

The Town of High River

Historic Murals



WALKING TOUR

Welcome to High River!

You are invited to tour downtown High River and enjoy the unique murals by very talented artists.

To help guide you on your tour, look for the footprints located throughout this brochure and a map on the back panel.

Begin at the Museum of the Highwood located on 1st Street and 4th Avenue S.W. in the former CPR (sandstone) train station.

Take care when crossing streets and note that 3rd and 4th Avenues are one-way streets.

 Go across 1st Street from the Museum of the Highwood (use the crosswalk!). The first mural is on the south side of the CIBC parking lot.



1. Chuckwagon Races

Paul Van Ginkel, 1993

Chuckwagon racing is a western tradition that had its beginnings during the days of “open range” ranching when chuckwagons were used as mobile camp kitchens. At the 1923 Calgary Stampede, Guy Weadick introduced the ‘Cowboy’s Chuckwagon Race’, and it became one of the most popular events. Each year in June, High River hosts the North American Chuckwagon Championships. The drivers in this mural have won a combined total of 14 Calgary Stampede championships and 11 World Professional Chuckwagon Association Championships.

 Go back to 1st Street and continue south to the Wales theatre. Turn right on to 5th Avenue, and the second mural is on the back (west side) of the theatre.



2. Old Woman's Buffalo Jump

Steve Jones, 1990

The Old Women's buffalo jump (“Old” refers to the age of the jump) is located 13 km south of High River. It was discovered during a flash flood in 1952. Excavations in

1958/59 revealed bones and artifacts over 2000 years old. Before the Plains tribes had horses and guns, they would run herds of buffalo off steep cliffs. Warriors would wait below with arrows, knives and clubs to kill any animals which survived the fall.

 Cross 5th Avenue to the left (south) side and a short distance to the west you will see the third mural.



3. Sunday Afternoon at the Polo Match

Stan Phelps, 1991

The influence of British settlers and the availability of good polo ponies led to the organization of the first local polo team in the late 1880s by George Ross. Practices were held at his ranch until a polo field was built in the late 1890s on the W.E.M. Holmes property one mile south of High River.

In 1905, the High River team defeated teams from Toronto, Rochester and Buffalo for the title of Champions of Canada. The *Globe and Mail* reported that “the High River team came from a spot scarcely-findable on the Canadian Prairie.” In 1907 new polo grounds were secured just north of town (now the site of the present-day development, Polo Park). Polo was very popular until the outbreak of World War I when many players enlisted, went overseas and never returned.

The game was revived in the late 1920s, and High River won several more championships. Polo is still played in the area, but it has never regained the glory of the early part of the century.

 Continue on 5th Avenue towards George Lane Park. Cross Macleod Trail and you will see the fourth mural on the end of a cinder block building on your right.



4. The Medicine Tree

Brent Laycock, 1990

The Medicine tree was two cottonwood trees joined together by a branch about 15 feet from the ground. It was located by the Highwood River about six miles west of town. The tree was believed to have spiritual and healing powers and was a favorite Native camping place. It fell over during a windstorm in 1958, but part of it has been preserved in George Lane Park.

 From the medicine tree mural go north on Macleod Trail and turn right (east) on 4th Avenue. You will see the fifth mural facing you on your right.



5. Harvest Scene

Doug Driediger, 1990

Early settlers broke the land and sowed grain crops which were then cut with horse binders and stooked by hand. The grain was then threshed by steam-powered separators. The entire family, as well as large threshing crews, worked long hours to bring in the crops.

 Cross 4th Avenue to the parking lot and look to the left.



6. Cattle Drive at the ‘D’ Ranch on Pekisko Creek

Jack Rigaux, 1990

High River's first mural was inspired by a photograph taken by Mary Cartwright on the D Ranch near Longview. Moving large herds of cattle through open country was a huge undertaking and required special skills and patience.

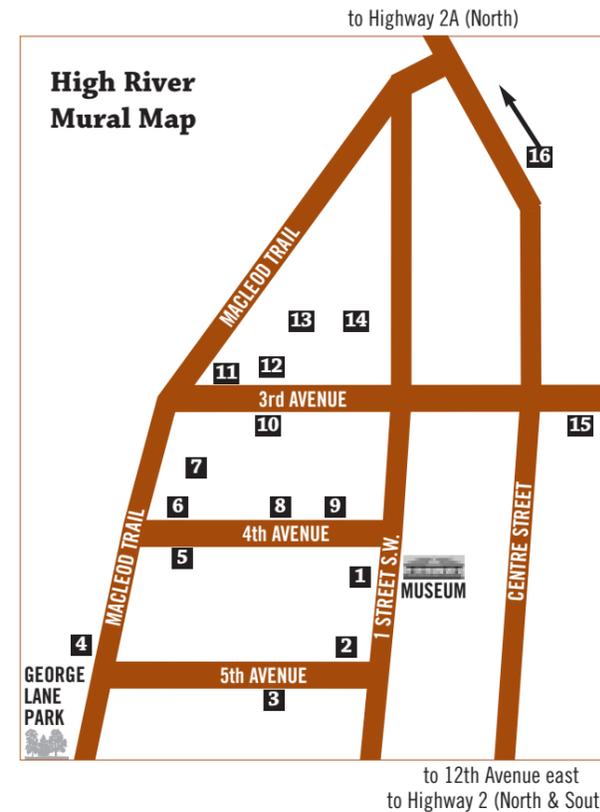
 Go back (west) to Macleod Trail and turn right (north). At the alley just before the brick building - look to your right to see the seventh mural on your tour.



7. The Opening of the High River Club

Zhong Ru Huang, 2007

In 1905, the club rooms of the newly-formed High River Club (so named in its official charter) were opened with a formal ball. Local ladies were dressed “to the nines” in the latest formal fashions. Local Natives wore their own finery for the proceedings. After one more formal reception, and a later visit by the fundraising Sisters of Lacombe Home, women never again graced the premises of what became known as the High River Men's Club.



HIGH RIVER
“Home of the Medicine Tree”

Town Office

309B Macleod Trail S.W.

High River, Alberta, Canada T1V 1Z5

www.highriver.ca

(403) 652-2110 • Fax (403) 652-2396

Go back to 4th Avenue and turn left. Down the block to the left you will find a small patio area. The eighth mural is on your left (west wall of the building).



8. Fort Spitzee

Terry Winter, 1992

In the late 1800s, many whiskey traders from south of the border came to southern Alberta and set up trading forts where they exchanged liquor, arms, and ammunition for furs and buffalo hides. There were several forts on the Sheep and Highwood Rivers, but the largest was Fort Spitzee. There were at least two other posts also known as 'Spitzee'. These posts proved to be disastrous for the First Nations people. In 1874, the North West Mounted Police were sent west by the Canadian government to put an end to the whiskey trade. Traders heard of their arrival, and abandoned the forts - often burning them to the ground as they left. Kneeling in the foreground is Jerry Potts, who was a guide for the NWMP.

Continue further east on 4th Avenue. To your left you will find another small open area. The ninth mural is on your right (west wall of the building).



9. Log Jam on the Highwood

Keith Holmes, 1991

In the early days timber was cut in the mountains and floated down the Highwood River. Sometimes, along the river where logs would be known to jam, men with long pike poles would be waiting to keep the logs moving. If a jam occurred, the boss would work his way out to the key log where he would place dynamite. The explosion would clear the jam. This mural depicts a log jam, which occurred in 1891 on the OH Ranch west of High River. These logs, from a camp on Cataract Creek, are destined to become hand-hewn railroad ties for the construction of the Edmonton to Fort Macleod railroad.

Proceed north through the open area past "Log Jam" turn left and then right. You will see the 10th mural on your right - the west side of a large brick building.



10. Supply Trains Here

Terry Gregoraschuk, 1991-92

This mural depicts an early small town scene. Excursions to town were few and far between for homesteaders and ranching families. The arrival of the supply train provided an opportunity for people to socialize and get caught up on the latest news.

Cross 3rd Avenue and go to your left (west). At the end of the street you will find the E.F.T.S. Memorial and murals on the east, south and west side of the building.



11. Aviation History in High River

Doug Dreidiger, 1992-94

The first mural (facing east) features squadron leader 'Ack Ack Leitch' one of Canada's outstanding aviators and a long-time resident of High River. He was awarded both the Military Cross and the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was stationed in High River at the Air Station and was later promoted to Officer Commanding. The parachutists are Flight Lieutenant Carter, M.M. seen making the first local jump at the High River Air Station in 1926, and stunt man Roy Lomheim demonstrating his free-fall dive to students from the No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School in the 1940s.

The south-facing mural shows an inspection at the No. 5 E.F.T.S. which operated on the former High River Air Station site from 1941 to 1944.

The west-facing mural depicts an aerial fire patrol carried out by members of the Canadian Air Force who manned the High River Air Station, which opened in 1921. Carrier pigeons were used until ground to air communications were established.

Stay on the same side of the street and go back east on 3rd Avenue, down the block is a small treed area with benches. On your left (west side) is the 12th mural.



12. High River's First Nurse

Marie Meyer Davis was a trained nurse who lived and worked in the High River area from 1903 to 1939. She was an invaluable assistant to pioneer doctor Dr. G.D. Stanley, and accompanied him to many out-of-town cases, often driving the horse-drawn vehicle while he slept. During the 1918 influenza epidemic, when the doctor was too busy to make all the calls, she often worked alone. This mural was a joint legacy project between the 1996 High River Science Festival Committee and Science Alberta, and is a reminder of the significant contribution science makes to our everyday lives.



Marie Meyer Davis
c.1908
Museum of the Highwood
collection

Continue north and go slightly to the right. Look for the windmill and you will be in Pioneer Square. The 13th mural is on the left (west) side of the square.



13. Rt. Hon. Joe Clark

J.M. Compton, 1994

High River native Joe Clark was Canada's 16th and, at age 39, youngest Prime Minister. His family has deep roots in High River, where his Grandfather Charles Clark Sr. started the *High River Times* in 1905. His father Charles Clark Jr.

then operated the *Times* from 1949 until he sold it in 1966 when Joe and his brother Peter decided to pursue other careers. Joe served in politics for many years, including serving as a Member of Parliament for Calgary Centre, until he retired in 2004.

Cross Pioneer square to the east side, and you will see the 14th mural on your tour.



14. W.O. Mitchell

J.M. Compton, 1994

W.O. (Bill) Mitchell is one of Canada's best-loved writers. His works include such Canadian classics as *Who Has Seen the Wind* and *Jake and the Kid*. Bill, his wife Merna, and their family lived in High River from 1944 to 1968 (except for three years when he was fiction editor at *Maclean's*). Bill taught English, Social Studies and Drama at High River High School. Stories of Bill's exploits in High River abound and he is fondly remembered by many locals. In later years, he and Merna lived mainly in Calgary, but they chose the High River Cemetery as their final resting place.

Go back to 3rd Avenue and proceed east two blocks - there is a mural on the south side of the street (on your right) 1/2 block past the traffic lights



15. Spitzee Crossing

Steven Jones, 1994

Spitzee Crossing was the only accessible place to cross the Highwood River on the old Macleod Trail from Fort Macleod to Calgary. In 1886, when flood waters made the river impassable, Buck Smith built and operated a ferry. A bridge replaced the ferry in 1887.

Go back to the traffic lights, turn right and continue on about five blocks (over the bridge). On your right there is a mural on the north side of the restaurant.



16. The Lost Lemon Mine

Jack Rigaux, 1995

According to Senator Dan Riley, two prospectors (Lemon and Blackjack) went searching for gold in 1868. They found the "mother lode" somewhere near the Highwood River. In his greed, Lemon killed Blackjack. Two natives witnessed the crime, but Lemon fled to a Catholic mission and confessed to a priest. No one ever was able to locate the site again. It is believed that there is a curse on the mine and many who tried to find it suffered bad luck.