

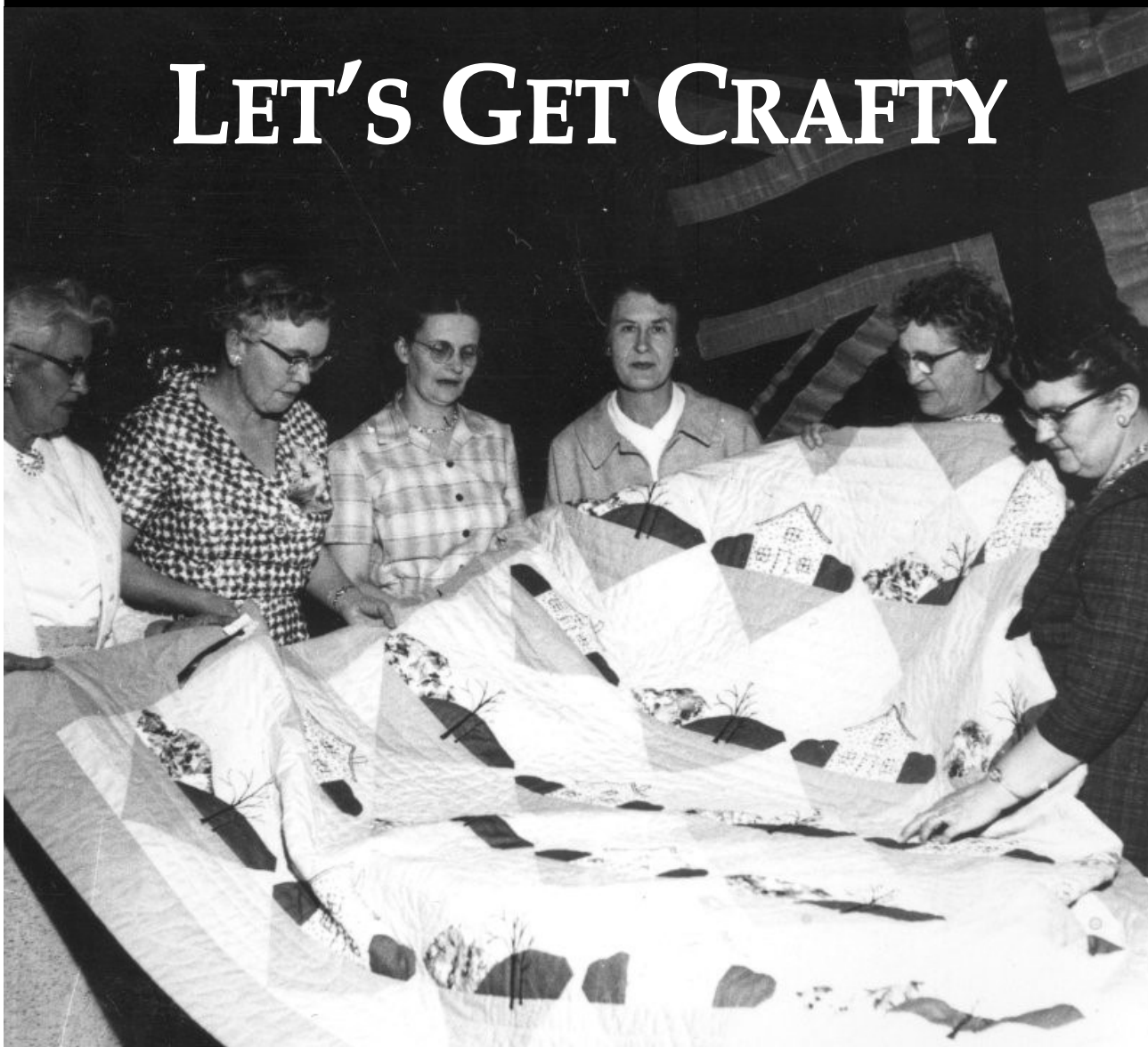
TELLING OUR STORIES

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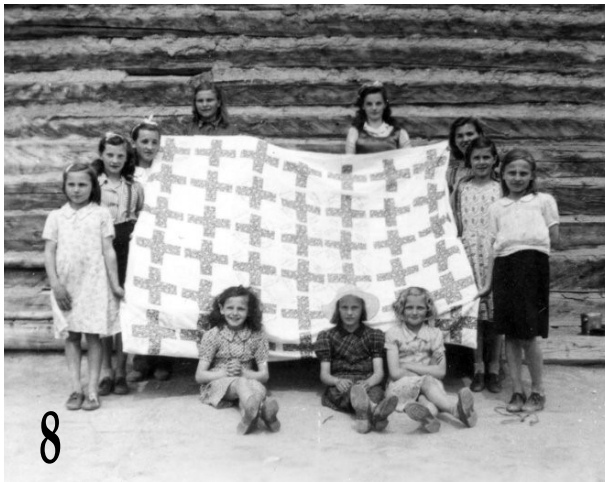
LET'S GET CRAFTY



A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH PEACE REGIONAL ARCHIVES

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Letter from the Editor
- 4 Take Note
Holiday Hours & New Exhibit
- 5 Crafting a Community
Women’s Institutes in the South Peace
- 6 Piece By Piece
Stories Told Through Stitches
- 8 Researching Wartime Quilt-Making in the Archives
Guest contribution by Joanna Dermenjian
- 10 Beads & Birch Bark
Indigenous Handicrafts



- 12 Olwen’s Own Words
Rockeries & Sanctuary Mats
- 14 Stitching Together Different Disciplines
This Issue’s Archivology
- 16 Creative Genius
The Many Skills of the Klukas-Wozniak Family
- 18 Getting Crafty
This Issue’s Featured Photographs
- 20 Useful & Beautiful
Functional Art in the Home
- 21 Taxidermy
Crafting Art & Science



- 22 New at the Archives
- 23 Membership Form



Cover: Grande Prairie Women’s Institute members pose with the “Home and Country” quilt. Included in the photograph is Alberta Women’s Institute president, Mrs. W. R. Ford, second from left. Date unknown. (SPRA 152.02.02.47)

Note on Photographs: Photographs featured in *Telling Our Stories* are unedited, apart from minimal cropping. In cases where substantial cropping may impact the context of the photograph, this will be noted in the caption.

A Publication of the South Peace Regional Archives

Our Vision: Preserving and Sharing the Past.
Our Mission: The purpose of South Peace Regional Archives is to gather, preserve, and share the historical records of municipalities, organizations, businesses, families, and individuals within the region, both now and in the future.

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Letter from the Editor

From a child’s handmade ornament to cozy knitted sweaters and carved figurines, many holiday memories are linked to beautiful handcrafted and handmade items. Whether we are talking about knitting, quilting, or woodworking, crafting is a form of personal expression as well as a means of creating necessary and practical objects. It has formed livelihoods and industries, but is at the same time so profoundly individual. This bridge of personal and practical has inspired us to explore the fascinating history of crafting in this holiday issue of *Telling Our Stories*.

We invite you to see how crafting is stitched into our community in “Researching Wartime Quilt-Making in the Archives” and “Crafting a Community.” See the work of local craftspeople in “Creative Genius,” “Piece By Piece,” and “Getting Crafty.” Explore the rich culture of Indigenous handicrafts in “Beads & Birch Bark.” Get your hands dirty with pottery and woodwork in “Useful & Beautiful” and learn about the science behind the craft in “Taxidermy.” Finally, see how the heritage field is stitched together in this issue’s Archiveology.

I want to thank all the staff and volunteers who helped to create this issue of *Telling Our Stories*, with a special thank you to our guest contributor Joanna Dermenjian. And as we enter this holiday season, I would also like to thank you all for your support and wish you a happy (and crafty) holiday season!

Ellyn Vandekerkhove
SPRA Executive Director

Take Note

Holiday Hours

The South Peace Regional Archives will be **closed to the public from December 24, 2022 – January 6, 2023** for the holiday season. Thank you for your understanding!

New Exhibit

Keep an eye out for the **Grande Prairie Museum’s new exhibit on handicrafts opening in 2023!**



Above: SPRA 993.1.1.035

Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that the South Peace Regional Archives is located on the ancestral and traditional lands of many Indigenous peoples. This territory is covered by Treaty 8, signed in 1899. The continuing relationship between Indigenous peoples and this land contributes to the rich knowledge and culture of the South Peace region.

We are grateful to serve the people on this land and honor the Calls for Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Crafting a Community

Women’s Institutes in the South Peace



Above: Unitarian Services Committee box being filled for shipment (SPRA 371.05.03.39)

The first Women’s Institute (WI) in Canada was started in Ontario in 1897 to offer public education in domestic science and sewing to improve the lives of women and their families. The movement quickly became popular, and in 1909 the first WI in Alberta was opened in Lea Park, just north of Vermillion. Starting in 1912, WI branches that had at least 20 members and provided copies of the Women’s Institute Handbooks could receive an operating grant of five dollars from the Alberta Government. As a result, there was an explosion of branches across the province. At their peak in 1920, there were 250 institutes with 15,000 members. (*Many and Remarkable: The Story of the Alberta Women’s Institute*, Catherine C. Cole and Judy Larmour).

There were several branches of the WI in the South Peace Region, and they got to work building their communities. One of the first in the region, the Sexsmith Women’s Institute, was founded in 1917. In 1928 they assisted Miss Johanna Haakstad in opening a Maternity Home and continued to operate it for many years. (Fonds 054, Sexsmith Women’s Institute Fonds)

On September 28, 1924, ten women met in the home of Mrs. L.B. Yule and, with the support of Mrs. William Stewart of the Peace River WI, founded the Grande Prairie WI branch. That fall, they took on surgery costs for a local child suffering from a cleft lip. They also started a rotation of visiting people in the hospital. (Fonds 371, Grande Prairie Women’s Institute Fonds, SPRA 371.01) Throughout their more than 80 years of operation, they performed various community services, including providing aid to families in need, operating a hostess

hut for soldiers in the Grande Prairie Basic Training Camp, and helping to start and run the Grande Prairie Public Library.

The WIs of the South Peace seamlessly merged crafting and social care, using their skills to benefit their community. We can see this during the war years when many WIs joined forces with the Red Cross to create and send needed materials to the front. For example, the Rio Grande Institute made quilts, knitted socks and mitts, and filled dilly bags to ship overseas (Fonds 334, Rio Grande Women’s Institute Fonds). In 1943, the Grande Prairie WI had meetings devoted entirely to knitting, making quilt blocks and ripping leather and fur for use in seamen’s jacket linings. Their goal was to finish one quilt and fill one dilly bag each month.

Piece By Piece

Stories Told Through Stitches

As a child, I was especially fascinated by one specific patchwork blanket in my mom’s collection. She had shown me school portraits from when she was growing up, and I recognized the fabric of her school dresses in the patches that made up the blanket. A blue check, a green check, a red floral. The blanket told a story.

Archival records, including meeting minutes, memoirs, and photographs such as those shown here, demonstrate the important place of quilts in South Peace culture over the past century. They were personally meaningful, like my mom’s patchwork blanket, as well as being beautiful and functional works of art. Scraps of fabric and remnants of worn clothing could be repurposed as materials for displaying the maker’s creativity, and the finished product brought

artistry and warmth into a home.

Many mentions of quilts in archival records appear in the records created by women’s organizations, such as the Just-A-Mere Ladies Club (fonds 481) of La Glace, the Bay Tree Community Club (fonds 533), and the North Kleskun Ladies Club (fonds 543). Quilting together would have been a welcome opportunity for women to enjoy a social gathering, particularly for those living in rural areas some distance from the nearest town or neighbor.

In many cases, women stitched quilts for charitable causes. The records of the North Kleskun Ladies Club have several such examples. As early as 1938 and up to as recently as 1996, the club raffled off the quilts they made and donated the proceeds to various causes, including the Monkman Pass Highway Association. The Grande Prairie Women’s Institute (fonds 371) also raffled off quilts; one quilt raffle brought in funds for a wheelchair that was donated to the hospital (see left). Some organizations, such as the “Just Us” Club (fonds 158) and the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (fonds 111), also sewed quilts to have on hand to give to local families who were victims of house fires.

Other quilts, like my mom’s, were rich in stories, intended to capture memories in a very tangible way. In

Left: Mrs. W. Lorens photographed with the “Wild Rose” quilt, which was raffled off in 1959 to raise funds for the purchase of a wheelchair to donate to the hospital. (SPRA 152.02.02.46)



Right: A photograph of one of Colleen Stewart’s quilts taken from Colleen’s scrapbook, featuring newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and photographs of her art (SPRA 690.01)



the photograph below, four women pose with a quilt embroidered with signatures. The quilt was created for a reunion of former Pipestone Creek residents.

For other women, quilting was a personal hobby and form of art. Barbara Klukas Wozniak (fonds 279 and 635) was an avid quilter. The Wozniak family fonds (fonds 279) contains approximately one hundred photographs of quilts Barbara pieced together and hand quilted. Most of the quilts appear to have unique patterns and carefully planned color schemes, suggesting that Barbara viewed quilts as a canvas for her creativity. Colleen Stewart (fonds 690) originally focused on oil painting but later began quilting as well, often choosing neckties and business suits as her materials. Colleen’s scrapbook contains photographs

of her quilts, most of which depict scenes of abuse and domestic violence. She used colors, shapes, and lines that she frequently describes as “angry and aggressive,” a stark contrast to the comfort and warmth typically associated with quilts.

Although quilts themselves do not find a home in archives, archival records have plenty of evidence of their significance throughout our history. Whether as expressions of generosity or reflections on the human experience, quilts contribute to telling the story of the South Peace and its residents.

Turn the page for an exciting contribution from a guest writer, telling the story of one specific quilt stitched here in the South Peace.



Left: Betty Welter, Paulette Hrychiw, and other quilters standing beside finished Pipestone Creek Reunion signature quilt, 1995. (SPRA 129.03.01)

Researching Wartime Quilt-Making in the Archives

We are excited to share the following article, contributed by Joanna Dermenjian. Joanna is an independent researcher and life-long creator. She is interested in how women have used stitching, both historically and in the present day, to nurture and restore themselves and to create community with other women for individual and collective well-being. Read on to learn about her research about the hundreds of thousands of quilts made by women and children and donated to the British Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) and the Canadian Red Cross to be distributed to soldiers, civilians and hospitals in Britain and Europe.



Above: Peggy Mair's class in the Torun School creates a quilt to raffle for the war effort in 1943. (SPRA 168.01.02)

For a number of years I have been researching the charitable work of Canadian women on the home front in the Second World War. Women were busy not just knitting socks, scarves, vests and balaclavas, but also sewing hospital supplies such as sheets, pillowcases, robes, slippers, bandages and face masks. But one of the most interesting items they made were quilts for hospitals, bomb shelters and civilians in Britain who had lost their homes in the bombings. Women all across Canada were making quilts that were shipped to Britain and distributed by the Women's Voluntary Service. The Canadian Red Cross records that over 400,000 quilts were made and sent from Canada.

As I research this quilt-making, I am using digital archives across the country to find records of lists of items women made, who the women were, and what

groups they met with to participate in the sewing. I am excited when I find photographs of women holding a quilt that they had made as a group. These photographs are rare – I have found less than a dozen but I keep on looking. When I was recently doing research in archivescanada.ca, using the word 'quilt' and the timeline of 1939-1945, I was delighted to find the amazing photograph above in the South Peace Regional Archives' Peggy Mair fonds (fonds 168), showing Peggy Mair's class with a quilt they raffled for the war effort in 1943. The archives describe further that the fonds "series consists of autobiographical stories based on Peggy's life as a child and youth growing up in Grande Prairie and later as a teacher in the areas' schools."

On the facing page is a photograph of the eleven schoolgirls, probably between the ages of eight to twelve, holding a quilt in front of the school they attended in the small Polish community called Torun in Webster, Alberta. I also found a photograph of the school, which was a log cabin with very few windows. The girls are dressed lightly, so I am hoping this means they were able to do some of the sewing work out of doors, since the lighting in the schoolhouse would be poor, even if there was electricity (which there may not have been). It is likely that Peggy Mair, the teacher, formed a Junior Red Cross group in her school to promote activities that children could participate in to help with the war effort. This quilt was likely not one sent to civilians in Britain because the description says it is for a fundraiser. Often quilts were made and auctioned or raffled in the community to raise money for the Red Cross or for knitting and sewing supplies. Making a quilt would have been a challenging project for these girls. Patchwork and quilting require planning, organization, precision and fine motor skills. I think Miss Mair was clever to engage the children in a creative project that would teach them new skills as well as provide an opportunity to contribute to the war effort. Perhaps she was

inspired by an article like this one I found in *The Winnipeg Tribune* from August 3, 1942:

"Slowly the war creeps into our homes. Our outside activities have been reduced considerably...we are hard pressed to find useful, interesting work for the children. The children who suffer most from the war depression are those old enough to worry but not old enough to look outside of home for useful occupation. They must be kept busy...Boys and girls can sew on patchwork quilts."

This is the first photograph I have found of children involved in this quilt-making, and it has led me to even more written references of children's involvement in knitting and sewing for the war, as well as collecting metal salvage and fundraising. These girls look so proud of their quilt. I would love to find names of these girls if anyone has done more in-depth research of the Torun community of Polish immigrants to northern Alberta. Some of them may still be with us, around the age of ninety years old.

For more information and resources relating to my research, visit my website at sutureandselfedge.com. I am also on IG [@suture_and_selfedge](https://www.instagram.com/suture_and_selfedge) and on Facebook at [Canadian Red Cross Quilts](https://www.facebook.com/CanadianRedCrossQuilts).

If you know of anyone who attended the Torun School in 1943, please contact the South Peace Regional Archives. A high-resolution copy of the photograph on the facing page is available if you think you may be able to identify any of the girls.



Left: The first Torun School at Webster, 1947. This school was located east across the road from the Webster graveyard and slightly south. It was built ca. 1930 and replaced with a frame school moved in from the Twilight District in 1954. (SPRA 2009.136.01)

Beads & Birch Bark

Indigenous Handicrafts

This article was contributed by Taci Trudeau. Taci worked as an Archives Assistant (Student) at the South Peace Regional Archives during the summer of 2022.

Alberta, especially the Peace region, has a great deal of Indigenous history and culture ingrained into its very being. The beautiful works of art and crafts created over many years and passed through generations are a significant part of our history and the knowledge of how to create is necessary as we move forward. To begin, Beadwork is a popular craft that has been around for many years in not only the South Peace region, but the whole of North America as well. However, before beadwork became the beautiful artistry that it is today, many Indigenous women created striking works using porcupine quills. Quill work

was only assigned to important women in the community, it was viewed as prestigious work and was only done by exclusive members of society. Other work such as tufting and birch bark biting were also very popular in our region, the intricate designs made using such methods are admired much the same today.

Quill work was a popular craft as it made use of the bountiful nature and wildlife here in Alberta. It was once used to decorate nearly everything, including, moccasins, jackets, medicine pouches, and pipes. The art made use of dyed porcupine quills, often wrapped birch bark, to create beautiful patterns to decorate clothing and objects. It was important that the entire animal was always utilized in the process; that the meat was used as food, the fur for headdresses and

clothing, the claws for jewelry, and the quills for decoration. The quills are handpicked from the hide, washed individually, sorted by length and diameter, and then they are dyed in different solutions to gain the

Left: Image shows a woman seated at a booth during a gun show that was held at the D Company Armouries in Grande Prairie. She is selling leather gloves with Indigenous beading at this booth. There is a man standing and speaking with her. 1979. (SPRA 190.02.01.1655.65)



color of choice. Such solutions include mixes with wild sunflowers, alder bark, blueberries, buffalo berries, and moss. The quills are then spliced and woven, folded, or plaited into geometric designs. When European influence began to increase in the Peace region, glass beads became a new and popular material for decoration. Bead work was done with sinew from animals (later string or wire became more commonly used) and glass beads were strung along the line, then sewn onto fabric or objects to create intricate patterns.

Birch bark biting is an ancient Cree art that only few practice today, it was once traditionally passed from mother to daughter, but as time passed the tradition has been left behind and the art nearly lost. The craft is very detailed, not just any bark will work, and there are only a few places in the Peace region where birch trees grow with the desired bark. Teeth marks will not show through other, darker and heavier barks. With the light, milky-white birch bark desired for the craft, teeth marks are very clear and work up to make beautiful designs of hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, and other animals. Tufting is another popularized art in the Peace region, consisting of detailed hair-raising

Left & below: Images show display cases at the Grande Prairie Museum featuring Indigenous artifacts, 1998. (SPRA 0001.08.06.03.05.05.06 & 0001.08.06.03.05.05.07)

on a hide or other material to create spectacular designs, often of floral patterns. Animal hair is used in the craft as it is hollow, unlike human hair, which allows it to curl and stand up to make workable tufts, whereas human hair lays flat. The hair is cut from hides, often moose or caribou, and dyed using many natural materials like berries and moss (although now powdered dye is popular, allowing for new vibrant colours!). Then the hair is sewn into the hide or a velveteen material, to be pulled and worked to form beautiful designs. Each artist has very different style of tufting, and many state that it is rare to have the same or even similar style to another.

Although the worry remains of these beautiful art styles being lost to time, many Indigenous people devote great time to their art and wish to share their techniques and passions with those eager to learn. The intricate designs and beautiful patterns remain a stunning decoration that is ingrained in our history and remains as a reminder of the rich culture and art our region is built on.



Olwen's Own Words:

Rockeries & Sanctuary Mats

In 1933, Olwen Sanger-Davies travelled from East Sussex, England to the Peace Country to visit her younger brother, Morgan. Olwen documented her visit in two personal scrapbooks, containing approximately 500 drawings and paintings. "Olwen's Own Words" features excerpts and illustrations from these scrapbooks.

Olwen's diaries show that she was a keen artist and enjoyed ink sketches, pastel drawings, and watercolors. However, she and her brother Morgan

evidently had other artistic abilities as well, including landscaping and needlework.

September 25th—28th

While waiting for the outfit to come and thresh us Morgan got on with the rockery, he had already unturfed the spot, and put some of the turf outside the back gate.

Unfortunately, on the Wednesday he squashed his little finger and broke the top bone, which led to many

visits to Dr. Little, who put it in a splint.

He was able to dig up the carrots and store them in the cellar. We also designed a sanctuary mat for the Grande Prairie church, which he meant to work at in the winter.

Friday, October 6th

Morgan finished the rockery and we took a photo of it.

I tried to cook, make butter, pack and clean up. At 7:30 pm we went into town and saw the harvest decorations in the church; they had outlined each window with corn, and it looked very nice.



Stitching Together Different Disciplines

This issue's Archivology

Sometimes when researching history, it is easy to know where to start. If you are exploring family history, contacting the Genealogical Society is a good choice. If you are looking for the personal records and photos of a well-known photographer, they may be preserved by the archives.

What about if you are researching craftwork in the South Peace; which institutions would preserve the documentary history and the finished artworks of a famous craftsperson or organization?

Institutions and organizations like galleries, libraries, archives, and museums are often connected together under the acronym GLAM. All of these groups collect and maintain cultural heritage materials to make them accessible to everyone. Archives and museums in particular are equipped to preserve items of personal identity; someone can donate items related to family or community history that are then woven into a larger body of documentary history.

Modern GLAM institutions have connected origins. Many institutions began from personal collections accumulated by wealthy scholars between the 16th to 18th centuries. These curiosity-cabinets, or wunderkammern, would contain anything and everything regardless of format or source to show off an individual's intellectual interests.

Eventually as some of these collections grew exceedingly large they were donated to institutions in the interest of sharing with the public.

To be able to preserve these large collections, different kinds of items were split into separate collections with separate disciplines emerging to manage them. For example, the British Museum, the Natural History Museum of London, and the British Library all started from the personal collection of physician and naturalist Hans Sloane.

Modern GLAM institutions today differ largely in what they collect and how you access them. A gallery is focused on exhibiting unique artworks like paintings for public viewing. A library collects non-unique items like books and makes them easily available for browsing. Archives preserve unique, unpublished records for individual access while Museums curate artifacts and objects both to preserve them and to provide access through displays.

As both are largely focused on preserving and providing access to items that document history, archives and museums can sometimes overlap in collections and goals. Museum curators and archivists perform a



Left: Embroidered card (SPRA 1991.3.80A, Fonds 049, Forrest Falk fonds)

The question about this item is whether it is considered an unpublished record (like a postcard) or if it is a handcrafted artifact (as an embroidered design). This embroidered silk postcard is likely handmade; while there were machine produced versions as early as 1916, they were not nearly as popular as hand-embroidered postcards.

From an archivist's perspective the postcard is a piece of the record collection produced by Forrest Falk and his family.

The postcard and the message written on it are valuable as part of a series of correspondences between Forrest's extended family. Special care is taken though to ensure the embroidery on the card is well preserved, as it is a great example of historical hand-embroidery.

When it comes to exploring the history of crafts, where you search depends on the type of documentary evidence you are looking for. However, it's worth reaching out to multiple GLAM institutions as they all work together to share cultural heritage.

lot of similar activities like collection, preservation, description, and access.

However, the differing kinds of items each discipline usually works with changes their approach and techniques. Curating primarily three-dimensional objects, museums often manage and display items individually. Since archives deal with large amounts of unpublished documents, photographs, and film, archivists take a collection (or fonds) approach and view a body of records as a unit to preserve and describe.

That is not to say the boundaries between GLAM institutions like archives and museums are not fuzzy. Take this embroidered postcard at the top of the page, for example; should it be preserved in an archives or a museum?

The image depicts an embroidered greeting card from the early 20th century located in the Forrest Falk fonds. The card was sent to his wife, Edith Paige, by Edith's father. The card reads:

"Dear Edith. This was supposed to be sent to you a year ago last chmas I misplaced it + could not find it till we made a general clean out for a move. Yours Ever, Dad"



Creative Genius

The Many Skills of the Klukas-Wozniak Family

Antoni and Maria Wozniak, along with their four children, immigrated to Canada from Poland in 1930. The first few years were difficult as they tried to clear the trees on poor land with very little money, and little outside work for cash. The children had to work alongside their parents to make ends meet. Below, Mathew Wozniak recounts how the whole family worked together to make warm socks.

In the early thirties, my father, Antoni Wozniak worked for a family called Richemback that lived, from where we lived in Wanham, 2 miles south .13 miles east and then 8 miles south. He would leave for work at 5 o'clock Monday morning and when he came home Saturday, he usually carried a bag of flour on his back. These people had sheep, he was paid a dollar a day and one Saturday he came home with a complete fleece from a sheep. Mother washed it and we unknotted [in original] it with our handa [in original]. There were carding brushes and spinning wheels available at that time but we didn't have any. We hung this wool on a stick and mother gradually pulled a portion of it out so it was the thickness of the wool used in making sywash sweaters. She tied this to a spindle, a stick about a foot long that tapered to less than a quarter of an inch at one end, (in Polish called Wzychono) and spun it with her fingers. As she pulled the wool out and spun the spindle, the yarn got longer and longer. She would wind it around the bottom of the spindle, put a half hitch around the end and continue making yarn. To make enough yarn to keep everyone in socks and mittens required many hours of spinning.

We made knitting needles out of wire from the rail-road fence, we ground them by rubbing them on a stone so they were thinner at the ends and every one in the family knitted. It took a long time to figure out how to knit a heel into a stocking. The footwear that we could afford at that time were rubber shoes that looked quite like leather shoes and even laced up but had practically no insulating value so we each had to wear two pairs of sox [...]

Mathew Wozniak married Barbara Klukas in 1949. Barbara certainly upheld the family legacy of ingenuity and craftiness. Below Mathew recounts some of Barbara's crafting adventures throughout their life together.

My wife, Barbara, dies at age 65, about 13 years ago. My opinion, she was a genius. When she was young, at home, she wanted to sew clothes for her dolls, there was a drawer full of rags but she couldn't have any, they were for a quilt. Her cat killed a small weasel, her dad skinned and took it to the Hudson's Bay fur store. She was able to buy 2 inches of three different colors and sew clothes for her dolls.

After we got married, I don't know how she did it but she mastered crochet, hardanger, knitting, ceramics, sewing, like dresses, painting, like pictures on ceramics and canvas well as coloring Easter eggs. Our daughter was likely best dressed girl in school. If Barbara saw a nice dress in a store, she would draw a picture of it and sew one like it. She had classes to teach ceramics and hardanger. She would display her work at local fairs, like Wanham, Eaglesham, Spirit

River, and Falher. I have a box that has 185 first prize ribbons, 108 second, and 60 third. It required a lot of work, she had to have something new for every fair. It could be the same judge. There was an award for most wins which she won frequently. One time she knit a pair of socks that were so perfect that the judge wrote on her paper "cannot judge machine knit with hand knit." Later, Barbara told the judge she knit them by hand and the judge said "Most certainly not, I know machine knit," everybody knew she had a knitting machine. The judge was gloating because she thought she caught someone cheating and Barbara was devastated that she was wrongly accused of cheating (never cheated in her life). She couldn't drive home for a while due to tears in her eyes. She would be wrongly branded as a cheater. They had a meeting of judges and officials in Fairview later, Barbara wasn't invited but she went there and knit one sock during the meeting. She expected someone to apologize, no one did, so she was still a cheater and didn't bring her work to fairs any more. The judges error cost her a first prize in hand knitted socks, possibly an award for most wins and a day of her life to drive to Fairview and knit a sock. No one apologized so she is still a cheater [...]

We had sheep, it began when, the Alleys in Belloy had sheep and once in a while a ewe would have triplet but could feed only 2 so they gave this little lamb to Barbara. She bottle fed it and we were in the sheep business. Normally when they sheer, the sheep freeze and don't move, this pet would start running any minute, so when we were done sheering, we raked the wool between the house and barn. When the herd was small, we would borrow a ram from the Alleys in Belloy. One morning the ram was missing. We were looking west, thinking that he would go home. 2 miles

Right: Some of Barbara's handiwork, 1981 (SPRA 0279.02.022a)

east, and a mile north, Casey was milking a cow and their three year old son, Teddy, outside said "daddy there is something here." Casey said "that's OK." "Daddy its coming close," a little later the kid said, "its pushing against my stomach." Casey went out and the ram had the boy against the wall. Through the children in school we found where our ram was. When we had enough wool we would send it to Sifton Manitoba and get a bunch of quilts and wool like for knitting [...]

After we left the farm, Barbara made quilts, painted Easter eggs and picture on ceramic or canvas. She bought a small car, a Taurus, called it Scootch, and we teased her that if she started the car, it would go straight to Fabric Land. She made a 100 quilts, some had a thousand pieces in them and she quilted them all by hand except two that she took to Beaverlodge. With her daughter and daughter-in-law she painted 8 dozen Easter eggs and it's a slow process, one would draws a pattern with wax and soak it in dye, where the wax was the dye didn't stick, they would wax another pattern and dip it in dye 2 more times. Each time the egg had to be dry to apply the wax [...]



Getting Crafty

Whether they used a chainsaw and a block of wood or pair of knitting needs and a ball of yarn, South Peace residents have always taken pride in their handicraft skills.



Above: Just-A-Mere-Ladies Club, with a quilt they have likely made. Two small girls in front are unidentified. Ca. 1955 (SPRA 481.05)



Left: Maggie Reich knitting a blanket, ca. 1960 (SPRA 573.03.26)

Below left: Two women, presumably members of the Grande Prairie Craft Guild, operate a loom while a man looks on, ca. 1959. (SPRA 032.08.08.0246)

Below right: A group of ladies in ethnic dress with a sewing machine and spinning wheel on the Valhalla Vikings parade float for Beaverlodge's Golden Jubilee Parade, 1955. (SPRA 032.08.08.0047)



Above: Displays in the 1913 Grande Prairie Agricultural Fair included two birds in a cage, pillows, quilts, clothing, soap and other handicraft items. (SPRA 024.01.05.04, 032.08.08.0321)

Top left: Beth Sheehan knitting inside her and Everett's first farm home, 1950 (SPRA 002.01.03.167)

Bottom left: Johnny Stark demonstrating chainsaw carving at the Stompede in 1985. (SPRA 050.08.04.064)

Below: Ceramic painting at the 1979 DeBolt Heritage Day celebration. (SPRA 116.09.01.01.0497)



Useful & Beautiful

Functional Art in the Home

William Morris famously declared, “Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.” Fortunately, we do not always need to choose between useful and beautiful—many types of handicrafts allow us to furnish our homes with objects that meet both criteria.

Woodworking, for instance, can produce many attractive and functional pieces. Bert Tieman, a long-time Grande Prairie resident, was an avid woodworker. He is shown at right passing on his skill to a young boy. The Tieman family fonds (fonds 039) contains many plans for woodworking projects. Some of them are commercially published plans for furnishings such as bunk beds, living room tables, and desks, while other plans are hand-drawn. It is likely that some of these pieces ended up furnishing the Tieman home. Additionally, Bert handcrafted the pews, tables, and Bishop’s Chair for Christ Church Anglican in Grande Prairie, where he and his wife Miriam attended for many years. Both Bert and Miriam were active volunteers with the Peace School of Hope, where Bert taught a woodworking class. He also supported Swan Industries, a woodworking shop for people with disabilities.

Evy McBryan (fonds 595) is perhaps best known for her paintings of the Peace Country. However, it seems likely that she was interested in ceramics and pottery as well. A handwritten notebook titled “Ceramics and Kindred Crafts 1935” and belonging to E. Newton (Fonds 001, SPRA 1987.67.27) is thought to have belonged to Evy, who was married to Stanley Newton and studying art at that time. On the first page she writes that “The discovery of fire meant the eating of cooked foods instead of raw, which necessitated the use of dishes. That was the problem which set primitive man to fashion pottery. Chance led to the discovery that by mixing clay with



Above: Bert Tieman working on what appears to be a woodworking project in a workshop with a child, August 1979. (SPRA 1985.02.217.224W)

water and baking it in the sun they could make receptacles for food and water.” Although pottery, ceramics, and other similar items are often created as ornamental pieces, Evy reminds us of their origin as items that met a need in daily life; my own dressing table has a pot and a tray created by Erika Moore-Adrain, a potter and former South Peace resident, that hold small items like lipstick and hair pins.

SPRA’s reference files also contain information about local artists who create not only woodwork and pottery, but also items like candles, saddles, and metal furniture. What useful and beautiful pieces in your home were created here in the South Peace?

Taxidermy

Crafting Art & Science

Taxidermy and other methods of preserving animals have been practiced for an extremely long time, with the ancient Egyptians being the most famous. Modern taxidermy though is more closely connected with the methods of Victorian era naturalists. The craft was a way for European scientists to preserve animal specimens for long term study and to display the wildlife of the colonies to the residents of the home countries.

As the craft of taxidermy for scientific purposes developed, innovative and hazardous new methods were popularized. The animal skins used for taxidermy had been stuffed with rags and sawdust, creating especially lumpy likenesses. The development of wire frames and sculpted mannequins to fill the skins created more anatomically accurate taxidermy mounts. The use of an arsenic laced soap, developed by ornithologist Jean-Baptiste Bécœur, was very effective in preventing pest damage while also making taxidermy mounts extremely toxic.

While dangerous enough to later be replaced with non-toxic methods, arsenic soap and anatomically correct mounts helped the art explode in popularity. By the 19th century the profession of taxidermy was widespread, supporting scientific study and public education. The use of taxidermy as an art form in its own right increased in popularity as well; the craft only de-

clined as camera technology advanced to support the emergence of nature photography.

Taxidermy has remained as an enduring craft in the 21st century. In the South Peace examples of taxidermy connected to hunting, education, and conservation are common; this is perhaps most illustrated by the Wembley taxidermist Gavin Craig.

Taking a correspondence course in 1957 with the Northwestern School of Taxidermy in Omaha, Craig began a lifelong craft. This passion was connected to his career in conservation as a fish & wildlife officer and for Ducks Unlimited as many of the animals used for his taxidermy were found on the job as roadkill. Craig has since donated much of his collection to educational institutes in the area, with the largest collection gifted to the Philip J. Currie Museum in 2020.



Above: Great Horned Owl (Gavin Craig, ID 2020.2.6, Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum)



Left: GP Museum wildlife display (SPRA 001.08.06.03.01.70)

New at the Archives

With a new archivist, Jack, joining the Archives in September, we have begun catching up on the backlog of processing that has developed in the last few months.

Since the start of September eleven gift agreements have been completed for donations that were new or ongoing. These have largely been small archival donations, additions to the reference library in the reading room, and accruals to existing fonds like the Lake Saskatoon Community Club fonds (0540).



One recent donation will be added as accruals to the Paulette Hrychiw fonds (197), Maurice Pivert fonds (527), and the Andre & Jeanne Pivert fonds (528). This donation contains a number of photograph albums taken by the Pivert family of the South Peace region and a postcard collection of Grande Prairie and Canada (seen above).

Of special interest is a set of letters between Maurice Pivert and family members who lived in France, which have already been translated into English by the donor.

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A special thanks to the following funding organizations for their support of this project:

- City of Grande Prairie
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