

## Sine Kassim Chadi

(formerly abouChadi)



The Chadi family settlement in the Lac La Biche region can be traced back to Alberta's earliest days. It is a story interwoven with the classic Canadian pioneer story and journeys of those who, driven by rumours of opportunities across the Atlantic, dedicated their hard work, creativity and tenacity to settle a new territory. **Sine Kassim abouChadi's** journey to Canada started in the early 1905 when he left his home in Lala, Lebanon at 30 years old. Boarding a freighter in Beirut, he had only his few possessions and just enough money for the journey. He was joined by his 12 year old nephew **Ali Ahmed abouChadi**, arriving first in Winnipeg where they stopped and worked hard trading and selling small goods in order to earn enough to make the rest of the journey west.

Their goal was to make it to Edmonton, and they worked hard and reached the newly incorporated city in the same year. There they began trading dry goods from out of a backpack, door to door. For two years, Sine slowly expanded his trading territory, moving to include a 100 mile radius around Edmonton, and trading the backpack for a horse and buggy which became his new store.

In 1908 Sine chose a permanent storefront in Lac La Biche. His first store was a general store that traded in food products, hardware and dry goods. Ali, now 15, was quickly becoming a savvy businessman and ran the store while Sine continued to secure goods for sale and trade.

By 1910 Sine was moving regularly along the waterways around Lac La Biche, navigating towards Fort McMurray and beyond into Fort Chipewyan and on to Fort Smith, N.W.T. His floating barge soon began a regular fixture, well recognized by the residents along the Athabasca and Slave River systems.

By 1913 Sine decided to return to Lebanon to marry, leaving Ali, his very accomplished business partner to run their operations. Over the next 14 years, Ali (now Alex Hamilton) would transform the business into one of Northern Alberta's largest diversified business interests. Recognized as a business leader, Ali become the chairman of the Lac La Biche Board of Trade in 1920's.

For Sine, WW1 and the responsibilities of a wife and two sons, Mohammed & Mahmoud, meant that a return to Canada was delayed longer than expected. Finally in 1927, he returned to Lac La Biche, Alberta and rejoined Ali. But with his wife and children settled in Lala, Sine only stayed in Lac La Biche for three more years before finally returning to Lala where he lived for the rest of his life.

A true pioneer, Sine Kassim Chadi's journey's through the north provide a glimpse into the energy and resolve behind Alberta's earliest commercial enterprises. Sine is well remembered and spoken of to this day by elders in the Aboriginal communities he visited. Fifty years after his days in Lac La Biche, his grandson discovered his picture, hanging on the wall of a trapper's cabin, leaving footsteps behind to allow us to trace his steps.