

For Who is Olds Named?

The year 1890 marks the beginning of the settlement which became the town of Olds. When the rail line reached the sixth siding (Olds) out of Calgary, a section foreman named David Shannon arrived on an open handcar. Mr. Shannon, a native of Ireland, was experienced at railway construction, as he had worked on the building of the Underground in London, England. At the Sixth Siding, Mr. Shannon provided living quarters for his family and established squatter's rights to a quarter section of land. This gained them the distinction of being the earliest residents of Olds.

On 27 July 1891, the first through train made the trip from Calgary to south Edmonton. That same month the CPR took over the operation of the C & E Railway and released its official list of names for the sidings and stations along the route. Sixth Siding had already been designated as a railway station point and work started on the building of the station and water tank.

A committee of CPR officials, charged with selecting names for the points along the line, suggested "Shannon", but this honour was declined by Mr. Shannon and the town site was named for a CPR traffic manager, **Mr. George Olds**. He was born in Gloucestershire, England in 1832. He came to Canada as a young man and worked for a number of railways in Canada and the United States, returning to Canada in 1886 to join Canadian Pacific as a General Traffic Manager. He held this position until his retirement 10 years later. Mr. Olds is buried in the cemetery at Airdrie, Alberta. It appears that even before he retired from employment with the CPR in 1896, he lived for a time in the settlement that was named for him, running a store.

Unfortunately we don't seem to have a photo of George Olds...if we ever find one, we will post it here!