 1903 the Trades and Labour Council, a general labour council, was formed in Edmonton. In 1906 the Council joined the American Federation of Labor. The Council of Building Trade Unions was formed in 1909 to share information among unions in order to co-ordinate their efforts in dealings with employers.



# MEETING SITES AND LABOUR HALLS: OLD DOWNTOWN





First Presbyterian Church was the site of the first meeting of the Civil Service Association. CEA EA-10-56

## **\*FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

10025-105 Street

The inaugural meeting of the Civil Service Association (the predecessor of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees) was held on March 26, 1919. It was a time of labour militancy across Canada and internationally. Just two weeks earlier, the trade union delegates at the Western Labour Conference, held in Calgary, voted to throw their support behind the organization of the One Big Union. The OBU dedicated itself to turning individual strikes into general strikes. While Alberta civil servants were less militant, they began to throw off earlier notions that civil servants had no right to view themselves as workers, and they demanded better wages and working conditions.



Faced with a wage freeze at the start of the First World War, huge increases in the cost of living, and a 5% “patriotic tax” on Alberta government workers’ pay, 11 civil servants hired a lawyer and incorporated the Civil Service Association of Alberta. In its early years, the union fought to gain real bargaining rights and win improvements in wages and benefits. But, facing government intransigence, the CSA never achieved the status of a real union. During the Social Credit period, the Minister of Labour attended CSA conventions and could veto discussion of particular resolutions. Nonetheless the CSA could boast of some achievements for its members. In 1938 a members’ credit union was established, and in 1953 white-collar workers achieved the 5-day week. Jail and mental institute workers worked a 6-day, 48-hour week. Successful militancy by the workforce came with the early 1970s and in June 1976, the CSA was reborn as the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, which was determined to act as a real union rather than the “company union” that the CSA embodied for much of its existence.

The Progressive Conservative government of the day responded by outlawing strikes by public servants and enforcing arbitration by a board of government-selected representatives. In 1977 AUPE retaliated by becoming an unincorporated trade union. The union continued to fight for wages, working conditions, and the provision of adequate services for the public throughout the periods of the privatization of government services that followed its formation.





Edmonton's Civic Block was kitty corner from Market Square, to the north east. CEA EA-10-205

## CIVIC BLOCK

99 Street and 102 Avenue

Now the site of the Winspear Centre for Music.

Built in 1913, the Civic Block served as Edmonton's temporary City Hall for 44 years until a new City Hall opened in 1957. The Civic Block was renovated in 1962 to become the Edmonton Police Service headquarters. The building was demolished in 1995 to make way for the Winspear Concert Hall.

A period of labour unrest followed the First World War. Rents had increased and unemployment resulted from the return of soldiers and the shutdown of war-related employment on the home front. Governments of the period expected the private sector to find work for those who had been employed



in wartime work. It was an irresponsible expectation. In 1919 Chief Justice Thomas Mathers chaired a Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, in order to investigate the unrest. The Edmonton hearings were held at the Civic Block. The Commission heard from representatives of business and labour. They found that labour unrest was caused by high unemployment, fear of unemployment, and the high cost of living (a 65% increase from 1914 to 1917).



## \*HV SHAW BUILDING

10229-105 Street

Harry Shaw's Edmonton Cigar Factory made La Palma and Major Reno brands of cigars. The business operated in at least three locations beginning in 1901, hand rolling 1 million cigars per year in 1908.

The ETLC encouraged union members to buy union goods and to buy locally made products: "Patronize Home industry in regard to smoking cigars." [ETLC minutes June 18, 1906, p.40] In 1910, Shaw's Edmonton Cigar Factory was located on the West side of 102 Street between 100 Avenue and Jasper Avenue in the same building as the Masonic Hall. The workers were members of the Cigar Makers' Union, as noted in a 1913 Edmonton Union Directory. [*Edmonton Capital* Feb. 1, 1913]



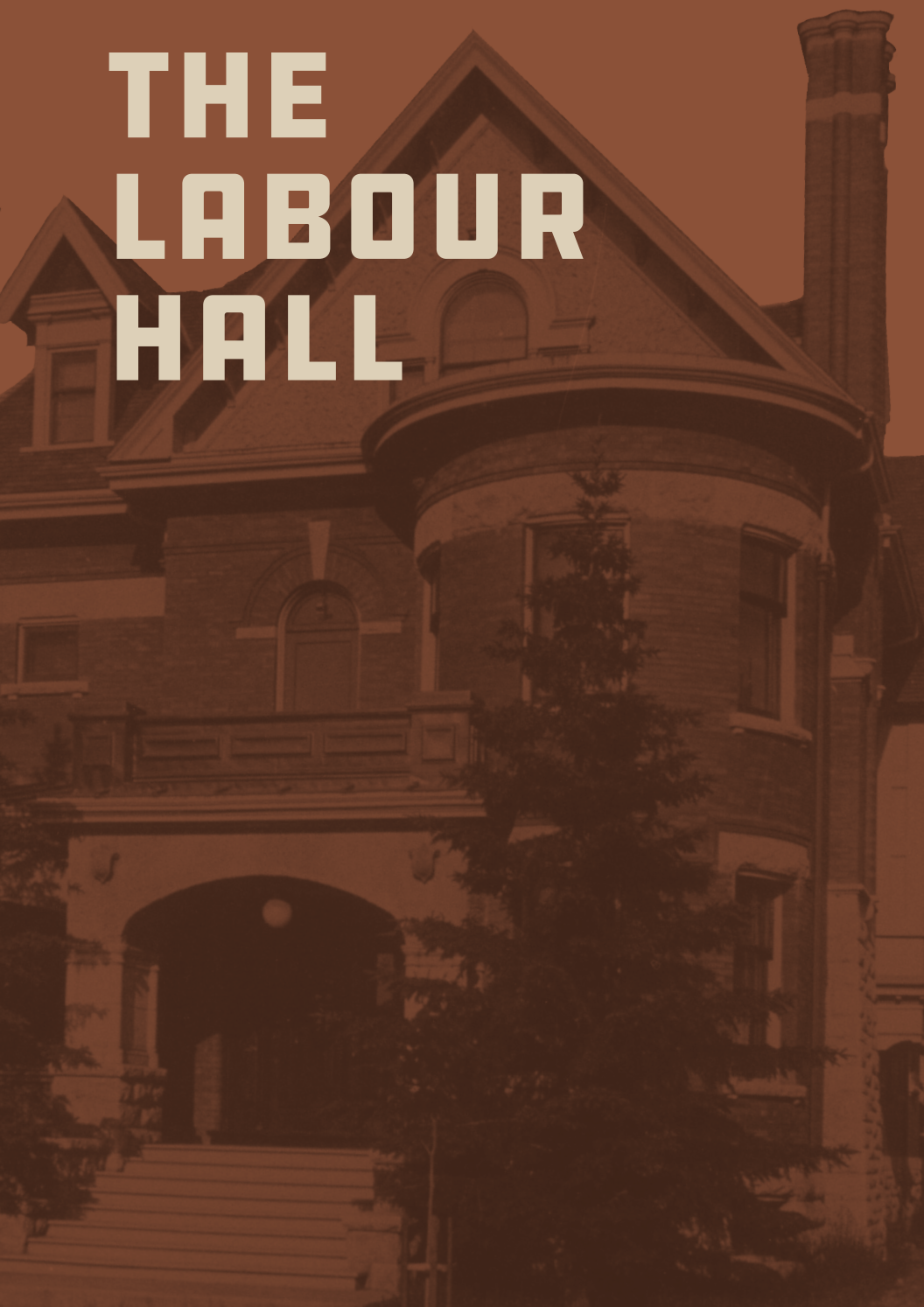
The Edmonton Cigar Factory sign is in the upper left of this 1903 photo of Jasper Avenue. PAA B4767



Ninety people worked in the Edmonton Cigar Factory in 1917. GL na-1328-66444

Shaw was one of the largest employers in Edmonton in 1914 and his success enabled him to build this decorative, fire-proofed, reinforced concrete warehouse. Ninety people worked here in 1917.

# THE LABOUR HALL





# The Edmonton Trades and Labour Council

was made up of delegates from trade unions in the city. Each union paid per capita dues to the Council. Social events such as sports days and fund raising “smokers” were held to create community within the unionized trades in Edmonton.

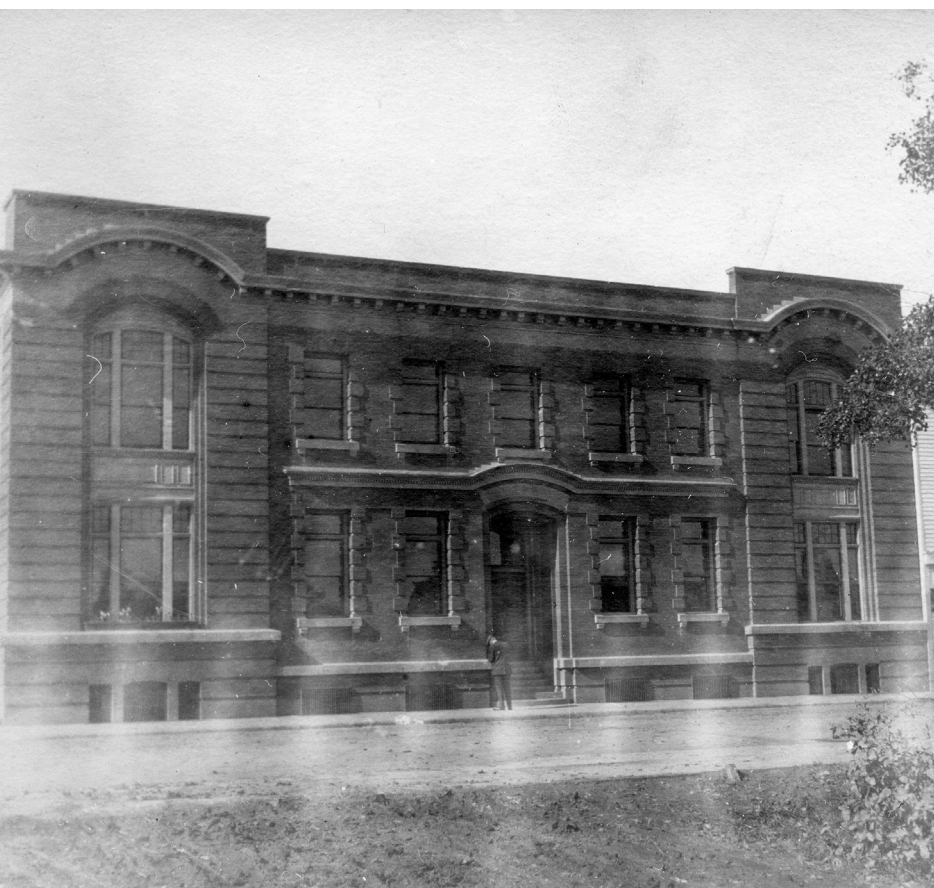
Union groups met at a variety of “halls” around the downtown core. The hall could be as simple as a rented office space. Many halls in early Edmonton were large rooms on the second floor of downtown buildings. These halls were important in the life of the City as community gathering places and functioned as performance venues, dance halls, and meeting sites. These early buildings have been demolished.

Sometimes the Edmonton Trades and Labour Council (ETLC) used a union-rented hall; at other times the unions used a hall rented by the Council or other unions. Travelling business agents for unions used the halls during the day since union meetings were held in the evenings. The earliest ETLC minutes record meetings at the Mechanics Hall (10169 - 103 Street, now the site of the Wheaton YMCA).

## MEETING PLACES

From 1909 to 1915 the Labour Hall was on the first floor of the Morris Block, 9927-Jasper Avenue, now the site of the Macdonald Apartments.

In 1917 the ETLC began to search for a suitable headquarters. Between 1919 and 1922 a third floor space in the Purvis Block at 10110-101 Street served that role. This location is now the site of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce at Jasper Avenue and 101 Street. The Hall was a “beehive of activity on Sunday afternoon,” reported the *Edmonton Bulletin* on May 25, 1919 during the voting to support the Winnipeg General Strike.



In 1922 the Labour Council moved to the former telephone exchange at 10180-100 Street. CEA EA-793-78



In 1945 the building was demolished to make way for a new telephone facility. CEA EA-10-350



The Churchill Wire centre still exists, facing the southwest corner of Churchill Square. PAA BL1655



## GEORGE HUTTON MANSION

The George Hutton mansion, built in 1912, was purchased in 1944 for \$34,000 by the Edmonton Labor Temple Co. Shares in the company were sold at \$10 each and the ELTC, unions, and other community groups used the basement, main, second, and third floor offices. In 1960 the ETLC sold the building for \$120,000. The parking lot of the Caravan Motor Hotel [now the Holiday Inn Express] replaced the building in January 1962. Today a strip mall housing Red Arrow Motorcoach is on that site.

In 1960, the ETLC moved to the Rawleigh Building at 10740 - Jasper Avenue (most recently the site of a large tavern). Their new facility at 10319 - 106 Avenue, built by Dominion Construction for \$410,000, was officially opened June 15, 1963. That building is now vacant.



From 1946-1960 the Labour Hall occupied the George Hutton mansion at 10006-104 Street. CEA EA-10-1462



This advertising card is backed with a form for purchasing shares.  
[CEA Edmonton Labor Temple Co clippings file]



The 1963 Labour Hall building at 10319-106 Avenue. ALHI IMG 9961

## \*GOODRIDGE BUILDING

9696 - Jasper Avenue

The Goodridge Block was built in 1912 by Leonard Goodridge, owner of the Jasper House Hotel, next door (now the Hub Hotel). The ground floor held a variety of businesses over the years including a menswear shop, barbershop, a liquor and cigar store, the W.W. Arcade Hardware, the Hardware Grill restaurant, and, in 2023, the Continental Treat bistro. The upper floors of the block were offices.

In 1919 the Electrical Workers Union met there in an office space.



The Goodridge Block had office space on the upper floors. GL nd-6-1055.

McDunnid



## THE GEM THEATRE

9682-Jasper Avenue (demolished)

The Gem Theatre was a movie theatre, originally built in the Classical Revival style, by the Goodridge family. It opened in 1914. The theatre's facade was modernized (as in the photo) during the 1940s. In spite of its historical designation by the city, it was demolished in 2010 for health reasons.

For a time in the early 1920s, the Gem Theatre housed the "Labor Church". Large labour meetings continued to be held in the 500 seat theatre during the 1930s and 1940s, including a meeting of the Canadian Labour Defence League in the mid-1930s. A meeting held at the theatre in 1948 on issues of immigration and labour was raided by the RCMP.



The Gem Theatre's 500 seat venue hosted many large labour meetings. CEA EA-819-189

## \*ERNEST BROWN BLOCK

9670 - Jasper Avenue

Ernest Brown, early Edmonton photographer, built this commercial space in 1912-13. The Plumbers and Steamfitters Lodge Room occupied Room 5 of the upper office spaces in the Brown Building in 1919.



The Ernest Brown Block with upper floor rental offices. PAA B4237

## \*PENDENNIS HOTEL

9660-Jasper Avenue

Now renovated with freshly painted Pendennis Hotel sign partly visible on the east side of the original building.

Jasper Avenue East provided Edmonton's first commercial district. A celebration for Edmonton Local 488 Plumbers and Pipefitters achieving the 8-hour day (64 cents per hour) in January 1906 was held at the first Pendennis Hotel. The banquet menu included soup, salmon, turkey, lobster salad, corn, peas, and lots of potatoes, with plum pudding for dessert.

The brick building remaining today was the second Pendennis Hotel – built in 1912. Many Edmonton hotels started as wood frame buildings and expanded to more permanent brick structures.



The Pendennis Hotel was noted for its fine cuisine! PAA B4329



# EMPRESS THEATRE

10125-Jasper Avenue

Now the parklet at 102 Street and Jasper Avenue. Theatres provided convenient halls for some labour meetings.

Both the Moving Picture Operators (organized in 1913) and the Theatre/Stage Employees' locals met “over [the] Empress Theatre” in 1919, likely in a third floor office space.



The Empress Theatre was built in 1912. CEA EA-160-20

## \*ALBERTA HOTEL

Originally at 9732-Jasper Avenue; now at 9804-Jasper Avenue.

The brick and stone hotel was built in 1903. It was dismantled in 1984 and reconstructed in 2010, just west of its original location (across 98 Street which had been closed to make way for the massive Federal Building).

The Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union Local 55 was established in 1907. The Cooks and Waiters Union Local 474 was active in 1919.

Between 1935 and 1947 the General Whitewear and Uniform Manufacturers was located in the basement of the Alberta Hotel.

The Alberta Hotel served downtown Edmonton for 81 years. CEA EA-500-12



# LEADERSHIP FROM MARGINALIZED GROUPS

MENT CO. Ltd.

PA





The first factory was at 10438-97 Street from 1911-1917, just north of the railway tracks. CEA A94-18.

## GREAT WESTERN GARMENT (GWG)

\*Plaque outside Winspear Concert Hall, on 99 Street, Union Promenade

"Chartered in 1911, Edmonton's United Garment Workers of America Local 120 was in the vanguard of the union movement in the garment trade. This industry, one of the chief employers of women in the first half of the 20th century, was notorious for its poor working conditions. In cooperation with GWG management, the union achieved remarkable concessions for its multicultural membership, notably the 8-hour workday in 1917 and the 44-hour workweek by 1919. Local 120 also provided its female members with opportunities to become leaders in the community, to join other labour groups, and to campaign for women's issues in the workplace."

### THE FACTORIES

The Great Western Garment factory was established in Edmonton in 1911. The workwear focus of their clothing lines fit the agricultural base and the rapidly industrializing province. Over the decades the factory provided unionized work to the changing groups of Canadian immigrants. The Edmonton factory operated in four locations.

The company expanded with plants in Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Brantford, Ontario. In 1961 Levi Strauss acquired a 75% interest in GWG and in 1972 they completed their purchase of the company. GWG's Edmonton plant closed in 2004.



The GWG factory on 97th Street during the 1920s. PAA A9349

## **\*10305-97 STREET**

GWG relocated to this larger facility in 1917. It had been built as a department store in 1911. In 1927 GWG built a fourth floor addition on the building. Cutters had the fourth floor, sewing machine operators were on the second and third floors, and business operations had the main floor. The staff cafeteria and shipping and receiving were in the basement.

Today the building is the site of the Edmonton Downtown Farmers Market.



The Mackinaw and Leather Department moved in to the Tilley Press Building at 9616-101A Avenue in 1929. The mackinaw department was housed in the basement. This is now the site of a vacated Salvation Army Building. CEA EA-64-187



The GWG factory in use from 1957-2004 at 10660-85 Street has since been demolished. PAA BI2195





The 1928 CNR station building at 100 Street and 103A Avenue. UofA PC 06775

## CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY STATION

104 Avenue and 100 Street

The 1928 CNR station building, just east of the present CN Tower, replaced the 1904 Edmonton station, further west.

Many African American men had been recruited to work for the Canadian railways. By the 1880s many were established as passenger car porters. Others came north hoping to escape discrimination and find an opportunity to work, farm, and establish communities. Work as a railway porter was available in a deeply prejudiced society. Porters on the *ca.* 1900 trains managed the wood heaters and washrooms as well as their other duties - greeting and assisting passengers, stowing luggage, serving food, shining shoes, making up berths, and quickly converting them back to seating in the morning. They worked 72-hour shifts without scheduled breaks or sleeping accommodations. They were assigned demerit points if they fell asleep during a shift and dismissed if that happened on several occasions. They were often denigrated, being called “boy” or “George”. Porters were confined to this service role, not being considered for more prestigious positions such as conductor.

In 1917, African Canadian railwaymen organized the Order of Sleeping Car Porters as a response to this racial prejudice. The union successfully negotiated with the CNR, and later with the CPR. In 1942 the American union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, formed an Edmonton chapter. The porters' unions achieved monthly pay increases, a one-week holiday per year, and overtime pay.



CPR porters in the 1920s. PAA A9167





CN Tower 10004-104 Avenue, opened in 1966. CEA FT-28-122

## \*CN TOWER

10004-104 Avenue

The 26-storey CN Tower opened on February 14, 1966. Until 1971 it was the tallest building west of Toronto. It had been under construction for two years, just west of the 1928 station building, and was finished ahead of schedule.

Ironworkers install the reinforcing bars (rebar) in the columns and the floors of high rises before the concrete is poured. Rebar is secured with wires to form a stable mesh to reinforce the building's concrete structure. Edmonton's CN Tower used 3,000 tons of rebar in its concrete columns and floors.

Metis men, employed by Rivard and by McCurdy Steel, were the ironworkers. They were young and fearless, hired through a community network that knew that other Metis men would work hard. The job involved climbing to heights, moving 100 pound steel bars into place, fastening them, and being quick about it! The men worked in T-shirts and jeans, without protective pads, steel-toed boots, hard hats, harnesses, or even safety fencing on the high floors. Injuries and deaths were not uncommon.

Fourteen iron workers formed a local in July 1949 of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers, which is now Local 720 of that union. Safety regulations came much later.



## CHINESE LAUNDRY WORKERS

Jasper Ave, east of 99 Street, 1901

Chung Gee provided the city's first laundry services beginning in July 1892. There were no non-Chinese laundries until 1903. By 1915 Edmonton (north of the river) had 50 laundries. Laundries were usually in the rear of street-facing businesses such as cafes and shops or offices.

The laundry workers sorted customers' clothing, boiled it, and pressed and dried it, then wrapped it for pick-up.

During the 1919 strike, the "Chinese laundrymen" were reported as being out on a sympathy strike. The *Edmonton Bulletin* joked that the "pestilential plutocracy" could go shirtless or dress more informally. (*Edmonton Bulletin* May 29, 1919, p. 3 "Late News of Edmonton Strike")

In 1919, four of the Chinese laundries were located on the south side of Jasper Avenue and both sides of 101A Avenue between 96 and 95 Streets, where the ARTery entrance was most recently located.

| Chung Gee 9633 Jasper Ave

| Wing Kee 9557-101A Ave

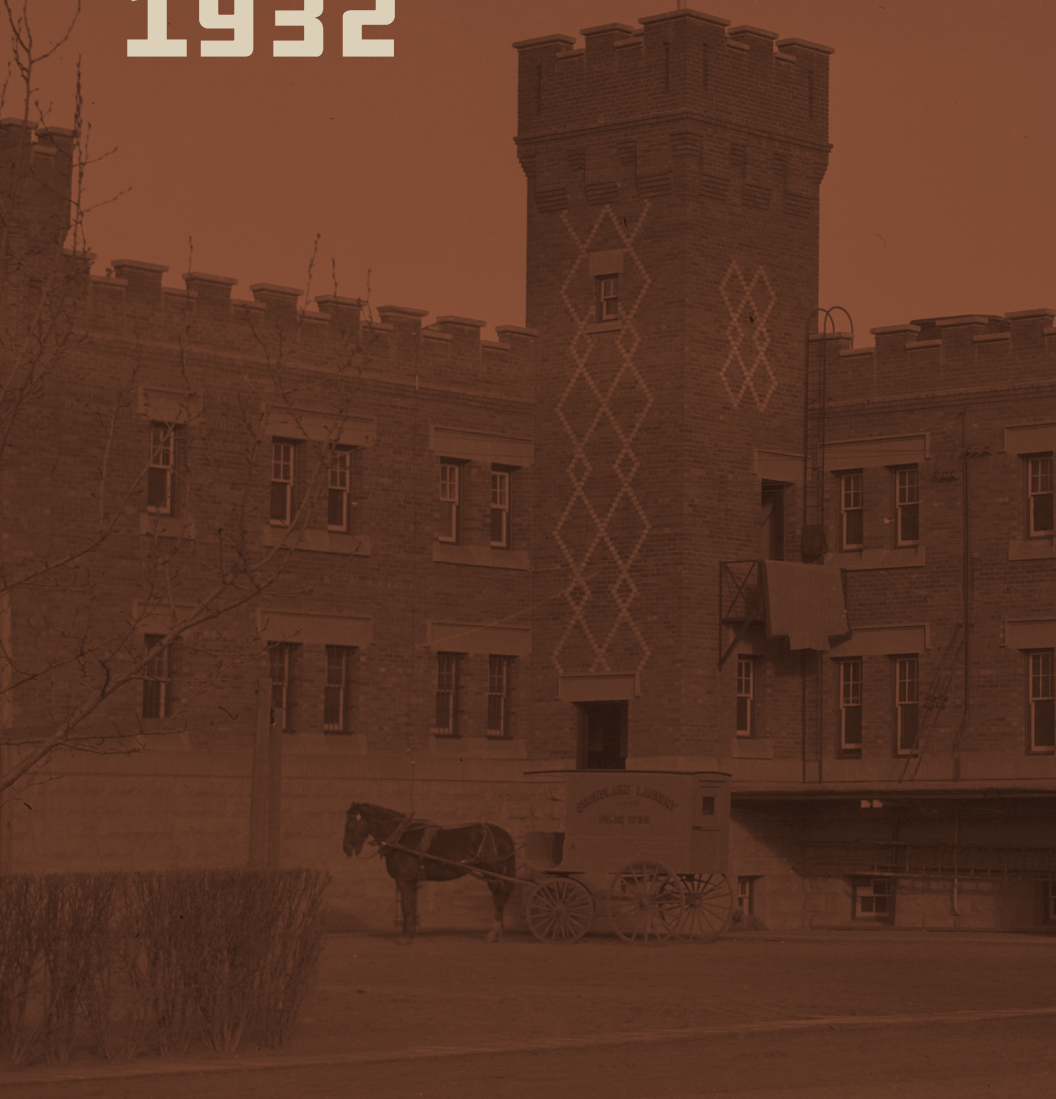
| Yee Wo 9560-101A Ave

| Mah Sing 9520-101A Ave



Jasper Ave, east of 99 Street in 1901. Note the Chinese laundry sign, lower left. CEA EA-10-2283

# THE HUNGER MARCH 1932



## MARKET SQUARE

Market Square is now the site of the downtown Edmonton Public Library (1967), which reopened after renovation in late 2020.

In the face of the conditions of the 1930s, failing crops and rampant unemployment, the militant unemployed planned a Hunger March in Edmonton for December 20, 1932. The Hunger March Committee organized the well-planned action. Twelve thousand farmers and unemployed from the Edmonton area gathered at Market Square. A delegation was sent to the Legislature Building to meet with Premier Brownlee to ask for provincial aid for those in need. But the delegation was refused, an orderly march began along city sidewalks, and the Edmonton City Police and the RCMP interceded with violence against the protesters.



The crowd on Market Square on December 20, 1932. PAA A9217



## **\*RCMP HEADQUARTERS**

9528-101A Avenue

Now Corrections Services Canada Programs, Health Care Services, and Edmonton Parole Office extension.



RCMP barracks and headquarters about the time of the Hunger March. CEA EA-0-5



The RCMP line on 100 Street preparing to advance on the Hunger March participants. PAA A9025

## UKRAINIAN LABOUR - FARMER TEMPLE

10628-96 Street

Also called “The Blue Hall” after being remodelled and stuccoed in a 1940s style. It has since been demolished and now is the site of the Boyle-McCauley Health Centre.

However, in December 1932 the hall was the headquarters for the planned Hunger March. When the police searched the hall, looking for firearms and ammunition prior to the march, they found women preparing food for the 3,500 they had expected to feed. The vacant Ukrainian Presbyterian Church next door was also used for March headquarters activities.



The Ukrainian Labor Temple Edmonton in the 1920s. PAA G3078



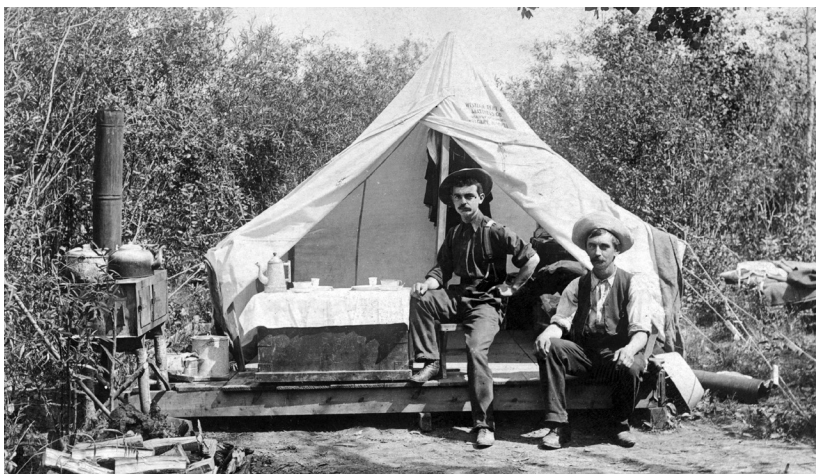
The Blue hall was later used by inner-city agencies such as the McCauley Senior Centre, 1973. SP Stark-1.

The “Blue Hall” was the original home of the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA, currently the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, Br. #2). The hall hosted a range of social and cultural activities, including the staging of several major Ukrainian plays. The hall was also the home to a full range of left-wing and progressive groups and activities.

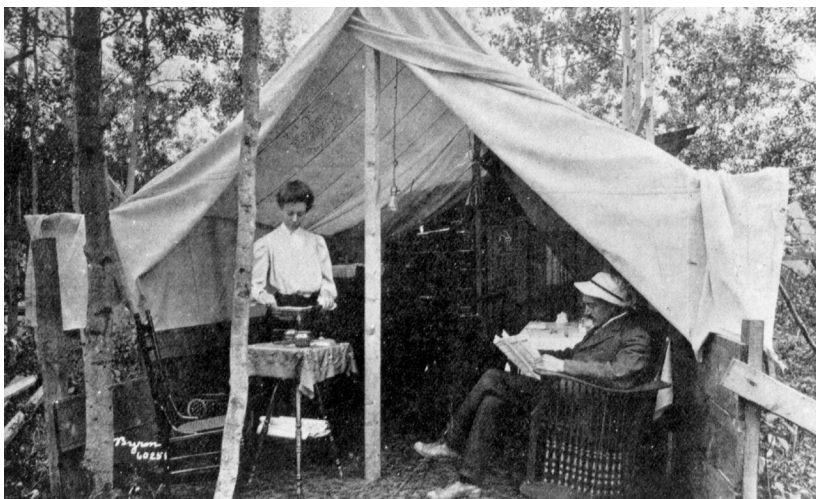


## TENT CITIES

Tents accommodated many Edmontonians during boom and bust periods. In the early 20th century the city grew rapidly and housing stock could not keep pace. A July 20, 1907 *Edmonton Bulletin* survey revealed that 23% of the population lived in tents.



Tents housed postal workers in 1906. CEA EA-10-2794



Housing shortages affected many new Edmontonians. CEA EA-267-428

These early twentieth century tent communities were found south of Jasper Avenue behind the former Dreamland Theatre (the current site of the Edmonton Convention Centre) and now Louise McKinney Riverside Park and parking lot; east of 95th Street and north of the CNR tracks (now the LRT tracks); west of 109 Street near the CPR tracks; and north of 105 Avenue between 104 and 105 Streets.

The Depression of the 1930s resulted in many farmers losing their land and many urban workers becoming unemployed. The government relief system excluded most single unemployed men or sent them to work camps in the country. Temporary shack or tent towns became accommodation for many of these men who wanted to remain in the City.



Shacks were built of available materials at the dump. CEA EA-88-201, detail.

One such site was below the Edmonton Convention Centre, now the site of Louise McKinney Riverfront Park and, during the 1930s, the site of the Grierson Dump. The dump afforded building materials such as cardboard, metal, boards, and wire. Other materials could be salvaged for sale. Coal for heating was available by digging the riverbank, and water was hauled from the river.



See the Macdonald Hotel at the top of the valley. CEA EA-160-325



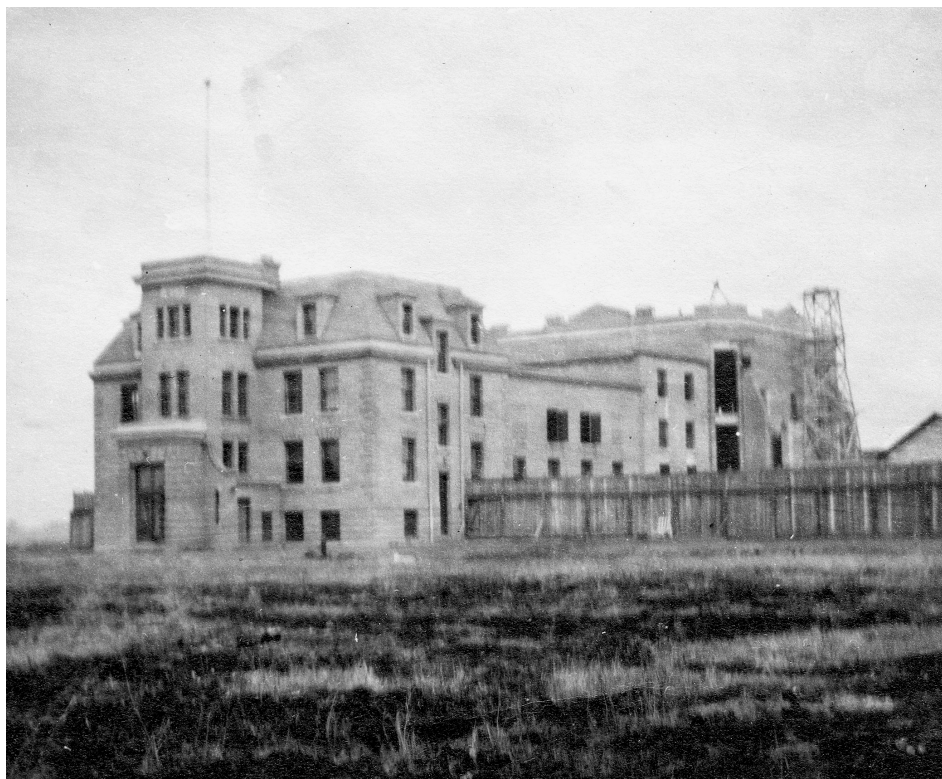
# WORK AND WAGES ISSUES



## EDMONTON PENITENTIARY 1906-1921

The Edmonton Penitentiary, the federal facility serving Alberta and Saskatchewan, was located between 92 Street (Government Avenue) and 86 Street (Saunders Avenue), north of the river to 112 (Pine) Avenue. The land was acquired in 1904 and a small 2-storey penitentiary was built to house up to 82 prisoners. Once the prisoner labour had been acquired, the penitentiary was expanded incrementally until the large facility was completed.

Prison philosophy at the time required that the inmates work during the day and spend their off time in small, solitary cells. Silence was required at all times and prisoners were referred to by their cell numbers, not their names. It was believed that trade instruction and time for silent penitence would rehabilitate the residents and equip them for life in society.



The Edmonton Penitentiary, still under construction by prisoners *ca.* 1909. CEA EA-793-75

In the Edmonton Pen, prisoners received instruction in and ample practice at masonry, carpentry work, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, shoemaking, tailoring, and baking as well as vegetable gardening and eventually coal mining. Inmate labour provided uniforms and boots for penitentiary staff, food for the facility, tin kitchen utensils, the bricks and concrete blocks they used in building construction, and coal to heat the facility. Inmates hauled gravel, sand, clay, and wood (for fuel) up from the riverbank.

The penitentiary lands had been the site of two early coal mines and the Pen staff included an Edmonton coal miner. The inmates began working an established “drift mine”, a tunnel along a coal seam, from the riverbank in about 200 feet towards the jail. By 1910 other inmates were hard at work, digging a 150 feet deep shaft within the Pen’s walled yard. In April of 1910, 29 inmates (20% of the prison population) went on strike for more food to fuel their strenuous workdays. The coal mine work afforded several escape opportunities over the years, but escapees were reportedly recaptured.

The Penn Coal Mine was privately owned and operated after the penitentiary closed.



Penitentiary staff and warden ca. 1906. CEA EA-10-2332



## FAIR WAGE ISSUE

### \*SOUTH SYNDICATE AVENUE SCHOOL

(one repurposed as a house at 10830-95 Street)

The South Syndicate Avenue Schools were two foursquare, wood frame, two-storey buildings located at 108 Avenue and 95 Street. They were built about 1908 as temporary schools when the first Norwood School could no longer accommodate the pupils of McCauley/Norwood. The buildings were updated in 1913, adding indoor plumbing as an extension on the back, a new front porch, and a coal chute. Their construction was noted by the ELTC as an example of unfair wages.

In the context of an active economy and an ever-increasing workforce in 1908, the ELTC lobbied Edmonton's City Council to institute a fair wage clause in all contracts for City work. The ELTC sought union rates for trades and a decent wage for labourers. In 1908 the City responded with a recommendation that labourers be paid 25 cents per hour and that the workday be established at 9 hours. The City's response was that it was unnecessary to fix rates for trades other than that "agreed to by the larger employers of labour in the City".

However, ELTC had a successful meeting in 1908 with the Edmonton Public School Board and the Board applied a Fair Wage Clause to contractor work. The 1913 clause defines fair wages as "the scale of wages [and length of working day] that shall from year to year be fixed by union(s) governing the respective classes of work".



South Syndicate Avenue Schools. ca. 1908. PAA B3879



## HUMBERSTONE MINE (1900 -1934)

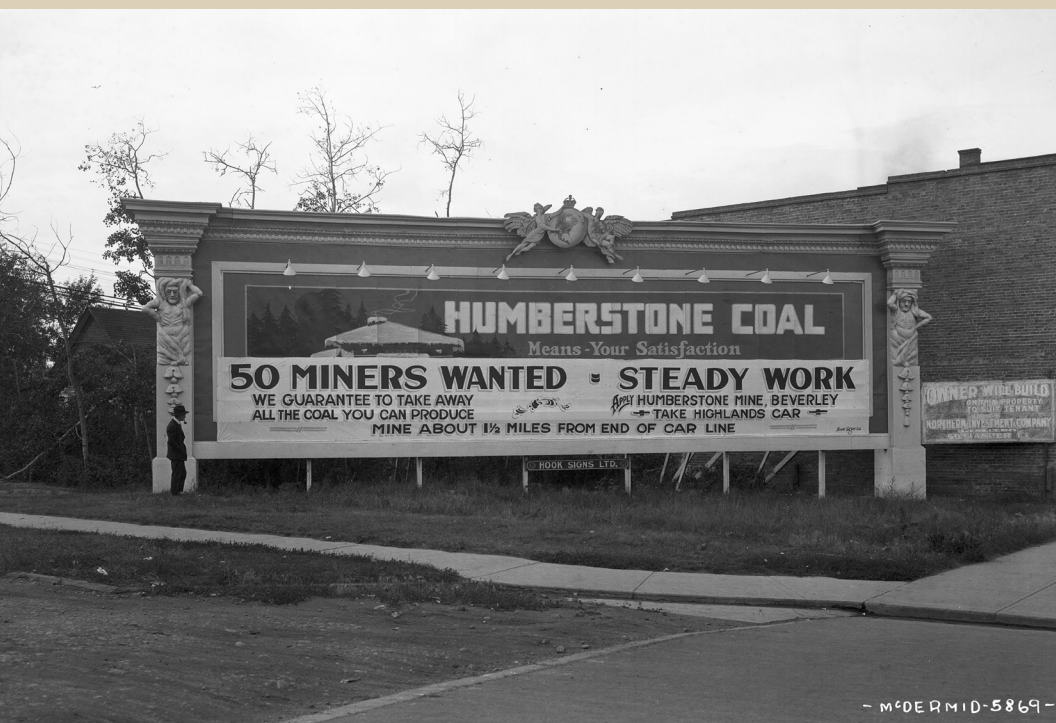
\*Commemorative plaque at 111 Avenue and 30 Street in Beverly

The original Humberstone mine, under Grierson Hill in central Edmonton, was lost in the flood of 1899. William Humberstone then purchased a half section in the town of Beverly (east of present day 34 Street and south of 118 Avenue). The mine entrance was at the north end of the Rundle Park Golf Course, 2902 118 Avenue. The isolation of the Humberstone Mine created a community of over 100 mine workers who were housed and fed on-site. A higher volume of coal was purchased during cold months, and by 1918, 200 men were employed during the winters. The hearings of the Alberta Coal Mining Industry Commission of 1919 revealed that the workers' living conditions at Alberta mines were usually deplorable.

The Humberstone Mine was led in the 1919 strike by miner and One Big Union (OBU) member Joe Cavazzi. He was blacklisted as a result but he spoke to the Commission on the working conditions of miners in the Edmonton area. He reported long hours of work, a lack of washhouses, lack of a dependable water supply, and lack of cold weather warming facilities.



Humberstone Mine employees and officers, 1917. CEA EB-39-148



Humberstone Coal billboard advertising for miners. CEA EA-160-334



Loading Grand Trunk Pacific train cars at the Humberstone Mine, 1916. GL nc-6-2152



Humberstone Coal Mine workers pose for a publicity photo in 1916. Note the lack of protective clothing. GL nc-6-2153



## **\*LATTA BRIDGE**

Note: Under replacement construction in 2023-24

The Latta Bridge on Jasper Avenue between 91st and 90th Streets was built by relief labour. During the 1930s, the three levels of government co-operated to fund relief. Few social services existed prior to the Depression, for example the Mother's Allowance for destitute widows and a strictly means-tested Old Age Pension (for ages 70+). The City administered relief services. Fifteen per cent of Edmonton workers were on relief in 1933.

Single unemployed men were offered two meals per day and rooming house or camp accommodation. But relief for single unemployed men largely ended after the federal government opened remote, relief camps run by the Department of National Defence in late 1932. These men were removed from cities and housed and put to work in places where they would be less able to organize protests against government unemployment policies.

Unemployed families and single women were provided with rent payments, clothing, groceries, shoe repair, and medical assistance. The City also provided work on public projects for married men.

The original 1911 wooden trestle over Latta Ravine was replaced with a concrete and steel structure in 1936 as a relief work project. The City engineering department reused materials from other projects. Seven of the nine steel girders had been salvaged from the 1931 alterations to the south end of the High Level Bridge. Scrap steel streetcar rails were used in constructing the stabilizing pads on the ground used during the bridge construction. The bridge's foundation pilings were bored by hand and poured in place in the ravine.

There were limitations on how many hours each man could work, an attempt by the City to share the relief resources equitably. Labourers on the Latta Bridge project could earn up to \$100 (at 48 cents per hour) per month and skilled tradesmen could earn up to \$100 (at 75-80 cents per hour) per month. The foreman and the timekeeper on the job were full-time City employees.

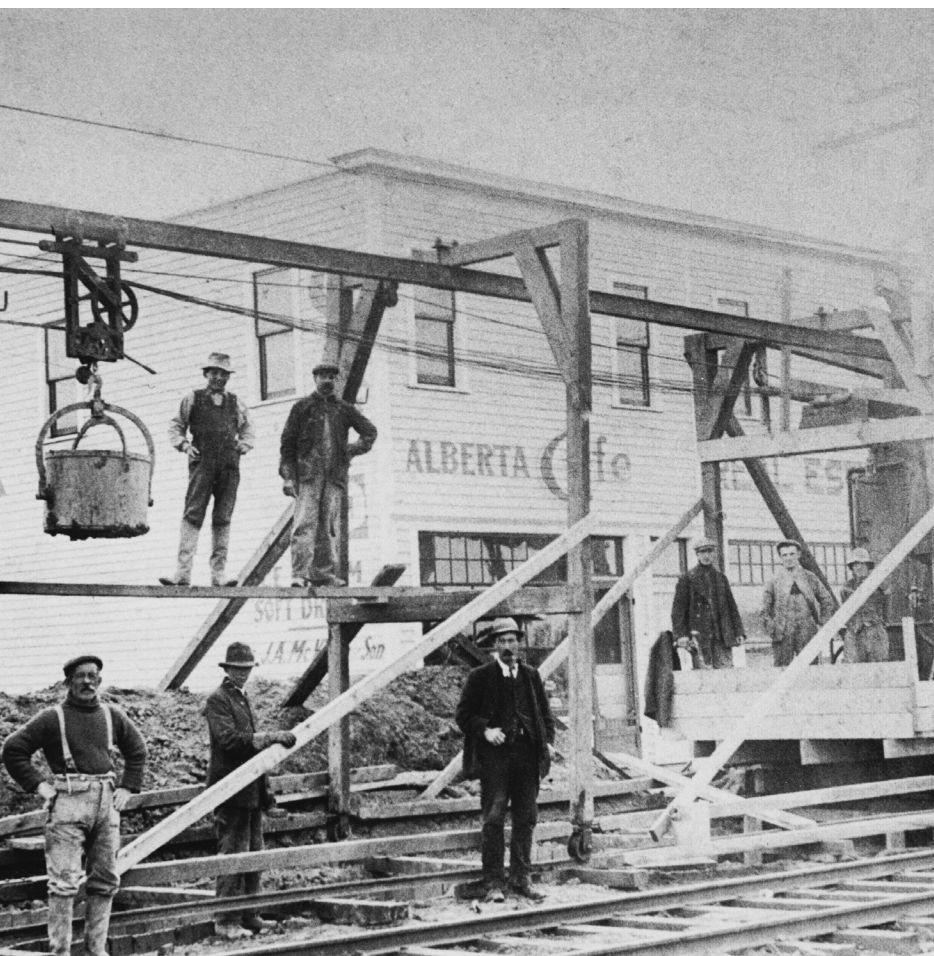
## SEWER WORKERS

118 Avenue and 94 Street

The frame building housing the Alberta Café behind the workers has been replaced by a building housing, in 2023, Pe Metawe games shop.

Canada entered a period of economic depression in 1913-1914. Unemployment soared due to the completion of railway construction and poor harvests. The construction boom was over. In August 1914 the City Engineer's Department laid off 123 workers (71% of their workforce), retaining 22, and keeping an additional 27 workers on half-pay. They reported saving nearly \$13,000 per month in salaries.

In February 1915 the ETLC protested that sewer workers were being paid in groceries, not cash, perhaps part of the relief services provided by the city during the war.



Main sewer line installation, 1914, 118 Avenue at 94 Street. CEA EA-10-742

## \*RENFREW PARK

(also known as John Ducey Park, Telus Field, RE/MAX Field)

Since 1906, this land had been the site of the Ross Flats Football (soccer) Grounds. In 1933 it was traded for the north Diamond Park site (just south of Rosedale Road at 100 Street) so that the football grounds could be expanded.

The name had been changed to Renfrew Park in 1923. In 1933, Henry Roche, a local printer and sports promoter, leased the grounds from the City for \$1700 with an option to purchase after 2 years for \$5000. He spent \$5000 in improvements to the site to create the baseball park.

It was noted in the ETLC minutes of May 1, 1933 that the new diamond at Renfrew Park was being installed by relief labour. Since it was a private venture, Council members stressed that rates of pay should be in accordance with fair wage law.

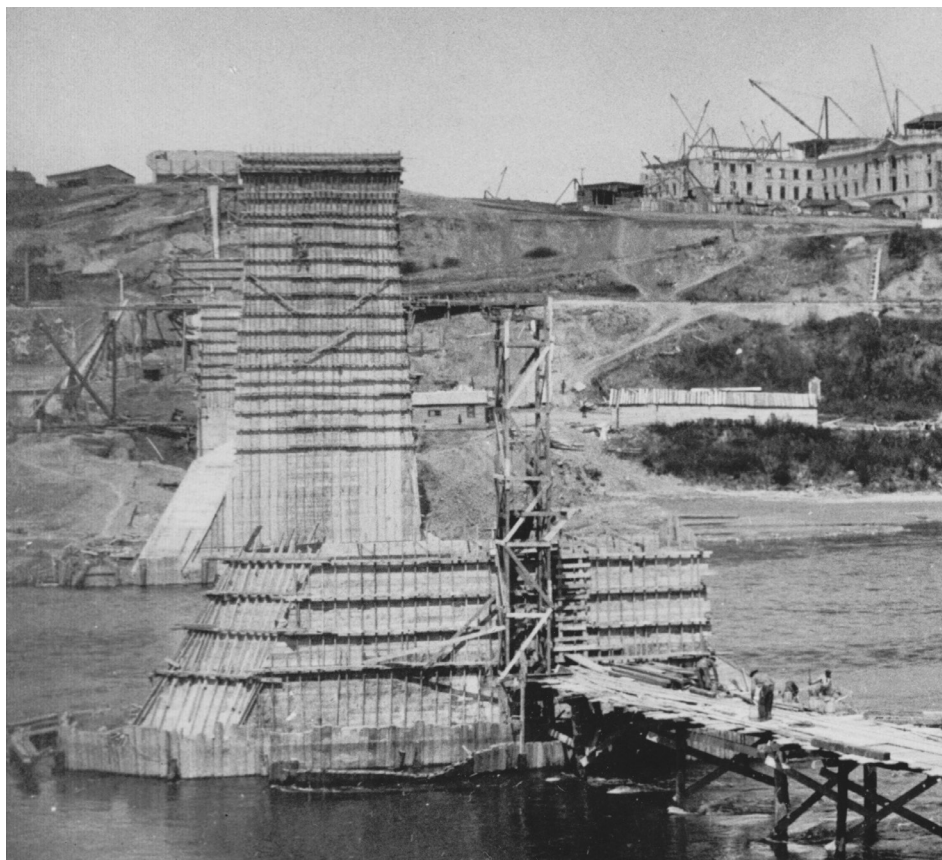


The new ballpark stands were constructed by relief workers in 1933. CEA EA-524-28

## \*HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE

The High Level Bridge linked Edmonton and Strathcona for train, streetcar, vehicle, and pedestrian traffic. The two cities, the federal government, and the CPR funded the ambitious structure, built between 1910 and 1913. Edmontonians provided the labour but eastern firms held the major construction contracts. The set-up for the bridge construction began in the fall of 1910. A blacksmith shop, machine shop, an office for engineers, and a bunkhouse for workers were constructed on the south side of the river.

Thirty men worked to excavate material from the riverbed prior to forming the piers. The pile driving equipment came from Montreal.



The High Level Bridge under construction in 1911. Note the Legislature Building being built on the north side. CEA EA-10-134



The concrete plant was set up on the site. Day and night shifts were required for the continuous concrete pour. Gravel from the North Saskatchewan River was hauled by teams to the staging areas at each end of the bridge. Sand was hauled from Clover Bar. In January 1911 work on the bridge was suspended due to extreme cold. Water pipes, pumps, sand, and cement were frozen.

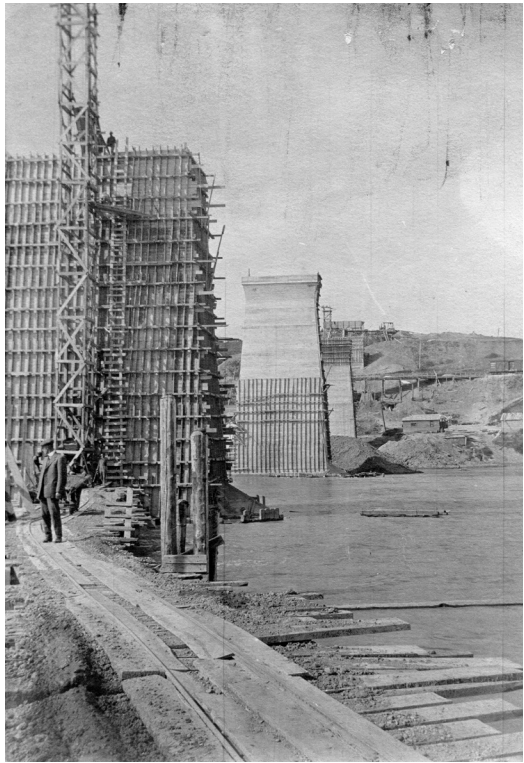
In February the ETLC challenged the wages being paid, claiming the men were being paid 17.5 cents per hour. John Gunn and Sons (Winnipeg) excavators claimed that the average wage was 22.5 cents with more experienced men being paid 25 cents per hour for a ten-hour day. Gunn claimed that the CPR fair wage clause prohibited wages of less than 20 cents per hour.





CEA EA-10-300

The steel work began in late 1911. The girders arrived from the manufacturer and timbers were assembled for the temporary support structure. The girders were first securely bolted, then riveted together. A travelling crane with two 85-foot booms lifted the steel girders into place. Compressor plants powered the automatic riveters. About 100 men were employed in the steel work. The structural steel workers went on strike on October 1, 1912. Their contract had expired and their demand was for 50 cents per hour for a 9-hour day – a higher hourly rate for a shorter workday. The strike was not well reported by the local newspapers. Canadian Pacific officials noted that the strike would not affect the completion of the bridge, as they would hire replacement workers if necessary.



CEA EA-10-343

Workers from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, Local 1325 built the forms for pouring the concrete piers of the bridge. In 1903 Local 1325 was the first union chartered in Edmonton and it continues in operation to this day.

## **\*ALBERTA LEGISLATURE BUILDING**

10800-97 Avenue

Once the federal government had created Alberta as a province in 1905 and the first provincial government named Edmonton the capital city, planning began for the construction of the Legislature Building. An American architect, Alan Merrick Jeffers, was hired by the Department of Public Works.

Day labourers were employed for the work by the department. Edmonton's labour movement was firmly established by 1907-08, but the Alberta government did not hire unionized workers.



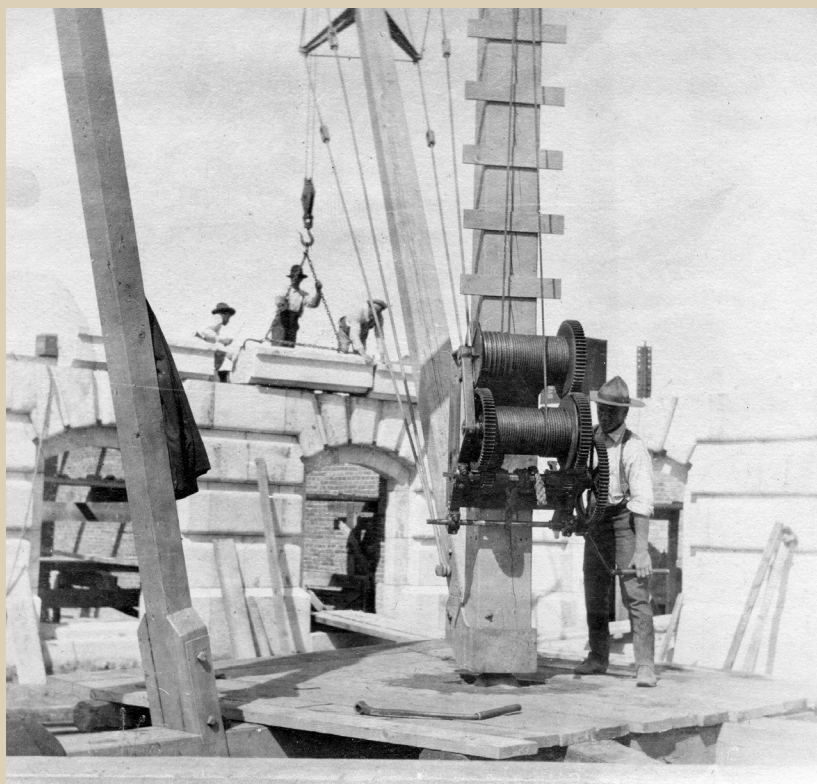
A steam shovel excavating for the Legislature Building, October 1907. PAA B3356



Construction began in August 1907. Steam shovels were used in the excavation. Quicksand was encountered. So concrete piles were driven prior to beginning the foundation.

Steam shovel operators and dredgemen had been unionized in the early 20th century.





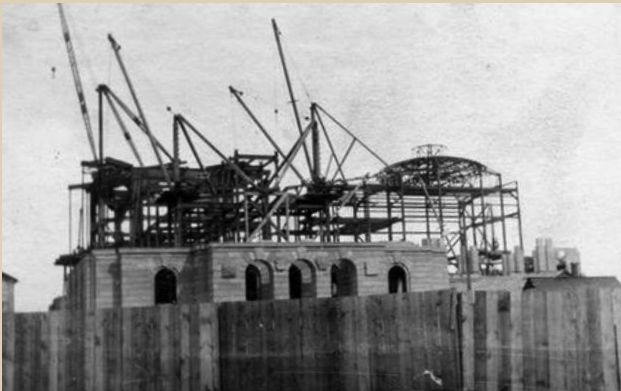
A stone lintel is moved into place with a hand-operated crane. CEA EA-793-27

Workers moving the stone lintel into position. The sandstone and marble for the Legislature were delivered by the Edmonton, Yukon and Pacific Railway to a siding below the construction site. James and John Miller hauled the heavy stone materials up to the site by horse and wagon. Teamsters formed a local in Edmonton in 1907.



Mixing concrete at the Legislature Building in October 1907. CEA EA-793-32

Workers using a concrete mixer on the construction site. Concrete work began on the foundation in late October 1907. Labourers were unionized in Edmonton at this time.



The west end of the Legislature Building. CEA EA-793-36

The west end of the building is taking shape in 1909 with first-storey stone work complete and the second-storey steel frame. Stone masons filled in the steel skeleton. Stonecutters were a part of the Bricklayers and Masons Union Local #1, formed in Edmonton in 1903.

## EDMONTON GENERAL HOSPITAL AND NURSES' LABOUR

The Grey Nuns ran the Edmonton General Hospital on this site, beginning in 1895. The hospital has had a number of locations on the block between 111 and 112 Streets and Jasper Avenue south to 100 Avenue.

The main building facing Jasper Avenue was built in 1940. It later attached to the 111 Street facing wing. This 1953 addition made Edmonton General the first Edmonton hospital building to access federal funding and provincial matching grants.

The Grey Nuns motherhouse in Montreal often delayed the Edmonton projects being afraid of the Social Credit government, perceived by the eastern-based religious order as communists who would favour publicly-owned hospitals. The hospital closed as an active care facility when the new Grey Nuns Hospital opened in Mill Woods in 1988.



The General Hospital 1940 modernized wing on Jasper Avenue. GN L053, 1Y2D



The nursing profession changed profoundly over the hospital's time on this downtown site. In the early days, student nurses who learned on the job were the core workers in the hospital, with a very few registered nurses in the supervisory positions. Over the twentieth century the characteristics of the successful nurse changed from obedience to knowledge as the nursing schools transitioned from training to the education of their students.

The formation of the United Nurses of Alberta union in 1977 paved the way for more effective bargaining between professional nurses and the provincial government and hospital authorities. In 1977 2,500 nurses across Alberta went on strike for increased pay. They were awarded a 9% increase (higher than the federal Wage and Price Controls guideline of 6%). In 1980 6,000 Alberta nurses struck for wages and improved scheduling of shifts. They were awarded a 39.8% increase.



Striking nurses picketing the General Hospital on Jasper Avenue in 1977. PAA J3461/4

## GRANDIN R.C. SEPARATE SCHOOL

9844-110 Street (Now known as Holy Child Catholic Elementary School)

Grandin School was built as a “Roman Catholic Separate School” in 1914 to ease pressure on St Mary’s School, located on 103 Street to the east. The school provided a Catholic education in French and English for grades one through eight. Grade nine was added in 1936. Most of the teachers were Sisters from the Faithful Companions of Jesus Convent. At the time, Grandin was one of the French enclaves of Edmonton.



PAA OB575

In 1919, the lay teachers in Edmonton Separate Schools went on strike for wage parity with teachers in the public schools. They returned to work on October 15, and an agreement between the teachers and the separate school board, witnessed by the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, was signed on October 18, giving the teachers remuneration equal to that of public school teachers. The agreement specified that no penalties were to be levied on the strikers.



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