

Calgary Elbow River Promenade





Introduction

The Elbow River Promenade is a community initiated project to revitalize a neglected section of riverbank while celebrating the natural and human history of Rouleauville, one of Calgary's earliest neighbourhoods. The new Promenade is an accessible pathway featuring cantilevered viewing decks, benches, bronze plaques, interpretive signage and an interactive public art piece.

The story of the Elbow River is one of flooding: flooding of the river itself, as well as an influx of new people and development that disrupted the area's existing culture and historic character. The original Francophone settlers of Rouleauville were inundated by Anglophone settlers following annexation by The City of Calgary in 1907. Since the 1970s, many of the heritage buildings and streetscapes that defined the area have been washed away by the tide of progress.

Wave patterns, water-inspired colours, and horizontal bars referencing the water level markers on a nearby bridge all evoke the literal flooding by the river. The use of French and English text honours the original settlers. Brick supports and structures provide a tangible link to a historic brick factory in the area and gave the community a fundraising opportunity.



BEFORE



AFTER



Main Plaza

Bronze panels give an overview of the history of two communities that border the river, using materials and style of other markers in the district. A unique kaleidoscope, the 'Realiscope,' offers an ironic twist on the standard tourist scope. Instead of bringing an image closer, the Realiscope fragments and rearranges reality to give the viewer a different perspective, reinforcing the idea that the area is constantly changing.



The Mission District

The Mission District was founded by the Roman Catholic Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Father Leon Doucet originally built the Notre Dame de la Paix mission about 25 miles up the Elbow River near Springbank in 1872, but when the North West Mounted Police built Fort Calgary at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers in 1875, the Church moved the mission closer to the police post.

In 1883, Father Albert Lacombe and Father Hippolyte Leduc secured homesteads on Section 10 and began selling building lots from Legal Street (26th Ave) to Notre Dame Road (17th Avenue) and east from Broadway (4th Street) to what is now Stampede Park.

The settlement was originally named Rouleauville in honour of residents Judge Charles Borromée Rouleau and his brother, Dr. Edouard-Hector Rouleau. Rouleauville became a town in 1899 and attracted French and English-speaking Catholics because of the church, the Holy Cross Hospital, and the Sacred Heart Convent. The area was also home to a thriving Jewish community.

Meanwhile, Calgary was expanding rapidly, and it annexed Rouleauville in 1907. The community became known as the Mission District in recognition of its early history. In 1990 the community association amalgamated with neighbouring Cliff Bungalow.

—The Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association



Rouleauville ca. 1900-1904

The Elbow River Historic Promenade was a result of the vision and effort of Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community residents and businesses with the generous support of the following:



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Cliff Bungalow

The story of Cliff Bungalow begins with the Canadian Pacific Railway. As part of its contract to build the transcontinental railway, the CPR received odd-numbered sections of land along the route in 1881, including Section 9-24-1-W5, between 4th Street and 14th Street and from 17th Avenue to 34th Avenue. The company subdivided this land between 1906 and 1912, during Calgary's first real estate boom.

Originally called simply "Addition to the City of Calgary," Cliff Bungalow was a middle-class extension of Mount Royal. Doctors, lawyers, tradesmen and CPR conductors lived side by side in wood-frame houses and some of the earliest apartment buildings in Calgary. A streetcar line from Mission Bridge to 17th Avenue helped turn 4th Street into a thriving business district.

In 1927 a school on Cliff Street at 22nd Avenue combined its location and architectural style into the name "Cliff Bungalow," and the name caught on for the whole neighbourhood.

Hard times from 1914 to the end of the Second World War saw some of the larger homes divided into smaller suites, and in 1935 the area was rezoned to permit more apartment buildings. During the early growth of Calgary's oil industry from the 1950s to 1970s, many of the original buildings were demolished. Cliff Bungalow came under new development pressure when it was rediscovered in the 1990s.

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Cliff Bungalow 1915

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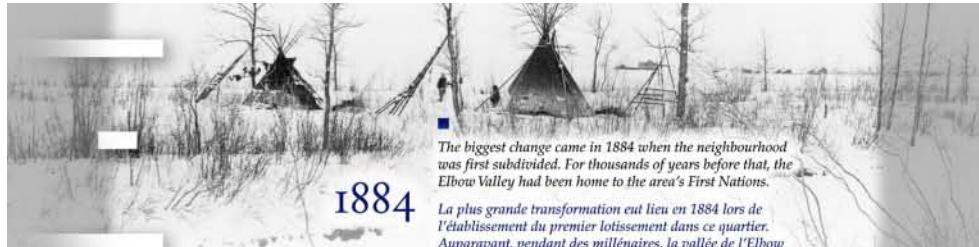
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West end: Waves of development

The theme “You need strong roots to survive a flood” plays with the idea that flooding can be traumatic and destructive, it can also be a natural and healthy process of renewal. Just as healthy trees, grasses and other vegetation along the riverbank help hold the soil in place during periodic flooding, maintaining strong cultural roots will hold communities together and allow them to adapt to new circumstances.





1884

The biggest change came in 1884 when the neighbourhood was first subdivided. For thousands of years before that, the Elbow Valley had been home to the area's First Nations.

Look at the buildings along 26th Avenue behind you. Each architectural style tells the story of a neighbourhood awash in change.

Every rise and fall of Calgary's economic fortunes has left its mark. The red brick house was built by one of Calgary's earliest architects, George Lang, during the first real estate boom in 1911. A bust in 1912 left many lots vacant until after WWII, when a housing crisis saw construction of walk-up apartments. Luxury condos arrived during the prosperity of the 1970s and early 21st century.

Examinez les édifices derrière vous dans la 26e avenue. Chaque style architectural raconte l'histoire d'une communauté inondée par des changements économiques.

Chaque changement de fortune de Calgary a marqué ce quartier. La maison en brique rouge fut construite par l'un des premiers architectes de Calgary, George Lang, pendant le premier boom immobilier, en 1911.

En 1912 une crise économique laissa de nombreux terrains en panne jusqu'après la 2e guerre mondiale, lorsque la construction de modestes immeubles à appartements paraît à la crise du logement. Des tours d'appartements de luxe apparurent durant les périodes de prospérité des années 70 et du début du 21e siècle.

1909-1911

WAVES OF DEVELOPMENT VAGUES DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

THINK ABOUT IT:

Between 1995 and 2008, Cliff Bungalow-Mission lost about five older houses each year. What will happen if all the historic houses disappear?

PENSEZ-Y:

Entre 1995 et 2008, Cliff Bungalow-Mission perdit environ cinq vieilles maisons relativement anciennes par an. Que se passera-t-il si toutes les maisons historiques disparaissent?



The historic Blue Rock Hotel on 4th Street was torn down to make way for Roxboro House in 1970. An oil boom was attracting 3000 people to Calgary every month.

L'historique Hôtel Blue Rock dans la 4^e rue fut démolie en 1970 pour céder la place à Roxboro House. Un boom pétrolier amenait 3000 nouveaux arrivants par mois à Calgary.

Above:
Photo circa 1940 showing original houses.

Cette photo d'environ 1940 montre les maisons originales.

1970S

Below: 4th Street, 1977.

Ci-dessous: 4e rue, 1977.





Middle: Inundated by English

Although English became the dominant language of the Mission district very early on, the area continued to play a role in the development of Calgary's francophone community by supporting French-language education and institutions.





Elbow River circa 1900-1904. The Notre Dame de la Paix mission attracted both French and English-speaking Catholic settlers.

La rivière Elbow autour de 1900-1904. La mission de Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix attira aussi bien les colons catholiques anglophones que francophones.

The Despins brothers' hardware store became a meeting place for francophones in the Mission District.

La quincaillerie des frères Despins devint un lieu de rencontre pour les francophones du quartier Mission.

The Mission District is often identified with the francophone community in Calgary. Yet by the time Rouleauville became a village in 1899, the minority French character of the area was already being eroded by an influx of English-speaking settlers.

Le quartier Mission est souvent identifié à la communauté francophone de Calgary. Pourtant, au moment où Rouleauville devint un village en 1899, son caractère de minorité française était déjà en train d'être érodé par les colons anglophones qui affluaient.

INUNDATED BY ENGLISH INONDÉ PAR L'ANGLAIS

In response, families such as the Beauchemins, Rouleaus and Despins clung to their roots. They established a branch of the St. Jean Baptiste Society and fought for a francophone parish and French education for their children. Their efforts allowed the Mission District to survive as a centre for francophone culture in Calgary, even as the community dispersed across the city.

En réaction, des familles comme les Beauchemin, Rouleau et Despins s'accrochèrent à leurs racines. Elles fondèrent une section de la Société-Saint-Jean-Baptiste, réclamant une paroisse francophone et une éducation française pour leurs enfants. Leurs efforts permirent au quartier Mission de survivre comme centre de la culture francophone à Calgary, au moment même où la communauté se dispersa à travers la ville.

LEARN MORE:
Visit Rouleauville Square at 17th Avenue and 1st Street SW to learn about the French history of the Mission District.

EN SAVOIR PLUS:
Visitez le carré Rouleauville au coin de la 17e avenue et de la 1ère rue s.o. pour en savoir plus sur l'histoire du quartier Mission.

Twenty-sixth Avenue was originally called Legal Street after Archbishop Émile-Joseph Legal, a missionary who helped document local Native languages.

La vingt-sixième avenue fut d'abord la rue Legal, en l'honneur de l'archevêque Émile-Joseph Legal, un missionnaire qui participa à la documentation des langues autochtones locales.

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East end: Life on the flood way

The Elbow River has flooded many times, most recently in 2005. It will flood again. A healthy riverbank with trees and natural vegetation will help reduce the effects of erosion during floods.



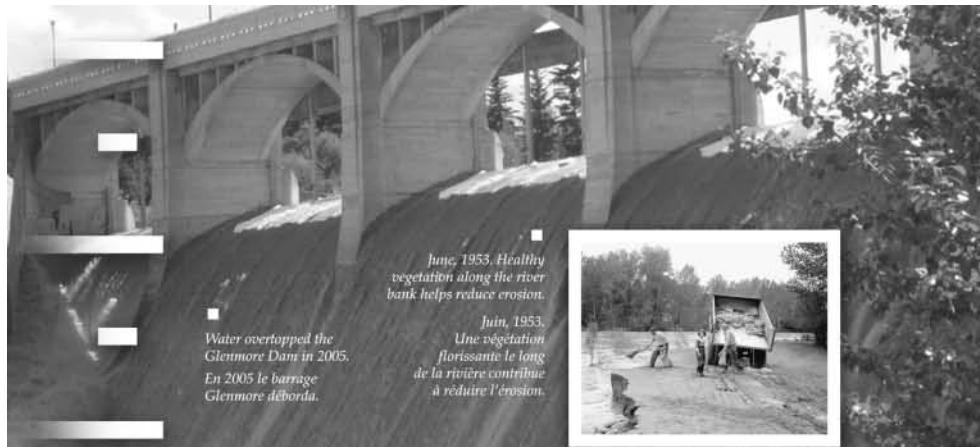
**LIFE ON THE FLOOD WAY
LA VIE SUR LE DÉEFLUENT DE CRUE**

THINK ABOUT IT:
The term 'one-in-one-hundred-year flood' refers to the size of a flood, not how often it happens. Every year, there is one in one hundred chance that a flood of that magnitude will occur. The chance of having a flood as big as the one in 2005 are about one in twenty.

PENSEZ-Y:
Le terme 'inondation de siècle' désigne l'amplitude d'une inondation, non sa fréquence. Chaque année, les chances qu'une crue aussi importante que celle de 2005 se produise sont d'environ une sur vingt!

PLANIFICATION:
Elbow Bridge was constructed in 1911, so Elbow Bridge Park residents are prone to flooding. In response to the river in 2005, water reached the 10th floor of the building.
In addition, the great flood caused significant damage to nearby properties, including the Elbow River Inn, which was destroyed by floodwater. The inn reopened in 2006.

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Water overtopped the Glenmore Dam in 2005.
En 2005 le barrage Glenmore déborda.

juin 1953. Healthy vegetation along the river bank helps reduce erosion.

juin 1953. Une végétation florissante le long de la rivière contribue à réduire l'érosion.

When the Elbow River floods, it can make life interesting for the people who have built their homes along its banks.

The Elbow has flooded twelve times since 1908, including five times after the Glenmore Dam was completed in 1932. That year also saw the biggest flood on record for the river. Fortunately, the reservoir was empty and the dam helped prevent more serious damage downstream.

Quand la rivière Elbow sort de son lit, la vie devient excitante pour ceux qui ont construit leur maison sur ses rives.

L'Elbow a déjà débordé à douze reprises depuis 1908, dont cinq fois depuis la construction du barrage Glenmore en 1932. Cette année-là eut lieu le débordement le plus important de la rivière jamais documenté. Heureusement, le réservoir était vide et le barrage contribua à prévenir de plus grands dégâts en aval.

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Even before it was completed in 1915, the Mission Bridge gave residents a gauge to measure changes in the river. In 2005, water reached the 8.5' mark.

Avant son achèvement, le pont Mission servait déjà de repère pour mesurer les changements de niveau de la rivière. En 2005, l'eau monta à 8,5 p.

Skating was popular before the dam made the ice less safe.

Le patinage était populaire avant que le barrage ne le rende plus hasardeux.

