

Senator Patrick Burns

Imagine watching with despair as your house and all you ever knew fell apart and went up in sparks. Dark, choking, black plumes of smoke rising from the wreckage around you. That's exactly what happened in the Fernie fire of 1908. Burns was one of the first to send money and aid to the dazed citizens, and to other disasters, like the Frank slide of 1903. Burns was a man of compassion, always the first to help people in need and constantly looking out for everyday citizens. One example of this was when Burns came across a shabby looking church and took it upon himself to pay the cost to have it re-painted. A few miles away, there was another church that looked grubby compared to the newly painted building, so he arranged to have *that* one painted as well. Anyone who needed help with money to build their lifestyle, would turn to one man: Patrick Burns.

Burns' life began as one of eleven children, a son to poor Irish immigrants. As an adult, Patrick Burns purchased some oxen from an employee who didn't have enough money to take care of them. Selling them, and with only one hundred dollars in his pocket, he continued west, where he became a well-known millionaire. What was really remarkable, was that even as Burns was getting more and more wealthy, his compassion wasn't lost in the greedy sea of green. Only one thing was important - helping the people. It takes a unique man to not get greedy with money, but to use it to help others.

In 1912, he was one of Alberta's, 'Big Four' cattlemen of the year and helped sponsor the founding of the very first Calgary Stampede! The 'Big Four' were the most successful cattlemen of the year. The other three were George Land, A. E.

Cross, and Archie McLean. Even today, each year, we still hold the one thing Calgary is most famous for; all thanks to the great 'Big Four' cattlemen who made the first Stampede possible.

Burns donated to so many causes that it is difficult to count them all. He won lots of awards that were well-deserved, just a few of them were: *Cosmopolitan Distinguished Service Medal 1931, Inductee 1981, Best of Alberta Project, and Greatest Citizen Award 2008*. He passed away on February 24, 1937, a year after his son tragically died of a heart attack. Most of what is now South Calgary, used to be his private land. He contributed much to Calgary, as well as over Canada, by providing meat for everyone in his day. He owned several large cattle farms to sell meat to the citizens; he even had a few branches as far away as London, Liverpool, and Yokohama. He also had a coal mine which helped build the Calgary and Southern Railways.

Patrick Burns showed and taught us lots of things. It doesn't matter how much money you have, if you have the courage and mind to do it, anything is possible. Also, he taught us to always be true to ourselves, and to never change for somebody else. Set the bar high, and eventually you'll get there. Any goal is possible if you try hard enough and never give up, you might feel discouraged, but never give up.

Anyone can be a hero today; again it all comes down to your determination and if you're really serious about what you want to do; you can do anything. Burns showed us that nothing is more important than helping others, nor is there any better reward than seeing the surprised, pleased face of a person you have helped. No matter how hard it is at the time; don't take the easy way out. In the end,

everything can all come tumbling down just because you made a wrong choice. The saying, '*You can do anything you put your mind to*' is not just an overused cliché expression, it is true. Many described Burns as a determined, simple man, true to his word, with his head screwed on tight.

You can strive to do your best in your community by just helping out. Look at Burns, he never stopped giving, and even as his money grew and grew, it only made his kindness stronger, because he could *make* a difference, he could actually use his money for the good of the people. All of Alberta's champions have one thing in common, they never stopped at just '*okay*', they went higher than expected, and even when they had reached their goals, they just kept on pushing.

Burns taught us a lot of things about compassion, and even today, decades after his death, the Burns Memorial Fund still donates to needy charities. As his kindness lives on, others will hopefully start to follow in his wake, or carve their own path for greatness. We can all be champions, in our own way.