**Riverside Story – Getting around on 4th.Street - for Bridges. April ‘23**

4th Street NE in Riverside, originally known as Edmonton Trail has seen a lot of traffic over the years. From the earliest Indigenous people travelling on foot on the ‘Old North Trail” to the horse and buggy era of the 1900’s to today’s vehicles rushing into the downtown, it has been a well travelled route. The first Langevin Bridge, built in 1888 had such busy horse traffic that its wooden beams were breaking down and becoming unsafe. This necessitated the construction of the second and much sturdier Langevin Bridge in 1910 (renamed ‘Reconciliation’ in 2016). Millions of feet and vehicles have traversed this bridge over the years.

If you were travelling by horse you needed a place to “park” it. This was accomplished in the village of Riverside with Pioneer Livery Stables. Located beside the Riverside Hotel (which was adjacent to the Bow River) the stable was the place for horses to be fed, rested and otherwise attended to. Piles of ‘you know what’ accumulated beside the stable, giving off a very noticeable aroma that was said to permeate all corners of the community.

Horses pulled a variety of conveyances in those early days of our community. Stagecoaches with passengers heading out on the four day journey to Edmonton, thundered up 4th Street. Deliveries of items such as milk, vegetables, laundry and ice were made by horse and wagon and supplies would have been distributed to the many small Riverside businesses. A horse drawn first wagon offered its services from Fire Station #4 on nearby 6A Street.

The electricity powered streetcar was introduced to Calgary in 1909 and soon after, a north bound route crossed our bridge and headed up 4th Street. It turned eastward at the 1st Ave corner (where Lukes is today) toward the Calgary General Hospital in the nearby community of Bridgeland. A second streetcar was needed to carry the many local labourers to their jobs at Ogden railyards or the Brewery. Later, the gas powered #9 bus plied this route, but many wonder if the steel rails for the streetcar still exist under today’s pavement.

It wasn’t long before automobiles came into use. One of the earliest stories describes a local doctor whose car could not make it up the steep and probably not too smooth incline of Edmonton Trail. He very resourcefully turned the car around and drove up the hill backwards; perhaps a precursor to the front wheel drive vehicles we have today.

Over the years there have been car businesses as well. For many years Farmer Jones Used Cars operated on the NW corner of 4th Street and Memorial Drive – just south of the Armour/Reliance block. Owned by the colourful Ed Pizinger, his car lot also had a corral with numerous farm animals that was a special attraction to local kids. Further north on 4th street was a dealership selling Alpha Romeo cars and later Ansell Motors that sold Russian Lada vehicles, all in keeping with the multi-cultural vibe of Riverside. For many decades a gas station was located on the NE corner of 4th Street and Memorial Drive. Riverside Service Station, Esso and the current Centex have all had a presence there.

With the 1970’s construction of a new northbound road, known today as Edmonton Trail (from Memorial Drive to 2 Avenue) and the conversion of 4th street to a one way southbound thoroughfare, the neighbourhood ambiance of 4th was significantly (and many would say negatively) altered. But nowadays new buildings are being constructed and more people are coming here to live. There seems to be an irresistible attraction to Riverside’s historic 4th Street. You and your feet are invited to stroll along 4th Street and imagine the fascinating place that it would have been and envision the amazing place it can become!

Thank you to Alan Zakrison and Devon Blean for your intrepid research work over the years.

* Deb Lee, Heritage Committee