

Tab 1

“Tents, Trade and Tweed”: The First Shopkeepers in Medicine Hat- A Historical Vignette

**By William J Anhorn K.C. ICD.D
The Mad Hatter Historian**

“About the Author”

William J. Anhorn was born and raised in Medicine Hat, Alberta and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree (Political Science) from the University of Calgary and a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Alberta. He returned to his hometown of Medicine Hat in 1976 and practiced law for over 35 years as a senior partner with the Law firm of Pritchard and Company. He retired in 2012 and he and his wife Joan Elaine Anhorn (Medlicott), a retired teacher, continue to reside there.

Always having had a keen interest in writing and more recently genealogy, he has researched and written a series of articles on his own family and his extended family (Medlicott/Mclvor) and their history. He has also written numerous articles on other topics of interest to him.

He has also a passionate interest in history including the history of Medicine Hat and has researched and written several articles in relation to local history. He currently is a member of the Medicine Hat Genealogical Society and the Medicine Hat and District Historical Society and Past Chairman of the Historical and Heritage Resource Management Committee of the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Company.

He is a frequent contributor to the Alberta Genealogical Society newsletter ‘Relatively Speaking’.

His stories can be found on his blog at: <http://wjanhorn.ca>



The Mad Hatter: "Have I gone mad?"

Alice: "I'm afraid so. You are totally bonkers. But I will let you in on a little secret. All the best people are."

From Lewis Carroll "Alice In Wonderland"



Introduction:

The Esplanade Archives and its robust search capability has been an inspiration for some of the stories that I have written in relation to the history of Medicine Hat.



"First load of merchandise shipped to Lethbridge, 120 miles from Medicine Hat. Weight 12,400 lbs. shipped by Messrs. Tweed & Ewart. Freight by Ezra Pearson. June 23rd 1885".¹

This image was recently discovered after receiving a request from a subscriber to my blog suggesting that I explore and provide information regarding a prominent early pioneer businessman from Medicine Hat.

¹ The wagon trail from Medicine Hat to Lethbridge became known as MacLeod Trail and continues today as a short but historical street in Medicine Hat. See my article, ["MacLeod Trail and its Connection to the Wild Wild West"](#) for more information about this historic route.

His name was **Thomas Andrew Tweed** and his story and that of his partners takes us another trip down “memory lane” and offers a glimpse into the past and the history of one of the “first” shopkeepers that served the bustling “tent town” called Medicine Hat, prior to the turn of the 20th century.

“Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor.....”

Thomas Andrew Tweed was born April 14, 1853, in Kingston, Upper Canada, the son of Thomas Tweed and Jane (née Hiditch). He received his education in Kingston and then entered an apprenticeship in a retail dry-goods firm in the town.

In 1870, at age 17, he was sent to help protect Manitoba during the Red River Rebellion (1869-70). Led by Louis Riel, the insurrection was a response by the Metis against the planned incorporation of Rupert’s Land as a part of Canada from the Hudson’s Bay Company. This was contemplated and planned by Ottawa without consulting the large Métis population in the area, who felt marginalized by the action, fearing that their culture and religion would be threatened and more importantly, that their promised entitlement to settlement landholdings would be compromised.

The provisional government led by Riel was considered a “threat” to the development of the west, and to the authority of the newly minted Canadian government, particularly after an outspoken critic, Thomas Scott was arrested, tried and convicted and executed by the rebels for alleged treasonous conduct.

Fearing the loss of their land, language, and Catholic faith, the Métis had formed a provisional government and had seized Fort Garry.

Tensions escalated when word was received back east that Riel’s forces had executed Scott, a Protestant from Ontario—an act that ignited outrage and demands for justice.

Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, determined to assert federal control and prevent American encroachment, dispatched a military contingent.

In May 1870, a combined British-Canadian force under Colonel Garnet J. Wolseley was dispatched to “restore authority” and implement the creation of Manitoba.²

The journey was epic: over 1,200 kilometers of rivers, lakes, and dense forest, was navigated with grit and precision. Wolseley, a master of logistics, orchestrated the movement like a symphony—canoes gliding through rapids, soldiers hauling supplies over treacherous portages, all under the looming threat of ambush from the rebels.

A force of over 1,200 men—British regulars and Canadian militia—set out from Ontario under the command of Colonel Wolseley.

Among the force was the young man named Thomas Tweed. It would be the first of many journeys for the young entrepreneur. Wolseley’s mission was to traverse the unforgiving terrain of the Canadian Shield, reach the Red River Settlement at Fort Garry and with a show of force, quell the insurrection which was considered a threat to the young nation’s authority.

But the resistance never came!

As the expedition neared Fort Garry in late August, Riel and his followers vanished into the prairie. On August 24, 1870, Wolseley’s troops entered the fort unopposed, raising the Union Jack over the settlement. The Red River Expedition had succeeded without a shot being fired.

² Biographical sources state that Tweed “served in the Red River Expedition of 1870 with Wolseley.” However, no primary record (such as a muster roll or enlistment list) confirming his name appears in publicly accessible records of the Red River Expeditionary Force (RREF). While the assertion is credible given his age and later western career, a direct documentary confirmation has not been located.

Though the Manitoba Act had already promised protections for the Métis, the arrival of the military marked a turning point. Many Métis felt betrayed as land rights were eroded and their culture marginalized. Riel fled into exile, but the seeds of future resistance were sown.

For Wolseley, the campaign was a triumph—his name became synonymous with efficiency and resolve.

For Canada, it was a defining moment: the assertion of sovereignty, the birth of Manitoba, and the beginning of a complex relationship with its Indigenous and Métis peoples. Although the military force faced no opposition, the seeds of discontent had been sown and it was only a matter of time before a further revolt would make the headlines and catapult the young nation into further conflict, which would reverberate across the Prairies including as far west as Medicine Hat.³

After his trip out west, Thomas Tweed returned to Ontario but he was destined to return!

³ For an interesting account of the Riel Rebellion and its often overlooked impact on Medicine Hat, see my article, [The Rocky Mountain Rangers, The Riel Rebellion and Their Distinct Connection to Medicine Hat.](#) During the time period, Medicine Hat prepared for a possible assault and Thomas Tweed, having had previous military experience became in charge of the local citizenry, who established a makeshift militia to defend the town.

Opportunity Knocks...

On June 3, 1873, Tweed married Helen (nee Sutherland), of Kingston. Subsequently, he worked in the cotton industry, for a short time in Montreal and then in Cornwall, Ontario where, in his late twenties, he took up the Managership of the Stormont Cotton Manufacturing Company.

Exhibiting a certain degree of “wanderlust” and lured by the business prospects offered by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, he gave up his promising career and headed back west to Winnipeg. Here he met John Ewart, who apparently had similar intentions and the two decided to join forces and head further west together.

John Ewart, was born in Montreal on March 22, 1861. His parents had previously emigrated from England. John was educated at schools in Montreal and at McGill College. In 1883, John Ewart moved west with the “rails” arriving in Winnipeg. After partnering with Thomas Tweed, the two decided to travel further west along the planned route of the transcontinental railway. With a railway carload of merchandise, they travelled west by train as far as Maple Creek, where the railway being under construction, ended. From here they loaded as much merchandise as they could into a wagon and headed further west. They arrived at Medicine Hat by horse and wagon, at the point where the railway was to cross the South Saskatchewan River. It was May of 1883, well before the steel was laid.

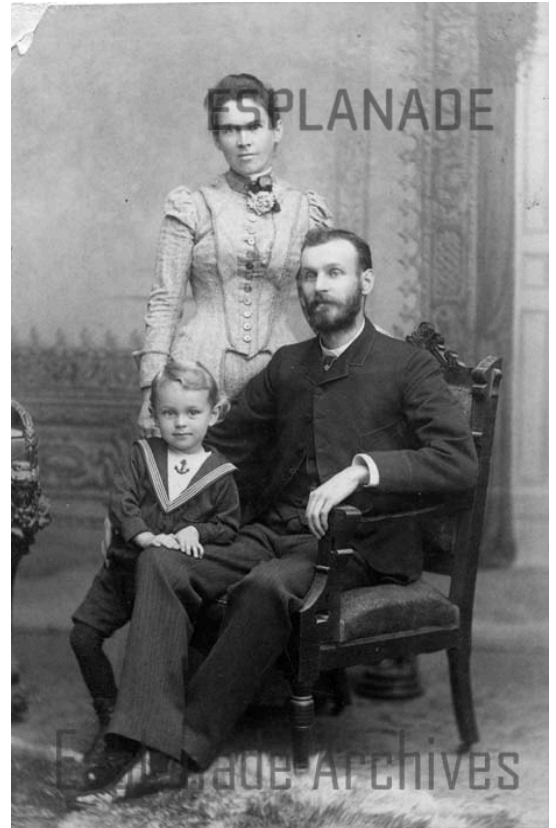
Upon their arrival, they quickly established a general store in a tent on the riverbank in the current location of Riverside Park. The business was called “Tweed and Ewart-General Merchants”

A Lasting Legacy...The Ewart Duggan House

In 1886, John Ewart became engaged and planned to marry Jessie Herald, who was the daughter of the Presbyterian Minister James Herald. He decided to build a new home for his bride, which by his own account would “be the finest residence in Medicine Hat”. True to his word, the house, “*with its steeple pitched front gable roof, massive chimney, gingerbread trim, stone foundation and bay window*” became a splendid example of architecture and quality construction and continues to this day to be a Medicine Hat landmark. It is the oldest brick house in the Province of Alberta and remains a historical gem.⁴

The house was built by contractor Harry Yuill and the couple moved into the home in 1887 (443 First Street). Regrettably, John Ewart died less than six years (1893) later while in California, purportedly there seeking medical treatment for a heart condition.⁵

Jessie and their two children (Jacqualine and McLaren) continued to reside in the home for the next twenty years, while the town grew up around them.



John and Jessie Ewart and son McLaren

⁴ See the article by Malcolm Sissons in the series ‘Heritage in the Hat’-Medicine Hat News May 21st, 2016, entitled **The Ewart-Duggan House**, The article details the history of the home and the community effort to preserve the structure.

⁵ Their collaboration was pivotal in shaping early commerce in Medicine Hat. The **Tweed and Ewart store** was not only a supply hub but also a symbol of stability during the town’s formative years. Both men were influential beyond business: Tweed became a prominent politician and rancher, while Ewart’s family home (the **Ewart-Duggan House**, built in 1887) remains a historic landmark in Medicine Hat. [\[editingluke.com\]](http://editingluke.com)

In 1913, Jessie married Rev James Morrow, the local Presbyterian Minister and she moved from the residence to a manse which had been built to accommodate the growing congregation of St John's Church (1914). Her daughter known as "Jacqie" married Hector Duggan, a realtor and investment advisor and it is reported that she resided in the home for the rest of her life until she passed away in 1987 at the age of 94 years of age.

The Ewart-Duggan house at one point in time was at risk of being demolished but a concerted effort by the citizenry resulted in it being designated as a Provincial Historic Site and it has been preserved and has become a lasting legacy to John Ewart, this early pioneer businessman and the Ewart family.



The First Merchant and Postmaster

As noted, Tweed and Ewart upon their arrival in Medicine Hat immediately established a mercantile “store” in a makeshift tent at the current site of Riverside Park on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River. In short order, the tent store also served as the local “post office” and Thomas Tweed by default became the first postmaster of the now growing settlement. It was a bit of marketing genius as all the railway workers and early settlers had to come to the store to pick up their mail from the east, which provided Tweed and Ewart a ‘golden’ opportunity to sell merchandise.

Mail at the time came by stagecoach from the east to the end of the steel, which was near present day Maple Creek. Sam Porter, father of Richard “Dick” Porter was one of the first to carry mail overland from Maple Creek to Medicine Hat. A round trip was made every week and upon receipt of a letter the recipient was charged 10 cents to cover the “carrying charge”.

Receiving the weekly mail was an exciting event in the tiny settlement and if the mail delivery was late, it was reported that the railway workers and townspeople would stay up all night, waiting for the mail to arrive, eager to hear news from their relatives and friends down east. Tweed maintained the role of postmaster from 1883 to 1891.

The First Lawyer

Tweed and Ewart were joined in their venture shortly after their arrival by a young lawyer from Ontario named James Alexander Lougheed. He himself had established a law office in a tent nearby at the current location of Finlay Bridge.

Lougheed was born in Brampton, Ontario on September 1, 1854, and raised in a lower-middle class family in the east end of Toronto.

His father was a carpenter by trade and he encouraged his sons to follow him in the building industry. James Alexander Lougheed after finishing school became a carpenter.



James Alexander Lougheed

In 1869, the firm for which James worked also employed William Pearce, a surveyor and later, a prominent Calgarian.

Pearce would later recall his acquaintance with the young man in 1869–70: *“He was then a very young man, in fact he was regarded as a boy, but he was always very industrious and aggressive.”*

Although his father may have been pleased with his progress in the industry, his mother was not and had greater aspirations for her son. She encouraged him to continue his education. While attending Sunday school he met Samuel Hume Blake, a distinguished layman and eminent lawyer, and volunteered to become the church’s assistant librarian. Blake was impressed with the clever young man and reportedly took a liking to him and once remarked to him: *“Boy you have too good a head to be a carpenter, why don’t you take up law?”*

James relished the idea and he went back to school, finished high school and later studied matriculation exams for entrance to Osgoode Hall, which he passed in 1875. In 1876, Lougheed was articled to the local law firm of Beaty, Hamilton, and Cassels, and in May 1881 he would be sworn in as a barrister and solicitor in the Law Society of Upper Canada

In January 1882, Lougheed, now a practising lawyer, decided to move with his brother Sam to Winnipeg, where he joined the law firm of Aikins, Culver and Hamilton. A year later, following the Canadian Pacific Railway's construction teams, James moved farther west to Medicine Hat to take advantage of the probable economic prosperity that would follow the transcontinental railway. While in Winnipeg however, he established contacts with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), whose primary solicitor for the west was J.A.M. Aikins.

Arriving in Medicine Hat in 1882, he set up a law office and became the first lawyer in the town. In addition to practicing law, he partnered with Thomas Tweed and John Ewart in the mercantile business, but the partnership was short-lived as James Lougheed had much higher ambitions. While in Medicine Hat, he made acquaintances with Sir Herbert Holt, Chief Engineer for the CPR, and was able to secure some solicitor work from the railway. He also met William Van Horne, a high-ranking official with the CPR. He apparently made a favourable impression.

Lougheed believed Calgary would become the commercial hub for the west, and expected he would both contribute to and benefit from the city's future development. Lougheed's connections with the CPR while in Medicine Hat proved to be crucial. Just before the rails reached the hamlet of Fort Calgary in August 1883, he and Sam moved there. Arriving in Calgary before the CPR in August 1883, he found a small settlement at the confluence of the Elbow and Bow Rivers. Lougheed set up a small law office and lived in the CPR construction camp in the vicinity that is now the Calgary Tower and Gulf Canada Square.

The CPR soon became one of his most important clients.

In 1887, he formed a partnership with Peter McCarthy and two years later he became a Dominion Queen's Counsel. Beginning in the 1880s, he made sizable investments in Calgary real estate, building many rental properties in the downtown area. He also became a prominent politician and was a member of the Senate and was knighted by the King. The name Lougheed became a household name in Alberta politics as his great grandson was Peter Lougheed, the former Premier of Alberta.



Sir James Alexander Lougheed

The First Ranch-The Medicine Hat Ranching Company

As the village sprang up, the mercantile business was a huge success and Tweed and Ewart quickly became one of Medicine Hat's wealthiest citizens and prominent members of the local community. The business became so successful that they established a second retail outlet at Lethbridge in 1885.

In 1886, Tweed and Ewart along with W.T. Finlay started the Medicine Hat Ranching Company (MHR) which was regarded as one of the earliest large scale ranches in the area. The operation, south of Medicine Hat near Seven Persons was managed by Ezra Pearson, who had come to Medicine Hat from Nova Scotia around 1885 and who established a highly successful freighting business. It is reported that he took the first freighter consisting of two wagons and a 12 horse team to Lethbridge along what became known as Macleod Trail, a trip that took eight days. He managed the MHR until 1900, when he established his own ranch.

Tweed and Ewart, General Merchants, continued until the untimely death of Mr. Ewart in 1893.

Tweed and Ewart were succeeded by Stewart, Clark and Co. Later, the business became known as Stewart and Tweed, when Thomas' son, Harry went into partnership with Henry McKeown Stewart.

The First Medicine Hat Politician

After Confederation in 1867, the Canadian government expanded its reach westward in an effort to secure the country's political and economic future. In 1870, it acquired Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) for £300,000 (CAD\$1.5 million) and a large land grant. Out of this vast territory, the tiny province of Manitoba was created on 15 July 1870. (See Manitoba Act.)

The remaining land was reconstituted as the North-West Territories (NWT). The federal government initially chose to govern the NWT through Manitoba's lieutenant-governor in Winnipeg, and an **appointed** Council.



North-West Territories, 1898

Administration of government policy in the NWT was conducted through the Department of the Interior. It was established in 1873. In 1875, it passed the North-West Territories Act. The Act provided a framework for governance. It allowed for a gradual transition from appointed to representative government as the population grew.

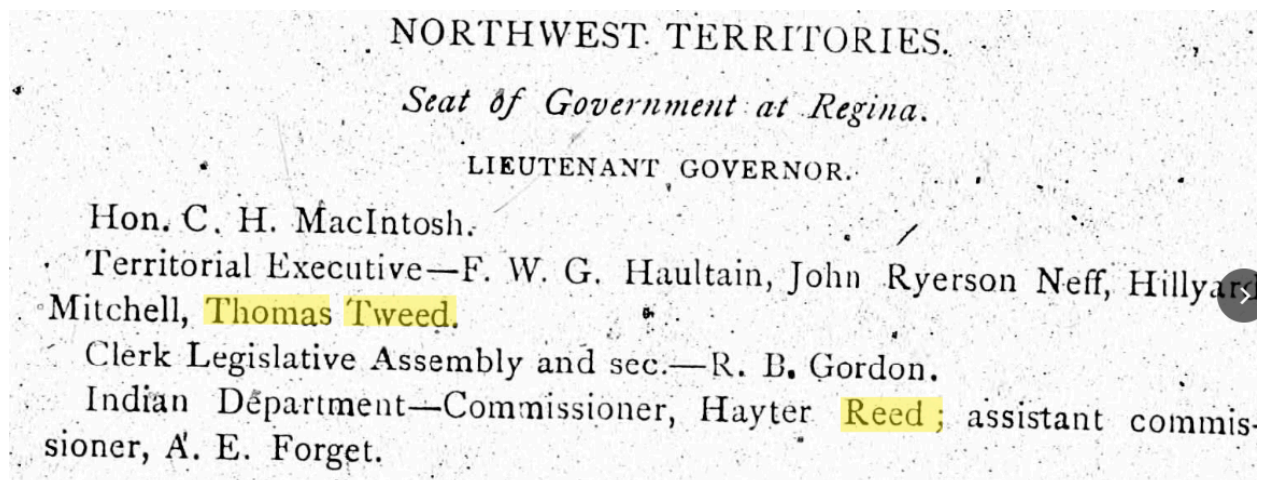
The North-West Territories Act provided for a separate lieutenant-governor and appointed Council. It also placed the capital at Battleford in 1876. In 1883, it was moved to Regina.

Agricultural settlement, along with the infrastructure and urban centres to support it, grew steadily after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1885.⁶

But resentment and political turmoil caused dissension at various levels.



⁶ The 1885 census of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Alberta reported a total population of 48,362. Of this, 20,170 people (41.7 per cent) were Status Indians. The 1906 census of Saskatchewan and Alberta reported 443,175 people, of which 12,861 (2.9 per cent) were Status Indians.



The tragedy of the North-West Resistance or the Riel Rebellion in the spring and early summer of 1885 was fuelled by discontent over unresolved Métis land claims, and Indigenous resentment over broken treaty promises. White settlers also resented what it saw as the federal government's neglect of the region's interests.

This in turn drove demand for the territory to control budgetary and policy matters. Ultimately, it drove a demand for provincial status. By 1888, the Territorial Assembly was almost entirely elected. It was granted to the responsible government in 1897. Official status for the French language was terminated in 1892. The NWT then moved to impose centralized state control over the denominational school system.

Other factors also contributed to western resentment. Protective tariffs benefited central Canada. The CPR operated as a monopoly for years to ensure its viability.

Vast areas of land were granted to the railways and the HBC. And freight rates were structured to benefit the railways at the expense of the farmer. The struggle to wrest provincial status from a resistant federal government, led most notably by Frederick Haultain, helped to entrench in the territories a deep suspicion of Ottawa.

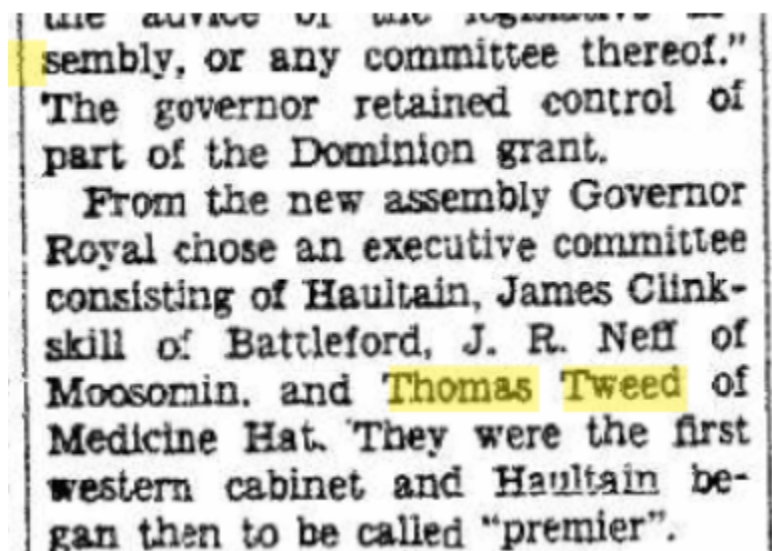
When an elected legislature was created for the North-West Territories in 1888, Tweed contested the seat of Medicine Hat in the election that year. A professed and active Conservative, he won against William Thomas Finlay, also of Medicine Hat, after an acrimonious campaign. In Regina, the territorial capital, his talents were soon recognized. He joined with the members led by Frederick William Gordon Haultain* who were struggling against the federally appointed lieutenant governor, Joseph Royal, to obtain responsible government for the territories. A member of the executive and chairman of the education committee, he was an outspoken advocate of English-only language provisions for territorial schools in this period when legal changes were leading to an erosion of minority educational rights.

The high point of Tweed's political involvement came in 1891. Early that year, he contested the

Conservative nomination for Assiniboia West, the large **federal** riding that included Medicine Hat. In doing so he challenged the sitting member, Nicholas Flood Davin, who won handily. Tweed then decided to run as an independent in the March election. He and his supporters maintained that Davin's drinking problems

nullified his effectiveness in the House of Commons, but Davin was a well-liked politician backed by a powerful local machine, and he won in a landslide.

Tweed's unpopular stand alienated many prominent citizens in his own community, and it also lost him his postmastership, which he had held since 1883. He was, however, returned by acclamation to the territorial assembly in November 1891.



sembly, or any committee thereof."
The governor retained control of
part of the Dominion grant.
From the new assembly Governor
Royal chose an executive committee
consisting of Haultain, James Clink-
skill of Battleford, J. R. Neff of
Moosomin, and Thomas Tweed of
Medicine Hat. They were the first
western cabinet and Haultain be-
gan then to be called "premier".

Between 1891 and 1894 tiny Medicine Hat became embroiled in conflict, much of which swirled around Tweed himself and which drove a wedge through the local élite. Even though he assisted in shaping a new liquor-licensing system after he was returned to Regina in 1891, many of his associates were prominent leaders in temperance societies and anti-prohibitionists suspected him of sympathizing with the rigid prohibitory legislation that had been imposed on the territories in 1873 by the federal government.

As well, he was accused of attempting to influence purchasing by the local hospital and school boards and of obtaining contracts for his friends.

These acrimonious controversies postponed incorporation of Medicine Hat at a crucial time in the community's economic development.

Thomas A. Tweed



MLA for Medicine Hat

In office
1888–1894

Succeeded by [Edward Fearon](#)

Personal details

Born [April 14, 1853](#)
[Kingston, Canada West](#)

Died [April 4, 1906 \(aged 52\)](#)
[Montreal, Quebec](#)

In November 1894, the NWT assembly elections again took place. Tweed's enemies had found a popular rancher from Maple Creek (Sask.), Edward Fearon, to oppose him. Tweed was depicted as hostile to labour, and a detriment to the establishment of responsible government in the territories, and oblivious to the constituency's best interests. Fearon was elected, and so deeply was Medicine Hat divided that another four years would pass before incorporation could again be seriously addressed. By that time Calgary had been enjoying the psychological and economic advantages of municipal status for 14 years.

Following his political career, Thomas returned to his business and ranching interests, but also remained active in the community and with his family; a girl Jean (1876-1930), and two boys Henry "Harry" Lyle (1881-1927), and Thomas McClelland (1887-1918)⁷

Mr. Tweed was also instrumental in establishing St. John's Presbyterian Church in 1883⁸, the local Board of Trade in 1887, and the General Hospital in 1889. In addition, he was active in the Masons, and several other fraternal organizations. In 1886, he was appointed Justice of the Peace, and in the late 1890's, helped establish a hockey club and a dramatic society. He also partnered with W.T. Findlay and John Niblock in purchasing the Medicine Hat News (1894). They incorporated "The Medicine Hat Printing and Publishing Co." and the paper's name was changed to "The News".

After his retirement from business in 1902, he assisted in the promotion of irrigation schemes for the dry lands of the district. He was on the Executive of the Eastern Stock Growers' Association and the Territorial Boards of Trade.

After a holiday abroad, Thomas Tweed died of heart failure at Montreal, on April 4, 1906.

⁷ Thomas McClelland Tweed enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force at Medicine Hat and was a member of the 175th Regiment (50th Battalion). He rose to the rank of Captain and was killed overseas on the 10th of August 1918 and is buried in the Rosieres Municipal Cemetery in the Somme, France

⁸ Reliable sources indicate that there was some controversy regarding the naming of the newly constructed Presbyterian Church. With two choices being put forward, St Andrew's and St John's. The board were deadlocked and Thomas Tweed as chairman cast the deciding vote and the church was hence named St John's Presbyterian Church

History is important

Why is local history important?

By studying the stories, landmarks, and traditions unique to a place, residents gain insight into the struggles and achievements that shaped their community.

This connection to the past encourages a sense of belonging and continuity, inspiring individuals to preserve cultural heritage and contribute to the community's future. Moreover, local history offers educational value by making broader historical events more relatable and tangible, thereby enhancing critical thinking and cultural awareness.

Engaging with local history not only honors those who came before but also empowers current and future generations to build upon that legacy.

Local history connects generations by passing down stories, artifacts, and experiences. These shared narratives strengthen community bonds and help younger generations understand their roots, creating continuity between past and present.

Documenting local history ensures that the unique traditions, customs, and stories of a community are not lost. This preservation is especially vital for marginalized groups whose narratives might otherwise be overlooked in mainstream historical accounts.

Local history serves as an educational resource, teaching future generations about their community's evolution. It also fosters civic pride and social cohesion, encouraging residents to value and protect their heritage.

Documenting local history provides a richer, more inclusive historical record, adding depth and diversity to our understanding of the past.

The life and times of pioneer businessmen like Thomas Tweed, John Ewart and James Lougheed provide a fascinating glimpse into the past and provide us with the opportunity to explore broader historical events in a relatable context. They, like many others, demonstrated foresight, fortitude and resilience as they shared a powerful vision for both their own future and the community they served.

Their contribution is an important part of the history of Medicine Hat and is worthy of being recognized and documented.

History is important!

William J Anhorn K.C. ICD.D

Tab 2

Tab 3

