

# TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 4, Issue 4, September 1, 2013

Produced by **South Peace**  
**REGIONAL ARCHIVES**



*Oops! I believe the above photograph was donated in 2010 when we were compiling A Grande Education: the history of 100 schools in the County of Grande Prairie. I remember it was not from the County, from Rycroft perhaps. Somehow, we lost the identifying information. If you know who may have donated the photograph, or know anyone in the photograph, could you please contact the Archives at 780-830-5105.*

*Join the fun to celebrate our new web presence! Post a photo of yourself as a teenager on our new Facebook page, and see how your style compares with others. "Fashion Fun" culminates on Tuesday, October 8, during Archives Week. Fashion is also the theme of our Film & Story Tea, which takes place at the Golden Age Centre on Sunday, October 6, at 2:00 p.m.*

*See pages 3, 21, and 24 for details.*

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## TELLING OUR STORIES

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The purpose of the SPRA Society is to promote and encourage the appreciation and study of the history of the south Peace River Country by acquiring, preserving and making accessible to the public, records in any format which reflect the history of this area.

September 1, 2013

Dear Members & Supporters;

Autumn again—where did the summer go? For the staff, this was a summer of transitions: Leslie Pearson is now Leslie Gordon (and a lovely Scottish wedding it was!); Patricia Greber had fun juggling kids and camps and work; and I spent the summer babysitting construction workers as we finished our basement.

At the Archives, we were kept very busy with our summer project: updating our website and getting SPRA up to speed on social media. This is being done by summer student Simone Bowes, who is actually making us enjoy being dragged into the 21st century. Thankfully, she is supported by Patricia, who has taken on the job of Web Assistant. You will find lots of references to this project in the newsletter.

Our featured area this quarter is the central Peace, and our theme is (sort of) back to school, so we have included the Blueberry Creek School Reunion collection with its photographs, some documents from the Spirit River City School District, and some excerpts about school memories from an interview with Wally Tansem (Wanham) done by the Pioneer Museum Society of Grande Prairie ca. 1990.

We are happy to have a new volunteer, Pat Wearmouth, working on mapping the history of communities along the railway. His article on Belloy-Codesa features the landmarks which can still be seen in that area.

The summer was shadowed with the passing of two long-time friends of the Archives: sponsor Beth Sheehan, after whom our annual award is named; and volunteer Betty Welter, whose last story, written in response to the March newsletter on Country Stores, is included in this issue.

Sincerely,

Mary Nutting, Editor

## SPRA and Social Media

We have noticed over the last few years that it is more and more difficult to spread the news about projects and events at SPRA using the normal forms of media such as radio and newspaper.

Of course, when the Daily Herald covers our event with a front page article and photographs, that is one of the best form of advertising. But we can’t expect them to do that before every event.

And we sincerely appreciate the public service announcements which the various radio stations air for us free of charge. We notice a flurry of phone calls around the time these are aired .

But the best form of advertising is still “word of mouth”, and we thank all of our members and supporters who not only tell their friends about what’s happening at the Archives, but invite them to come along and get involved.

We see social media as the new “word of mouth”, with some extra goodies to have fun with. For example, in our first month, 4000 people read our two most popular posts. That is almost as many as we reach in one year through traditional means.

So if you are involved with social media, please:

Like Us on Facebook!  
and get involved in Fashion Fun (see p. 21)

Subscribe to our RSS Feed  
for the “This Day in History” Blog

Check out our YouTube Channel

Get familiar with our new website on  
[www.southpeacearchives.org](http://www.southpeacearchives.org)

(for more on all of these aspects of our summer project, please see p. 21)

# Blueberry Creek and District Homecoming and School Reunion fonds

**Blueberry Creek and District Homecoming and School Reunion fonds.** -- [ca. 1932]-2006. -- 1 cm of textual records. -- 338 photographs. -- 3 maps.

## Agency History

Blueberry Creek School District was established in 1932 and the first school was built around 1934. After a fire in February 1940, a two room replacement school was built on the same site and was ready for occupation that October. Later, the Spirit River School Division assumed responsibility for the District and in 1956, began to consolidate the surrounding school districts to Blueberry Creek. These included Deep Valley, Ksituan, Whitburn, Yellow Creek, and Blueberry Mountain. The result was a six room school with several teachers. Wonderland School was also consolidated to Blueberry Creek a few years later, in 1961. Finally, in 1990, Blueberry Creek School was consolidated to Spirit River.

Although plans for a school reunion were discussed for several years, it wasn't until 2005 that a committee consisting of former teachers and students was formed to organize the event. Original members included Bryan (President) and Joyce Matkowski, Jean Kowalchuk (Secretary-Treasurer), Grace Sadownik, Roger Rymhs, Wilma Bird, and Tina Doetzel. Arletta Hampton, Peggy Charlton, Barbara Buck, Dan and Lorraine Dolhan, Alice Dobish, and Mary Dwernychuk later joined the organizing committee. They decided that the reunion should also include a general homecoming for the area. The committee met monthly between February 2005 and July 2006 at the home of Jean Kowalchuk. Publicity for the event consisted mainly of articles in the local paper, phone calls, and word-of-mouth. The homecoming and reunion was held July 14 to 16, 2006 at the Blueberry Mountain hall and relied heavily upon volunteer labour. Registration cost \$10 and the program

included community meals, displays, ball, horseshoes, races, self-guided tours, music, and an outing to Moonshine Lake.

## Scope and Content

The fonds consists of records collected and created to celebrate the Blueberry Creek and District Homecoming and School Reunion held July 14-16, 2006. Materials include a written history of the committee, minutes and financial records, registration records, lists of supplies and volunteers, lists of teachers, and a display of photographs and documents related to the Blueberry Creek School, the schools consolidated under it, and the surrounding community. Photographs pertain to schools named Blueberry Mountain, Deep Valley, Ksituan, Whitburn, Wonderland, Yellow Creek, Blueberry Creek; churches such as the Ksituan Ukrainian Catholic Church, Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church at Devale, and the Munro Presbyterian Church at Blueberry Mountain.

The photographs and documents, most of which are copies, were originally mounted on a series of 49 posterboard panels to form a display titled "A Blast From the Past," which was created for the 2006 Blueberry Creek School Reunion. The photographs and documents were collected from various sources and the fonds also contains a brief list of some of the photograph donors. The boards were arranged by the Archivist according to topic and chronology and assigned a number, 1 to 49. The material was then removed from the panels for conservation reasons and numbered according to their original positions on the panels. Captions not attached to the photographs were transcribed onto the reverse of each image by the Archivist. Newspaper clippings were photocopied and the originals discarded. The teacher lists were maintained separately from the display and their original order has been maintained.



*Photographs from the Blueberry Creek School Reunion include (clockwise from upper left): Norman Ellison with his school pony and colt in 1942 (SPRA 499.02.03-4); Blueberry Creek School Students standing on the steps of their school with teacher Miss Finlay ca. 1942*

*(SPRA 499.02.18-4); Olga Pronyshyn, Bernice Solomiany, and Nettie Matkowski in a horse-drawn sleigh outside of Paul Hrychan's house ca. 1940 (SPRA 499.02.16-5); the newly-built Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church in Devale ca. 1930 (SPRA 499.02.46-06); and a children's class outside of Ksituan Ukrainian Catholic Church ca. 1940 (499.02.41-5).*





# Memories of School Days

by Wally Tansem

The following transcript is from an interview of Wally Tansem, from Wanham, conducted by Margaret Heath in 1990. It is one of about 120 interviews conducted by the Grande Prairie Museum to record stories of early settlement.

*The school was half a mile south of the town, almost a mile from our house. There was always a controversy around the community because there was a bad feeling between the town and the country. I can remember people at a meeting saying, "By George, if our kids have to walk to school, the town kids are going to walk, too." And so the school, eventually, was built up a mile south of the town. It was called South Slope 3545. Everybody had to walk.*

*Actually, the first school we had was in what was called the Eli Barrett Shack. Eli Barrett was a little wizened up English fellow with very quick actions; quite a character in the country. A Moonshiner, of course. And he lived at the intersection down at highway 49, a mile east of Wanham. That was Eli's shack, and that was where the first school was held. At that time, I think you had to have seven kids to start a school, and Wanham only had six; they were short one. So, they got one of the Gillmore kids, Ivy Gillmore, I think it was, to ride horseback from the east, so they could get enough kids to go to school.*

*And then, the government would provide a bit of money for the teacher. The first teacher was right from Wanham. Her name escapes me now. And then, Ross Archibald taught for a while. I think they just had school in the summer months in Eli's shack.*

*The following year, probably 1918, they started clearing where the present school is now. It was just south of there, about three or four hundred yards, where they built the first small school. It was a one room school.*

*The first teacher at that school was probably Ross Archibald, but the first one I recall was a man by the name of Mr. McTavish. He was a tall elderly-type man and I was frightened to death of him. There was an incident that bothered me a lot, shortly before he was kind of ousted from the community.*

*There were two boys named Cliff and Stan Pladen. There were more in the family but I recall those two kids mostly. Their father was section Foreman [on the railway]. Stanley Pladen was sitting alongside of me; we were back about three or four rows in one of those double desks and Mr. McTavish was sitting at the front, of course. And someone behind us was fooling around.*

*McTavish had the habit of rolling up his strap. He had a piece of belt, belting. I suppose it was fourteen or sixteen inches long. He would roll this up in a ball and then he would throw it. Of course, if it bounced off your head, it hurt pretty good, but it got your attention too.*

*Anyway, he hauled off with this strap and hit someone behind us, but it also hit Stan Pladen who was sitting along side of me. So, then he (he always called us "little boy") he said to Stan, "Little boy would you bring up that strap?" Stan said, "No." So, of course, this rankled Mr. McTavish and he said, "Little boy, bring up the strap!" Stan said, "No, I wasn't doing any thing. I am not bringing the strap."*

*The strap was lying between us on the floor. He didn't ask me, thank goodness. He came down and reached through under my legs and took the strap out. Of course, when it came, it was uncoiled. And he reached over and hit Stan on the side of the neck.*

*We were on the row next to the wall—you had to turn side-ways really, to go up and down along side between the wall and the desk. You couldn't walk*

*normally. You had to pretty well shuffle side-ways. Of course, been a tall man, Mr. McTavish could reach across and just hit Stan with the strap as he tried to wriggle his way back and forth across.*

*He hurt Stan pretty badly. His face was swollen up and so on. So, they had quite a rhubarb over it. Mr. McTavish didn't come back again.*

*But he was very forgetful, couldn't remember hardly a thing, and we enjoyed it in a way. We would take our lunch and leave the schoolyard at noon. We would go across what was called Johnson's pasture. The older kids—there was Steve Pesarchuck, Julian St Pierre, and Gordon McDonald—they were the top echelon. And we were always there. They were the kings and we were kind of the slaves. We had to steal the tobacco from home and coffee and so on and we would bring it to them.*

*I remember Steve Pesarchuck was great. His dad would weave chairs out of willow, and Steve had picked up on this, so he wove two or three of these king's chairs in the bush. They were quite comfortable, nice to sit on. Of course, the big guys would sit, and as younger kids, we would have to wait on these characters, bringing them their coffee and rolling their cigarettes and so on. I guess we took a few drags, all right, too.*

*And we wouldn't go back in the afternoon at all, and Mr. McTavish would write up on the board all the names of the kids who weren't there.*

*But there was a fellow by the name of Cameron who lived a little bit south across the road from the school, and Tom Cameron, the oldest boy, was the little janitor. So the next morning, Tom would go there as the janitor and erase all these names. And of course, we would undergo a questioning the next morning. Mr. McTavish would look at one of us and say, "Were you in school yesterday afternoon, little boy?" And we would say, "O yes, I was here, we were doing so and so", and then he would ask someone else. It was strange that he was that forgetful, but he actually was and this happened constantly.*

*So, for us, he was a pretty good teacher. The next*

*one I remember was Miss Ramsey, who was a very small, very pretty girl. Of course, the first day we tried to pull something like that... She was a little tarter, I am telling you. She shaped us up pretty fast. But she was an excellent teacher, too, just excellent. No, that finished that.*

*Then the schools got bigger, of course, and they had to have school in the Frontier Lumberyard office, downtown. The school progressed, and they kept building on. Eventually, we had a fair-sized school, three hundred pupils. They used the old school, originally, for high school but eventually that petered out and they used it as a teacherage. They also built a teacherage that is still there. Then, of course, bussing started, and the number of kids went down.*

*They had the amalgamation of the schools, and that was when the schools in the outlying areas closed and they moved the school buildings in to the original school. That is where I took my grade nine. It was just together at that time.*

*It was just kind of a progression. They started with closing down Heart Valley, Mercy School, and Steele School, which was east of town here. There was a lot of bitterness. When consolidation started, you were kind of lackadaisical about it, but then when it happened to your school...*

*We had some terrific meetings over trying to keep the school at Wanham when amalgamation started. There were some terrible school battles between Rycroft and Spirit River, which were the two closest schools. First there was a petition for all those in favour of a centralized school in Spirit River. So, everybody from Rycroft and Wanham voted against it because we didn't want the school in Spirit River. So, that was defeated.*

*Then there was a petition in favour of a school in Rycroft. So Spirit River joined with Wanham and of course, we defeated it again. And so it was a battle that went on and on. It made for a lot of bitterness in the community.*

# Walter Mazurkewich

*Fighting in the Free Polish Army during World War II*

*Not all young men enlisting from the south Peace River County in World War II joined the Canadian Army. Walter Mazurkewich, whose photographs are shown on these two pages, fought for the Polish Free Army.*

*The photos were donated by Dawn Schumilas, Walter's step-granddaughter-in-law (got that?). We have very little information about these photos, except for what Duff Crerar and Jeff Nutting could piece together from their content, and what Archives staff could find in family obituaries.*



*Walter Mazurkewich moved to the Codesa area (between Wanham and Eaglesham) with his father and step-mother when he was about 12 years old. He was just barely 18 when war broke out, and when he enlisted, did so with the Free Polish army. Perhaps this was because he had been born in Poland and was not yet a Canadian citizen. In the photo above you can see the insignia on his shoulder. After the war, Walter returned to the Peace Country and lived in Grande Prairie, becoming a life member of the Royal Canadian Legion, and a member of the Elks Club and the Shriners. He passed away in 1983.*



## **The Polish Free Army**

*After Germany and the Soviet Union conquered Poland in 1939, Polish servicemen escaped to England, France, and later Russia, and formed "Free Polish Army" units which fought alongside the Allied armies. They also served with Canadians after D-Day in the First Canadian Army.*

*The photos on these pages are of Polish soldiers fighting alongside the British Army in Italy. Walter Mazurkewich was one of these soldiers.*

*The bottom photograph shows a Mass being held just outside of Monte Cassino. The Battle of Monte Cassino, in 1944, was the greatest victory won by the Polish Free Army in World War II. Polish soldiers who fought there received a special victory medal, a Polish Cross.*





# Explore the History of Belloy and Codesa

by Pat Wearmouth

In this issue, we explore the Central Peace area between Wanham and Eaglesham. The area, situated in Birch Hills County, is the location of two former hamlets, Belloy and Codesa. Both were agricultural supply and shipping points on the railway.

The Northern Alberta Railway (NAR), known as the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway prior to 1929, arrived here in 1915/16. The communities grew as land was opened for settlement. The first wave of settlers consisted of returning WWI veterans who wanted to farm. The next were settlers who had been dried out of the southern prairies during the 1930s.

The last wave of settlers, which put Belloy and Codesa at their peak populations, came during the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was largely because of a land clearing and settlement scheme called the Lassiter Project which brought in, among others, returning WWII veterans.

However, as in many other areas of the Peace, improved roads and centralized services and schools led people to use larger centers. The populations and businesses of the two hamlets declined steadily to what you see today.

The sites and buildings referred to in this article are found on a mix of public and private land. However, all are visible from either publicly accessible County roads and the former NAR grade.

## Belloy

Driving east from Wanham on Highway 49, you come to Range Road (RR) 23, signed as the Belloy Road. Turn north here and proceed two miles to the intersection with Township Road (TR) 782. As you pass the first farm on the east side of the road, you will see a grove of willows out to the east of the buildings. This is the area's first cemetery, where

seven of the earliest pioneers are buried. The first burial was the young wife of the farmer who homesteaded the farm. She was buried there in 1915 shortly after arriving in the area.

At the intersection, you are sitting at the southwest corner of Belloy. Belloy was known originally as Grizzly Bear Prairie, that being the name of the district in general. The name Belloy has been attributed to a famous Belgian opera singer that one of the early pioneers admired.

In the farmyard on the southwest corner of the intersection, you can see the former NAR Belloy Station (look for the nameplate) which was moved here from the railway grade. The building is typical of the stations used at smaller railway sidings. It would have had a waiting room, freight storage space, and an agent's office with telegraph service. Many of the NAR stations of this size were prefabricated in Edmonton and delivered by railway flatcar.

On the northeast corner of the same intersection, the clearing you see is the site of a former Roman Catholic Church. It was built in Clairmont in 1916, moved to Sexsmith in 1920, and then to Belloy in the early 1950s. It was subsequently moved back to Sexsmith in 2004, and was being restored there when it burned down.

Proceeding north on RR23 you will next come to a road on the right. Look east down this road to see a small log building in the trees. This is the Legion Hut that is shown on the map. Originally an Anglican church, it was moved here from its previous location on the corner of Highway 49 and the Belloy Road.

Next up to the north is the NAR right of way and grade. The rails are gone, but you can walk along the grade and look for evidence of the sites noted on the map. Walking from west to east you will cross a small trestle (mind the gaps in the cross ties). Then look for

the west end of the siding, which can be visualized by noting the widening of the grade on the north side of the main line. The presence of extra-long crossties or the depressions left by them, indicate where the switch would have been located.

Proceeding further east, look off to the south through a gap in the willows to see the remains of the Community Hall. This hall was built in the early 1950s and was the site of many enjoyable dances for the people of the surrounding area. Also on the south side of the grade is the site of the NAR station.

To the north of the grade, the site of the stockyards and UGG elevator can be seen by looking for the concrete slab that underlay the elevator. In addition, although it is a bit of a walk, if you proceed to the east end of the siding, the site of the railway water tank can be seen. Just beyond were the reservoirs that provided water. Look north and south off the grade for them.

Return to RR23 and proceed north a bit more to come to the site of the Steele School on the right side of the road. This school, originally built in 1922 was moved from its first site nearer to Highway 49. The addition built onto the school is still evident.

## Codesa

Leaving Belloy, one has the choice of driving east on TR 782 or returning to Highway 49. In either case, continue east for about 6 miles until intersecting RR 12. Turn north and continue to TR 783. At this intersection you are at the southeast corner of Codesa. The original name of the settlement was Rahab, a biblical name, but it was changed around 1936. The name Codesa comes from combining the first two letters of the surnames of three NAR employees, Coldwell, Deacon, and Saunders.

As you drive west from this intersection, you see a field on the south side of the road. This was the location of the new Codesa school and teacherage, the Girard house, and the Church as shown on the map. Just a bit further along, across from a farmyard, you will see a building on the north side of the road with the square false front of a commercial building. This is the Chamberland store shown.

From a trail in front of the store, it is a short walk north to the railway right of way and grade. This trail, now quite overgrown, was part of a wagon road cut by an early pioneer, and called the "22 Corners to Rahab" road. The corners occurred as the pioneer tried to guess at the road allowances that would be put in with the coming of a proper land survey. In the end, some corners were close, some were not, but grain was hauled nonetheless.

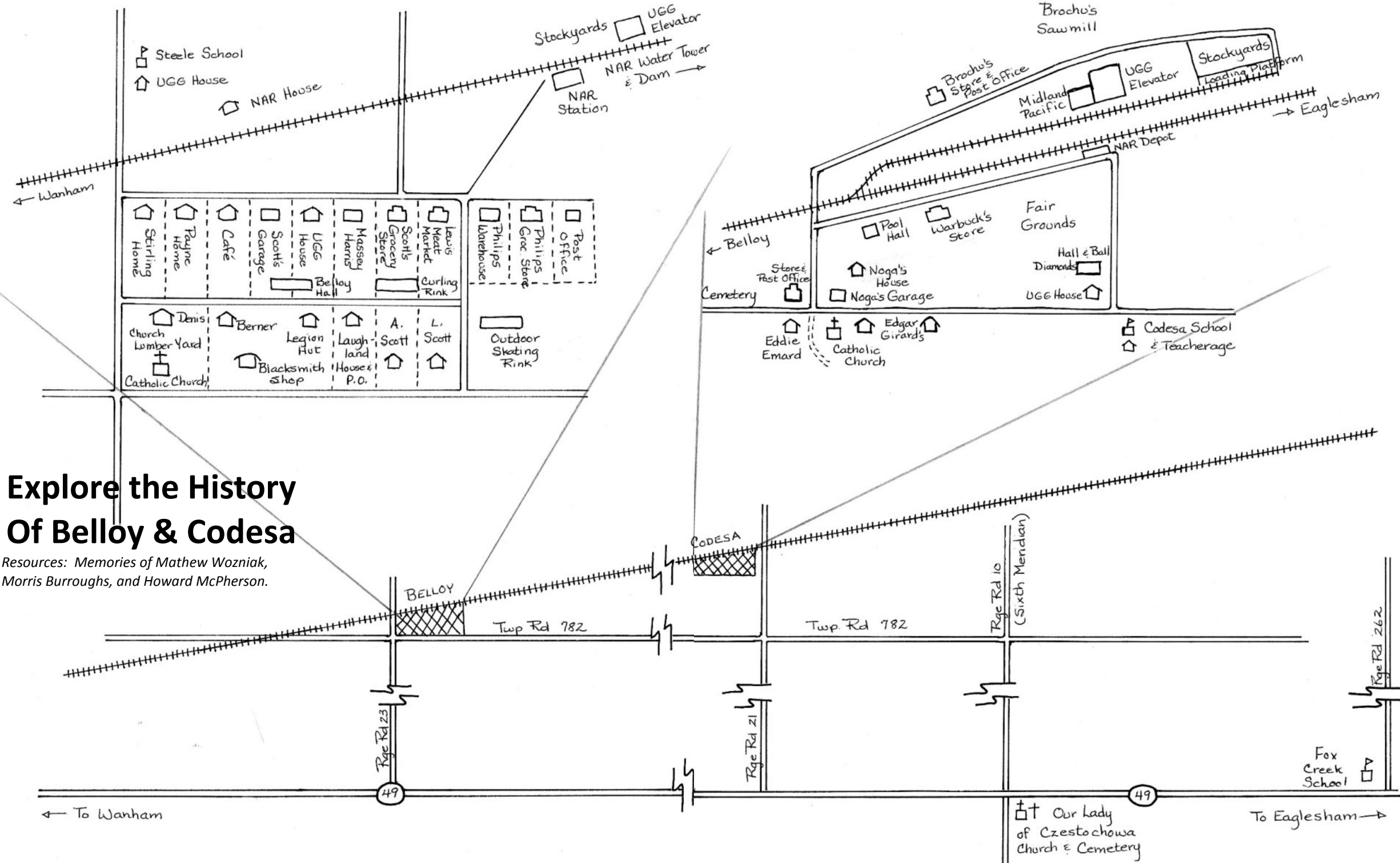
Turn east on the grade and again note the widening of the grade where the west siding switch was located. Proceed down the grade to see the location of the elevator (concrete slab) and the stockyard and loading platform (raised) sites.

To end the exploration we will look at two other sites associated with the area. Return to RR 12 and drive south to Highway 49. Turn east for two miles to RR 10, the Sixth Meridian. On the southeast corner of the intersection is the site of a well-known landmark, the Roman Catholic Church, Our Lady of Czestochowa, perhaps better known as the Red Church. It was built in 1948, primarily by parishioners of Polish decent who felt they needed a church. The Church was torn down in 2012, but the cemetery is still there. There are plaques at the site that explain some details.

Further east along the highway about 2 ½ miles is the intersection with RR262. You will see the Fox Creek School, the second building with the name. The original was a mile west. This building was closed as a school in 1956 and eventually used for beekeeping. Look for the faded name over the door of the building.

That ends the tour of Belloy, Codesa, and District. The once thriving communities certainly exist in the minds of those who knew them. We hope this tour may have brought memories to some and new discoveries to others.

Resources: [North from Edmonton, The Northern Alberta Railway](#); [Grooming the Grizzly](#); [Smoky Peace Triangle](#); [Google Earth](#)



# Explore the History Of Belloy & Codesa

Resources: Memories of Mathew Wozniak, Morris Burroughs, and Howard McPherson.

# Spirit City School District Canadian Red Cross Certificate



Spirit City School District was established on the new townsite of Spirit River when it was created in 1916. The above photograph (SPRA 394.05 from the James Lillico collection) shows the school built in 1925, with two rooms downstairs for grades one to eight. By 1929, Spirit River High School occupied the upstairs. Over time, a modern school replaced this unique building, and in 1962, the name changed to Spirit River School.

# Morrison's Department Store

by Betty Welter

These are Betty Welter's memories, as a seven-year-old, of Morrison's General Store in 1928, when it was located on the south side of Main Street right across from the old Bank of Montreal in Grande Prairie.

In September of 1928 we arrived in Grande Prairie and shortly thereafter made the first of many trips to Morrison's General Store. Our only method of transportation during our first 10 years here was with horses pulling either a sleigh or wagon depending on the season, and the trip into town from our farm lasted about an hour. In the winter months we had hot rocks (heated in the oven) to keep our feet warm and several tanned cow hide robes to snuggle into. During that hour travel we would eagerly anticipate what we hoped to find and buy in the store. Usually we had a nickel to spend on a treat so this ensured much dreaming enroute.

Upon arriving in town, our horses were tied up to hitching posts just behind the store and sometimes were blanketed depending on the weather. They enjoyed the rest. There was a big livery barn close by for horses but that cost money to stable them and cash was very short all over. An outdoor privy, the only available bathroom, was just beside the livery barn and hitching posts.

How we anticipated entering the store - electric lights, all the display cases, garment racks and so many interesting smells as we got closer to the grocery area. Usually a large stalk of bananas hung over the main counter where clusters, as ordered, were sliced off with a curved metal knife. Cheese came in a huge round 30 pound wheel in its own special cheese holder with a large cleaver style knife. The store keeper would guess the correct weight and size as he sliced off a wedge for the customer. I can still well remember the aroma of the freshly sliced

cheddar. Shortly after, Velveeta Cheese in the familiar yellow boxes arrived at the General Store and I think there were different sized boxes.

All the canned goods, bins, etc. were along the wall at the back of the store on shelves built right to the ceiling. There was a long counter running across the width of the store. All the customers stayed on one side, the store clerks on the other. The clerk wrote your order down on a counter book as the customer dictated same. Quite a few different foods were stored open in big bins with a scoop to measure out what was ordered. The counter had a raised platform-type scale with a large oval funnel-shaped scoop to weigh grocery items. Mothers would weigh their babies on the store scales too (this was long before any baby clinics in Grande Prairie and this method of weighing babies continued until almost 1950 when the Women's Institute began a baby clinic staffed by ex-nurses — nurses who had married and were thus unemployed and volunteered to staff this clinic weighing babies and comparing them to a printed scale of desired weights. My two eldest children were weighed this way. Flour, sugar, salt, rolled oats, etc. came in cotton sacks weighing from 5 to 100 pounds. These sacks were well used and often recycled into clothing items for children. Mom used flour sacks and sugar bags to make our bloomers and slips (worn under our dresses....girls had to wear dresses to school at this time and we always had a home-made slip underneath).

Very little candy was wrapped and candies were displayed in bins that had a glass lid. We surely enjoyed looking them over very thoroughly before our purchase. Grandad Morrison used to serve us here quite often. We waited for him too; he was a smaller, very friendly old gentleman, always immaculately groomed in his suit complete with collar and tie even



in the early morning. Candy would be scooped into little paper bags and we would ask for a few each of different varieties. Even for a nickel we could share some with our parents and enjoy our purchase. My Dad always said that the store certainly didn't make any profit in the candy department with Grandad Morrison as clerk serving the children. Ice cream cones were available during the summer months and cost 5 cents each so candies were a better purchase as we thought we got good value for the nickel we shared.

The clothing department was on the left hand side of the store as we came in. The window right beside the front door usually displayed ladies' dresses, coats, hats, etc. We girls certainly checked that out, dreaming of when we would be grownups and able to wear similar garments. A small selection of yard goods such as flannelette, broadcloth, prints, etc. were rolled in bolts and stacked on shelves. (My recollection is that most cloth cost about 25c or less per yard.) Mother was an excellent seamstress and made nearly all our clothes, so we would sometimes choose a piece for a new dress. Woolen coating was ordered through mail-order catalogues. There was also a small sewing section of thread, embroidery cotton, knitting wool for men's socks and finer yarns for ladies' sweaters and baby clothes.

Men's wear was further down this side and included work clothes. Footwear for the whole family was in this section and included rubbers, overshoes for men, women and children, workboots, shoes for the whole family, and an assortment of locally made moccasins. Children had a special section with underwear, hosiery, shoes, coats. I can remember paying 15c to 25c a pair for girls' socks and again there was much deliberation over this purchase. I can't remember any hardware of any sort in Morrison's store, but there was a section at the side of the store that carried coal oil or gasoline in barrels to fill one's small container, as nearly everyone lit their homes with coal oil or gasoline lamps.

I also remember Dad buying blocks of salt here, coloured a bright turquoise blue, for our horses .

Mom bought loose leaf tea, coffee, sugar, molasses, flour, walnuts, cheese (in the summer Mom made her own cheese), cereal occasionally (Sunny Boy or rolled oats), canned salmon and sardines, dried beans, canned tomatoes, usually 2 kinds of apples (red and yellow Delicious and McIntosh), and often naval oranges. Christmas oranges were available only briefly during December. Sometimes a case of lettuce would arrive in the middle of winter.....what a treat. We had cabbage at home in the root house during winter, but no lettuce. P&G Laundry soap was available and also Lifeboy and Palmolive handsoap. In the summer my Mother made her own soap.

Once the order was assembled into an empty grocery box, paid for or put on credit till the fall harvest time, the customer took it home. I remember cash being in very short supply and suspect that most purchases at Morrison's General Store were on credit until harvest time. Many farm women had a butter press and prepared home churned butter and eggs to trade at Morrison's for other grocery items. Mom got 20 cents per pound for her butter and at the least 5 cents per dozen for eggs during summer peak production.



Morrison's Cash Store ca. 1925. (SPRA 2001.01.041)

# What Archives Do and Why We Do It

by Leslie Gordon, B Sc, MAS

*Author's Note: I recently created a FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) sheet on donating records for our new website and decided that some of our readers might be interested too! Also, if you've been subscribing to this newsletter for awhile, you may have noticed the little scenarios on the last page, urging you to tell people you know that they can donate their records to the archives. If you've been doing this, you may have encountered some of these same questions and struggled to answer them. Read this article and your troubles are over! Or if you are extra lazy, skip reading it yourself and just give it to them!*

You have records around your home or office and you might possibly be willing to donate them but... you're not sure how to do that and you have a lot of questions that need answering first. Read on!

One of the questions you may be asking is "What is the process to donate my records?" The first step is simply to contact SPRA by phone, email, or in person and let us know that you have records to donate. You may be unsure whether we will want them or if they are orderly enough. Don't worry. Just talk to us. At the most general level, SPRA takes records in all formats (paper, photographs and negatives, film, video, sound recordings, maps and plans, drawings, electronic records, etc.) that reflect the political, social and economic life of the south Peace River Country of Alberta. Our primary focus is on one-of-a-kind, unpublished material, although we do maintain a small reference library, again concentrating on local, historical publications. SPRA does not accept artifacts or general interest publications. Donors need not worry about re-organizing or removing records from their overall collection or making decisions as to what is or is not historically relevant. Selection and appraisal are activities archives staff are familiar with and trained to do. Records may simply be donated as is.

The next step is to deliver the records. Most donors will make a visit to the Archives with their records in tow. In some special cases, we may be willing to come and pick them up. Again, just talk to us. Then you will need to sign a "Gift Agreement" form. We use this form to gather information about you and your records so we can document clearly where the records in our holdings have come from and that we have a right to have them and to provide researchers with access to them. The Gift Agreement has sections for briefly describing the content of the records and how they came into your possession, transferring ownership of the physical records and any copyright you may hold in them, instructing us on what to do with anything we don't end up keeping, and your contact information. The Gift Agreement also gives us the right to provide access to the donated records



Happy donor Bill Turnbull with the boxes of records he donated in 2013, from his involvement with running clubs in Grande Prairie. Karen Burgess and Mary Nutting are assisting with the acquisition.

and you the opportunity to list any restrictions you may feel are necessary. After you've answered the questions and signed this form, the records are no longer your responsibility. You may breathe a sigh of relief and return to your home or office unburdened and carefree with a warm glow of pleasure that you've helped preserve our history for future generations.

You might also be wondering what will happen to your records at the Archives. You are not alone; this is a mystery to many of our donors. Once the records have been accepted, they are placed in the unprocessed storage area and enter the processing queue. When we are ready to process them, which could be any time from almost immediately to 2-3 years later, depending on the size of the collection, content, conservation issues, and other variables, they are moved to the processing area and gone through by one of the archivists on staff. Processing a fonds is essentially preparing it for researchers to use. The records you donate will most likely be processed as a fonds based on who created them and named accordingly. A fonds is the whole of the records, created, accumulated, and used by a person, family, government, business, association, or organization, during its functions or activities. The first step in processing is **appraisal**. Not everything that is donated is kept. Part of our job is to distill a fonds down to its essentials, weeding out unnecessary and duplicate records and ensuring that important records are kept so that the resulting fonds is tight and easy to use. Things removed during this stage will either be discarded or returned to you, depending on which option you selected on your Gift Agreement form. Next comes **arrangement**. Having an order is crucial, especially for large fonds, if we ever expect to find things again. As far as possible, the archivist tries to preserve the original order given to the records by their creator. However, some things are invariably out of place so the archivist has to restore original order in those cases or, when no order is apparent, impose one based on how the archivist believes the records were created and used. Within a fonds, records are divided into smaller groups called series, then sub-

series, files, and items. After arrangement is **re-housing** and related **conservation** activities. The goal of the Archives is to preserve the material in our care for the longest possible period. For this reason, we rehouse the records in acid-free files, envelopes, and boxes and determine whether further conservation treatments or reformatting is needed. Finally, the records are **described**. Researchers need to have a basic idea of what is in a fonds so they will know where to look for the information they need. The archivist will produce a finding aid giving a history of the creator of the records and a brief description of the kinds of records in the fonds and series, and their dates, quantity of records, location, etc. As the donor, you may be contacted during this phase to provide additional information about the records or to fill in gaps in the history of the creator. At the very least, you will be sent a copy of the description/finding aid and given the opportunity to make corrections. When all of this is done, the fonds is ready for researchers to use it! The records themselves remain in the storage room in their new boxes and files until they are requested.

Sometimes donors are unwilling to donate their original records to the Archives, preferring to give us copies. Although it is always our preference to archive the originals and provide the donor with copies (if requested), we do accept copies as well. Ultimately the Archives wants to preserve both the records and the information they contain, but if that is not possible, we would rather have the information alone than nothing. If you are donating copies rather than originals, the "Gift Agreement" form is replaced by the "Loan for Copy" form. Much of the information collected remains the same, but the copyright section is expanded to give the Archives permission to use the material in the greatest variety of ways without copyright being transferred away from the physical records, which are being retained by you.

Are you afraid that if you donate your records, you will never see them again? Don't worry. Although you are no longer responsible for them, your records remain accessible to you. You can request copies or visit the originals at the Archives. Best of all, you can

send interested family and friends to view them and you don't even have to be there! Or if you have a quick research question of your own, we can do a search remotely. You don't even have to leave the comfort of your home or office. One of the only things you are not allowed to do is take them home again; once records are donated, there is no changing your mind. However, if you have an extra-special event coming that requires the presence of your records, we are willing to arrange a loan (under strict security and environmental conditions) or provide you with copies.

Copies, for whatever purpose, are provided free of charge to donors, providing the expense of creating them is not prohibitive (copies of film, oversized photographs, or large collections, for example, would have an additional cost). Please call us to discuss your specific situation and needs.

You may also be wondering who will get to see the records you donate. When records are donated to a public archives like SPRA, there is an understanding that the records will be made available to any member of the public for research. Your records may also be used by the Archives for special projects, including publications and displays, and posted online for research use. When you sign the "Gift Agreement" or "Loan for Copy" form, there is a place for you to specify any restrictions on access to the records, particularly if they contain information of a sensitive, embarrassing, or extremely personal nature. The archivist accepting your records will help you determine whether restrictions are needed, what portion of the fonds should be restricted, and a reasonable amount of time for the restriction to be in place. In general, the Archives is reluctant to accept records that are permanently restricted (please see my column in the September 2011 issue for more information on this).

Now you might be thinking, "With so many people able to access them, how safe are my records at the Archives?" SPRA takes numerous precautions to



*Archival storage at SPRA, taken in 2011.*

ensure that your records are protected from a variety of hazards and preserved for the longest period of time possible. As mentioned previously, records are rehoused in acid-free files and boxes. These are placed in a locked storage room inaccessible to the public and temperature and humidity conditions within the room are monitored to ensure they are within acceptable levels. Original records may only be accessed onsite. Researchers using the records are supervised and food and drink are prohibited. Records of greater fragility or with special needs, for example photographic records, are treated with special care. SPRA is also an institutional member of the Archives Society of Alberta and, as such, meets certain professional requirements.

You might have guessed that the costs of archiving collections properly can be high and supposed that these costs are passed on to donors. That is not the case. South Peace Regional Archives is generously funded by the City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, Municipal District of Greenview, and Municipal District of Spirit River. Accepting the records of their residents and those showing their history is part of the service we provide to them. That being said, SPRA greatly appreciates donations from donors to help cover the costs of staff time and



specialized conservation supplies, allowing us to stretch our resources further and make more material available.

Finally, you might be thinking “Why should I bother donating my records? This seems like a lot of effort to me!” Your records help create a fuller picture of the history of the area. You are important! Your records show the contributions made by you, your family, your organization, or your business. They are evidence of what happened in the past and are worth preserving for use in the present and the future. As an archives, we are dependent on donations of records from people like you. We won’t have for the future what we are not given today. Donating your records can benefit you as well, emptying your storage areas of material you no longer need or make reference to. If you are in the process of downsizing, SPRA is the perfect home for records you no longer have room for or are tired of moving from one house to another. Archiving your family or organization records also allows other members and interested individuals to have access to them without pestering you or after you have moved away or passed away.

Hopefully you have a better grasp now of what the process of records donation looks like and have discovered that it’s not as scary as it seems. Only one form to fill out. Not too much hassle. No cost. You can still see your records and have copies of them. You can prevent others from seeing things they shouldn’t. Peace of mind, knowing your records are protected. The privilege of having your life and contributions remembered. Whatever your reasons, whatever your story, please consider donating **your** records today. We need you!

**Kathryn’s Picks** *The article on the right, from the April 27, 1933 Northern Tribune, shows the difficulties of getting medical care in the 1930s, but also the willingness of friends and neighbours to give time and possessions to aid others in time of need.*

## Kathryn’s Picks

by Kathryn Auger



## Updated Website

We are in the process of updating the SPRA website so that it contains information for all users of Archives: researchers, donors of historical materials, and supporters of SPRA. You can play with it on [www.southpeacearchives.org/new](http://www.southpeacearchives.org/new). We are expecting it to be live and searchable by October 1st. Our goal is to have the website more organized and easy to follow, but it may take awhile to get used to it. If you generally use it to search for photographs, you can choose the Research button at the bottom of the page and go to “Search Our Complete Holdings”, then “Alberta On Record”; or you can choose the Holdings tab on the menu bar at the top of the page and go directly to “Alberta On Record”.

## YouTube Channel

Check out the SPRA Channel on YouTube through the link at the top of our new webpage or at <https://www.youtube.com/user/sprarchives/>. You will find local historical film clips such as Eaglesham in 1952, Family activities and the Volunteer Fire Department in the 1950s, Travel in the South Peace ca. 1967, and Historical Buildings in Grande Prairie in 1992. You will also find some sound recordings: an interview with Jack Mackie, the mayor of Grande Prairie when it became a City in 1958; and an interview with Charlie and Winnie Moore, the 1964 Master Farm Family for Alberta. These interviews were created by the Grande Prairie Museum ca. 1990.

## “This Week In History” Blog

We have added a blog to the website as a quick way to update our supporters on what is happening at the archives. Blog posts also make our archival collections and activities more easily findable on the web. You can subscribe to the blog through an RSS feed on the home page or simply click on the Blog tab on the top menu bar. And just for fun, we are including a regular post titled “This Week in History”, created by volunteer Kathryn Auger, which contrasts the present with the past. You can read articles from the Grande Prairie Herald or the Northern Tribune which will remind you of how much life has changed.

## Facebook Fashion Fun

SPRA wants photos of YOU! We are having a contest in celebration of Archives Week and we are looking for fashion photographs from the 20’s, 30’s, 40’s or more current – we don’t care. We want to see what styles you or your family have embraced. What is your favorite photo, what were you wearing? Start going through your albums, show off your fashion sense. Share it with us and the community – maybe yours will be the winner of a fantastic assortment of prizes! Were your friends as fashionable as you? Share this contest with them to see what their favorite outfits were! The winner will be decided based on the style we feel best represents the fashion of the era. You can upload these photos to our Facebook page after September 15, drop them off at the archives, or email them to us. Looking forward to seeing you online!

*Sadly, we have two Memorials in this issue of the newsletter: Betty Welter, one of our original volunteers; and Beth Sheehan, one of the initial supporters for the creation of South Peace Regional Archives. They were 92 and 93 years of age.*

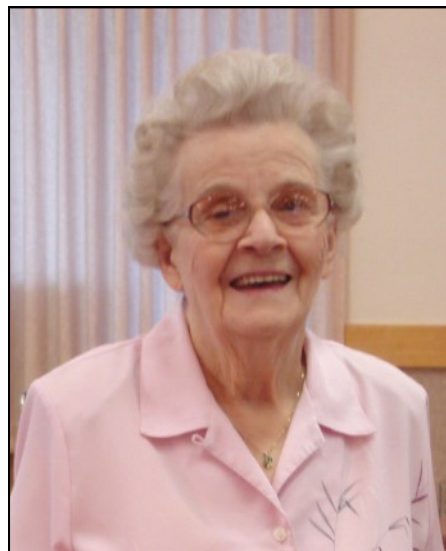
**In Memoriam**



Long-time supporter, Beth Sheehan, passed away August 23, 2013. Beth not only loved history, but took great care of it. She preserved the records created by her grand-parents, Paul and Elizabeth Flint, who arrived in the Beaverlodge area in 1909, and the interviews of early settlers done by her mother, Frances Flint.

When she began her own documentation through photography, which she loved, Beth recorded the date, place, events and people on each photograph. This included a project to photograph every street and major building in Grande Prairie for the 25th anniversary of the City in 1983. Her meticulous documentation of Peace Country history through photographs will be a great resource for years to come.

**In Memoriam**



Long-time Archives volunteer, Betty Welter, passed away on July 12, 2013. Betty was one of the original "Famous Five" ladies who became involved with SPRA soon after it was established in 2000. One of her first tasks was assisting with the processing of the County Schools collection, but she was willing to do (and did) everything from cooking for AGM luncheons to helping us put out the newsletter.

Betty had a phenomenal memory and loved to re-count stories from her childhood. She was working on her memory of Morrison's General Store on page 15. This was finished and edited by her daughter, Margaret Skelly, as she lay in her hospital bed.

*This Issue of Telling Our Stories  
is sponsored by  
Mr. Mathew Wozniak*

**New at the Archives**

**Thank You Donors!**

The collections at SPRA have all been donated by individuals, organizations, and municipal governments. You are our only resource for the preservation of the history of the south Peace. Here are a few of our recent donations.

Mary Margaret Thompson Gulick interview CD  
*Municipal District of Spirit River*

Walter Mazurkewich Photographs  
*Dawn Schumilas*

Dimsdale Community Club records  
Spry family fonds  
*Sherida Rossol*

Various Running Clubs records  
*Bill Turnbull*

Herman Klukas family fonds  
Barnaby farm records  
*Mathew Wozniak*

Hythe History collection  
*Donna Shail*

National Farmers Union, DeBolt Local  
*Norm Dyck*

City of Grande Prairie Photographs  
*Violet Dryer, Brian Tink, Roy Bickell*

**Submissions to this Newsletter**

SPRA Society encourages submissions in the form of stories, poems, memories, letters and photographs.

Do you have a story, or does someone you know have a story about the past in the south Peace? Submit it to us by mail or e-mail, or call us at

780-830-5105.

**Problems With Alberta On Record?**

The provincial archival databases have recently changed, and we are having some problems uploading material to them. Check out the new version at <http://www.albertaonrecord.ca>, but if you can't find what you need, please don't hesitate to ask Archives staff for help. You can give us a call at 780-830-5105 or visit us at the Archives. It's a good idea to phone ahead to make sure someone is available.

**Interested in Archival Records from Spirit River?**

SPRA is seeking a **volunteer** to transcribe Spirit River tax records from the old tax ledgers into a database -- can be done by hand or by computer.

The volunteer needs to have good eyesight because the oldest records are quite faint. Some experience reading old hand-writing and familiarity with Spirit River families would be an asset. Our goal is to have this project done by 2016, when the MD of Spirit River celebrates 100 years!

**Are You Enjoying This Newsletter?**

Would you like to receive it mailed to your home four times a year? It's free when you are a member of the South Peace Regional Archives Society. See the Membership Form on the back of the newsletter. You can also give memberships as gifts to friends or family.

**Benefits of Membership**

- Be actively involved in preserving the history of this area.
- Have a voice in keeping archival collections in the Peace River Country.
- Become more aware of the issues and types of collections in archives.
- Receive a quarterly newsletter and notice of meetings & events.



## South Peace Regional Archives Society Membership/Renewal Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

There are two types of membership:

Full membership--get involved in the society,  
 attend meetings, vote on issues and run for office.

Associate membership--receive communications  
 (like this newsletter) to stay informed about issues  
 and happenings at the Archives.

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: 780-831-7371  
 E-mail: [spra@telus.net](mailto:spra@telus.net)

## Member Support and Upcoming Events

### The Perfect Introduction

If you hear someone say:

*"I have family records collected by our parents, as well as our own. None of my children are interested in keeping that stuff. I hate to do it, but I guess it should go into the garbage."*

Tell them:

*"Are you kidding? Why not call the Archives? They would be happy to take your family collection, or if it doesn't relate to this area, direct you to an Archives that would!"*

### 2013 Film and Story Tea

#### *"What We Wore"*

Join South Peace Regional Archives on **Sunday, October 6, 2013** at the **Grande Prairie Golden Age Centre** (10222-101 Avenue) for an afternoon of memories about fashion, costume, and clothing in the South Peace, featuring a variety of storytellers, photographs, archival film clips, and live models.

**Doors Open 1:45; Program Begins 2:00 p.m.**

South Peace Regional Archives

is funded by

City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, MD  
 of Greenview, MD of Spirit River

grants from the Archives Society of Alberta

and donations from people like you!

Current Projects include

Film Digitization

Event and Newsletter Sponsorship

General Funds