
A Brief History of Liveries

Edson and District
Historical Society

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Liveries were an integral part of communities up until the 1920s. The buildings themselves were not only the site of renting and boarding horses, but also gambling, coal, lumber, feed, storytelling, hauling and various other activities.¹

Various forms of liveries emerged once the idea came over from England. Most liveries in North America were called livery stables as they provide space for animals to graze. There are five main types of liveries that were used in Alberta: full, part, do-it-yourself, pasture, and working.²

A full livery was looked after solely by the proprietor. Owners placed their horses under the care of the proprietor to have their needs look after. Brushing, farrier work (shoeing and clipping of hooves), feed, water, and exercise were all included in the cost. Veterinarian costs would not be covered by the proprietor. A full livery was the most expensive option.³

A part livery was the most popular and familiar option. Horses would be fed and watered, and for a charge their stalls could be mucked out. Brushing, farrier work and exercise would all be the responsibility of the owner of the horse.⁴

A do-it-yourself livery would provide a field and shelter for a charge. Often, hay would be supplied by the owner of the livery, but the horse owner was expected to do all other tasks required for maintaining their animal.⁵

¹ Maurer, David. "Livery Stables Were Staples in Community." *The Daily Progress*, , sec. Lifestyles, January 24, 2013. http://www.dailyprogress.com/lifestyles/livery-stables-were-staples-in-community/article_9d2b1e77-892f-5832-9d72-4c23ffd95c32.html?mode=story (accessed January 28, 2015).

² Clark C. Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 36, no. 2 (1986): 36-49, 36.

³ Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 36.

⁴ Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 36.

⁵ Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 36.

Pasture liveries were the cheapest option for horse owners, as it provided the least amount of services. Owners would be charged per horse for the use of a grass paddock. Horses from various owners would be mixed in the same pastures.⁶

Working liveries had horses available for rent for a wide variety of purposes. A horse, or team of horses, could be rented for riding, draying (moving of heavy objects such as houses), or farm work such as plowing.⁷

Nearly all those in Edson were a mixture of part and working liveries. One of these was the OK Livery Barn, which was one of the longest running liveries in town.⁸ Each month they would advertise a new special they were featuring, such as the rental of rigs for hunting and camping parties, guides, drivers, picnic and fishing parties, or undertaking the moving of buildings, safes, and patios.⁹ Lloyd and Son Livery also advertised a wide range of services that included draying, transfer, the sale of hay and oats, and goods collected and stored.¹⁰ The average price for renting a horse for a day in 1922 was four dollars, and to rent per hour was 75 cents.¹¹

It was essential for liveries to diversify, especially during the dawn of the century when automobiles were becoming popular. A livery focused entirely on horses would die out - and they did.¹² Edson's Palace Exchange Stables went out of business once the automobile market

⁶ Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 36.

⁷ Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 37.

⁸ Marguerite Ahlf, *Edson: 75 Years*, (Winnipeg: Jostens Publications, 1986), 163.

⁹ Ahlf, *Edson: 75 Years*, 163.

¹⁰ Ahlf, *Edson: 75 Years*, 163.

¹¹ Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 38.

¹² Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 37.

reached the town; there was not enough business to support the stables. It was at this point that stables like the Palace Exchange were converted into storage for vehicles.¹³

In most communities around the world, liveries were secluded to the outskirts of town due to their awful smell and popularity as a location for crime. However, this was not the case in Edson. Livery Street was located in the central part of Edson to readily access the travelers coming through the town.¹⁴ There were also few rules regulating the smell or upkeep of the buildings.¹⁵ This was also unique to Edson. In other towns, liveries were at the mercy of the town council. If they smelled too much or had too much crime, extreme cases would be moved to the outskirts.¹⁶

It was also common for liveries to be exclusive to men. This was because of their shady nature - often due to their location and the people that owned them. In nicer stables there would be a separate entrance for ladies, usually located on the side of the building and leading to a waiting room and ladies bathroom.¹⁷

¹³ Ahlf, *Edson: 75 Years*, 163.

¹⁴ *Grand Trunk Pacific Divisional Map of Edson 1914* (Edson: Edson Printers, 1914).

¹⁵ *The Agisters and Livery Stable Keepers Act, The Revised Statutes of Saskatchewan 1940*. chap.227, sec.7.

¹⁶ Spence, "The Livery Stable in the American West," 37.

¹⁷ "New Livery." *Edson Critic*, , sec. Advertisement, March 1912.

References

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