

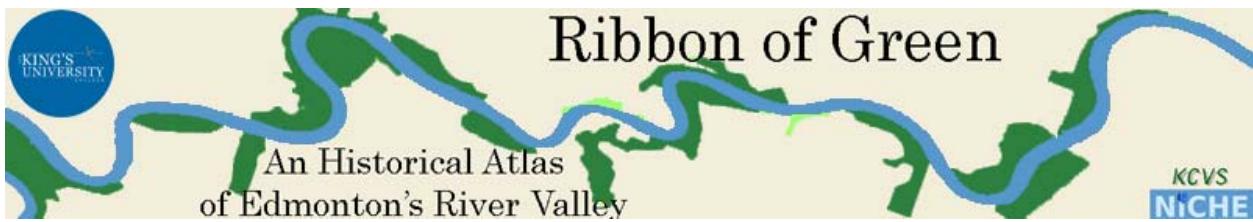
No Room for Horses

By Dr. William Van Arragon

While the plans in the 1970s for the Capital City Recreation Parks were intended to expand Edmontonians' enjoyment of the river valley, one group found their access to be increasingly curtailed. In 1975 Charles A. Jenkins, president of the Alberta Trail Riding Association, wrote an indignant letter to the Mayor and City Council protesting the reduction of the number of trails available to horse riders. He argued first for the social and cultural value of horses and trail riding:

"The present generation has more leisure time and more money to spend than any generation in history. A major portion of both is going to the horse industry, presently a multi-million dollar business in Alberta and is projected to be in the billion dollar bracket by the end of the seventies. The largest proportion of both money and time is spent on Trail Riding. For the older people, because of shorter hours of work, increased automation, more rural and suburban living, and increasing participation in sports and recreation in the out-of-doors, the horse is the answer. Because parents realize the value of horses to young people, as they teach the young a sense of responsibility, thoughtfulness of others and pride in their own achievement, they support the natural attachment of the young for the horse."

Having made this argument, Jenkins criticized the river valley park plans. "We, the members of the Alberta Trail Riding Association, had ten trail rides in the River Valley area in 1974 and the consensus of opinion was that it is tremendous territory for bridle paths, the scenery is magnificent and we met hundreds of horses along the way." He refuted the idea that humans and horses could not share the trails: "Not one objected to the presence of horses, in fact they proclaimed delight by either their voice or



expression.” And he concluded by asking “that instead of restricting trail riding by

depletion of trails, the trails should be extended and improved.”¹

¹ Charles A. Jenkins, Trail Riding Association; Letter to the Mayor and Council
10 February 1975. Capital City Recreation Park, Box 1, Folder: CCRP – Committee Meetings (Technical)
– Trails and Recreation Committee. Provincial Archives of Alberta.