

Heavenly Hamlet

A scenic view of Elbow Lake in Alberta, Canada. The lake is a deep blue-green color, reflecting the clear sky. In the foreground, a person wearing a red jacket and green pants is sitting on a rocky shore, looking towards the water. The background features a range of rugged, snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky. The shoreline is lined with evergreen trees and rocky slopes.

It takes a very special place to earn a reputation as being the “gateway to God’s country,” but Bragg Creek – nestled a mere 30 kilometers west of Calgary – is really that kind of a place.

Still graced with the raw, isolated beauty that prompted the area’s founding residents, Nova Scotia-born brothers Albert and John Bragg, to build the first local homestead back in 1894, Bragg Creek is a true nature-lover’s paradise offering countless Albertans and passing visitors an unrivaled natural playground for rejuvenating their spirits and recharging their batteries.

The serenely beautiful Elbow Lake: headwaters to the Elbow River.



Left: The meandering Elbow River provides water for the entire hamlet of Bragg Creek, and forty percent of Calgarians. Top right: Tom Fullerton relaxes inside his Youth Hostel, 1940 – photograph reprinted from *Our Foothills*.

Although the brothers' namesake is a small trout-speckled waterway that enters the Elbow River at Bragg Creek, it's the Elbow River that sustains the residents of this small hamlet and provides water to a huge municipality – forty percent of Calgarians receive their drinking water from the Elbow River. Therefore, Bragg Creek is not only the gateway to Kananaskis Country – a giant forestry reserve in the Rocky Mountain front ranges offering a year-round outdoor recreational paradise that boasts some of the most beautiful and pristine landscapes in all of the world – but also the gateway to the water of life for one in six Albertans.

Majestic Mount Rae – named in the late 1850s after the renowned arctic explorer John Rae, the man who reported on the Franklin expedition – serves as the headwaters to the Elbow River by the way of Rae Glacier. The area's natural beauty often sparkles to life

whenever the sun catches the crystal-clear river in her bed at Bragg Creek, creating a heavenly display of brilliant, inspirational natural splendour.

In many ways, the area's history has been defined by the enduring symbiotic relationship between its natural beauty and the pioneering spirit of prominent residents such as Tom



Fullerton, who founded Canada's very first youth hostel. Back in 1933, Tom agreed to blaze trails for youth and allow them to build a shelter near the Elbow River on his property three kilometers north of Bragg Creek, providing young travelers and visitors with an opportunity to fully appreciate the area's natural grandeur. By 1936, a wooden cabin with a dining room and two sleeping rooms was erected at the site.

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Bragg Creek main shopping mall



"Bragg Creek is like a beautiful diamond with many facets: magical, unpredictable winters; endless summer days; colourful, fragrant fall tableaus poised against blue skies; and miraculous springs filled with the promise and rebirth of new life."

Neil Patterson: Master Painter



"Creatively, I couldn't ask for more inspirational surroundings than those of Bragg Creek – the trees, the mountains and the wildlife!"

Beth Root Sandvoss:
Internationally-Renowned Cellist



"After years of traveling and living in various parts of the world, I feel I've found my final destination. I am at peace, happy, content and never cease to be awed by my surroundings."

Chris Sandvoss:
World-Class Violin Maker



The original Trading Post in Bragg Creek

This enduring lifestyle balance between Big City convenience and natural serenity continues to flourish to this day, as evidenced by the impressive array of accomplished, extraordinary people – including many resident artists – who have permanently made Bragg Creek their home, drawn by the area's extraordinary beauty.

Enjoying the convenience of residing only a short drive from one of Canada's most vibrant cities, as well as the peaceful tranquility of country living, the area's residents are blessed with an abundance of wildlife, fresh mountain air, and clear-running rivers and streams that are tailor-made for fishing, kayaking, rafting and other outdoor adventures. Just as it did for the area's first settlers more than 100 years ago, Bragg Creek today offers an unrivaled opportunity to escape from the ordinary and the daily grind to a full slate of activities ranging from hiking and biking to horseback riding and cross-country skiing.

Home to a gorgeous palette of plant species – including rare alpine flowers – Bragg Creek provides an ideal opportunity for busy professionals to fit their careers into a rewarding and healthy lifestyle, rather than the other way around. As a vibrant community with all the conveniences of 21st Century living – including first-class restaurants offering the best of international cuisine, art galleries, antique shops, conference facilities, and medical and professional services – Bragg Creek affords the rare opportunity to pursue a thriving and successful career in nearby Calgary without sacrificing one's quality of life.

Thanks to continued funding support from three levels of government – including Rocky View County, the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada – Bragg Creek is currently developing a communal water and sewage system within the hamlet, adding a vital piece of infrastructure to further strengthen the community, increase our property values, and enable us to be better stewards of the beautiful environment that helps sustain us all.

For anyone looking to really get the most out of life, Bragg Creek has everything they need to nourish their minds, bodies, hearts and souls in ways that few other places on earth, if any, can even begin to compare. ■

Article by Dwayne Zaba, Publisher. For stunning video of Bragg Creek and Kananaskis visit www.braggcreek.tv .

Photography by Robert Berdan, www.canadiannaturephotographer.com

