

Biography of Mohamed (Sam) Asiff



Sam Asiff

Born in Lebanon in 1904 to father Mohamed Ahmed Asiff and Khazma Houndous. At the age of 4, his father passed away, leaving his mother a widow at the age of 27 to raise two young boys (ages 4 and 2).

At the age of 17 (1923) Mohamed left Lebanon looking for a better life and a means to provide for his mother and brother. Along with a few other friends, they embarked on this journey together with Canada being their destination.

Somewhere, along the way, a couple of the friends got lost and ended up in Argentina. Mohamed's first stop was Paris, where he worked for six months selling newspapers. Once he had enough money, he made his way to Canada. The boat docked in Halifax. He was met and taken to Edmonton. From there, he was picked up by his cousin Mahmoud Rahall and was taken to Frog Lake. He worked on his cousin's farm for food and board putting in long hours. In 1928 he made his

way to Edmonton where Ahmed Amiree fronted him money so he could buy merchandise.

He became a traveling peddler, on foot, with a suitcase strapped to his back and eventually he was able to purchase a horse drawn buggy as his mobile store. After a few years of hard work Mohammad was able to purchase his own store and rooming house.

This was during the 'great depression' years, so he was able to contract housing to the government to board many of the homeless and disadvantaged people at the time. He quickly became involved in the Edmonton Muslim community. At that, during the early 30's there were very few Muslims in Edmonton so it did not take long to become acquainted with all.

Mohammad became involved with the Edmonton Muslim community to raise funds for a much needed Mosque. He spent many hours and days writing letters to politicians, business people and even to churches, in order to raise funds for the new mosque.

He often traveled to eastern Canada, at his own expense to help raise funds. In 1946 Sam, as he was best known, sold all his assets in Edmonton and moved to Lac La Biche where he started up his own mink ranching operation.

He settled in Lac La Biche and here he met and married Malaki Abougoush in January, 1949. They raised 7 children, Ozzie, Faisal, Jamel, Naief, Noor, Nowf and Gamela, all born in Lac La Biche.

Shortly after settling in Lac La Biche he became involved in the newly formed Lac La Biche Moslem Association and applied his expertise by fund raising for a new mosque in Lac La Biche.

In 1958 the Lac La Biche mosque was finally finished making it the 2nd mosque to be built in Canada and the 3rd in North America. Sam became the first president of the Lac La Biche Muslim Association. He passed away in June 1980.



Sam Asiff Peddling Goods to farmers from horse and bugey