

# FISH CREEK PROVINCIAL PARK

## PARK NOTES

# The Spirit of the Old West

## Pioneer Adventures - The Shaws of England

In the spring of 1883, Samuel William Shaw with his wife Helen and eight children, left the comforts of their mansion in Rochester, Kent, England. They moved from their home for the challenges and rewards of a life in Canada's untamed North West Territories. They did not come unprepared. Trying to plan for every necessity resulted in filling two railroad boxcars with their belongings.

By July 1883, this bold, inexperienced, but determined family settled here. They set up their homestead, farmed, ranched, opened a general store, kept the post office, and manufactured woollen goods.

## Alberta's First Industry - Shaw's Woollen Mill

Only a son of England's Industrial Revolution would include thirty tons of woollen mill machinery in his settlers' effects! In 1889, Samuel Shaw launched Alberta's first industry. His woollen mill, located along Fish Creek, could manufacture three hundred pounds of wool a day.



S. W. Shaw's woollen mill, Midnapore, AB, ca. 1908-1910  
*Glenbow Archives, NA-1149-1*

To market the woollen goods, Helen Shaw opened a store *Midnapore Woollen Mills*, on Stephen Avenue in downtown Calgary. The store sold skirts, blankets, flannels, tweed, and stocking yarn. Many prospectors setting out for the Yukon Gold Rush were outfitted in her shop. The mill operated until 1917 when it was destroyed by fire.



S. W. Shaw,  
Midnapore, AB, ca. 1880  
*Glenbow Archives*  
NA-225-3

## Building a Community - The Shaws of Midnapore

The Shaw family helped to create a lively cultural heritage in the community of Midnapore. Samuel Shaw was a member of the first vestry and organist of St. Paul's Anglican Church. He built the first school in the community, with his daughter Helen as its first teacher. He also promoted the Midnapore Exhibition, and provided evening dances and concerts at a pavilion that he built named *Paradise Grove*.

Samuel Shaw was a keen amateur scientist as well. He kept accurate weather records, encouraged better farming and ranching practices, and built from basic components the first telephone system in Midnapore.

The Shaw family created a deep sense of fellowship with their neighbours, and their home became a meeting place to share, discuss, and enjoy pioneer life. The young community of Midnapore was enriched by the Shaw family's interest in its integrity and growth. They are a shining example of the settler's spirit, desire, and resourcefulness that helped establish and define western Canada.



Mrs. S. W. Shaw,  
Midnapore, AB, ca. 1880  
*Glenbow Archives*  
NA-225-3

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