

# TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 1, Issue 2, March 1, 2010

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*Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Agnes & Alexander Forbes' arrival in Grande Prairie. See p. 3*

## Mark Your Calendar

<b>March 4</b>	<b>"The Heritage of Winter Sports in the Peace: A Night of Reminiscences" sponsored by the Peace Country Historical Society. At the Grande Prairie Museum on Thursday, March 4 at 7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>March 20</b>	<b>South Peace Regional Archives Society Annual General Meeting (page 19)</b>
<b>March 28</b>	<b>Book Launch for <i>A Grande Education</i> (see page 19)</b>
<b>April 10</b>	<b>Telling Our Stories Workshop (see page 19)</b>
<b>May 28-30</b>	<b>Forbes Celebration and Opening of Montrose House (see page 3)</b>

March 1, 2010

Dear Members & Supporters;

2010 is the 10th Anniversary of the Archives, and the 3rd of the South Peace Regional Archives Society. One of the Society's goals is to raise the profile of archives in the south Peace, and this newsletter is one of the platforms of that goal. We hope it will educate, advocate, and celebrate archives. We also hope it will increase membership in the SPRA Society.

Why is membership important?

More members = more community knowledge. Our members have a much broader network in the community than we as individual board members and staff can have. When questions about archives come up, we want our members to be able to communicate that there is an Archives in the south Peace, what we do and why, and what kinds of materials are archived.

More members = more donations of historical material. When we established this archives, there was no body of material that magically appeared to illustrate our history. Every document, photograph, map, film, and sound recording has been donated: by municipal governments, organizations, or individuals. We want our members to be a voice for the importance of preserving historical material in all the contacts they have, whether at work, in organizations they belong to, or with their friends and family.

More members = more credibility. One of the measures that granting institutions use is the amount of community support an organization has. The number of members and volunteers in a society is one indicator of that support.

There are two categories of membership--you do not need to attend meetings and serve on boards and communities, although we are very grateful for those who do. You can choose to be an Associate Member and participate by receiving this newsletter.

Lastly, more members = more fun. Come and join us for lunch and our AGM. Help us celebrate our 10th Anniversary on Saturday, March 20th.

Sincerely,  
Mary Nutting, Archivist

## TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY

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The mandate of the SPRA Society is to acquire records of on-going value which reflect the political, social, cultural and economic life of the south Peace River Country of Alberta, and to make them accessible to the public.

# Forbes 100th Anniversary

2010 is the 100th Anniversary of the arrival of Alexander and Agnes Forbes in the Grande Prairie area. This middle-aged couple (he was 50, she was 59) first came to visit in 1909, taking the Long Trail from Edmonton via Athabasca, Slave Lake, Grouard and Peace River Landing and camping along the way. Their objective was to survey the south Peace to see if a Presbyterian Mission for incoming settlers was warranted. They recommended the Mission and, when noone answered the call, took on the job themselves.

They set out in February 1910, with three wagon-loads of supplies and a caboose in which Agnes cooked all the meals and in which they slept at night. With them came 15 year-old Tom Paul, whose story you can read over-leaf, and Ike Nelson.

Within four years of their arrival, the Forbes had established four churches--at Bezanson, Spring Creek, Glen Leslie and Grande Prairie. Three of them doubled as schools, and three still remain to this day. The Forbes also established the first hospital.

At the encouragement of developers, they also took a homestead. As the community grew, they donated large tracts of land for the hospital, schools, and finally the new Presbyterian Church. That original homestead is now a substantial part of official Grande Prairie, taking in Jubilee Park and the Cenotaph, the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, City Hall, the Provincial Building, the Health Unit, the Courthouse and the RCMP buildings.

The Forbes legacy remains today in names like Forbes Presbyterian Church, Montrose School, Aberdeen Avenue and Aberdeen Square, Alexander Forbes School, and the Montrose Cultural Centre.

The Forbes home, Montrose House, is the oldest building still standing in Grande Prairie. It is being renovated by the Forbes Homestead Society, the City of Grande Prairie and the Grande Prairie Museum and the Grand Opening is planned for the last weekend in May.

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
ARRIVAL OF REV. ALEXANDER  
FORBES IN GRANDE PRAIRIE IS  
BEING CELEBRATED AT FORBES  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
on May 28th, 29th and 30th.

Celebration Events include:

FRIDAY, MAY 28th

7:30 p.m. at Forbes Church

GOSPEL SING

with the Rodackers and Judy Strand

Coffee and snacks following

Public welcome.

SATURDAY, MAY 29th

10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Forbes Church

FUN, GAMES, FOOD

Races, music, popcorn, hot dogs

For young and old.

SATURDAY, MAY 29th

6 p.m. – 9 p.m. at the Golden Age Center

DINNER @\$20.00

Reserved seating

Music, old friends and fellowship

SUNDAY, MAY 30

10:30 a.m. at Forbes Church

SPECIAL SERVICE

Men's chorus, Special music

Powerpoint presentation about Rev. Forbes

Food & Farewells

Public welcome.

In conjunction with this special Anniversary Celebration, the opening of the restored Forbes Homestead (Montrose House) at 10424 – 96 St. will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Friday 28th of May.

# Memories of a Teenage Pioneer

*This is the story of 15 year-old Tom Paul, who accompanied the Forbes to Grande Prairie in 1910. He intended to go back to Edmonton to train as an electrician, but instead took out a homestead on the grande prairie. When he enlisted for World War I five years later, he already held patent on the land. He returned after the war and spent the remainder of his life in the south Peace. The story is taken from notes written by Tom Paul and edited by Kenneth Robert Paul, his grandson.*

I met Dr. Forbes on the street of Fort Saskatchewan and he asked me to drive a team for him to Grande Prairie. I knew Dr. Forbes as he was our Minister in the Fort before he came up to Grande Prairie the year before. Being not yet sixteen and being at loose ends, and not wanting to wait until May until I was sixteen to be apprenticed to Burman & Frith, the people who supplied electricity to Edmonton, I took the job on, intending to be back in Edmonton to start serving my apprenticeship in May. I was going to be an electrician, but what boy wouldn't have done it--there was a lot of talk going on about the country.

So I came from Fort Saskatchewan by horse team over the Long Trail by Athabasca Landing, Grouard and Simonette. We were eighteen days not counting Sundays arriving at Bezanson. Then Dr. Forbes and myself went back to Grouard to pick up two loads. Four teams having been in the original party, two teams left their loads at Grouard and went back to the Fort. They were farmers from around the Fort.

So having started in the first days of January 1910, it was getting into April when we hit the Simonette for the second time. There was eighteen inches of water on the river and a great many teams looking at the river not knowing whether to tackle it. It was evening and the men were testing the ice. Finally, eight teams under the leadership of Benson could go—so could I. His team weighed a ton each.

So there we were in the water for miles and it was dark too. Two men who were tied together went ahead and tested the ice with poles and to pick out the trail, which of course was the thickest ice. Some places you would thrust the poles in the water and didn't seem to be able to touch bottom.

When we came to the junction of the three rivers—Simonette, Smoky and Wapiti—it looked like a big lake and we had to cross it to get to Bezanson. My heart was trying to jump out of my mouth. The water was actually up to the horses' bellies and we sure looked small when we got out in the middle of it. However, we made it and had to hook two or three teams to get up the bank and what a delicious smell greeted us. Mrs. Bezanson was stacking up the pancakes.

But we were not to eat yet. Somebody yelled that another bunch of teams were coming out of the Simonette. So we waited with our teams ready to pull them up the bank. It's a good job we did so—as we got them up the bank the ice started to move out. I think it was the 11th of April. The others who hesitated up the Simonette had to pull up on the banks wherever they could and of course build rafts to bring the freight down after the ice was out. So we got at last to the pancakes and had to change to wagons the rest of the way to the city which was only a bunch of stakes marking the lots. Benson's Stopping Place had the only buildings.

So my first trip was with horses. Mr. Forbes never travelled on Sundays, but this did not seem to delay us as we passed lots of others. I drove five times the Edson Trail, walked three times, and did one trip with oxen over the Edson Trail in the following years.

On one trip we caught up with Jack Patterson who tried to sail down the hill and put his six feet six inch wide caboose between two trees six feet apart. He didn't make it and the team drew the sleighs from

under the caboose and dropped it on the ground. It was funny to us but I didn't think about him. Then towards noon Mrs. Jim Moore had started a fire in the caboose and the sleigh upset. When we came along and helped them luckily things didn't burn, but there was lots of smoke. That was around Slave Lake. People catching up always lent a hand to others in difficulty.

One time we were taking out Dr. Hadwin. He was having trouble with his teeth—the gums were poisoned and he was quite violent with the poison in his system so that one of us had to watch him all the time. Sometimes we had to tie him up to a line at night. We came to the Fraser Hill and met a Doctor coming in, and he drew out all his teeth out right there on the hill about half way down. It was one of the most wonderful views on the trail. You could look right into the mountains up the Athabasca and Berland Rivers—you looked down and the trees looked like toothpicks.

So I drove the trail with horses, oxen and walked, with my fastest trip being in December 1915 when I walked out to enlist. I did it in seven and a half days. It was hard on the feet, the ground being half frozen. So I got before the recruiting officer and was accepted. He said I was a fairly good specimen except for my feet which were a little puffed and swollen. So I told him that they would be alright after they had a chance to cool off, having just walked from Grande Prairie to Edson.

So I found myself off to the war at twenty-one years of age with the title deeds for the homestead in my hip pocket. I was not to see Grande Prairie for over three years and was thankful to have a homestead to build a home.



*The early spring in 1910 resulted in rivers breaking up before the expected date. Incoming settlers, such as the Forbes and Argonaut party seen here, were forced to make rafts for transporting effects down-river to the Grande Prairie townsite. (SPRA 2001.1.192)*

*Below, Mr. & Mrs. Forbes around 1910, all decked out for winter, accompanied by I.V. Macklin and Maude Clifford. The caboose and the first manse at Flying Shot Lake are in the background. (SPRA 108.06)*





# Forbes Scrapbook

by Jean Cameron

Jean Cameron is the historian at Forbes Presbyterian Church. She collects and preserves in scrapbooks, the documents, photographs and news clippings which tell their story. Copies of those scrapbooks have been archived at SPRA, and some of the collection is featured here. The two photos on this page are of the first Forbes Presbyterian Church ca. 1933, and the stained glass window, created in 1929 for east wall of the church.



*The original McQueen Presbyterian Church was built in 1911, a year after the Forbes established themselves in Grande Prairie. When the majority of Methodists and Presbyterians in the area voted to join to form the United Church in 1925, the minority voted to start a new Presbyterian Church. Rev. Forbes himself voted against the union motion, but cautioned his congregation, "Don't be influenced in your decision because of me, as I plan to tender my resignation in any event."*

*In 1929, Rev. E.A. Wright arrived to help re-organize a Presbyterian Church, and the above church was built in 1930 on land that was part of the Forbes original homestead. Dr. Forbes returned to Grande Prairie to dedicate the church, which was named Forbes Presbyterian in his honour.*

*In 1979, the second Forbes Presbyterian Church was built in Grande Prairie, on Patterson Drive. The 1929 stained glass window (seen on left) was moved to the new church. The old church was eventually sold and moved to Wembley to become Wembley United Church.*





Most of the photographs on this page are ca. 1933. They are, counterclockwise beginning with the top left: 284.03.09 Mr. Wright, Sr., splitting wood for the parsonage; 284.03.07 Mr. Rooney taking Rev. Wright to Bear Lake for Sunday Service; 284.03.12 Curley & Martha Pitman's wedding at Bear Lake; 284.03.01 The Youth Choir in 1935; and 284.03.17, the Ladies in the church kitchen ca.1955.



# Explore the History of New Fish Creek

## *(map overleaf)*

by Mary Nutting

I am quite familiar with the road north of Valleyview as it passes the Dollar Lakes where my husband loves to fish. What I was not aware of was the interesting history of the rural community of New Fish Creek tucked into the country west and south of the lakes. This is a land of creeks and old trails, which I cannot do justice to, but I want to share a bit of its history. All citations in this article are from *Where the Red Willow Grew*, which has a delightful story about how New Fish Creek was named, written by Wilma Marcotte.

### *Kinuseehkanik Seepeesis*

*The name Fish Creek came about at the turn of the century. A white man, whose name has been forgotten, caught fish at Sturgeon Lake and then traveled to the Falher area to sell them. He built a small cabin on the bank of a creek on SW26-72-22-W5. He did not know how to write, so he made a sign in the shape of a fish to tell people where he was. If the fish pointed toward Falher, he was there; if it pointed toward Sturgeon, he was there; if the fish was down, he was nearby and would be back home sometime during the day. The native people enjoyed his sense of humour, as the creek near his cabin had no fish in it. They began to refer to it as Artificial Fish Creek.*

*The native people began to build cabins near his and it soon became an active community. The area was good for trapping and hunting. There were lots of open meadows with good hay. Four miles north of the community was a meat and berry camp on the banks of Muntohkan (Spirit) Creek. On the south side of this creek was the Great Muntohkan or Great Spirit, with which one must trade something like shells, matches or tobacco for whatever had been left by someone else. If you traded, you would have good fortune in hunting, berry picking*

*or traveling...*

*When the community got a Post Office, the people applied for the name Fish Creek, but there was another Fish Creek, Alberta, so they applied for and got New Fish Creek. (pp. 396-97)*

To explore New Fish Creek, take Highway 49 north from Valleyview to Township Road 724. This was where the last New Fish Creek Post Office was, in Gordon's Store and Garage on the south-east corner of the intersection, but a lot of history comes before that. Turning west on Twp Rd 724, you soon cross a small bridge over a creek. Just west of the creek is where The South Trail marked a short cut from New Fish Creek to Sturgeon Lake and Valleyview. This trail was hand-cut by Francis Belcourt, who homesteaded here in 1930.

Continue west two miles until the road turns south. This is the Old Highway to the Puskwaskau Forestry Tower. North of that first corner is where the first unnamed white man built his cabin on the banks of New Fish Creek (also known as Cloustan Creek) and where the First Nations village was located. About 12 families (the Islands, Mitchells, Gladues and Payous to name a few) built their log homes here, with barns and corrals for their horses and cattle. They harvested the meadow hay for winter feed, picked and dried blueberries, and caught fish in the Whitemud River. They used the white river mud, diluted with water to whitewash the insides of their houses. (p. 445)

Turning back on Twp Rd 724, head north on Rge Rd 221. The next Twp Rd is New Fish Creek Road. The small community of New Fish Creek, consisting of the School and an Anglican Church was about ½ mile north of the intersection. Although the first homesteads were taken out in 1919, full-scale



settlement did not begin until the late 1930s. New Fish Creek School was built in 1937, a one-room log school. The site also contained a teacherage, a barn and the usual outbuildings. The first log school was replaced by a modern frame school which, when it closed in 1960, became the Community Hall. The hall now there was built in 1984.

St. John the Evangelist Church, built in 1941, is still there. It was deconsecrated in 1997 and turned over to the New Fish Creek Association which manages the cemetery and the Hall. The small cemetery is worth a visit, and should be noted for the inscriptions on the tombstones. One reads, "You belong among the wildflowers. You belong somewhere you feel free", signed "Wildflower."

A half mile north of the church was the site of the first post office, established in 1945 by Edgar and Cora Smith. Now just the nondescript end of a country road, this was once where two main trails intersected from Whitemud and the Puskwaskau in the west to Little Smoky in the east. Early homes and community buildings were built before there were any roads into the area. Settlers followed the native trails into the settlement and from building to building within the settlement.

From the post office site, back-track past the Hall and turn west south of the cemetery on Twp Rd 731. The first row of sections on township 73, ranges 21-23 were known as "The Banana Belt". A slightly more temperate climate and plenty of water from spring-fed creeks meant that the gardens grown here were splendid. (p. 436) As you wend your way west, you pass to the north of Gilmore Lake, named after a badly wounded World War I veteran who settled here in 1919. Now it is only a small lake, surrounded by bull rushes, but it was once the community source of ice for ice boxes and ice houses. It was also a popular place to go skating on a Sunday afternoon, with the Gilmores offering hot chocolate and lunch afterwards.

After the first corner you pass an overgrown farmsite, where the Bradleys lived. Because there was no Catholic Church in New Fish Creek, Celima

Bradley had a "spare bedroom converted into a sanctuary, with an arched doorway between the large kitchen and the dining room area." (p. 480) Mass and confirmation classes were also held in the school and the Anglican Church when the Bradleys weren't available.

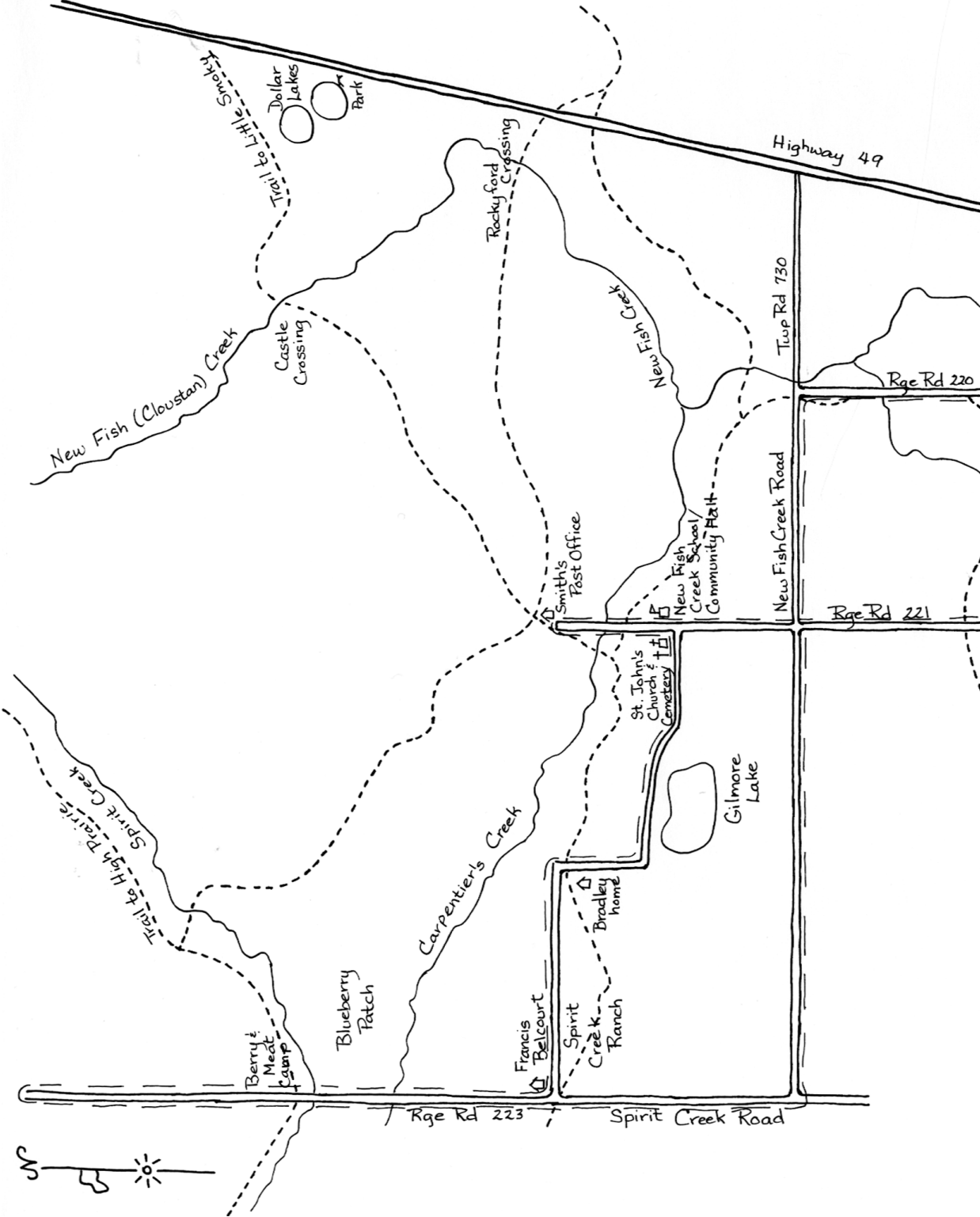
Soon you reach Rge Rd 223, Spirit Creek Road. Here, on the north-east corner of the intersection, Francis Belcourt homesteaded in 1930. Mr. Belcourt was one of the mainstays of the community. He helped people find land, let them plant gardens on his land, even took in older homesteaders before they died. He was also the first Forest Fire Ranger, and the Ranger Station was in his home and others until a permanent station was built in 1962.

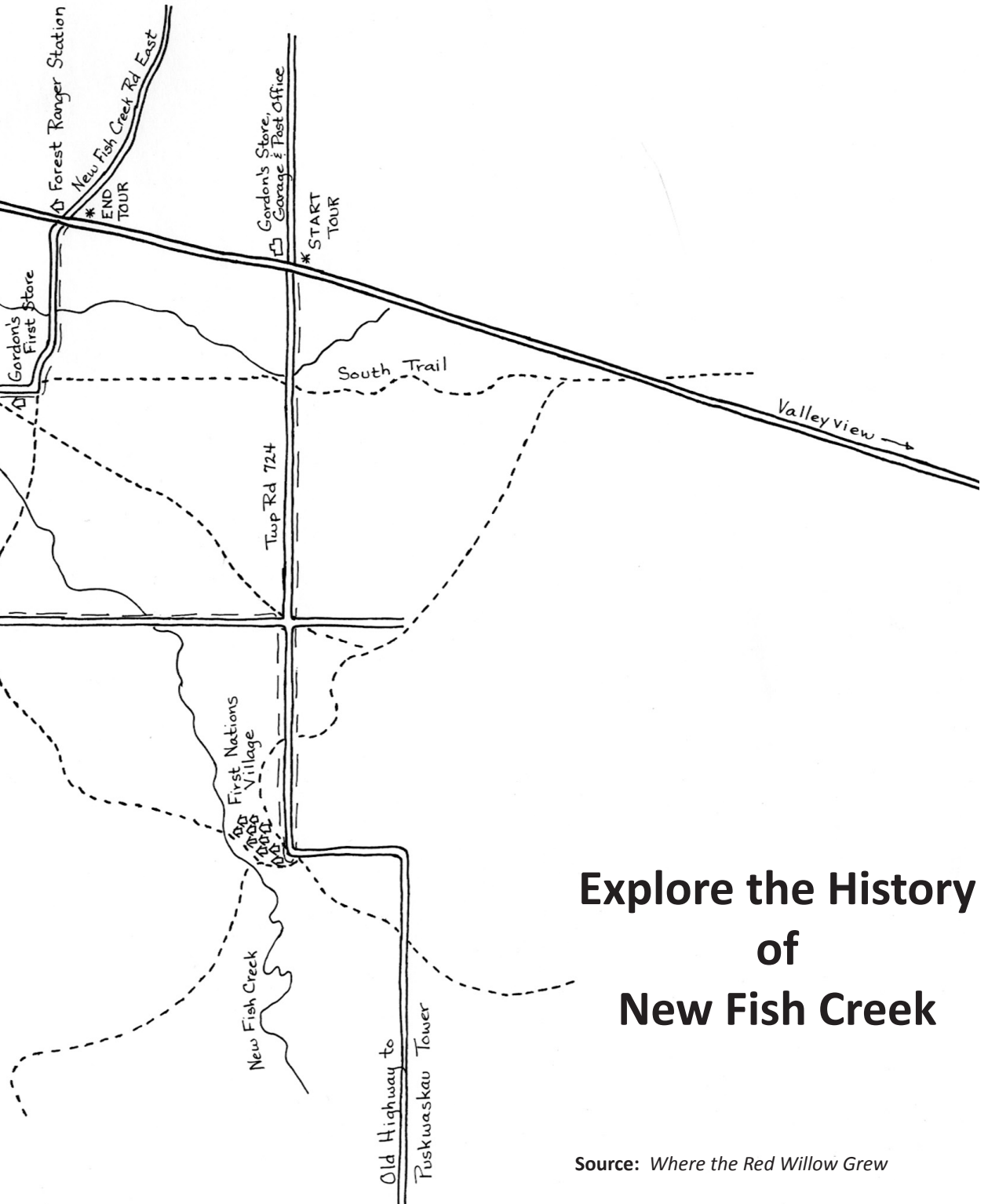
Take a detour north past the blueberry patch and Berry & Meat Camp or turn south on Spirit Creek Road, then east on New Fish Creek Road. Continue on to Rge Rd 220 and head south past where Jim and Julie Gordon started their first store in 1944. They took over the post office after the Smiths and also boarded the teachers before there was a teacherage. Imagine those early teachers making the four-mile trek, back and forth each day, along the trail to the school.

Follow the road to Highway 49. Highway 34 (later re-named 49) was built in 1960 and became an all-weather route to Valleyview in the south and High Prairie in the north. Across the highway you can see the 1962 Ranger Station, now a converted farm home since it was closed in the late 1960s. It is on the New Fish Creek East Road, another road staked out by Francis Belcourt.

This is the end of the tour. It's been a short one, so why not take the scenic route home down the New Fish Creek East Road to the Old Highway between Valleyview and High Prairie and back south to Valleyview.

I hope you have enjoyed this armchair tour of New Fish Creek and will explore it more through *Where the Red Willow Grew*.





# Explore the History of New Fish Creek

Source: *Where the Red Willow Grew*

# A Letter from Louis Calihoo

*preserved by Robert Cochrane*

Bezanson, Alberta  
Feb. 25th, 1939

To Mr. R. Cochrane

Grande Prairie

Dear sir,

Am here to tell you about my life since A.D. 1896. I left my old home at St. Albert coming to Grande Prairie in September 1896 with an outfit of 4 four pack horses looking for a new location. At the same time, I spent the winter here trapping. A man by the name of Laboucan wintered at the Island at the ferry crossing at Smoky and at Wapatii there was Sam Cunningham, Pat Gouchie, St. Pierre Gouchie, Xavier St. Arnault, Elzier Callihoo. This bunch were in together and the outfit I was in with at the mouth of Big Mountain Creek on the north side of the river. Myself, Adam Callihoo, William Callihoo, Baptiste Bisson, Joe Knife, Wm Einkester, Robert Donald. All those people had shacks. Some of them stayed two together.

In the spring of the year 1897, we all moved to Bear Creek where the present town of Grande Prairie stands now. We camped there for the spring fishing. When I was ready to go back, I took a stick and pointed it and drove it in the ground and

Bezanson Alberta  
Feb 25<sup>th</sup> 1939  
J. Mr. R. Cochrane  
Grande Prairie  
Dear sir  
am here to tell  
you about my life since  
A.D. 1896 I left my old  
home at St Albert coming  
to Grande Prairie in September  
1896 with an outfit of 4 four  
pack horses looking for a  
new location at the same time  
I spent the winter here trapping  
a man by the name Laboucan  
he wintered at Island at ferry  
crossing at Smoky  
and at Wapatii there was  
Sam Cunningham Pat  
Gouchie St Pierre Gouchie

marked X on this stick. That's where I took location that you saw yourself where I used to live south of Grande Prairie.

So I went back home to move my family up. I moved just my family to Lesser Slave Lake. I put up hay there that same fall. I went back to St. Albert to get my cattle. I wintered there [at Slave Lake]. In the Spring in March 1898, the Klondike rush was on, so I stopped off. There was a chance for making good money on carpenter work and no carpenters there then. At the same time I put some of my boys to school at Grouard, for there was no school up here then in the spring of 1899.

I moved up here with all my outfit, horses & cattle



and what little machinery I had. I still have part of the plow I had to break an acre of land that same spring and sowed oats and barley in later part of the summer. There a party coming from Regina stopped with me, so when they saw the oats and barley, they asked me for some to take back with them, to show the king of crop it grew on spring breaking. St. Pierre Ferguson was with the outfit and if anybody wants to see what I still have that I came up here with, part of a plow and hay rake was still in use last fall. Well this is all for this time, so good-bye dear friend.

I remain yours truly,  
Louis Callihoo,  
Bezanson, Alta.

*The letter transcribed here was written to Robert Cochrane, who homesteaded north-east of "Grande Prairie City" in 1912. He was interested in paleontology and history, and Louis Callihoo appears to be answering his request to record the early history of the Grande Prairie District. The editor (Mary Nutting) has made minor changes to correct spelling.*

*Louis Callihoo's homestead was where the Highland Park subdivision in Grande Prairie is today. He grew some of the first crops on the Grande Prairie, and his name features in many of the early stories of settlers in the district.*

*The photograph below is from the Societe Genealogique et Historique de Smoky River and shows Louis Callihoo helping Father Joseph LeTreste sow a crop of grain beside St. Vincent's Mission on the west bank of Bear Creek ca 1908. This is about where Canfor is now.*



# Going To The Bush

*by Betty Welter*

In the 1930s and early 40s 'going to the bush' was a very familiar activity in Northern Alberta. Nearly all homes were heated with wood stoves as natural gas was not commercialized until the late 40s in this area. There were miles and miles of crown land on both side of the Wapiti and Smoky rivers which produced many types of trees used for firewood, building logs, fence posts, rails, lumber, etc. This wood was free for the taking plus a lot of hard work to cut, load and haul it home.

Money and jobs were very scarce during these years and people did whatever they could to earn a few dollars. Many farmers cut and hauled loads of wood to town during the winter months for firewood at prices around \$5.00 a load. This took probably two men plus a team of horses and sleigh, saws and axes from morning until night, traveling quite a few miles for this amount of cash. Yes, it was a job and 'times were tough' as the saying went and money precious indeed.

Our family had moved to a homestead in the early 1930s with very little money. We surely started from scratch as this piece of land had no house, barn, fences, or well and not an acre broken. Poor Dad had his hands full to provide for the five of us and certainly made many trips to the bush to harvest whatever was needed. I accompanied him on many of these trips, sort of a junior hired man. Dad wouldn't venture out when the temperature was below -20 F or blizzarding and would wait for a better day. It was rather a plus in a way that Grade VIII was the end of public school in our area and there was no way to continue on in town at the high school so I was available to help on these trips to the bush now any day in the week. The following two years we were taking our high school by correspondence at home. Lesson time could be juggled to suit the farm obligations. I can well remember Mother waking me up half way through an evening lesson after being outdoors and

really active in the cold all day—it was very difficult to stay alert in the warm house after a day in the bush.

Dad would go out to the barn first thing to do chores before breakfast. It was always a bit exciting when he would announce that we should make a trip today for firewood or whatever building materials were needed. Lunch had to be made for us and oat bundles for the horses and axes and saws fastened on the sleigh bunks. Our dog "Spot" knew what was happening and pranced about while we were getting ready to leave as he loved these trips too.

We would be on the road by around 9 a.m. and home by 5 p.m if possible. The distance varied by what kind of timber we were after in different areas. Traveling on the road allowance where there would be some sort of a trail was rather uneventful. When we got closer to the timber we would go across some sloughs and make our own trail as everything was frozen. The ice would crack with the weight of our outfit and this would upset poor Spot to no end. He would jump up in the air and pounce and follow the cracks under the snow and though the bulrushes barking and yelping and never seemed to learn he couldn't find them.

Once we arrived at the spot where we were going to cut our load Dad would trample the snow down and plan his day. It was my job to unhook the horses and tie them up out of the way of the falling trees. Dad would never let me use an axe except to limb a tree once it was felled. I guess my aim wasn't that accurate. This was before chain saws of any type and lots of strength and expertise was required. However I surely knew how to use the cross cut saw to top the trees, cut them in lengths or whatever. Sometimes a tree had to be 'snaked out' closer to the sleigh and this was also my job. Our horse would

be used with a logging chain to pull the tree out—if the snow was deep this was quite a task but necessary as the horse was stronger than we were.

In 1934, Dad decided he had to build a new barn from logs of course. This project required far more searching once in the bush for suitable trees. Also the rear bunk on the sleigh had to be lengthened out with logging chains to accommodate the longer logs. This was a pesky nuisance in many ways plus more work and it took longer to load those heavy green logs.

The crack of the axe and zing of the saw hitting the tree plus the cry of “Timber” as it came crashing down echoed all through the bush as many neighbors were working within ear shot. About 11:30 a.m. Dad would say it was almost lunch time. I’m sure the dog understood him too. I would build a fire, and sometimes had to dig through a lot of snow to get closer to the ground. Our coffee in a syrup pail had to be heated, lunch spread out and horses fed too. As we were eating or as soon as there was any smoke from the camp fire several ‘whiskey jacks’, sometimes called ‘camp robbers’ would appear. We would throw a piece of our sandwich in one direction to them and in the other direction for Spot. The latter detested these birds and would sometimes leave his piece and dash in the other direction to grab their piece, then come back to his. There were numerous squirrels chattering away to further annoy the poor dog and he never seemed to learn he couldn’t catch them. Dad and I quite enjoyed the circus anyway.

We were always very glad to get the load on the sleigh chained down, and the team hooked up and ready to go home. Spot was ready too but he always seemed to have the energy to chase a frightened rabbit and follow the ice cracks again across the sloughs. The trip home was slow with the load on and many times we were quite wet from the snow and took turns walking behind and driving the horses just to keep warm. The clothes then were a far cry from the wind and water proof fabrics of today.

It was usually getting dark by the time we arrived

in our yard, having traveled from five to ten miles back from the bush. The horses had to be looked after plus other animal chores and our load unloaded. It was quite a long, hard day. We were one of dozens of outfits doing exactly the same thing to either add to the firewood pile or whatever project needed logs. No one needed to go to the gym or use a treadmill to keep fit in those days. However, I must admit I quite enjoyed these ‘trips to the bush’ despite the hard work involved. Incidentally we did build our log barn during 1935 and 36. Although the bottom row of logs is deteriorating, it still stands fairly straight and square and is in use today in the next millennium. How proud my father would be to see his barn in use over sixty years later.

### **A Cow Named “Pet”**

The following is a clipping from the oral history of Cam Cameron, who was interviewed by Margaret Heath in 1990, about a certain cow the Camerons bought when they were newly filed on a homestead in Bonanza, west of Spirit River. It illustrates some of the challenges and joys new settlers had when they didn’t have a farming background.

*“We were from Ottawa. We had a nice home there and, in fact, the furnishings were really good. It wasn’t the stuff for a homestead, so... we traded it in for... a new cow, a milking animal. And of course, I had to take that cow home-- down across the Pouce Coupe River at Bredin’s Crossing. So, I pushed her along and then we would argue a while and then, we would go a little further.... Finally, we got down to Bredin’s crossing. It took all day to go that friggen mile. And I got home and Martha met me there and she said, ‘O what a beautiful animal. What do you call her?’ You know, I didn’t dare tell her what I called that cow.... She called it Pet. So, we had it for many years and she was a great companion...”*

# Opening Maude Clifford School

by Karen Burgess

In November, when I was asked to tell a grade five-six class about Maude Clifford in preparation for the official opening of their school, the Maude Clifford School, I wasn't sure how interested the students would be in a lady who came here over one hundred years ago.

Maude was a trained and experienced teacher when she came to the Grande Prairie from Ontario in 1906 with her husband, Harry. They were young and inexperienced pioneers but they were willing to try to make a life in this new wilderness. They settled in the Flying Shot Lake district amongst the Metis settlement which was the only inhabited area at the time and the Metis taught them many survival skills. While Harry set about building a trading post business, Maude used her love of botany to build a garden with seeds she brought with her. Soon they had built up a small farm and became part of a growing community. Their three children were born on their homestead and by 1912, when the school district was organized, Maude was able to help teach the fledgling group of students. In 1917 when the first school, Montrose School, was built, Maude became one of several teachers. Teaching had become a necessity as her husband had suffered a stroke and Maude had to support the family now. She was admired in the classroom and as a music teacher on Saturdays.

After I visited the class and told these and more details to the students and showed them photographs, they were going to build a presentation based on her story in the form of displays in their library in preparation for the group of people who would be coming to the opening ceremony. I was truly "blown away" by their enthusiasm. They had picked aspects of her life that students could explore and show: one student showed the map and traced the route they took to get to GP; another showed a mini garden the students had created



with seeds like the ones she had first grown; another showed the preserves they had made; another had built a large trading post display complete with furs and Hudson Bay blankets; and another showed off some old school texts that could have been used in Maude's time. The climax to their history lesson had been the making of a Christmas dinner like the one Maude had described making for their first Christmas and to which she had invited all the single men in the area. The students tried to follow Maude's menu which included fowl, a variety of vegetables, and home made bread -- food all grown or raised locally. The students even tried parsnips and admitted they weren't so bad. It was truly a living history lesson and kudos to teacher Leslie Griffiths for making it happen.

*Photographs on these two pages show Karen giving a talk to the children about Maude Clifford, and , on the opposite page, the children's displays about Mrs. Clifford, their recreation of her Christmas Dinner, and teaching the other children in the school from their displays.*





***Students at the new Maude Clifford School in the Crystal Lake area of Grande Prairie. Story on opposite page.***

# What Archives Do and Why We Do It

*Author's Note: This column will be a regular feature in "Telling Our Stories." My hope is to shed a little light on what exactly archives are and do. To make this column more interesting and relevant, please send in any questions you have about archives for inclusion in future issues.*

*Leslie Pearson, BSc, MAS*

Have you ever wondered how archives are different from libraries? If someone asked you what the differences are between libraries and archives would you be able to tell them?

Have no fear. Although the differences between libraries and archives are not always readily apparent, they are there none the less. Here's a few of the key ones...

Libraries usually collect the end product of someone's work, like published books, magazines, reports, audio recordings, and movies.

In contrast, the material held by archives is usually unpublished material that shows how people did their work or carried out their activities. This includes records like minutes, letters, draft documents, diaries, personal papers, etc. Sometimes the end product is also collected by the archives because it is also considered part of a person's work.

Libraries lend material out, letting patrons take items home.

Unlike libraries, archives do not lend out material. This does not mean that archives do not want people to use the resources. It simply means that because the material held by the archives might be the only record a person or organization has left of their activities, the archives needs to be extra careful to ensure that it is not lost, damaged, or stolen.

In a library, patrons are encouraged to browse the shelves to find what they need.

Following up on the security theme, archives do not allow patrons to browse the stacks. Original

materials are kept in a secure area that is not accessible to the general public. If people want to see records, they must go through an archivist who will pull small quantities of records from the fonds or collection that the patron wishes to see.

Libraries arrange their collections by topic or category.

Archives arrange their holdings by creator rather than by topic or category. There are a few reasons for this. People and organizations create records as a byproduct of their mandates and activities. Archives try to keep this relationship intact by keeping all the records from one creator together. In addition, there are frequently links between archival records within files. If the records are split up, those links are broken and the resulting separate pieces might not make sense anymore. From a practical standpoint, archival materials usually contain information about numerous diverse subjects. Trying to decide which topic to file them under would be much too difficult and confusing even to attempt.

Hopefully you now have a better idea about what the differences between libraries and archives are. So next time you run into someone who says something like "Aren't archives basically the same as a library?" you'll be able to say "No, they aren't and here's why!"

Coming next issue: How are archives different from museums?

**NEED A GUEST SPEAKER?  
WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT  
ARCHIVES?**

**SPRA Staff will speak on various aspects related  
to the subject of Archives  
to groups within the South Peace.  
Give us a call at 780-830-5105**

# Society and Member News

## **Join us for Lunch and the Annual General Meeting Saturday, March 20, 2010**

10:00 a.m. Grande Prairie Museum AGM  
12:00 noon Shared Lunch  
1:00 p.m. South Peace Archives AGM

During lunch, the annual Beth Sheehan Archives Award will be presented, and to celebrate our 10th Anniversary we will have a count-down of our 10 favourite acquisitions from the last 10 years.

RSVP to 780-830-5105 by March 15, 2010

## **TELLING OUR STORIES WORKSHOP**

**Saturday, April 10, 2010, 1:00-4:00 p.m.**

Come and get ideas about keeping your family history alive

Phone Karen Burgess at 780-830-5105 for more information

## **Come to our BOOK LAUNCH for**

*A Grande Education:*

*One Hundred Schools in the County of Grande Prairie, 1910-1960.*

**At the County of Grande Prairie Office  
Sunday, March 28, 2:00-4:00 p.m.**

## **A Few of our Recent Acquisitions:**

*Ellen Brown*

Anton Moen Diary from World War I  
1915

*Edna Grotkowski*

Photographs of Webster, 1947

*M.D. of Spirit River*

Municipal Records, 1916-[2000]

*Beth Sheehan*

The Settlement of the Peace River Country  
by C.A. Dawson, McGill University, 1934

*Gordon Mackey*

Grande Prairie Crime Watch Association  
1980-2001

*Elmer Borstad*

A Canol Adventure, 1942  
personal story and photographs

## **Contributions Wanted**

Genealogical queries

Old photos and memories, Full articles  
Corrections/reactions to this newsletter

Announcements from other  
Historical Organizations

Write or e-mail your thoughts  
(contact information on page 2)

# South Peace Regional Archives Society

## Membership Application Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Interested in being involved as a \_\_\_\_\_ volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ board member

There are two types of membership:

Full memberships are for individuals who want to be involved in the society, allowing them to attend meetings, vote on issues and run for office.

Associate memberships are for individuals who want to receive communications from the society to keep them updated on happenings at the Archives, but not attend meetings.

This membership is \_\_\_\_\_ new \_\_\_\_\_ renewal

Full Membership \$20.00/person or \$30.00/couple \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Member \$15.00/person \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to donate to the South Peace Regional Archives \_\_\_\_\_

Total Membership and Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay by cash or cheque to

South Peace Regional Archives Society  
Box 687, Grande Prairie, AB. T8V 3A8  
Phone: 780-830-5105  
Fax: 831-7371  
E-mail: [spra@telus.net](mailto:spra@telus.net)