

Hilwie Hamdon School



Hilwie Hamdon (1905–1988)

Hilwie Hamdon was one of Edmonton's first Lebanese Muslim immigrants and was instrumental in raising money to build the first mosque in Canada—one of the first in North America. Hamdon came to Alberta from Lebanon when she was 16 years old, settling first in Fort Chipewyan, where she had six children with her husband, Alexander Hamdon, a fur trader. The couple decided to move to Edmonton in 1933 so their kids would have access to better education.

In the 1930s, when Canadian census numbers showed there were about 650 Muslims in the country, Hamdon led a group of women who approached then-mayor, John Fry, to lobby for land to build a mosque. The mayor agreed to provide the land if they could raise the \$5,000 needed for construction. During the Great Depression, the persuasive Hamdon launched a successful fundraising effort that convinced Edmontonians of all faiths to financially support the project.

Then the group faced another challenge—finding someone who could build a mosque when none existed in Canada. A Ukrainian-Canadian builder took on the construction project and built the Al Rashid Mosque near 104 Street and 108 Avenue with one main room, arched windows and two hexagonal minarets each topped with a silver dome and crescent moon. The community celebrated the new prayer space, which resembled a Russian Orthodox church and opened in December 1938.

The mosque, which became too small for Edmonton's flourishing Muslim community, closed in 1982. The original building has since been restored and moved to Fort Edmonton Park where it was preserved as a historic site in 1992.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

LOCATION

Hudson neighbourhood
in The Palisades

GRADES

Kindergarten to Grade 9

CAPACITY

900 students

OPENING

September 2017

