



Boating at
Bowness Park,
1992, Glenbow
NA 1496-4

Bowness
streetcar, 1947,
Glenbow
NA 2935-6

Urie recalls: “Bowness developed in fits and starts. First came the wealthy and the middle class, to be joined and later outnumbered by those pushed out of the city by high taxes and expensive housing. They squatted on the open prairie, building huts, shacks, and small dwellings, often with their own hands. All melded together on the streetcar – squatters and businessmen, professionals and tradesmen, stockbrokers and the unemployed. All rode the streetcar. It was the ultimate leveler – a club where no one was excluded.”²² By



the end of 1949, the streetcar had made its last run and the service was replaced by buses. In the early 1950s, Bowness had a population of about 900, and achieved town status. In 1964, after a contentious plebiscite in the community regarding annexation, Bowness was amalgamated into the City of Calgary.

Aviation in Bowness

One of the popular spectacles to enjoy on a trip to Bowness was the air show, and joy rides were offered by local flyers for a modest fee. Bowness is closely connected to early aviation history in the Bow Corridor, and many early developments in local aviation took place here.

It is possible that the very first flight to happen in the area took off from Bowness. In 1914, Frank Ellis and Tom Blakely repaired a damaged Curtis biplane that they had salvaged for \$200 from an American barnstormer who had crashed it in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. It was built of wood and wire, with tricycle-wheel landing gear and a 45 hp motor that would keep it in the air for 15 minutes. They refurbished the little plane, named it the West Wind, and spent a few months in Bowness practising flying – mostly just hops off and back to the ground. Their little experiment in aviation ended in 1915 when their contraption crashed on landing. The intrepid pair repaired the wreck, but other damage from UV exposure caused the right wing to give way. This was followed by a big windstorm, and despite the plane being well pegged down it broke loose and rolled for a quarter-mile. All that was salvaged was the engine and propeller.

Subsequent to this, returning World War I flying aces would set up shop for barnstorming out of Bowness, using an old wagon track as a runway. They held aerial stunt displays and gave rides for a few dollars. The area just east of the present Bowness Road, in the central part of Bowness, became known as Bowness Flying Field. In August 1919, there was great excitement as the first flight across the Rockies, by Captain E. C. Hoy of Vancouver, was scheduled to land there. He arrived at 8:55 after 16½ hours of flying. Hoy set off to return to Vancouver on August 11, stopping in Golden, B.C., to refuel. However, on takeoff a couple of

boys ran into his path on the runway and he had to swerve to avoid them. His plane was gravely damaged and Hoy made the rest of his journey home by train.

In 1919, the Air Board was created to regulate flying in Canada. It then created the Canadian Air Force (CAF) and, as a public relations effort, undertook a trans-Canada flight. The pilot started in Halifax on October 7 and arrived in Vancouver 10 days later, having made a stop in Bowness to great public hurrah. Interest in aviation was growing with exposure at these aerial events.

Part of the CAF's mandate was to promote local flying clubs. In 1919, a promotional tour by Major John Inwood entitled *The Commercial and Pleasure Possibilities of Aerial Navigation in Canada* led to the formation of the Calgary Aero Club. Some flying instruction ensued, but interest soon waned and the club faded away for the time being. Still, commercial interest in flying continued.

Two companies were established out of the Bowness Flying Field in 1919. George Webber set up shop and bought a Royal Air Force Curtiss JN-4 when these planes were made available to the public. But his enterprise ended when pilot Frank Donnally crashed that plane in May. Captain Frank McCall, a World War I flying ace, set up McCall Aero Corporation in August of the same year. He floated advertising streamers and offered passenger services, but the majority of his business was stunt flying and joy rides. A commercial flight was initiated to Nanton, dropping off a bundle of newspapers over High River en route. At its peak, McCall Aero operated three planes and toured around local fairs doing stunt shows. But two of the planes were lost in accidents, and interest in flying waned in the community as attention turned to bringing in the harvest. The introduction of wing walking piqued interest for a while, and spectators were awed as Alf Maybee performed his aerial acts on weekends in the fall of 1920.

But McCall's operations were no longer viable, so in 1921 his business was purchased by P. Flemming. That ended in June of that year when they crashed on landing after a wing-walking performance. Maybee was killed and Flemming suffered a broken leg and head injuries.

About half a dozen fledgling aviation companies flew out of this rutted stretch of cow pasture over the years between



the end of the war and 1928. Recreational flying received a boost in 1927 when the Canadian government (through the Department of National Defence) introduced a program encouraging the formation of local clubs, with cash subsidies for training and loans of planes. The Calgary Aero Club was revived, once again out of the Bowness Flying Field. However, as newer planes came along that required longer and better runways, the site became impractical. So, in 1928, the aerial activity moved further west, by the Banff Coach Road.

The West
Wind, no date,
Glenbow
NA 2825-4

Paskapoo Slopes

On the south side of the Trans-Canada, southwest of the Sarcee Trail intersection, is an escarpment that rises about 150 metres from the valley bench to the upland plateau. This area is known as Paskapoo Slopes. The name *Paskapoo* is said to come from a Cree word meaning "Blind Man," which is from a native story about the occurrence of snow blindness in the area. The term is connected to a geological feature, the Paskapoo Formation, which is a layer of buff-coloured sandstone and grey shale up to 600 metres thick that formed in the Paleocene (about 60,000 years ago) and covers much of the slopes overlooking the Bow Valley.

Paskapoo Slopes have great importance for both ecological and historical reasons. Within this area, stretching about four kilometres along the highway, there are six distinct significant habitat areas, from aspen parkland to balsam poplar

Paskapoo
Slopes and
Canada
Olympic Park



stands to riverine tall shrub areas and rare native grasslands. The area is even more valuable because of the proximity of these different habitats to each other, which greatly increases its usefulness for wildlife. There are numerous ravines cutting through the vegetated slopes, and many fresh springs provide wetland areas. This scenario adds up to huge diversity in habitat and the wildlife that it supports.

As people in the area became aware of the threat posed by rapidly encroaching development, Paskapoo Slopes became the focus of a prolonged battle between developers who viewed this spot as having excellent residential potential, and Calgarians who saw its value primarily as important natural habitat, a refuge for wildlife within the city limits, as well as for urban human inhabitants. Paskapoo Slopes have the added dimension of encompassing an area of high archeological significance (next section).

So, the fight was on. The Paskapoo Slopes Preservation Society was formed in 1991, and this group put a tremendous amount of energy into informing the public, lobbying City Hall, and collecting data that presented the true value of the slopes in their natural state. The society fought for the recognition of the area's value as an environmental, recreational, educational, historical, and even spiritual resource. In spite of this, in 2000 the City of Calgary approved residential development on 165 acres within this area. However, the city gradually became more receptive to what the society was

presenting, and it commissioned a number of studies on the area that led it to revise its plans. In 2006, the city stated in its Structure Plan that “the forested hill is a magnificent sight – a landmark on the city’s gateway from the west, similar in significance to Nose Hill Park in ecological quality and visual prominence... Because of its prehistoric context, Paskapoo Slopes could (even) be of provincial significance.”³

The outcome of this has been a plan for Natural Area Management that leaves the 165 acres in a largely natural state, preserving contiguous open space for wildlife corridors. Areas of significant natural habitat are to be preserved or enhanced, maintaining the integrity of the area’s ecology. Walking, cycling and cross-country ski trails will be laid out in the area, in consultation with interested groups such as the Mountain Bike Alliance. These will incorporate an interpretive program to inform people of the archeological finds in the area.

Of course, not everyone is satisfied with the outcome of this plan. The developers, most obviously, are disappointed. Some Calgarians felt that the area should have been simply left untouched, without even the pathways and interpretive additions. But the city seems to have found a satisfactory middle road through this issue that involves many of the stakeholders. It will be a true asset to the city, a source of pleasure and interest for the citizens, and an area of refuge for wildlife under increasing pressure from urbanization.