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## History of Bowden

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*The first homesteaders to the Bowden area arrived between 1875 and 1880. Prior to 1885, settlers who had moved to the Bowden district were primarily ranchers. After 1885, the settlers focused on mixed farming. Crops were produced such as hay, oats, wheat, and barley.*

*The earliest businesses included a general store, creamery, and a blacksmith shop.*

*In 1891, the Edmonton-Calgary branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed to Bowden. With the arrival of the railroad came a large influx of settlers who began planning business establishments and secured property close to the railroad.*

*However, there were constant problems between the railway company and the landowners.*



*The railway failed to reach an agreement with the landowners on the purchase price of the properties. To end the dispute landowners decided to locate the new townsite 1½ miles north of the existing site on land not owned by the railroad. This change in location forced all of the early settlers to move to the new site.*

### Before WWII



*In the early 1900s, the settlers' main source of income was from hay and dairy products such as cream. By 1906, the local output of butter was the second largest in the province. The first church in the district was of Anglican faith and built in 1893. It was followed by the Presbyterian Church built two miles west of the townsite.*

*In 1904, Bowden was incorporated as a village.*

*The first hotel was built and the following year a four-room brick schoolhouse was completed.*

*Over a period of years, fire plagued the growth of the village, destroying the business section in 1906, the general store in 1923, between 70 and 80 buildings in 1925 and the creamery in 1935.*

*Sadly, in 1954 a propane gas explosion destroyed the first building which had been built in the village.*



*In 1959, construction began on a \$4-million refinery by Canadian Oil Companies Limited. With the completion of the plant, the economy of the village and district had greatly improved, and a building boom occurred. In 1960, a natural gas processing plant was constructed, creating employment for many people.*

## WWII and After



*Bowden was in the centre of a prosperous mixed farming area. Farm income was primarily from cattle and grain. The trend in that area then began to shift towards more livestock, especially cattle. Farm mechanization in the Bowden area was about average for the province except that the farmer's progress was above average. With the opening and establishment of the Canadian Oil Company's refinery and the sulphur extracting plant, 35 additional families moved into Bowden.*

*During the World War II an area of land 4 kilometres north of the Town was appropriated by the Royal Canadian Air Force for construction of an Air Training Base. RCAF Station Bowden was home to No. 32 Elementary Flying Train School (EFTS).*

*After the war the site was converted to the Bowden Institution, originally as a Provincial facility. In 1974 it was converted to a Corrections Canada medium security penitentiary.*

## Present day Bowden

*Bowden is located in the County of Red Deer, in the Central Alberta Parkland region. The area consists of agricultural cropland with rolling foothills of the prominent Rocky Mountains. Bowden has been experiencing a steady growth over the years.*

*The Bowden area also features many recreational amenities such as a nine-hole golf course, fairgrounds, and rodeo facilities.*

*The Town has an economy based on manufacturing, agriculture, natural gas and oil service and supply.*

*The Town describes itself as a bedroom community, meaning a large proportion of the working population commutes to other employment centres, including Red Deer and Olds.*

*Sources: Wikipedia, Central Alberta Museums, Statistics Canada.*

## Current Statistics

<i>Incorporated as a Town:</i>	<i>September 1981</i>
<i>Population 2018:</i>	<i>1240</i>
<i>Total private dwellings:</i>	<i>605</i>
<i>Ave Age of population:</i>	<i>39</i>

*More of the history of Bowden can be found at the Bowden Pioneer Museum, located at 2201 - 19 Ave.*

*Please contact the historical society for further information.*

*Email: [bhs@shawbiz.ca](mailto:bhs@shawbiz.ca)*

*Phone: 402-224-2122*

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