



SELF-GUIDED TOURS:

Immigration History



Hungarian Immigrants arriving in Canada
Image Courtesy of Collections Canada

Fort Edmonton Park is located in Treaty 6 territory, as well as the traditional lands of the Métis people.

How to use this guide: Fort Edmonton Park encourages you to use this guide as a starting point to exploring the park. You will find small tidbits of information as well as suggestions of buildings to visit and questions to ask the costumed interpreters you will find on site.

1846 Fort Temporary Foreign Workers

In 1846, western Canada was called Rupert's Land and trading companies exported raw goods east and relied on Great Britain for commercial goods as well as political leadership. The Hudson's Bay Company, which claimed Rupert's Land, was based in Great Britain, not Canada.



A Job For Now - The vast distance between their homes and this new territory must have seemed daunting for men coming from Canada or the British Isles to work for the HBC. A five-year contract would pay about £17-20 (pounds sterling)/year, and included room and board. This work was not for everyone. Some Norwegian and Icelandic workers who came over to make a profit found the conditions too harsh, the pay too little, and the work too severe, and demanded to be taken back to their home countries.

A Penny Saved - For those who stayed, the promised wage often evaporated over the five-year period as workers purchased necessities from the Company, forcing many to renew their contracts for another five years. Consider today's temporary foreign workers: what attracts them to Canada now? What promises or challenges do they face?

ASK AN INTERPRETER

Find the Clerk in the [Trade Store](#) (#3) and ask him where he's from and when he'll get to go home. Under what conditions did he come to Rupert's Land? Could he bring his wife? Would you do the same?

BE SURE TO VISIT

The [York Boat](#) (#19) and see how furs were transported up and down the North Saskatchewan River. How long would it take? Would you be willing to travel that distance for your work?

1885 Street Go West, Young Man

In 1867, much of eastern Canada united under Confederation, and with Confederation came the construction of a national railway unite the country, including the newly added west.

A Key to Survival - In 1885, Edmonton, having been passed over for the railway in favour of Calgary, was facing the possibility of becoming a ghost town. Harsh winters, uncleared land, and the vast distance from all other settlements made attracting new immigrants difficult. For Edmonton, the promise of free land and enterprise became key features to draw people to the west from eastern Canada and the United States. Few other groups were welcomed.



Not a Poor Man's Game - Because of the long travel distance and the cost of starting your own business, immigration wasn't easy. John and Lovisa McDougall (pictured) moved from Ontario, while Newton (of Scandinavian

descent) and Cynthia Egge moved north from the United States. Lovisa notes in her letters that enterprise in the west was not a poor man's game and many young men who came west seeking their fortune left just as penniless as they came. Would you recommend Edmonton today? How would you describe living here?

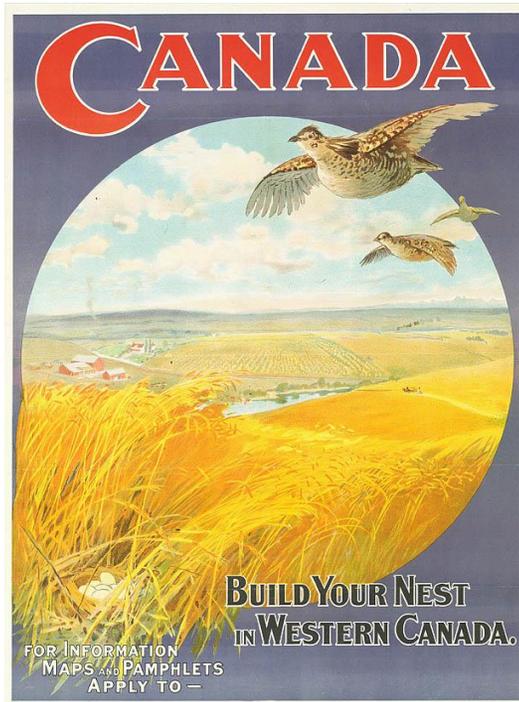
ASK AN INTERPRETER

Visit Métis Edmontonians at [Peter Erasmus' House](#) (#40) or the camp next to it and find out how they feel about newcomers to the Edmonton area. Does it affect their livelihood?

BE SURE TO VISIT

Find the [Dominion Land Office](#) (#45) and find out about the opportunity to own land in the west. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of taking the government's deal? If you lived back in 1885, would you do it?

Thank you for visiting Fort Edmonton Park!



Historic Advertisement for Immigration
Image courtesy of Libraries and Archives Canada

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1905 Street Growing a Nation and a City

Between 1896 and 1911, over 3 million immigrants made Canada their home. British and American immigrants were given preferential treatment, forming the largest group of immigrants during this period.

Pride and Prejudice - Edmonton's Immigration Hall, which opened in 1906, documented new arrivals, and helped find respectable work and safe accommodation. However, this was also a period of prejudiced restrictions on who could immigrate to Canada and from where.



In 1911, 3400 Edmontonians signed a petition asking the federal government to stop allowing African-American immigrants to settle in the west. This is also the period in which Japanese and Chinese immigrants had a "head tax"

levied against them.

Carrying on Traditions - For early arrivals from ethnic communities, establishing an identity in the burgeoning city was key. After Abraham and Rebecca Cristall arrived in 1893, one of their first orders of business was hiring a rabbi to bring Jewish culture and religion to Alberta's scattered Jewish population.

ASK AN INTERPRETER about the residents on 1905 Street who immigrated to Edmonton. Find [Mr. and Mrs. Firkins](#) (#55) or one of the bachelors living at [Tent City](#) (#52) and ask them what brought them to Edmonton. How are their experiences different from one another?

BE SURE TO VISIT The [Employment Office](#) at the back of the [Penny Arcade](#) (#57), where many young immigrants would pay fees for the officer to find them work.

1920 Street Birth of the Cultural Mosaic

Canada's rapid growth through immigration led to a moment of cultural identity crisis. By the late 1920s, Canada began its journey towards a cultural mosaic.

A "Menace" to Society - During this period, immigrants from Scandinavia and Ukraine streamed into the province. Meanwhile, labour uprisings such as the Winnipeg General Strike (1919) allowed the Canadian government to use new laws to deport immigrants who were suspected to cause 'trouble', or who were suspected to be Communist sympathizers.

Establishing an Identity - In Alberta, recent immigrants from Germany and Ukraine were moved into internment camps during the Great War. Afterwards, it became all the more important for Ukrainian-Canadians to assert their cultural identity as well as their importance within Canada. Places like the [Ukrainian Bookstore](#) (#68), Talmud Torah School and [Al-Rashid Mosque](#) (#80) were not just markets for familiar goods or services, but also serving as community meeting places. Do you have a similar meeting place in your life?



ASK AN INTERPRETER

Visit the [Capitol Theatre](#) (#70) and ask an interpreter about Edmonton's burgeoning Jewish population. Where are they coming from? What kinds of businesses do they own? What sorts of projects is the community involved in during the 1920s?

BE SURE TO VISIT [Bill's Confectionary](#) (#73), whose owner, Bill Kazakos, was a member of Edmonton's Greek community. Also visit [Al Rashid Mosque](#) (#80) to see how Muslims worked with the larger Edmonton community to build Canada's first purpose-built mosque!