

Ormand Family Activity

April 2015: David's Canada Visit

To see the travelogue of the family trip to Colorado, [go here](#)

One of the best customers for the TOW missile system is Canada. The Ministry of Defence has contributed to our projects before by providing the Suffield Range for missile firing tests and picking up the related costs. This, of course, is an opportunity for TOW engineers, including yours truly, to visit our northern ally. This was the fifth visit to Alberta for me; I've documented a previous trip in dlormand.us/family/fam_alberta11.pdf, but this occasion in 2015 left me with considerable free time unaccompanied by other travelers, a rare opportunity to look around.

Medicine Hat

Suffield is just off the Trans Canadian Highway about half an hour west of the town of Medicine Hat, which is the only city of any size in the area and thus where visitors to the range stay. It is a l_o_n_g three-hour drive from Calgary, which is the only airport in the vicinity. On the visit I wrote up before, I looked at the Saamis Teepee (a giant "teepee" framework, set up at the Calgary Olympics and "rescued" by Medicine Hat when the Olympics were over and most of the trappings were being dismantled) and a little bit of downtown. I had the better part of a day to look over the downtown area, guided by a walking tour I found online:

www.tourismmedicinehat.com/media/files/HISTORICALWALKINGTOUR2.pdf



The day starts with (complimentary) breakfast at the hotel and parting words with the other travelers who came from Alabama and Ottawa for the firing test that concluded yesterday. I then take my little rental car downtown and park it on the street - there are no meters, only signs limiting parking to two hours, and my walking tour shouldn't take longer than that. Before starting the tour, I have lunch in a little cafe on a corner across from the railyard; the cafe has an adjacent artists' workshop, and there are paintings and sculptures and glassworks on display (and for sale). After finishing my nice sandwich and cup of soup, I'm ready to get started.

The first stop is Saint Patrick's Catholic Church on the other side of the river. The downtown crossing is this old-style bridge with two narrow lanes for autos and two generous walkways for pedestrians on each side. I gather that the north side of the river is predominantly residential. While there are lots of people downtown today (a pleasant surprise), there's not too much traffic on the bridge. I suspect it's a different story around 7:00 and quitting time.





Handsome Catholic church building, Gothic Revival, but what is really interesting about it is the construction. It isn't masonry, as you might have expected. It was built in 1912 (yes, the year of Arizona statehood) by a continuous concrete pour into molds, from the foundation all the way up to the towers. No joints. I'm sure it is steel reinforced (which I would think is unusual for concrete work in that era), but I can't help but wonder if they have problems with cracking and settling.

Saint Patrick greets parishioners on their way into the building.



St. Patrick's is the only sight north of the river, so after admiring the building, I return on the other side of the bridge. The Saskatchewan River is a real river; again, it's no Missouri or Mississippi, but it's bigger than the Verde or the Gila or the Salt, so it's irresistible to Zonies. (Yes, there is a similar photo of the river in the 2011 travelogue as well).



On the corner of First Street and the road over the bridge is the Medicine Hat City Hall. It's a very modernistic structure, and if I had read the tour guide more closely and had discovered earlier that visitors are welcome to go inside and look around (very different than the Tucson City Hall), I would have done so. As it is, I only enjoy the sight of the all-glass building, the

fountain under the clock tower, the flags of Canada, Alberta and Medicine Hat on the poles...

... and the prominent logo of Medicine Hat, "Gas City". The reason for Medicine Hat's flourishing in the area, aside from the railroad, is the presence of significant oil and natural gas resources nearby. Medicine Hat actually has a municipal gas works, very unusual for a city, and manages the income from the business. There are lamp posts all over downtown - I am pretty sure I noticed them being actual gas lamps when I came a few years ago, but since then, they have been converted to solar-power-generated electric lamps. I guess they work better (the engineer should approve) but not nearly as charming (the aesthete disapproves).



The Monarch was the first movie theatre in Alberta. It is not on the tour, which is perplexing for a "historical tour", but it is here, so I snapped a shot. I was planning to come down for a movie last night, but when I looked it up, I discovered that, like Tucson's historic Fox Theatre, it doesn't operate as a normal movie theatre anymore. It *does* show films, but only classic ones

(which is fine by me) and only on the weekend (which leaves me out).

The Provincial Courthouse, with its interesting and beautiful architecture. Once again, after I leave and reread the tour guide, I find I could have gone inside. There was no evidence of legal activities going on, but I suppose it continues to operate as a local or regional courthouse. I know the Canadian "provinces" approximate the role of the "states" in the United States, but on the map, I don't see minor administrative divisions like "counties" in the States.



Giant chess set, available for use if you arrange with the Medicine Hat Chess Club to get the giant chess pieces out of the storage lockers. In the three or four times I've been down here, I've not seen it being used; maybe (again) on the weekends.

Hey, Guinness World Record! I guess there's not a lot of competition for "world's largest chessboard". Seems the chessboard in the first *Harry Potter* movie would have beaten this one, but that board wasn't for public use.



When Medicine Hat was young, it was a raw railroad town, with tents and shacks. One of the first real houses was the Ewart/Duggan house, built in 1887. The sign by the door says it was occupied by a family descendent as late as around 1970, but now, it is owned by the city as part of the Esplanade center next door (the big grey wall is the east side of the Esplanade).

The Esplanade is on the southeast corner of First Street and Fourth Avenue. The Medicine Hat Public Library is on the northeast corner. The Kerr/Wallace house is on the northwest corner. It was built in 1910 and apparently used by family members until the 1970s. In Tucson, most of the proud old houses downtown have been turned into



lawyer offices, which I think is a shame, but there is no sign outside this old house, so it might still be a residence, except for the pavement all around it for parking. Terrific bell-shaped turret or cupola; I would love to see what it looks like on the inside. There is a "widow's walk", or a walkway with railings on the crest of the gable, apparently accessible from the cupola. Balcony over the enclosed porch - you just don't see homes built like this anymore.



The Canadian Bank of Commerce, corner of Fourth Avenue and 2nd Street, built 1907, now occupied by an attorney (and probably others; it's a large building).

Just behind/south of the Bank of Commerce is the Cypress Club. It would seem this association of leading citizens of Medicine Hat still meets here for more than a hundred years after its founding. I guess Tucson has its "Old Pueblo Club", though you don't hear much about it. Maybe it's the same here.



Anyways, the Cypress Club filled an important role in a political controversy in 1910, when a group of newcomers wanted to change the unusual name of the city to something more respectable. The Club wrote to famous writer Rudyard Kipling for his view about the situation. His reply was an expression of outrage that anybody would want to change the name: "What should a city be rechristened that has sold it's name? Judasville?" I guess the letter was published in the newspaper, and the name-change party lost the fight.

Apparently on this site, St. John's Presbyterian Church started in the raw days of the town as tents, then a wooden building, and then this 1902 brick building. I doubt the pretty relief artwork was original, but the guide doesn't talk about it. I think I heard bells in the tower chime the hour.



On the corner of 5th Avenue and 4th Street is the Fifth Avenue Memorial United Church. The building was built in 1912 (there's that date again) as the Fifth Avenue Methodist Church.

It seems that several denominations in Canada have combined into the United Church of Canada

(www.united-church.ca), including the Methodist Church, Congregationalist Church, and most of the Presbyterian Church. They say they affirm Jesus Christ, but they also affirm homosexuality as "normal" (which they must, to be in good standing with the law in Canada), so take it for what it's worth.

They celebrated burning their mortgage in 1931, and one month later, the church burned! The fire did not damage these huge stained-glass windows on the north (this one) and south sides, which were made in Quebec, and five months later, they had cleaned up and rebuilt and re-opened. I think of the First Baptist building in Tucson that burned out, and it was more than a year of meeting in a tent in the parking lot before it was rebuilt. I can't imagine this is anything other than a different level of government interference between 1931 and 1997.



St. Barnabas Anglican Church, built in 1912. That must have been a phenomenal year for building churches (and probably lots of other serious buildings in the town); I'll bet it was an exciting year to see the development going up all over. Kind of like Calgary (see below).

Not on the tour, but I saw this big neon sign, and thought about the neon sign restoration and appreciation in the Tucson Historical Preservation Foundation (preservetucson.org)



The Salvation Army had a presence in Medicine Hat - the Citadel was their operations building. The Army is still in the town, just elsewhere, and now the Citadel building is used for offices.

Here is the reason Medicine Hat prospered - the Canadian Pacific Railroad depot and rail yard where the railroad crosses the Saskatchewan River. This fantastic building was put up in 1905.



The official sign for arriving trains.

A visit to the CPR website (www.cpr.ca) gives no suggestion that the railroad provides passenger service, and I didn't see any such facilities walking around the depot, so the sign announcing the location must be a holdout from earlier days.





You know you're in snow country when you see railroad equipment like this.

The railroad divides the city, and since the railyard is downtown, it's a serious divide. In Tucson, there are bridges over the railroad. Here, there's a pedestrian underpass. I wasn't entirely sure what this odd structure was until I saw people (mostly younger men; skaters) coming and going, so I figured I would check it out.



I don't know if it's official, but the walls of the underpass are decorated with serious and tasteful graffiti artwork. I suspect it represents community-sponsored projects, which has remained (mostly) free of the vandalism graffiti.

On the other side of the depot. CPR offices, lots of "No Public Access" and "No Trespassing" signs. At least the building is actively being used by the company.



Past the depot, the neon sign of the Cecil Hotel beacons to the rail travelers that no longer exist, rather like the Beale Hotel in Kingman or to a lesser extent the Hotel Congress in Tucson. I don't know if it still operates as a hotel or if it has been converted to

apartments; I saw a couple of questionable cafes or saloons on the ground floor when I walked past.

At this point, I have exhausted seeing what there is to see in downtown Medicine Hat, and I have finished the walking tour (or at least the recognizable buildings). I get back to my rental (no tickets) and drive around the corner to the Esplanade and park it in their underground (winter-proof) garage, and then enter the building. The Esplanade is part convention center and part music hall (or cultural center); there is apparently a concert setting up for this evening. It is also where their community museum is, and during the summer, admission is free.

There are a number of parts to their little museum, but mainly two - Medicine Hat history and Alberta's contribution to the Great War. The history part was pretty nice, from the area's beginnings as Indian (or, as the Canadians call them, First Nations) hunting area through it's beginnings as a railroad town, through the WWII years and the present. There was even a bit about how the original downtown area started to decay after the new shopping mall drew the retail business away, and how the city started the project of revitalizing the urban core fairly recently - sounds real familiar.

The really amazing exhibit was about the Great War. I am familiar with America's involvement, including my grandfather's enlistment and arrival in France just as the war ended. I've seen picture books of the French, German, and British war efforts. But to see the distinctively British flavour of Canadian colonial support of the mother country - recruiting officers in red jackets, paintings of the king on the wall, the use of British equipment after finding Canadian-made stuff wasn't up to the rigors of the front - was eye-opening. I very much enjoyed the hour.



www.esplanade.ca

CASH REGISTER FIGURES CONSTITUTE A RECEIPT FROM THE MEDICINE HAT CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR THE AMOUNT SHOWN.

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DO NOT DETACH

MEDICINE HAT POLICE SERVICE

884 - 2 St. S.E. Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 8H2

THIS TAG ISSUED FOR A BREACH OF SECTION

☐ BYLAW 2434

☐ OTHER BYLAWS

FINE AMOUNT \$50.00 \$100.00

DATE DAY MONTH YEAR TIME AM PM

OFFENCE *Public Display Nudity*

LOCATION *Esplanade Duggan*

LIC. *L-11507* PROV. *AB*

LIC. YEAR *2015* VEH. DESC. *Jeep*

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED REGARDING THIS OFFENSE MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE MEDICINE HAT POLICE SERVICE.

ISSUE# *60115* FILE#

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Until I left. I had popped inside earlier during the tour (next door to the Ewart/Duggan house) and asked about the parking underneath. I'm pretty sure I was told it was free. Maybe it would have been free with validation, but when I parked, there was something that looked like a vending machine on the wall, but it had the stupid little pictographs for illiterate people, and I couldn't figure it out. So I assumed free was free, and a vending machine wouldn't know when you arrived to charge for the time you were parked. Bad assumption. Parking ticket under the wiper.

If I ever come back to Medicine Hat, I may visit the Historic Clay district (Medicine Hat was home to a thriving local pottery or chinaware industry) and Police Point, a natural park on the river

somewhat east of downtown. There's also a nice park and walking path below the Saamis Teepee in the Grand Coulee, a deep ravine where the First Nations people stampeded buffalo to their deaths. But I think I have given Medicine Hat a good lookover, now.

Calgary

Arising early the next day and grabbing an apple from the breakfast room, I depart Medicine Hat for the l_o_n_g three-hour drive back to Calgary. I want to make the most of the day. To optimize my time in the big city, I used some tourist websites:

www.calgarydowntown.com
www.visitcalgary.com

On previous visits, we had parked our rental downtown, and while there *are* parking facilities, like any busy urban situation, it isn't easy to get into or get out of. Besides, I had noted Calgary has a well-developed mass transit system including a light rail, and I want to ride the C-Train. Therefore, after doing my research (complicated by the inadequacy of the online train route map - it shows the stops, but not the streets it travels along), I identify where I can park and catch the train.

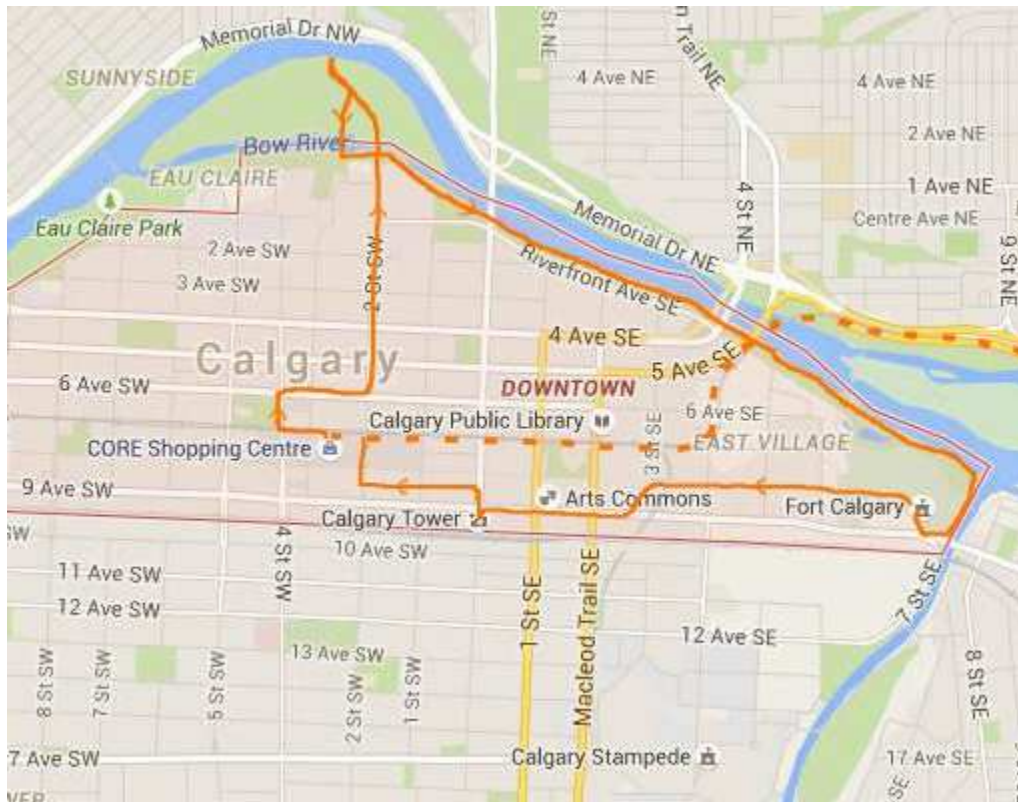
However, when I arrive in Calgary and take 36th Street north to Sunridge Mall, I find that, while there *is* a free parking area for train riders, it is completely full, and the mall has posted signs warning that the mall parking lot is only for mall shoppers. After wandering around in the mall lot for a little while wondering what to do, I notice there is a medical center just north of the mall with a parking structure. That's where I leave the car, and walk back to the station on 36th Street.

There I find another surprise. In the United States, credit cards are still predominantly of the magnetic-strip type. We appear to be slowly migrating to the "smart card" equipped with an embedded microchip, but most American cards don't have them. In Canada, the chip type is the default, although human-operated sales devices can handle either. Turns out my personal credit card has both a chip and the strip. Now, I've learned that to use the chip, usually (but not always) you must supply a PIN. I might have known what PIN went with my card, but it's been too long to remember. Now, when I get to the train ticket vending machine and put my personal card in, it senses the presence of a chip, requires me to use it as a smart card, and to provide the PIN. Of course, all my guesses fail. I end up having to use my company card that *doesn't* have a chip - and the machine is fine with that. Oh, well. Hey, I can claim "train fare" on my expense report!

It's about nine o'clock, and while there are lots of riders, there are still

seats to be had. I'll bet at the rush hours, it is standing room only, pack into the cars. Thankfully, I've arrived after the morning rush, and will be leaving before the evening rush. The ride is interesting; it dips under a few major roads, crosses the river, runs alongside the Calgary Zoo, and approaches downtown. Turns out that 7th Avenue, which is dedicated to the trains, is a "fare-free" zone, and you can board the train anywhere between the City Hall station on the east side to the last station on the west side without a ticket, as long as you get off at or before either of these endpoints.

My journey traces the route shown on the map. The dashed line is arriving and departing on the train.



I arrive at the 2nd Street stop, and get off. 7th Avenue is a canyon between tall buildings. Just ahead on the southwest side is the Hudson Bay Company building. Walking past that, I arrive at the CORE shopping mall. I have learned that on the fourth floor is an indoor garden, called the "Devonian Garden". I am intrigued by a garden park on an upper story of a shopping mall.



Pretty nice. There are seats and benches all over, and tables along the outside perimeter for people to take their lunches. I can see it would be popular at lunch-time. There are a few moms with little kids, and the kids are chasing the floaty things as they swirl around the fountain, shrieking. It's apparent why the garden flourishes, for the top floor is against the glass roof, and the Alberta spring sunshine streams in. You can see adjacent tall buildings looming overhead outside. I sit for a little while, reviewing my itinerary and enjoying the sights and sounds.

Unsurprisingly for a downtown shopping center, it is oriented vertically. Very open and airy, and not as echoey as you might think. Or maybe that's because it isn't crowded, being a working day during business hours. Which strikes me as funny, because the shops are open when the fewest people can come - it kills me that the shops in downtown Tucson do the same thing, and are closed after 6:00 and on weekends.



Somewhat rested, I depart outside and head north on 2nd Street. I see a big mural celebrating Calgary's cattle and petroleum roots. Similar to the big mural in Fort Worth's Sundance Square, celebrating the Texas cattle drives.

A little rent-a-car at the sidewalk. I suppose if you need to get somewhere, you can jump into one of these and pay the fee via credit card.





Every western city has its Chinatown; Calgary's is on the north side of downtown, on both sides of the river.

And this is the river, running under the 2nd Street bridge. That is Prince Island on the other side. The Bow river splits around it, and this stream is the smaller one.



On the other side of the island is another pedestrian bridge over the main part of the Bow. There is a jogging path on the north bank, and a lot of people are out this morning for a run.

Prince Island used to be occupied by a sawmill run by a Mr. Prince, hence the name, but some time after the commercial use of the property died out, the city turned it into a park. Here I am looking over the (not exactly verdant) lawn at the other pedestrian bridge and part of

Calgary's impressive skyline beyond.



There's a fancy little River Cafe on the island, where I have a gourmet lunch and their own house sparkling water and look out the window at the people jogging, walking and pushing strollers, or bicycling on the island park paths.





Lunch finished, I'm ready to start again. I take the other, rather more elaborate footbridge back to the south bank, where there is a "river walk" all along the downtown waterfront. The strands along the bridge "suspension" cables are light strings - it must be quite a sight after dark; too bad I won't be here to see it.

On the south bank "river walk", looking back at the fancy little footbridge and a "landing" where a family is feeding some Canadian geese.



A very fancy bridge takes Centre Street over the river. Northbound traffic runs on the top of the bridge, and southbound traffic runs on the deck suspended underneath. The pedestrian path goes through an arched passage on both sides and under the lower deck.



The lion statues guarding both ends of the bridge were apparently made by the same sculptor who did the lions in Trafalgar Square in London.

On the other side, I see evidence of Calgary's cultural diversity - an eastern orthodox church building.



Lots of artwork along the river walk. On the piling of a bridge is a mural tipping the hat to the cattle industry and the railroad.

Other fanciful sidewalk sculpture. It's interesting and whimsical, and you couldn't object to it unless you knew how much the city paid for it.





Calgary is a relatively young city (compared to places like Tucson), and there's not a lot of its 19th and early 20th Century structures left. Looks like the Simmons Mattress Company had a division here, and it looks like someone is repurposing the building while leaving the old markings.

Another fancy footbridge. That's St. Patrick's Island, which appears to be another park with trails and picnic spots amidst the trees. I can't really go over and look at it, because the work crews are doing something on the trails and have the exit from the bridge blocked.



The confluence of the Bow and the Elbow Rivers was chosen by the Northwest Mounted Police as the site of a police fort. It was named for a bay in Scotland. People started settling in the area, the railroad came through, and the city was off and running.



A monument to James MacLeod at the site of Fort Calgary. Note the classic British cork pith helmet - the campaigner-type hat with the pinched crown and the broad circular brim didn't show up until the 1920s, along with the change of name to Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

There's an excellent museum at Fort Calgary that traces the beginnings

of the Northwest Mounted Police as an expression of Canadian sovereignty versus American whiskey traders who were coming over the border to obtain buffalo and other furs from the First Nations people in exchange for whiskey and firearms. The whiskey was proving highly damaging to the health and character of the natives, who were already suffering from the extermination of the buffalo by the "civilized" easterners. It seems the NWMP were much more successful at negotiating with the Indians than the United States Army and government were - there were no "Indian Wars" in Canada, like there were in the western States. In addition, the NWMP seems to have served a peacekeeping and law enforcement role similar to U.S. federal marshals. It was some time before Alberta had developed enough economic power to stand up a provincial peacekeeping force of their own, after which the importance of the NWMP diminished. Of course, like the U.S. marshals, the Mounties are still active today.

Flagpole at the site of the original stockade. It's the Union flag, not the Canadian maple leaf, so I guess that Fort Calgary and the NWMP were started before Canada became an independent nation in the Commonwealth.





Site of the original stockade. I'm a little confused; in the museum and in the literature, I had gotten the impression that after the fort was abandoned and the land turned over to the city, it was built over, at least partially. Certainly the stockade was removed after just a few years after the founding of the fort in favor of a more comfortable and practical "open" fort - what

were "fortifications" or defensible works needed for? Not against the Blackfoot. Not against marauding Americans. So the trace of the stockade visible in the grass must have been from a more recent recreation that has been torn down.

An aerial view of Fort Calgary, and where it stood in relation to the confluence of the rivers.





The visit to Fort Calgary and the museum was very interesting and educational. As I proceed on the adventure back toward the city core, I can't help noticing the massive construction all over the east side of downtown. There was construction work on the north side as well, and the cranes were evident in the photos from Prince Island (above). As the focus of the booming

petroleum and natural gas industry in southern Alberta, Calgary is prospering. The east side isn't built up to the point where the Calgary Tower can no longer be seen from the ground. There it is; that's where I'm bound for next.

Pretty impressive from the ground. It was built as part of the usual "let's show the world how classy we are" impetus of a city chosen to host the Olympics. I later learn that the Tower includes a gas flare, to look like a giant Olympic torch, and that the actual torch used by the runners for the 1988 Winter Olympic Games was modeled after the Tower.



www.calgarytower.com



The pride of Calgarians of their landmark structure is quite obvious.

After several trips to Canada, and several attempts to get to the Tower before it closes for the evening, I'm finally here! There's a breathtaking panoramic view of the city and the Albertan horizon from up here, even if some of the buildings are taller than the Tower.



There's even a glass floor! It is so funny that anybody can stand near a window and look down and out, but it takes an effort to overcome an instinctive fear of falling to step onto the glass.

The tour includes a little tablet gadget with an interactive map of what you are looking at and an audio narration. I learn that the Calgary fire department has occasional lifesaving exercises - including rappelling from the tower!

And a statement by a "lucky" person who won the lottery for the role of "being rescued"!

I notice some local attractions advertise themselves to Tower visitors.



Off to the southeast lies the characteristic Saddledome (home of the Calgary Flames hockey team) and the Calgary Stampede grounds. The Stampede is a world-famous western festival and rodeo, prominently featuring the "chuckwagon races". I am torn between the choice, if I ever return to this city with my family, of coming during the

Stampede season to see the show, or some other time when the city isn't absolutely packed with international visitors.

The tour gadget narrates a funny story how, every year, a cowboy advertises for the Stampede by bringing his horse up to the Tower (another reason to BE here for the Stampede). On some occasions, the horse (I guess there are different ones) finds it alarming to see his master (standing on the glass floor) apparently walking on air. On one occasion, the horse reacted with... diarrhea.

This is the second time I've been in Canada during the Stanley Cup playoffs. Apparently the local team is competing, for I see Calgary

Flames flags flying from car windows, people wearing Calgary Flames jerseys (I see some for sale in shops and am strongly inclined to get one for myself), and businesses putting Calgary Flames banners against their walls or over walkways in the CORE mall.

The majestic Canadian Rockies stretch across the western horizon. Somewheres up there is Banff and Jasper and Lake Louise.



The next spot on my travels will be Stephen Avenue, which I can see from above.



After I finish my high-altitude tour of the Tower, buy a book about Calgary from the gift shop up on top, and descend, I am back out on the street. I am just arriving at Stephen Avenue on Centre Street when my hand catches on a headphone cord, and I realize I've still got the A/V gadget, for which I had left my passport as a deposit. I hastily return to the Tower and swap the device for my passport.



Stephen Avenue is the designated preservation district in Calgary, where the 19th Century buildings still stand. Like most western towns, Calgary started off as wooden buildings, but after some serious fire, reconstruction went toward sandstone and granite. Another story from the Tower tour gadget was how Butch Cassidy, the American outlaw, was partners in a saloon on this

street, and when he returned to collect his "cut" and was refused, reacted in his characteristic extreme (but not deadly) manner.

Looking westward down Stephen Avenue, the route I take back to the train stop. Not unlike Denver, with the contrast between old and new, except that Denver intermixes the two. There are shops and restaurants and saloons and nightclubs along Stephen. It was my original intent to stay downtown till the



evening, see the lights, and have dinner in a unique downtown restaurant, but I'm feeling a little funny and am thinking I need to get to my hotel and rest. Probably if I had just sat here on a bench and rested and looked at the literature I had bought at Fort Calgary and in the Tower, I would have been okay, but I wasn't feeling like it now.



Back on 7th Street, I catch the eastbound C-Train. It isn't until after we are rolling along and I listen to the robotic announcer and look at the scrolling message bars that it occurs to me, there are *two* eastbound trains, one that goes south and one that goes north along 36th Street, back to where I got on earlier today. I'm on the wrong one. At the next stop, I get off and wait for

the train with the *correct* final destination on its marquee.

Back to Sunridge Mall station. I get off and walk up and into the mall, looking for a restroom. Except for some Canadian-unique shops like the Hudson Bay Company (which is really just a Sears or Dillards-style department store), this mall (and the one in Medicine Hat) are as boring as any mall in the States. Then I go back outside and cross over to the medical plaza and recover my rental car (whew, glad I can charge the parking to my company expense account). Finally, a short drive a little further north to the hotel, and a quiet homespun meal at a nearby Perkins.

If we *do* ever return for a family visit, in addition to the Stampede and downtown and the Tower, I would like to spend a good while at the Heritage Park (www.heritagepark.ca). This is a recreation of life in Western Canada between 1860 and 1950, with all kinds of steam trains, oil derricks, excursion boats, native villages, with "costumed interpreters", and of course shops and snack shacks. I was torn between having lunch at the River Cafe on Prince Island or continuing on the C-Train to Heritage Park, where there are some interesting (yes, touristy) restaurants outside the gate. In the end, I think I chose best, since I would find it hard to not go inside and look around, and I didn't have time for that.





Outside the hotel, the biggest wild rabbit I've seen.

My adventure ends early the next morning, flying out of Calgary International ("YYC", what?) to Chicago, and after the usual extended layover at O'Hair, the leg back to my own hometown.

