



The Board of Directors
Abbeyfield House Society of High River

ENTRY FOR REFLECTIONS CONTEST
BOARD OF DIRECTORS CATEGORY

A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE CREATION OF AN ABBEYFIELD HOUSE

Submitted by:
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When the Abbeyfield House Society of High River began looking for a building site, we were fortunate enough to be offered an affordable price on a piece of land located beside a small creek complete with trees and an established walking path in the heart of our close-knit community of High River.

This had been the site of an Early Childhood Services building where children in Kindergarten had been given a wonderful start to their education. Unfortunately for them, the building was no longer suitable.



Demolition of the Old ECS Building

Our first order of business was to find a company willing to demolish the old building and clear away the debris. We found someone willing to do just that - and, at a considerable saving to us as he had a crane that he wanted to try out having had it recently repaired. The demolition began on a wintry day, early in the morning.



Site of Abbeyfield House of High River



Readying site to begin building

We were still in the throes of major fundraising activities pulling together donations and arranging a mortgage to proceed with the building of our first Abbeyfield House. In fact, this was to be the first purpose-built Abbeyfield House in Alberta. We are proud of our efforts.

The Society held many fundraising functions: inducting donors into the Square Metre Posse, having bake sales, selling angel Christmas tree ornaments, and holding annual dinner and dance galas.



Recognizing Donation by the
Municipal District



Fun for the Live Auction



Guests at the Gala



Honouring Loyal Supporters and Corporate Sponsors at various Galas

Breaking the sod at the site was used to celebrate our fundraising efforts to date and to create public awareness of our progress. Our main public officials were invited to participate in the sod-turning ceremony.



Hon. Patron, Mayor, President & Reeve



Guests at the Shin-Dig

The next step was to level the land and dig out the basement area in preparation for the pouring of the foundation. Because we were located near a creek, the project manager felt it was prudent to have a water impermeable membrane put around the cement pad on which the foundation would be laid. Now we don't have to worry if the water tables rise in the future.



Digging for the foundation



Putting in the forms

Our project manager and his wife, members of our board and known as honest, hardworking people, were able to get quotes from many local trades people, who, knowing they would be treated well, donated some of their time or provided materials at cost. This enabled us to stay within our budget.



Preparing to wrap the concrete pad



Pouring concrete into the forms

Crews worked diligently all through the summer and fall months trying valiantly to get the house closed in before the chilly winter weather set in. The walls and interior soon began to take shape, following the architect's plans as closely as possible. When it was necessary to make alterations to accommodate later stages of building, those changes were made. This preventive measure helped in the finishing stages.



Looking down from 2nd floor



Work station set up inside

After several months, the outside of the House was nearing completion with insulation, roofing and stuccoing getting underway. The interior of the House progressed well but did not keep pace with the exterior work being done.



Stucco crew taking a break



It's beginning to look good

Several months were spent putting in cupboards, finishing the plumbing, hanging doors and installing locks, not to mention putting in cable and telephone systems. Finally, we knew that we were going to have an amazing house to offer for residency for the seniors in our area!

Of course, knowing that the heart of every successful charitable organization is a wealth of loyal volunteers, The Abbeyfield House Society of High River honoured its volunteers at its Spring Gala.



Preparing to honour volunteers



Volunteers honoured at Spring Gala

Much of coming in under budget was due to the generosity of many of the trades people who were honoured at a noon-time barbecue. However, none of this would have been possible without our generous and loyal supporters. In order to pay tribute to these donors a Wall of Honour plaque is displayed in the main entrance to Abbeyfield House in High River.



Wall of Honour Plaque

A former director on our Board has been familiar with the site, located at the bottom of the hill upon which the old town water tower sits. She knew it when children went to the ECS and watched with interest the clearing of the site and the building of the present Abbeyfield House that will once again provide shelter for people, albeit at the other end of the age spectrum. She sums it all up in her poem "There Was a Need."

There Was a Need

*There was a need and so it came to pass
The community worked together,
For their children, if you'll ask.*

*And for decades the little tin school house,
At the bottom of the water tower hill,
Rang with the laughter both loud and shrill
Of those children and many others, too.*

*But, through the songs and the stories
The children were still,
With bright eyes they listened;
They were eager for knowledge.
They learned and they grew.*

*For those of us that were a part of this era
With pride our hearts still fill,
Of memories of the little tin school house
At the bottom of the water tower hill.*

*Again, there was a need and so it came to pass
For one more decade the community worked and gave.
The children moved on, grown now!
Their children are scattered in many big schools.*

*But, if you are lonely and in need of some peace
There is a bench and a path winding through;
A slight breeze rustles the leaves of the poplars-
Our ancestors once sat here, too.*

*In place of the little tin school house
That our children outgrew
Stands an Abbeyfield House, a concept that's new.
A home within a home, for lonely seniors to share
Their memories, their hopes, their dreams and their cares.*

*But, if you listen real close and sit very still
You can still hear the laughter
At the bottom of the Water Tower hill.*

Marion Carter