

Historic Markerville Creamery Museum

General Site Information

Markerville Creamery Museum is owned and operated by Stephan G. Stephansson Icelandic Society (SGSIS). Built in 1902, the Creamery was open for 70 years until its closure in the 1972. Upon closure, the 'hub' of the community became a dilapidated structure. In 1978, the creamery was designated a Provincial Historic Resource by the Government of Alberta and in 1984, the SGSIS took on the task of restoring the hamlet icon to its 1932 appearance. Opening its doors in 1986, the Museum received its Recognized Museum status from the Alberta Museums Association in 2009.

The school programs offered reach out to the young to encourage learning in the agriculture and the history of Central Alberta. We hope the students enjoy their visit! Here are some guidelines that will make the visit more enjoyable:

- The bus may drop the students at the side of the Creamery (114 Creamery Way). Once dropped, the driver may park around the corner in the bus parking located beside the 'ice house'.
- Our facility is wheelchair accessible. The first part of the program offers a short puppet show in the basement of the Museum. Unfortunately, this area is not wheelchair accessible.
- Upon completion of the puppet show, the students will participate in a 'cow milking' relay race in the Creamery courtyard
- Once the cow milking relay has concluded, the group will be split into two. One group will tour the Museum while the other group participates in butter making. Once these activities have completed; the two groups will trade activities.
- The artefacts on display in the Museum are aged and precious. The students should not touch the artefacts unless the guide allows. The Museum has interactive displays and students will be allowed to experience them.
- At the end of the program, the students will be offered an ice cream cone. Please indicate at that time (or upon arrival) any allergies of the students. We offer 'Freezies' to those that have nut allergies; a sorbet to those that are lactose intolerant or ice cream in a bowl for those with gluten intolerances. We cannot guarantee that our ice cream has not been cross-contaminated.
- Name tags are encouraged for all students.
- Cell phones should be placed in 'silent' mode.

The Markerville Creamery Story

In 1888, 50 Icelanders settled in the Tindastoll area (renamed Markerville). By the late 1890's, the federal Department of Agriculture identified the area as a potential site for a creamery. In 1899, the Tindastoll Butter & Cheese Manufacturing Association was formed and quickly became the economic mainstay of the area. This original factory burned down.

In 1902, with encouragement of the Dairy Commissioner, C.P. Marker, 34 settlers built the present creamery building and hired Dan Morkeberg, a young Danish man, as the butter maker.

Although a temporary position for Dan Morkeberg, it became a lifelong occupation. He was succeeded by his son, Carl in 1932, who operated the consistently award-winning creamery until it closed in 1972.

The weekly cream cheque represented the only source of revenue for most farmers, and led to the establishment of a thriving commercial sector in the new hamlet. Monday was 'Cream Day', cheques were issued at the Creamery and everyone did their weekly shopping, visited the library and chatted with neighbours. Currently, Cream Day is celebrated on the second Sunday of August each year as an open house event in the Creamery courtyard.

Hola School

General Site Information

Hola School is owned by the Hola Community Society and is leased to the Stephan G. Stephansson Icelandic Society for school program use in May and June. Hola School was built in 1904.

The "Roll Call" program is a unique opportunity for children to experience an original one-room schoolhouse. In order that you and your students will enjoy your visit to Hola School, please remember:

- Hola School does not have washroom facilities. Stephansson House Historic Site has fully equipped washrooms. You may use these facilities on your way to Hola School.
- The School is not wheelchair accessible, although doorways are wide enough to accommodate small chairs.
- Students will be taking the role of pupils in a 1927 classroom, and lessons are conducted by a costumed interpreter playing the role of an old style school teacher. Teachers should explain to the students the Hola teacher is ACTING, as it is a very strict environment.
- Encourage your class to attend the program dressed in "old fashioned" clothing: for girls, bows and braids in their hair, pinafore style dresses and bonnets and dark stockings; for boys, caps and laced boots, knickers or overalls, woolen pants with suspenders would be appropriate.
- Students should be briefed to expect reading and recitation, penmanship lessons and a spelling bee.
- Teachers are generally asked to sit at the back of the classroom with other adult supervisors and allow the 'teacher' to conduct the program. Cell phones should be placed on silent mode.

The Hola School Story

The first settlers arrived in the Tindastoll (later Markerville) and Hola districts in 1888. By 1891 there were enough families in the area to warrant construction of a school, and it was decided to build at Tindastoll east of present day Markerville. Settlers in the Hola district to the north and west were concerned about the distances their children would have to travel to school, so a parcel of land was donated by the Stephansson family to the east of Stephansson House for a second school. The first school building, a 26 x 18 foot structure, was named "Hola", meaning "many hills" in Icelandic, after a famed centre of learning in northern Iceland.

Hola School was actually completed before the one at Tindastoll and was for a time the only school in the region north and west of the Red Deer River. Because of difficulties in locating an Icelandic teacher it was 1892 before the school opened to students.

By 1904 a substantial increase in the number of children in the area necessitated the construction of the present building west of the Stephansson home. The school opening was marked by a celebration complete with speeches, dances and a performance by Fanny and Jenny Stephansson, dressed in period costumes and singing "Three Old Maids". The school's original Waterbury furnace is still lit every morning for school programs. A swinging bridge across the Medicine River was constructed in 1906, allowing children from the west side of the river to attend classes. Horse barns were located on both sides of the river.

Hola School was closed in 1957 and students were bussed to Markerville for a year until the opening of the consolidated Spruce View School. The Hola Community Society was formed to maintain the building as a community center. The historic Hola School is still used for picnics, socials, reunions and card parties in the winter.

Stephansson House Historic Site

General Site Information

Stephan Gudmundsson was born in 1853 to a poor family. His father, a farmer, was unable to buy his own farm, so he was forced to rent several small farms over the years. In the early 1870's a series of volcanic eruptions spewed ash over Stephan's family's rented land, which prevented future crop growth. Destitute and starving, Stephan and his family decided to leave Iceland to pursue a more fruitful farming career in North America. In 1873, several families, including Stephan's and his uncle Jon Jonsson, purchased tickets on a cargo ship bound for Scotland. They landed in Edinburgh and took a train to Glasgow. From there, they purchased steerage tickets on a ship bound for Quebec City. Arriving in Canada, the Icelanders experienced the challenges of Customs and Immigration. The Canadian officials did not understand the Icelandic naming system, wherein an individual takes his or her father's first name with the suffix "sson" or "sdottir," depending on sex. The immigration officials assumed that family names were passed down paternally, so Stephan Gudmundsson became Stephan Stephansson, after his father, Gudmunder Stephansson.

Many Icelanders, including Stephan, moved on to Wisconsin where they worked as farmhands and labourers until they could save enough money, become acclimated to the land, and North American farming techniques, to start a successful farm. In 1878 Stephan married his cousin Helga Jonsdottir.

They soon discovered that farming conditions were poor in Wisconsin, and the desire for better land, as well as the wish to better preserve Icelandic culture, made the Icelanders move on to Pembina County, in what is now North Dakota. At first the settlement prospered, but by the mid-1880's, low prices for farm produce, drought and religious differences drove Stephan and other Icelanders North to the Markerville area, where he lived until his death in 1927.

Stephan found that farming and cultural conditions were better in Canada, and his farm had its first profitable year in 1907. Stephan could not quell his creative urges even as he was farming, and he would write his poetry during the nights and on rainy days; whenever the opportunity presented itself. He became quite well-known for his poetry in Iceland, prompting the Icelandic government to invite him for a six-month speaking tour in 1917. A collection of his poems was published in six volumes (the last one posthumously) called *Andvokur*, an Icelandic word meaning "wakeful nights." His poetry is considered some of the best Icelandic poetry since the middle Ages, and his works are part of the third-grade curriculum in Iceland. We hope you enjoy your visit to home of Stephan G. Stephansson, who lived here with his wife, Helga, and seven children.

General Site Information

Parking: There is a parking lot at Stephansson House for buses and cars. HOLA School visitors may park at Stephansson House and take the short five minute walk to the school.

Facilities: Outdoor picnic tables and complete washroom facilities are available at the site.

Accessibility: The House is not totally accessible; however with prior notice, programs can be altered to accommodate participants in wheelchairs.

Contact: 403-728-3929 between May 1 and Labour Day