

Community Conversation

Starters*

Eighth Street SE & the Old North Trail

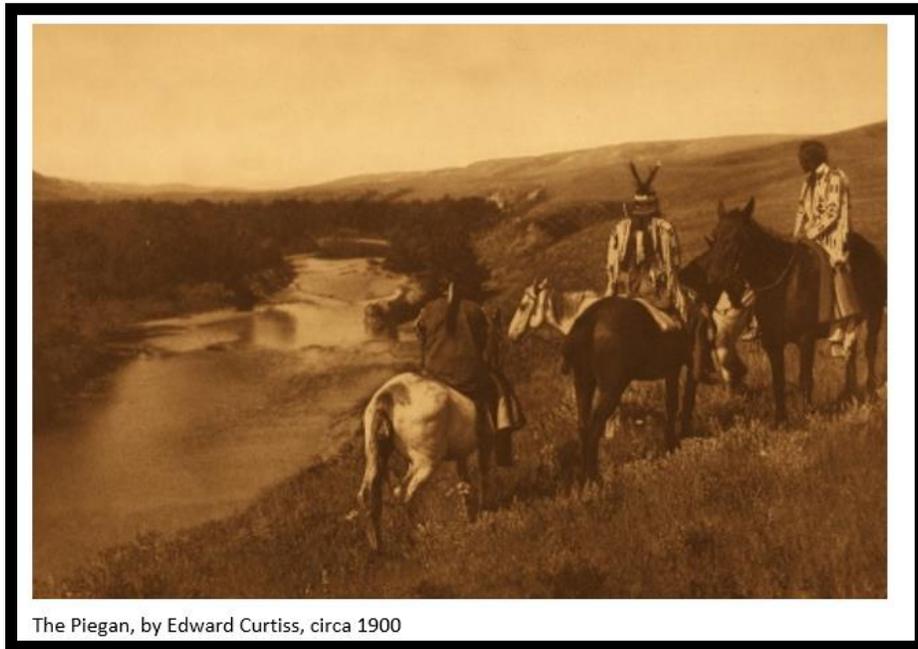
*Community Conversation Starters are designed to stimulate discussion within your community. They are organic, flexible and adaptive to the uniqueness of each neighbourhood.

Did you know 8th Street SE used to be part of the Old North Trail, a super fascinating piece of our history?



Who's all here? Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi (second from left) and Calgary Heritage Authority chair Scott Jolliffe (far right) present the plaque commemorating the Old North Trail as one of Calgary's historically significant sites to members of the Ramsay Community Association (from left) president Lexi Shmyr, vice president external Art Matsui, director Wendy Macrae, and vice president internal Josie Casale. (2001)¹

¹ <https://ammsa.com/publications/alberta-sweetgrass/ancient-aboriginal-trail-recognized-historical-significance>

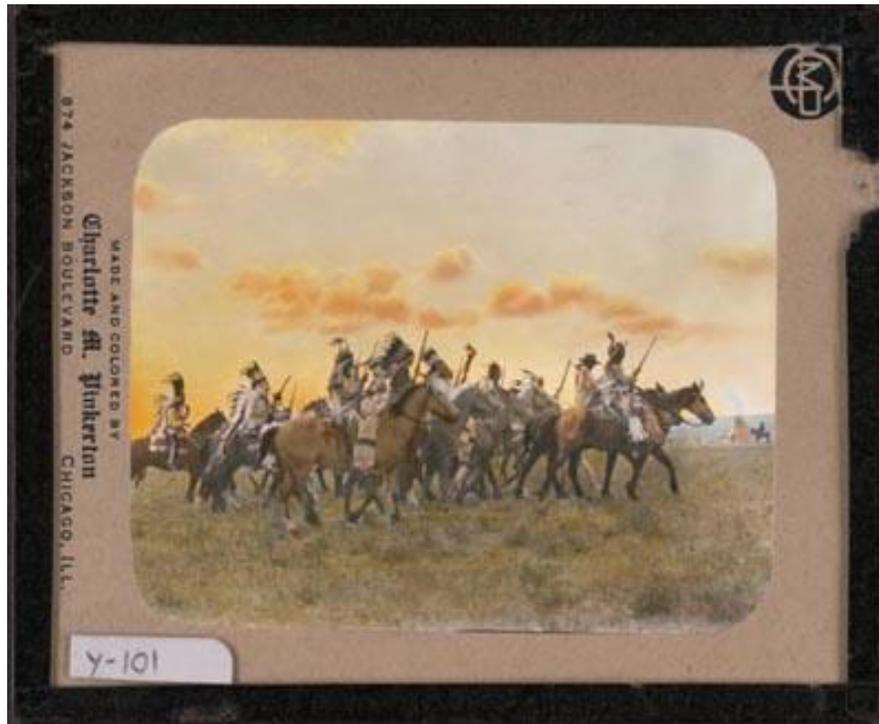


There is a well-known trail we call the Old North Trail. It runs north and south along the Rocky Mountains. No one knows how long it has been used by the Indians². My father told me it originated in the migration of a great tribe of Indians from the distant north to the south, and all the tribes have, ever since, continued to follow in their tracks.

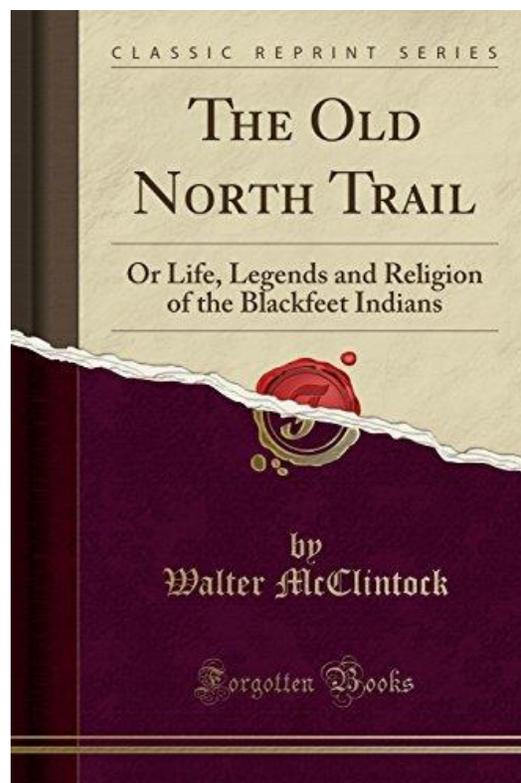
The Old North Trail is now becoming overgrown with moss and grass, but it was worn so deeply, by many generations of travelers [sic], that the travois tracks and horse trail are still plainly visible.

Chief Brings-Down-the-Sun (Blackfeet) as told to Walter McClintock in 1910

² In this excerpt the word *Indians* is being used by Blackfeet Chief Brings-Down-the-Sun in 1910. *First Nations* or *Indigenous* would be considered more appropriate terms for use today, especially by non-Indigenous people.



Need more knowledge? Check out *The Old North Trail or Life Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians* by Walter McClintock, originally published in 1910.





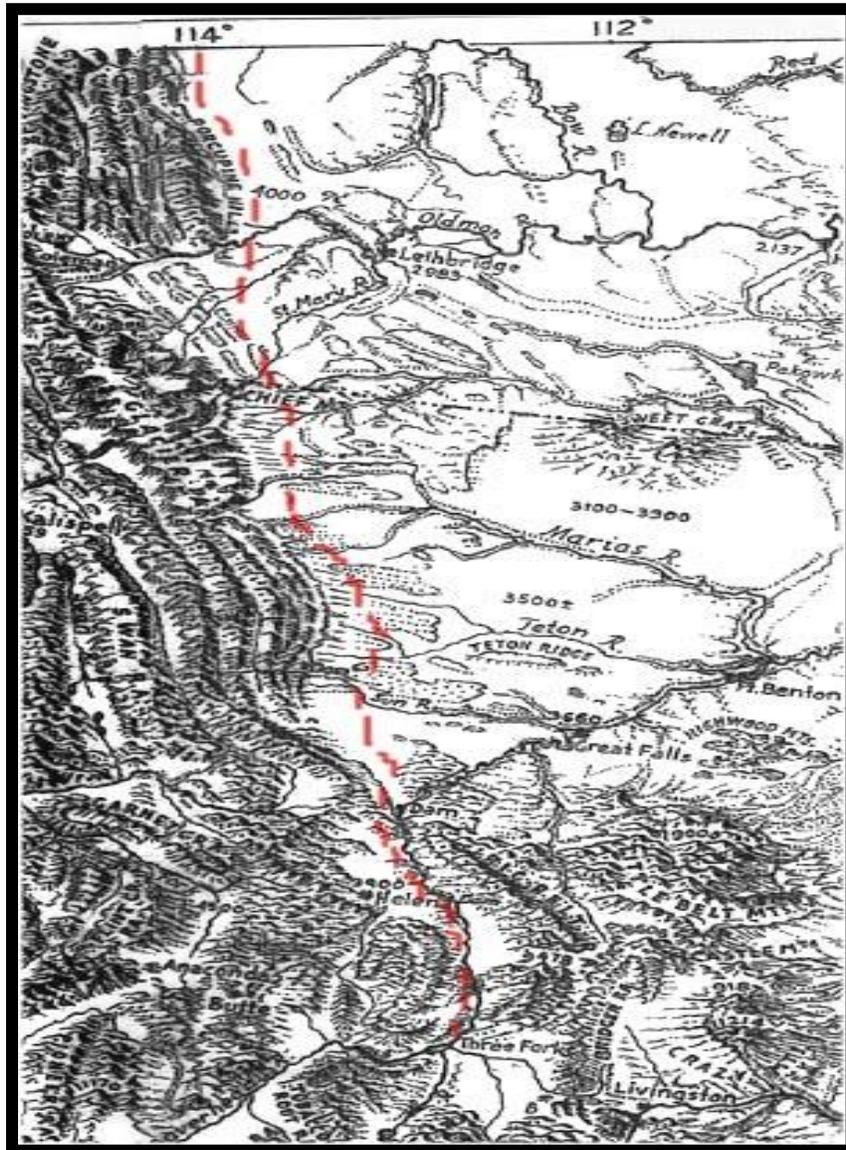
John Palliser



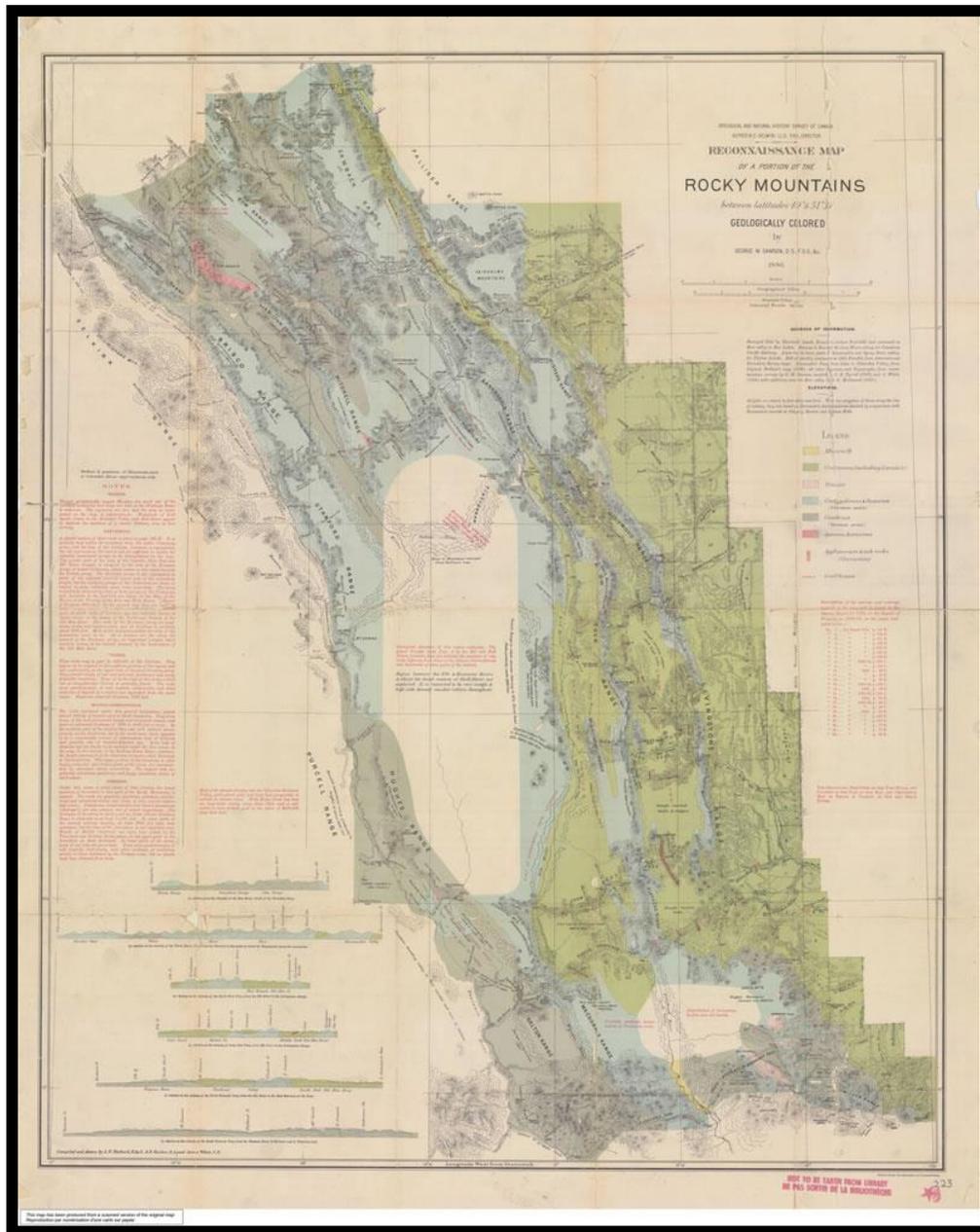
George M. Dawson

The Old North Trail which ran through the foothills along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains was utilized by Indigenous groups for more than a thousand years before these two guys, John Palliser and George M. Dawson, noted it in their surveys of Alberta.³

³ Knowledge Credit: Wendy Aitkens, Galt Museum, 2015



The Old North Trail connected lands that eventually became Alberta and Montana. Dawson recorded stream crossings, wooded groves, and landmarks on his map of 1886. The trail is marked in red on the above image.

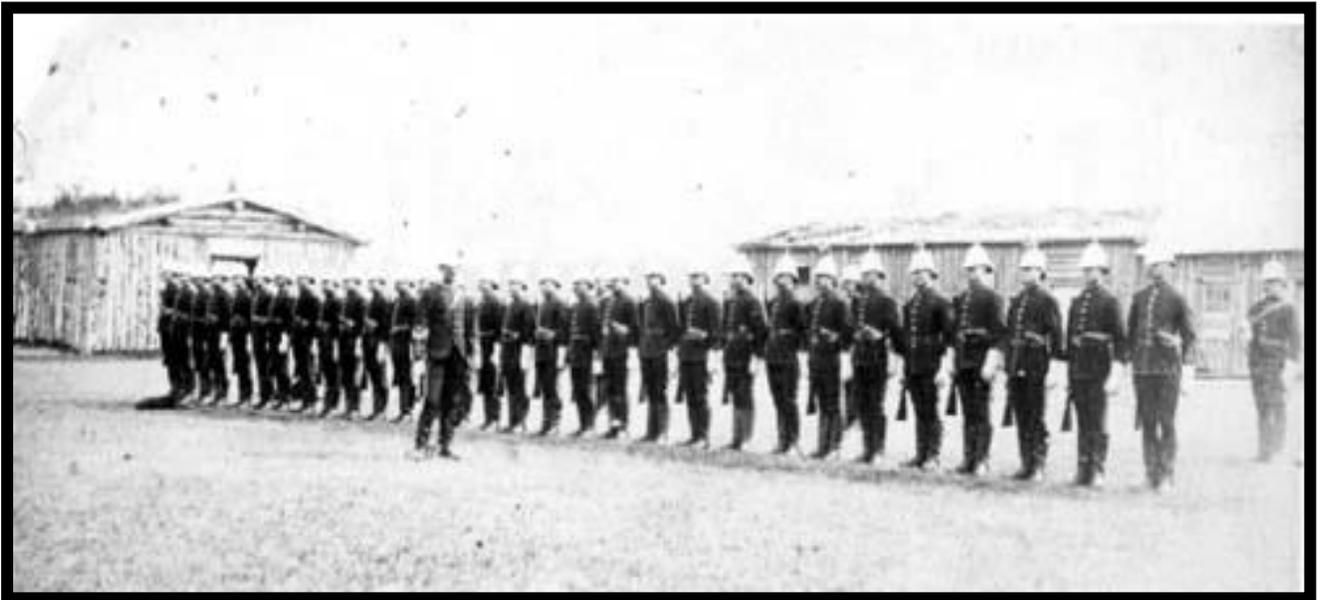


Need more knowledge? Hit this link:

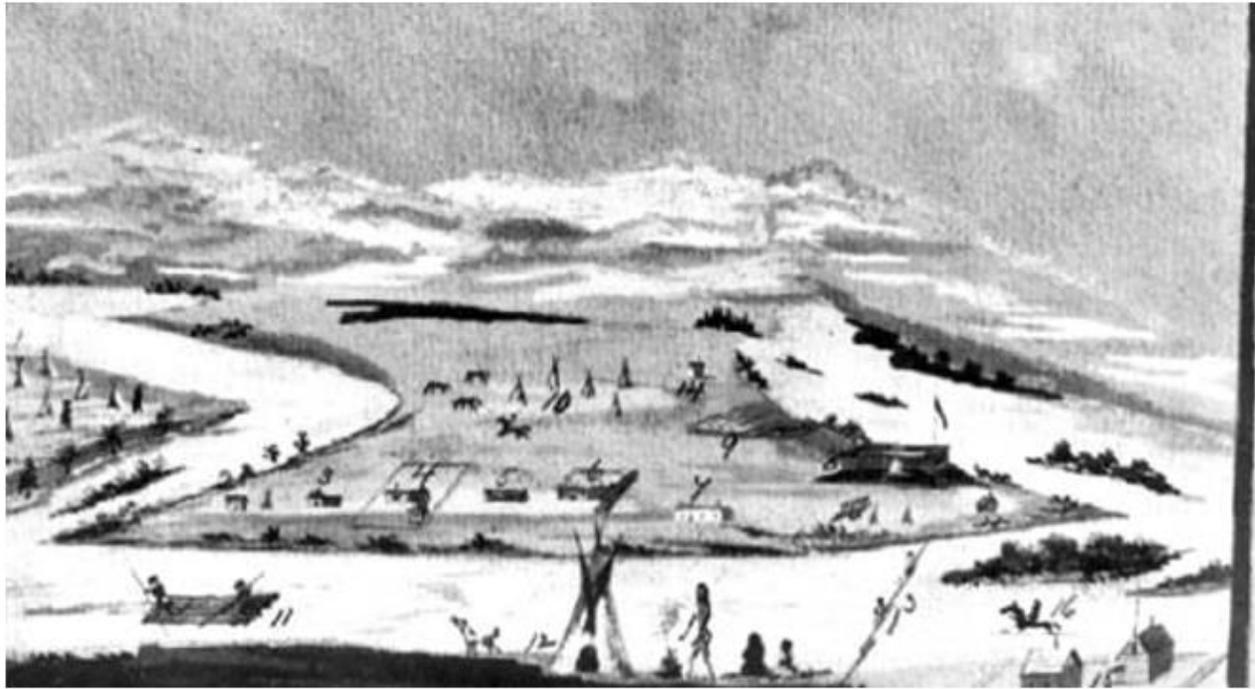
<http://history.alberta.ca/energyheritage/turner-valley-gas-plant/geology-surveying-and-mapping/surveying-and-mapping/george-mercator-dawson.aspx>

When Fort Calgary was founded in 1875, the section of the Old North Trail (already a **very** popular cart trail) between the two forts became known as MacLeod Trail.

Since supplies from the east coast could not be transported to the west on the Plains rivers, they were shipped by river boat to Fort Benton, Montana and then north by cart to Calgary.



"F" Troop NWMP at Fort Calgary, 1876 (GAI NA-354-10)



View of Fort Calgary, Alberta. August 29, 1877, Winder, William, GAI NA-98-10

How many of these can you find in this image of Fort Calgary in 1877? (For further information see RCMP Quarterly, January, 1940)

- 1) First Nations Camps
- 2) Catholic Mission
- 3) Interpreter's House
- 4) Trading Post
- 5) Government Post
- 6) Government Garden
- 7) Raft on the River
- 8) Bridge across the River
- 9) Anglican Mission
- 10) Hudson's Bay Company Post
- 11) First Nations crossing the Elbow River

HISTORY BITES

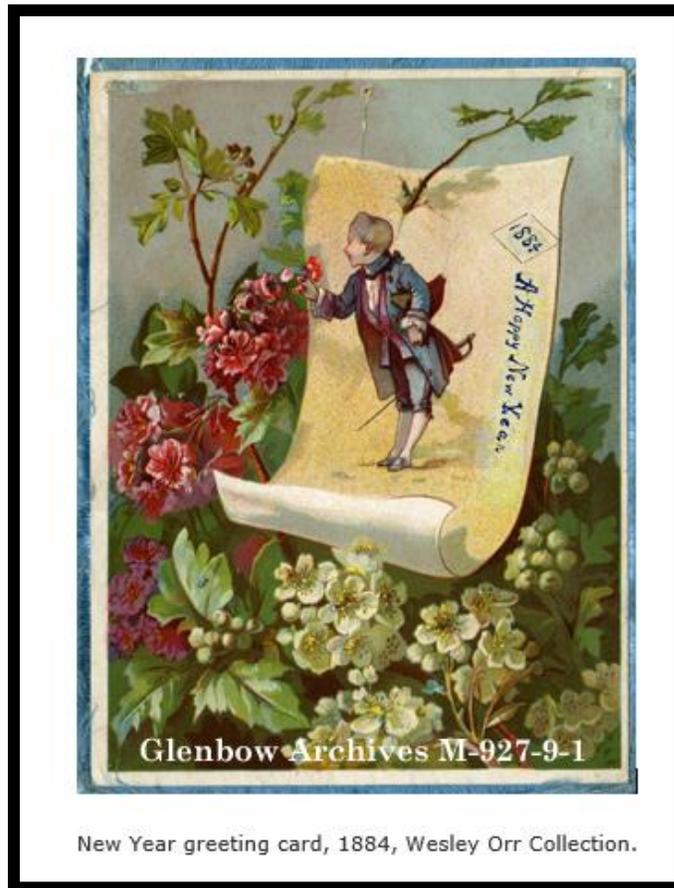
Some say the first settler in Ramsay and Inglewood, was a Métis man named Antonie Godin, who lived at the end of the trail. He homesteaded this land in **1876**.

In **1880**, the land was sold to Louis and Angelique Roselle. Louis was a Métis buffalo hunter and HBC employee.

Circa **1882**, Ramsey's first bridge is constructed!
It's a foot bridge!
#nohorseshere

A section of Ramsay officially becomes part of the town of Calgary in **1884**.

The Old North Trail, in whole and in part, has gone through a number of names including Macleod Trail, Orr Street, and Spiller Road.



In 1883, when the Canadian Pacific Railroad came to Calgary, the land was sold again, this time for \$10,000 to an agent for Wesley Orr. Early subdivision plans for East Calgary show that Wesley Orr named this part of MacLeod Trail as Orr Street in 1887.



Title: Edward V. Spiller, Calgary, Alberta.
Circa 1910-1919. GAI: NA-2915-1

In 1967, it was named Spiller Road after Edward Vincent Spiller (1878-1970), a man devoted to the Boy Scout movement in Calgary.

The northern section of the trail was renamed 8th Street to match the modern grid pattern in the city.⁴

⁴ Knowledge Credit: Alberta Sweetgrass, 2011, Volume 3, Issue 18. Author Shari Narine Sweetgrass

GOT A STORY?

KNOW A STORY?

SHARE A STORY!

Let us know if there's something you'd like to see featured here (community related) by sending an email to: engage@calgary.ca