

For Immediate Release – November 5, 2009

**THE STUFF OF LEGEND: The Luxton Family in Banff and the Bow Valley
featuring *High Fashion in the Rockies* opens November 21, 2009**

Banff, Alberta – Celebrate the Luxtons – one of Banff's most well-known and influential families. This exhibition is a tribute to the spirit, vision, commitment, and creative energy of one of the early pioneer families in Banff and the Bow Valley. It showcases many wonderful artifacts and photographs of the Luxton family, as well as several video vignettes produced by The Banff Centre which incorporate the recollections of Stoney elders and others who remember the Luxtons.

Opening on November 21 is a new story focusing on a surprising collection of gorgeous dresses belonging to Georgina and Eleanor – the Luxton ladies.

High Fashion in the Rockies

Who would have thought that Georgina and Eleanor, the Luxton ladies, would have accumulated finery spanning five decades? Rediscovered in the Eleanor Luxton Historical Foundation collection were dozens of beautiful dresses from 1910 through the 1960s. Purchased by Georgina and Eleanor by mail order, most of these frocks were worn for only one special occasion and then stored carefully away. A small percentage of this extraordinary assortment of apparel along with accessories including gloves, purses, smoking paraphernalia, and lingerie, has been added to the Heritage Gallery as part of *The Stuff of Legend: The Luxton Family in Banff and the Bow Valley*.

Throughout the 20th century, fashion, like art, has reflected societal changes. In the 1910s women gained not only the vote, but fashion independence. After decades of being bound by corsets and hidden under layers of underskirts, trains, scarves, hats, and gloves, short skirts appeared, and a new era began.

Between 1910 and 1920, fashion began to loosen up. French designers like Paul Poiret encouraged the trend after 1907 by designing women's clothes for an uncorseted figure. Red lips, cigarettes, bobbed hair, and flapper dresses became all the rage in the 20s. The look was a straight, boyish silhouette where bust, waist, and hip were ignored. Low-waisted dresses with fullness at the hemline allowed women to kick up their heels in new dances like the Charleston.

In the 1930s, pleats, fur, and understated elegance replaced the exuberant styles of the Roaring Twenties. Skirts lengthened again and, thanks to designer Madeleine Vionnet, dresses were cut on the bias so that they clung to and moved with the body. These designs required elegant, lightweight fabrics such as crepes and satins. Toward the end of the decade, shoulders became broader with puffed sleeves and a more definitely marked waistline, again requiring corsets, now called girdles.

As fabric became scarce during WWII (1939-45), skirts became slimmer. Military influences were seen in the wide, padded shoulder line and slim hips. Women expressed themselves through turban hats and scarves.

By 1947, Christian Dior reacted against the deprivation of the war years by introducing his “New Look,” which drastically lengthened and widened skirts. Coolie and parasol hats balanced the wide, full skirts. With the end of the war came a return to fashion sensibility that persisted throughout the 1950s.

In the 1960s, popular trends moved away from the New Look and fashion became a template for individual expression. With the free-thinking attitudes of the 60s came more bare skin. The mini skirt became a symbol of female freedom. The twentieth century felt “new” to people. With each decade, advances in technology increased the speed of life and the speed of change. Artists and designers responded to this new age with their work.

High Fashion in the Rockies reminds us of a time when women dressed as ladies when they attended special events, even in small towns such as Banff.

Exhibition-Related Events

Opening Reception

Saturday, November 21, 2009, 7 to 9 PM

About the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies

The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies welcomes those who are drawn to the power and inspiration of these mountains. We are the gateway for experiencing and enjoying its art, culture and history in order to inspire and cultivate knowledge and the exchange of ideas. Visitors from near and far experience the Museum’s galleries, programs, archives and library, heritage homes, museum shop, guided walks, tours and special events.

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For more information about this exhibition, and the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, please contact:

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