

New collection of grain elevator lists adds to online trove of Prairie history

University of Alberta Libraries
Submitted

Western Canadian grain elevator lists are the latest online addition to the University of Alberta Libraries' website Peel's Prairie Provinces, which helps tell the story of the prairies.

Researchers and everyday history buffs alike have free and open access to millions of pages of the digitized collection.

The new collection enhances UAL's ongoing commitment to working with community partners to preserve and share Western Canada's history by putting historical resources online for everyone to explore, said Geoff Harder, Associate University Librarian.

"It falls to the University of Alberta and memory institutions like us to ensure that Western Canada's story is available for future generations. Identifying and digitizing collections is a good way of moving us closer to that goal," Harder said. "The U of A's first president, Henry Marshall Tory, spoke of 'uplifting the whole people', and one way we support that ambition is by working with our communities and helping them know where they came from. Access to historical information helps in understanding how we got to where we are today and knowing where we want to go tomorrow."

The Peel's Prairie Provinces website focuses on material related to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. "We collect things that fall within that geographic boundary and it is a wealth of information", yielding insights into urban development and political and social trends to ethnic views and even the history of marketing across the prairies, Harder said.

Thanks to a partnership with the Canadian Grain Commission, more than 80 years' worth of historical information on grain elevators in Canada is now available online. Records kept by the commission span 1912 to 1998 and list licensed grain elevators, their locations across Canada and their storage capacity.

At one time, the tall wooden sentinels dotted farming communities across the Prairies and were instrumental in the grain trade.

"The newly available online data will help anyone exploring diverse but related fields like transportation, railway history and prairie agricultural economics," said Peggy Sue Ewanyshyn, digitization librarian.

Other treasures in the digitized collections include an atlas of Alberta railways, the Sir Samuel Steele collection, Alberta homestead records and 80,000 Canadian historical books.





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Peggy Sue Ewanyshy, digitization librarian with the University of Alberta Libraries, says that there is a ton of online historical information and that grain elevators are just the latest addition.