

TELLING OUR STORIES



Volume 8

DECEMBER 1, 2016

Issue 1

a publication of South Peace Regional Archives

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Group photograph of WWI Headquarters Staff (Third British Army) with Charles T.M. Turner second from left in front row, ca. 1915 (SPRA 2005.053.06)

Take Note

Interested in learning more about:

***DNA tests and what they can tell
you about your ancestors?***

Basic Genealogy?

Genealogy online?

You are invited to attend

Family History Day

Saturday, February 25, 2017

**10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the
Grande Prairie Public Library**

featuring

**Leslie Anderson from
Ancestry.ca**

December 1, 2016

Dear Members & Supporters;

I am pleased that we are once again increasing the distribution number for "Telling Our Stories." Some of those will go to the sixteen new members who have signed up in the past few months, but we have also added the seven Grande Spirit Seniors Lodges to our "free" list. Thanks to board member Beth Sande for that suggestion.

Our theme for this newsletter is Immigration, but as usual, there are several topics which over-ride that theme, including a Belgian researcher with a World War II project in the community of Wommelgem on p. 5; a newly donated artifact from Doug & Angie Crerar on p. 18; a story about Peace Country settlers in Yellowknife from our relocated Leslie Gordon on p. 20; and a story about the first postmaster in Bezanson by Society member Wanda Zenner. We truly appreciate these submissions. It makes our newsletter more vibrant and interesting to read, as well as supplying more material for the Archives.

Since we have several volunteers working on our "Soldiers' Memorial," we decided to include some of those stories as well. The featured photographs in this issue are of the display Archivist Patricia Greber created for Archives Week 2016 on the theme "Coming to Alberta."

If you're wondering what's been happening at the Archives, check out our most recent donations on p. 26 and maybe you can help us find the answer for a researcher in Italy on p. 24.

Our building fund continues to grow thanks to a donation from the Hythe Homecoming Committee 2016 (p. 26) and our Raising the Archives fundraiser (p. 25). Thanks to attendees and donors, we were able to add another \$10,000 to our building fund from that event.

Thanks for supporting a Regional Archives, and have an excellent Christmas!

Sincerely,
Mary Nutting, editor

TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY

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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.

Found: Adam Tolway

By Patricia Greber

We often get requests from researchers at the archives but a recent request about a local soldier was quite touching. A member of the Heemkring (local history society) 'De Kaeck' of Wommelgem, near Antwerp, Belgium, Niko Van Kerckhoven, sent us an email inquiring about WWII soldier Adam Tolway.

Adam Tolway was born in Poland in 1922. Together with parents Frank and Eva, and siblings Ludwig, Evelyn, and Mary, he arrived in Canada in 1927. Their final destination was Lymburn where the Tolway children attended Lambert School. As he got older Adam helped his father on the farm, and later he worked as a section man for the Northern Alberta Railroad. Adam signed up for WWII in Grande Prairie on April 2, 1943 and was stationed in many different locations in western Canada.



Adam was able to speak Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and English which may have been an asset to his military career. He was transferred to the Calgary Highlanders and left Canada in August 1944 for active service. On August 30 he arrived in France and on September 22, 1944, Adam and his unit reached Belgium.

Adam Tolway in uniform, ca. 1943 (SPRA 2016.48)



Placing flowers on the graves at Wommelgem, where Adam was first buried. Used with permission of Niko Van Kerckhoven

It was on this day, less than a month after his arrival and during the liberation of Wommelgem, that Adam Tolway was killed in action.

Niko, the researcher, is part of a project that is in the process of

"...linking the different regimental histories to the few eyewitness accounts we have from the locals." Niko also states that he is "...a guide in one of the Antwerp fortresses, Fort 2 at Wommelgem, which was used as an Advanced Dressing Station by the 18th Canadian Field Ambulance, although Private Tolway was already dead when he was transported from the Albert Canal Bridgehead. In fact, he died very close to the spot where my wife's office is located nowadays... It brings history very close and personal to us."

Adam was initially buried in Wommelgem but his remains were later moved to the Canadian Cemetery at Bergen-op-Zoom in Holland.

We were able to help Niko with his request. A Facebook post generated a lot of interest in this story. Alec McPherson of Beaverlodge scanned a photograph of Adam that was hanging in the Hythe Legion and we shared that with Niko. The West County News also ran the story and a few days later one of Adam's relatives, Mary Fowler, stopped in at the archives with some documents and photographs that she had.

It was a community effort to find what we could about Adam and in the end we are happy to learn of Adam's story and sacrifice.

Featured Fonds: Pierre Lozeron Family fonds



Lozeron-Girard family in Switzerland, 1893 - Madame Lozeron-Girard shown with children (from left): Pierre (1887), Jean (1890 c.), Madeleine (1878), Sophie (1891 c.), Paul (1883) and Agnes (1888). (SPRA 0006.02.01)

Pierre Lozeron family fonds. — 1893-1980. — 86 cm of textual records, 29 photographs.

Biographical Sketch

Pierre Lozeron was born in 1887, in Auverern, Canton of Neuchatel, Switzerland, where the family were grape growers and wine merchants. When the family of six children lost both parents, Pierre and his younger brother Jean decided to seek their fortunes in America. A sister, Sophie, also immigrated to the States.

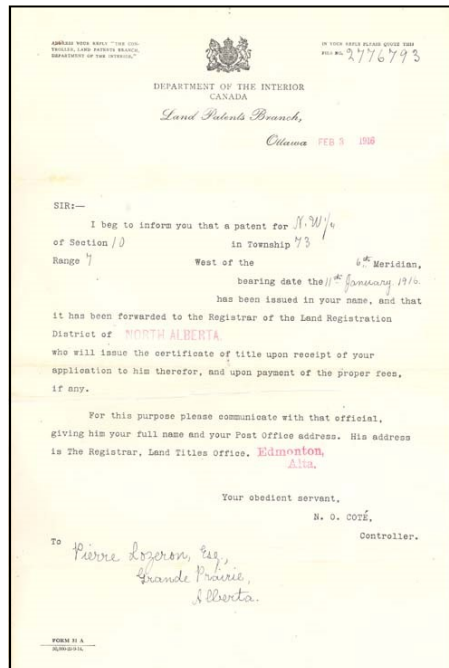
The brothers left Switzerland in 1910, when Pierre was 23 and Jean 20 years of age. By that time, Pierre had completed a time as sharp-shooter in the Swiss Army and Jean had taken some

Agricultural College courses. They were well-prepared for a pioneer lifestyle in the Peace Country. After spending two years farming in Nebraska State, Pierre went on to the Peace Country, and in July 1912 walked in over the Edson Trail with his friend Charlie Heller. He chose the NW 10-73-7-W6, northwest of Bear Lake, for a homestead. Here there was a natural flowing well in a little forest giving him a fresh supply of water and wood for fence posts. But the biggest attraction was that it was all open land on the slope up from Bear Lake, a warm slope like they had for raising grapes in Switzerland. He also claimed the adjoining quarter section, SW 16-73-7-W6, for his brother Jean.

Traveling over the long trail with their supplies, the Lozeron brothers arrived to stay in December, 1912. They lived, that winter, in the box of their sleigh, with snow banked around it and a tarp for a tent on top of it. The next year they built a log cabin with a sod roof and a cross on the front of it like a Swiss flag.

In 1918, Dora Koberg made her first trip to the Peace Country with the Thomas family from St. Paul's, Minnesota. Dora was born in Berlin, Iowa and attended a Presbyterian Teachers' college in Minnesota. In 1926 Pierre and Dora were married.

Pierre Lozeron's 1915 Land Patent



The couple raised three children on the land that Pierre had filed on: Paul, born in 1927, became a medical doctor in Neuchatel, Switzerland; Homer, born in 1934, became a biochemist in the United States; and Andre, born in 1939, received a degree in agriculture from the University of Alberta and became a farm commentator for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In 1939, a new family farm home was built by William Balisky.

The children attended Canuck School and later high school in Grande Prairie. Both Pierre and Dora were active with the United Farmers Association, Pierre as president of the Canuck U.F.A. Local, and Dora as a member of United Farm Women. During the development of the DEW Line and Radar stations after World War II, Dora was a civilian plane spotter (call letters EKBL 0218) for the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Although, like many immigrants in the early 20th century, Pierre and Dora rarely saw their families again, they carried on a voluminous correspondence, especially with the Lozeron extended family. Dora passed away in 1978, and for his final years Pierre lived in the Red Willow Lodge in Valleyview, then in Heritage Lodge in Grande Prairie. He passed away in 1980.

The management of the Lozeron family farm was taken over by Andre and Verna Lozeron circa 1955. They farmed until Andy's failing health forced them into retirement. The land and home was then rented out to neighbours.

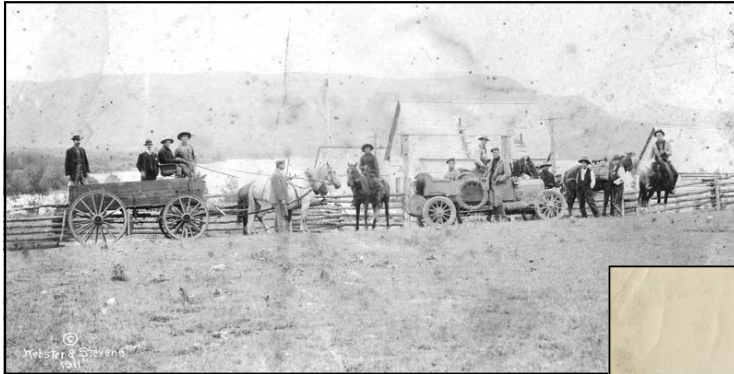
Scope and Content

The fonds consists of Lozeron family photographs; personal papers and correspondence of each member of the immediate family — Pierre, Dora Koberg Lozeron, Paul, Homer and Andre; farm documents from as early as 1915; farm account books from the 1930s to the 1960s; farming information from the 1950s and 1960s filed according to the UGG filing system; and correspondence from their extended family members in Switzerland, friends, and family members in Canada and the United States. The correspondence dates back to 1910, when the Lozeron boys first left Switzerland.



Postcard from Gerald Patterson to Jean Lozeron, July 1916. Gerald was killed in action less than a month later.

Featured Photos: Settling the South Peace



There were not many ways to get to the Peace Country when it opened up for settlement. The first option was to walk. Later the train arrived, and some brave souls travelled by car. Left: Settlers, wagons, horses, and car outside buildings and corral on the bank of the river, ca. 1911. (SPRA 1984.258.53c)

Why did they come?

Was it our fantastic weather, our metropolitan lifestyle, or maybe the modern conveniences boasted of by Peace Region residents? Not really. The main reason was land, land, land. In 1910, when Grande Prairie land opened for settlement, there was a stampede to apply; in one day alone there were 300 applicants for a homestead. Some people came because they thought it would be a big adventure, but many were unprepared for the struggles of living in a remote location and an unforgiving climate.

How did they get here?

Their boots were made for walking. Early settlers had no option but to walk to Grande Prairie. The first route was via the Long Trail, but in 1911 the Edson



Above: One often hears about the bachelors who settled in the Peace Country, but many times families would make the journey. This is the Miller family on the Edson Trail on their way to Pouce Coupe, ca. 1911. (SPRA 0032.08.08.0271)



Above: A couple on their honeymoon travels the Edson-Grande Prairie Trail to their homestead. (SPRA 116.09.01.01.844)

Left: Konstantine Elashuk's passport, 1924 (Fonds 116)

Above right: Peter Elashuk's passport, 1926 (Fonds 116)



Left: The indigenous people helped early settlers find food and in later years would often be guides on their hunting expeditions. This Cree family acted as guides on the Macklin's trip to Nose Mountain, ca. 1935 (SPRA 177.070)

Below: Once the settlers arrived on the trail they had to find a way for their supplies to be transported to their homesteads. In 1917 a large group of Norwegian settlers arrived from Minnesota and encountered this dilemma. Karl Dolemo (second from right) arrived with other Norwegian settlers from Minnesota at Valhalla on April 11, 1917. (SPRA 0256.02.02)

Trail opened up which made the journey much quicker, and in 1916 the train arrived which became the chosen form of travel.

Where did they arrive from?

The settlers journeyed from all over the world, as you can see from the passports: Europe, the States and from all over Canada. Most of the early settlers took out homesteads and worked on the land while others settled in town, starting businesses for the growing population.



Above: L-R Milo Berge, Adolf Slind, Bennie Velve, Bennie Berge, Ingebrigt Evjen, Milo Fuglem, Dick Olson. Milo Berge, Bennie Berge, Bennie Velve, and Ingebrigt Evjen came to the Peace Country and acquired homesteads in the Valhalla area. (SPRA 2000.73.143)



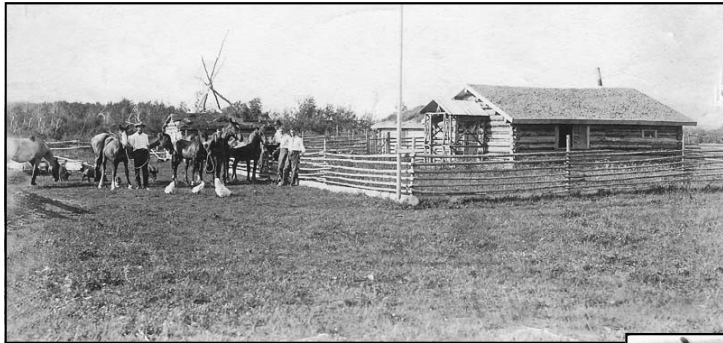
Left: Grande Prairie Train Station in winter, crowded with people and cars. The horse-drawn dray unloading the Royal Mail from the mail car in the foreground belonged to Mr. Alex Wishart. (SPRA 1997.13.07)



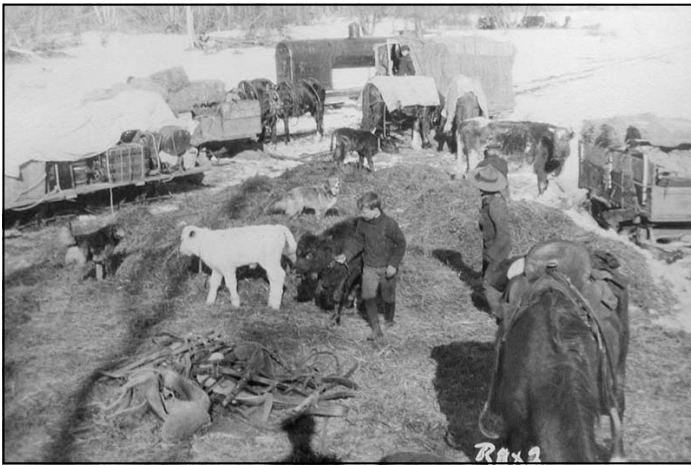
Left: O. Haaksted, Gilmore, Haaksted, Tommy, Lloyd, Arnold Christianson, and Schimler on a journey from Cecil Lake near Fort St. John to find homesteads, ca.1940. (SPRA 0483.01.34-09)



Above & left: Teodor Koda's passport (Fonds 192) and Certificate of Naturalization (SPRA 2011.42)



Left & below: The homestead of brothers Charles and Arthur Buck who arrived from England, ca. 1910 (exterior SPRA 298.05, interior SPRA. 298.04). They both signed up for WWI. Arthur fought for Canada and was killed in 1917. Charles went back to England where he joined the British army and was badly gassed. He returned to the homestead near Lake Saskatoon in 1918 but never fully recovered. Charles died in 1920 and is buried in the Lake Saskatoon Cemetery.



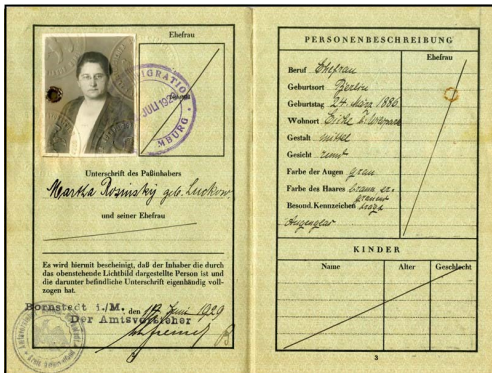
Above: At a stop along the trail this young boy was in charge of the calves, ca. 1911. The wagons and carts were strategically placed to form a perimeter fence for the animals. The feed was then spread inside the circle to keep the animals contained during rest stops. (SPRA 2001.01.185)



Above left: passports for Marie Lunde (Fonds 517) and Mathias Eggenheim (Fonds 169)

Above: A young girl in charge of the oxen team who are pulling a covered wagon, 1912. This could possibly be Euphemia McNaught. (SPRA 586.07.094)

Right: Lorenz & Martha Rozinsky's passports (SPRA 2015.086)



Left: Load of settlers' effects pulled by a team of horses on the way to Bear Lake, ca.1911. (SPRA 2001.02.760)

The Memoirs of Maria Wozniak

Translated and transcribed by Mathew Wozniak

Antoni Wozniak and Maria Parachin were both born in Poland in 1903. With poor opportunities in Poland and rumors of hostilities amongst nations, they decided to immigrate to Canada with their family. They had hoped to be able to go to Toronto, but ended up on a farm in the Wanham area, arriving June 24, 1930. Our newsletters this year will feature excerpts from Maria's memoirs, telling the story of their first years on the prairie. This episode begins in the fall of 1937.

In the fall of 1937, my husband went to stook and thresh. I will always remember the twenty-ninth of September, it was our first harvest, we threshed twenty-nine bushels of wheat. Also we got vegetables and potatoes enough for the whole winter. At harvest, my husband earned \$35.00 so we had money to buy shoes and winter clothes as well as groceries such as sugar, flour, salt, and tea.

Christmas holidays were much happier than the previous ones, we could exchange ten pounds of sugar for a gallon of moonshine or homemade vodka. Invited are neighbors and friends. During the summer we picked some raspberries and made some good wine. Our house is small and the walls are whitewashed. The table is set for eight people. On the table is homemade liquor colored with burned sugar. For the last few days we were getting ready for this occasion. I baked many buns with poppy seeds and then three-cornered buns. I also made cabbage rolls with buckwheat in them. On the table we placed homemade ham, sausage, fried chicken, and beets. My husband is glad to have that many guests and is treating them with vodka or wine. He had to have a drink with everyone and say Merry Christmas. We invited two boys with a violin and a guitar, John and Peter Paziuk. One room, one bed on which children are sleeping. Antoni had too many

drinks and went to sleep on the floor, forgetting about our guests. After supper we dance again, polka, waltz, and kozak. John Los keeps stamping the floor in one place until he broke two boards and there was a hole into the cellar. Little Eddy woke up from the noise, began to cry, and came running to me. We looked for a hammer and nails but did not find any. In a situation like that, the guests began to leave. I am saying goodbye to everyone, thanking them for coming to our first party and apologizing for the mishap. There were twenty-two guests.

Being pregnant, I have to go to the village of Wanham and see the District Nurse. January 2, 1938, neighbors are returning their daughter to school in Wanham. I am to wait on the road and meet them there. I walk about a half mile to the road and wait. Outside it is frost and miserably cold. They are not coming so I start to walk. After walking about a mile, I see a building. I go to the door and knock. After a while a woman opened the door for me and upon seeing me, that I am chilled to the bones, she asked me to come in out of the cold. My hands and feet are numb. The lady recognized me and knows that I must live nearby. The people did come and took me into their caboose. This is a small erected home on a sleigh and where they keep a small fire to keep warm. The horses are covered with frost and are pulling the sleigh slowly through the snow. In the front are sitting both Chernowskis and their daughter Stefania.

In the rear are bags of potatoes and carrots where I have to sit on top of. Hard and uncomfortable. On my back snow is blowing.

We arrive at 1:00 after noon. They left me off where the nurse lives and went to town. I found out that the baby will come on the eighteenth of March and I am to visit her again in a month.



A couple traveling over the Edson Trail by horse and caboose. A caboose was a small canvas covered sleigh which served as shelter and kitchen for the settlers on the long trip, ca. 1911 (SPRA 0024.01.09.07)

My husband is going from neighbor to neighbor looking for seed wheat, we need fifteen bushels. He went to Michael Yurchyshyn who refused because his wheat was No. 3 and frozen. Went to Mike Varedka, he had nice wheat but refused because someone else had spoken for it. Then he went to John Los who refused because he had wild oats in it. Then my husband went to an

Englishman from Southampton, two brothers, one was Thomas Gicks, veterans from the world war. There he found seed wheat but for a dollar a bushel. My husband says that he has no money but could he work it off in the summer. The Englishman is thinking, then goes to talk to his wife, then asks if Antoni's wife could wash for three people for fifty cents a week.

January 15, 1938 the hard work starts. I have to wash, iron, and deliver about thirty pieces of clothes. It was particularly difficult in the winter. Lots of snow and frost to walk, carrying the box on my back (over two miles). My husband did not understand that a woman with child cannot do hard work.

He worked hard too, cutting wood, hauling snow, went into the bush to shoot squirrels, he would leave in the morning when it was dark and return in the dark.

February 24, 1938 at 6:00 PM was born to us a boy weighing seven and a half pounds. He was three weeks early but thank God the child began to grow and in a few days I was able to return to and continue the same work. All the washing was done on a scrub board and wrung out by hand, then dried on a clothesline and ironed. I have to prepare four children for school. In the evenings I spin wool and knit mittens and socks because in these rubber shoes, they would freeze their feet. They have to wear two pairs of socks all the time. At home we are short of good and warm footwear.

Returning home, I am sitting on hay in the smoky hut. Got a pain in my back. Arrived home late in the evening. Our friend stopped his horses by the trampled trail made by our children going to school. Everything is white, I can't see the trail. A few times I wandered off the trail and fell into snow up to the knees. I see a small light in the window of our house. Dogs hear me and then come running through the snow. They are friendly and are jumping to my face. At home, it is warm because of the fire. The children are happy to see their mother who left early in the morning. At home, we keep in secret that there is to come a baby into this world.

Our house is built out of round logs and plastered on both sides with mud and straw. Inside stands a bed, two benches, and a plank bed where our daughter sleeps. We have a metal kitchen range and a heater. In our home are two windows, one on the north and the other on the south wall. On the north wall is a ladder on which our children climb up to the attic to sleep in a bed laid on the ceiling beams. The roof is covered with boards but it is not very good, when it snows, it comes into the attic.

January 3, 1938, the two older boys went to school, while the two younger ones are learning at home. Winter time, there is no milk in the home. We fry in a fry-pan, coarse brown flour and then pour it into slightly salted boiling water. When we had bacon or lard, I fried onions and in this way prepared soup. When I didn't have lard, I used tallow which had an odd and unwelcome odor.

Warrant Officer Michael Bzowy

By Kathryn Auger

The letter in this October 12, 1944 article is from a bereaved mother in Quebec, writing to the mother of Michael Bzowy, who was mentioned in her son's diary. It is a moving reminder of war's far reaching effect, even on strangers, united only by their concern for their sons. The mother in Quebec is hoping to find someone to talk to her about her son; the mother in Rycroft is awaiting news of her son who had appeared in casualty lists.

Dear Mrs. Bzowy:
I am enclosing a snapshot of your son (I have no idea of his Next of Kin) as I only saw his name in a casualty list that gave no other detail. I found it among my son's effects which were sent here from England, and thought you might be glad to have it. I do not know if your boy ever mentioned my boy, Thomas F. How, but I found Mike Bzowy often mentioned in my son's diary. My Tommy was lost over Germany on May 14, 1943, and I have so hoped that some day I would meet a lad from the RCAF who would have known him and talk to me about him. My heart breaks each time I see one of his friends names in the casualty lists and I have seen a great many. Please God your boy will be found. Pilot Officer of War. With most anxious time of waiting for news and hoping if you have any information of my son, that you will write. Sincerely yours, D. How.
God was pleased because one week after the receipt of the above letter, the followig telegram was received by Mrs. Bzowy:
"Pleased to advise International Red Cross quoting German information states your son, Warrant Officer Michael A. Bzowy, is a Prisoner of War. Letter follows."
Letter was received in confirmation and Mike by this time is or will be soon a recipient of a very handsome parcel.

Flight Lieutenant John Archer

By Meg Archer

John Archer was born on August 21, 1918 in Lake Saskatoon to Ruth and Joseph Archer. He grew up in Wembley, and he attended the U of A for one year. On January 8, 1941 he joined the Air Force in Edmonton, and he was posted in various locations in Western Canada.

John married Jessamy Smith on August 10, 1942 in Edmonton, and they lived in Claresholm. In 1943 he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and his main job was flight instruction, and armament testing. In 1945 he was discharged and he and his wife Jessamy moved to Beaverlodge. In Beaverlodge the Archer's owned the Marshall-Wells hardware store until 1976. John also served as the mayor for seven years.

The Archers had six children: Fred, Bill, Joe, Mavis, Robert, and David. In 1986 John and Jessamy moved to Qualicum Beach, BC. Jessamy died in 1999. John remarried to Mary Peters on February, 3, 2001. He died on September 10, 2010 in Victoria, and is buried in Beaverlodge.



L.A.C. John Archer R.C.A.F. married Jessamy Smith on August 10, 1942. The wedding took place at the United Church's Indian Residential School in Edmonton where Jessamy's father was the farm instructor. Here they are ready to board the train after the wedding. (SPRA 0399.12.27)

Pilot Officer Robert Ernest Nelson

Robert Ernest (Ernie) Nelson was born on March 4, 1925 in Grande Prairie and had four brothers; two older and two younger. The Nelson family lived in the Forbes House, a provincial historic site in Grande Prairie, from 1936 to 1947. Ernie's father, Isaac Nelson, co-owned the Nelson & Archibald General Store where Ernie spent some of his summers



Ernie at 17 in 1942 when he joined the Air Force

working. As a child, he attended Montrose Elementary Public School and then went on to attend the Grande Prairie High School.

At the age of 17, Ernie Nelson (R212423) decided to join the Air Force and trained to become a rear gunner. Once overseas, he had advanced training. He was posted to 429 (Canadian) Squadron, stationed at Leeming, Yorkshire.

Just before leaving on his last operation, on November 20, 1944, Ernie received his promotion to Pilot Officer (J92597). The next day, Halifax #M377 left the base in Leeming, England, at 15.46 hours for a raid on Castrop-Rauxel, located in the Ruhr Valley, five miles northwest of Dortmund, Germany. The target was the oil refinery. After climbing to 18,000 feet, they set course, went over London, crossed the channel and French coast. Two minutes from the target, at 19.30 hours, over Langenburg, Germany, they were illuminated by a single searchlight. A night fighter, directly underneath,

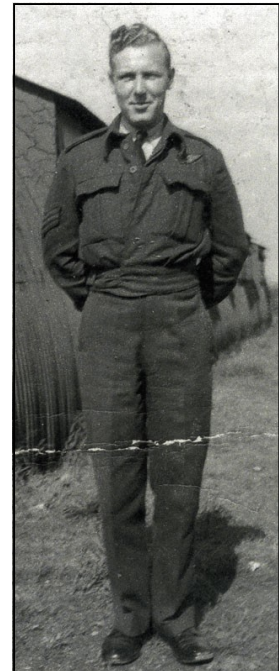


Ernest in 1945 after he came back to Canada

spotted them and opened fire.

Ernie, the rear gunner, opened fire and the enemy aircraft, a JU-88, burst into flames above and to starboard. They continued on to the target. After releasing the bombs, the pilot gave the order to bail out. Ernie turned in his seat, opened the door, and jumped out. The aircraft went completely out of control. The port wing dropped off at the root. The pilot, hearing no response from the crew, looked into the nose to see an opened parachute. The crew could not get out. At 400 to 500 feet, the aircraft went onto its back.

The pilot was thrown out and landed less than 50 feet from the plane, badly burned. The plane exploded over a house in Langenberg, Germany and landed in the garden. The house is still standing today, in 2005. The bomber burned fiercely upon impact, killing the remaining crew members trapped inside. Ernie broke a bone in his foot when he landed. He became a Prisoner of War (POW no. 1254) at Stalag Luft VII (Bankau) and remained a POW until the end of the war. Ernie returned to Grande Prairie and died in Edmonton on October 15, 2004.



Ernie in 1944 on the base in Leeming

Corporal Harold Hugh Black

By Kaylee Dyck

At the outbreak of World War I, Canadians eagerly stepped forward to show their support for Britain. In a matter of weeks, more than 32,000 men had amassed at Valcartier, Quebec, and soon the First Contingent, CEF, was headed to England.

Some complained that the men in rural areas were not such keen volunteers, although Britain was encouraging the farmers to plant even bigger crops in order to feed both soldiers and civilians, in Britain and Canada alike. But the men of the South Peace did not shirk their military duty in any way. Hundreds of men from the area (which was quite remote at the time) joined the army, and quite a number were killed or left with injuries and memories to haunt them.

Harold Hugh Black was born in Fergus, Ontario in 1891. Along with his brother Hubert John Black, he came to the Peace country in 1913, and they settled in Halcourt. In September of 1915, Harold, Hubert, and their neighbour Gordon Moyer walked more than forty kilometers from their homesteads to Lake Saskatoon to enlist. Out of the three men, only Harry was accepted at the time. Hubert was too slender and Gordon had flat feet (it is interesting that they were declared unfit for service, considering the distance they had just walked); however, both were drafted in the 1917 conscription.

Harry embarked for England on April 28, 1916 and arrived there on May 7. In June, he was transferred from the 66th Battalion to the 31st, and shortly thereafter landed in France. In October he was promoted to Corporal. About a year after his promotion, Corporal Black was granted leave in England, and shortly after returning to action, he sustained a gunshot wound to the scalp at Passchendaele. He remained in the hospital for twelve weeks before being discharged to duty on January 28, 1918. Harry returned to France in May and it wasn't long before he took another bullet, this one in his right shoulder and in the midst of a valiant

act that earned him a Military Medal. The citation in his battalion's war diary reads like this:

“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty at Rosieres on the morning of August 9th, 1918 - This N.C.O. utterly regardless of personal danger, rushed a machine gun post which was holding up his section, killing two of the enemy and making several prisoners. Later was wounded, not being able to reach the post he crawled up close and succeeded in dropping several bombs into the post, putting it out of action, thus allowing his platoon to move forward.”

Following this act of bravery, Corporal Black spent about five weeks in the Military Convalescent Hospital at Epsom. The war ended not long after he had recovered, but before returning home he was also briefly posted to a concentration camp in England.

Corporal Harold Black was discharged in London, Ontario on January 30, 1919. He did not arrive in Canada in good health, and as a result of having been severely gassed during the war, he took up residence at the Central Alberta Sanatorium (now Baker Park) in Calgary. Harry died in Calgary on April 10, 1923 at 31 years of age. He is buried in the family plot at Belsyde Cemetery in Fergus, Ontario.

Sources:

Attestation Paper at Library & Archives Canada

Canadian Great War Project

Citation: <http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/e/e040/e000976644.jpg>

Grave Marker: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=54843821>

Enlistment Information: <http://www.warmuseum.ca/learn/dispatches/french-canada-and-recruitment-during-the-first-world-war/#tabs>

Farm or Fight: <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol13/no2/page57-eng.asp>

Numbers: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/first-world-war/canada/Canada3>

Lieutenant James Archibald Foote

By Teresa Dyck



A group of soldiers belonging to the 256th Construction Battalion outside a building in Toronto, March 16, 1917. James Foote is probably one of the soldiers in the picture. (SPRA 0644.01.02)

James Archibald Foote was born in Perth, Ontario to David and Catherine Foote. His service files show some conflict regarding his date of birth, with his initial Attestation Paper stating July 23, 1880 and subsequent documents stating July 20, 1887. In August of 1914, at the onset of the First World War, James enlisted in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and shipped overseas to serve on the Western Front.

The Princess Patricia's fought at the Second Battle of Ypres, which lasted from April 22 until May 25, 1915. It was the first mass use of German poison gas, and also the battle during which Lt. John McCrae penned "In Flanders Fields." In the days preceding the battle, James was digging communication trenches at Polygon Wood, near Ypres. On April 11, he "got a rifle bullet through left thigh, about 8 inches above the knee." He spent eleven weeks in hospitals in France and England, but the wound had been a severe one and after leaving the hospital James still walked with a limp and experienced pain in his leg. He was discharged from the army and returned to Canada in January of 1916.

But James by no means left army life behind him. He was influential in recruiting for the 257th Railway Construction & Forestry Battalion; his forceful public speaking skills made him successful at securing men. On January 1, 1917 he reenlisted in the 256th Railway

Construction Battalion. This time he left behind a wife; on March 22, 1917, four days before his departure, James married Nellie Alice Mason in Toronto.

James was a dedicated and courageous officer. On August 16, 1918, he was awarded the Military Cross "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty while engaged in the maintenance of light railways. The area where he was working was subjected to intense shell fire, and the line was broken in six places. He repeatedly reorganised his working parties, who had suffered casualties, and by his example and encouragement kept his men at work under most difficult conditions. By his efforts the line was kept open, and the supply of ammunition was ensured."

When he returned from overseas in 1919, James and Nellie moved to Sexsmith. James passed away in Edmonton on August 14, 1949 and was buried in the Soldiers' Plot at Beechmount Cemetery.

Sources:

Service file at Library & Archives Canada

Canadian Great War Project

"The storied Princess Patricia's regiment born during deadly conflict" (<http://ww1.canada.com/battlefront/the-storied-princess-patricias-regiment-born-during-deadly-conflict-with-video>)

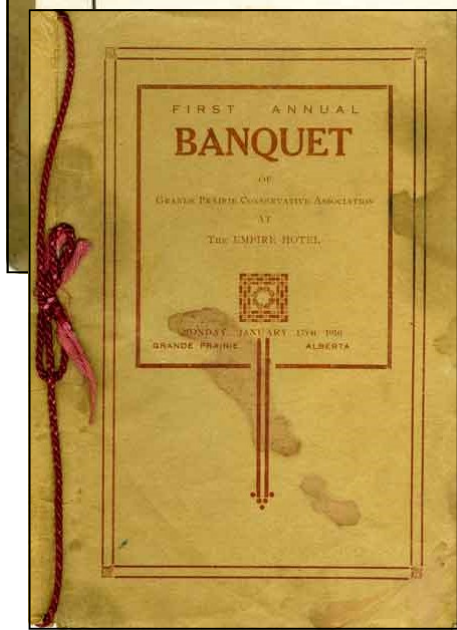
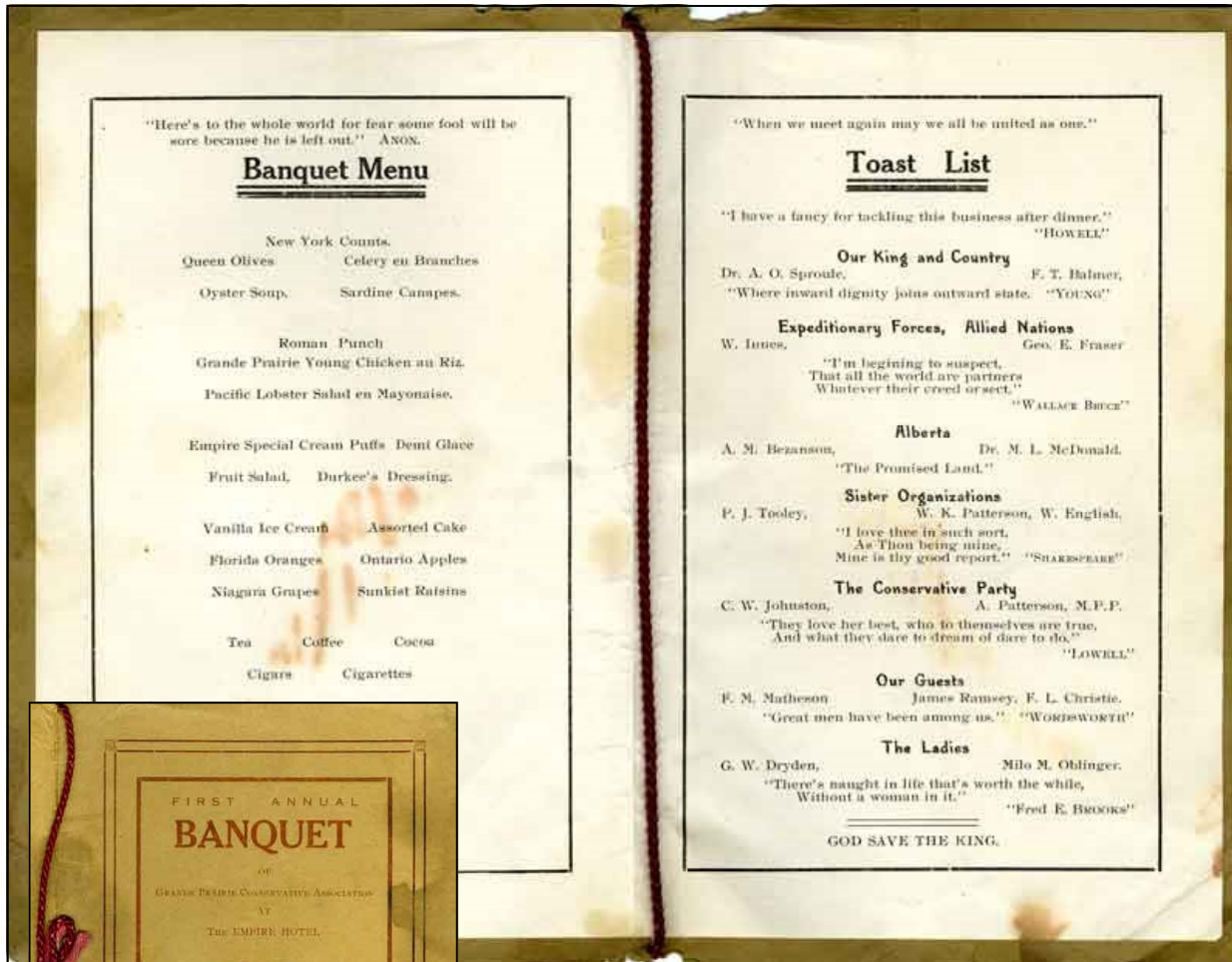
The Second Battle of Ypres (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Ypres)

Grande Prairie papers, April 9, 1918 and August 18, 1949

Featured Paper Artifact: Grande Prairie Conservative Association Programme

Peace Country Connections

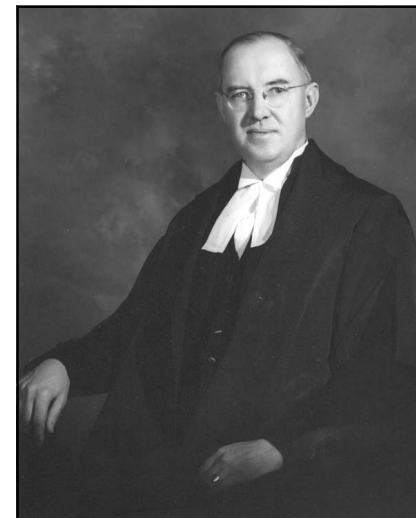
By Leslie Gordon



This programme from the first annual banquet of the Grande Prairie Conservative Association in 1916 was recently donated to the Archives by Doug and Angie Crerar. Perhaps the menu can serve as an inspiration for upcoming holiday feasts, and be sure to read the wise and witty quotations that accompany the toast list.

When my family and I moved to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories this summer, we missed our home in Grande Prairie. I missed the sense of knowing the history as I wandered the streets and drove in the countryside. During my time at South Peace Regional Archives I had learned so much about the people who went before us in the region and now I was in a new place I didn't know anything about. That can be an interesting place to be because there is so much to learn and discover. It can also be a lonely place because nothing is familiar. However, the longer I've been here in Yellowknife, the more connections I've discovered to people of the Peace.

I was delighted to find that several of the characters who played roles in developing the Peace Country had also played roles in Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories. The first one I encountered was J. H. Sissons. Having small children to entertain over the summer, we made the rounds of the local school playgrounds. The first one we visited was at J. H. Sissons School. John Howard Sissons was born in 1892 in Ontario. He attended university at Queens, graduated in 1917, articulated in Alberta, and was called to the bar in 1921. He practiced law in Grande Prairie and the Peace Country for the next nineteen years and also had a stint as Member of Parliament from 1940 to 1945. In 1955, Sissons became the first judge of the Territorial Court of the Northwest Territories, moving with his wife, Frances, to Yellowknife. He went out on circuit to cover his vast



Judge John Howard Sissons, ca. 1950 (SPRA 1970.78.01)

territory, with the court staff and counsel travelling with him by air to various small communities in the Northwest Territories, an estimated 25,000 miles twice per year, plus special trips, as needed. Sissons served as judge until his retirement in 1966.

In my efforts to learn more about my new home and entertain myself over the summer, I got in the habit of picking up free back issues of the magazine *Up Here* from the tourist information centre. We called in there often not only to supply me with reading material, but also to use the bathrooms, a frequent

need for a family with young children visiting playgrounds. One of the *Up Here* issues I read was on the history of northern aviation. Two of the key players were names familiar to Peace Country aviation: Wop May and Grant McConachie. Wilfred Reid "Wop" May was born in Manitoba in 1896. A famed WWI aviator, involved in the 1918 battle when the Red Baron was shot down, May became a commercial pilot and bush pilot after the war. Wop May was the first pilot to land in Grande Prairie. He brought airplanes north for sports days in Spirit River, Grande Prairie, and Peace River in 1920. After oil was discovered in Norman Wells, Northwest Territories, Wop May was one of the two pilots hired by Imperial Oil to fly planes in

from New York. Then, Grande Prairie's Harry Adair hired May to fly his new airplane up from the United States. The resulting Edmonton and Grande Prairie Aircraft Company was unfortunately short-lived when the heavily loaded plane hit a telephone wire and crashed during takeoff from Grande Prairie. Wop May was also involved in a famous mercy flight to the



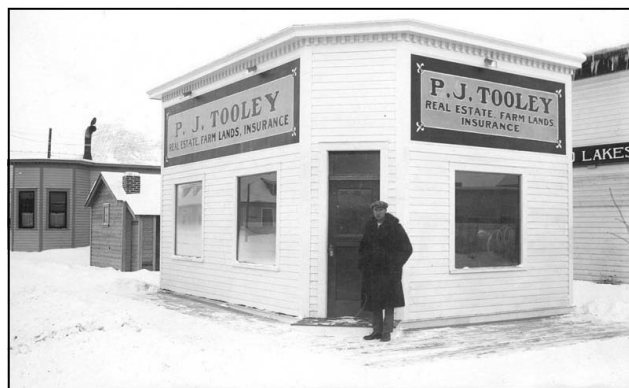
Captain W.R. "Wop" May, of WWI fame, barnstormed at local fairs in 1920. He is shown with a group of welcoming Grande Prairie town officials on pastureland west of town. (SPRA 2001.01.136)

north Peace Country in 1929, flying diphtheria antitoxin to Red River, beyond Fort Vermilion, in the dead of winter. The plane had to stop for refuelling in Peace River both there and back. Also in 1929, May obtained the weekly airmail contract for Grande Prairie and the first airmail contract in the Northwest Territories, flying the Mackenzie River air mail route from Fort McMurray to Aklavik. Later, he was employed by Canadian Airways (which became part of Canadian Pacific Airlines) before and after WWII. Wop May died in 1952.

Grant McConachie was born in 1909 in Ontario and grew up in Edmonton. In 1928, he took flying lessons at the Edmonton & Northern Alberta Aero Club and embarked on a lifetime of aviation and business exploits. His first airline was Independent Airways, founded in 1931. After its demise, he partnered in United Air Transport, later Yukon Southern Air Transport. In 1937, UAT obtained the contract to provide weekly air service to the Yukon. Although the route was supposed to include fuel stops only in Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, and Lower Post, an unscheduled stop was made on Bear Lake, near Grande Prairie, on the first run. Mayor Percy Tooley was an avid aviation fan and also the local United Air

Transport agent and airport manager. Along with several other bush airlines, Yukon Southern Air Transport was purchased by the CPR in 1941, becoming Canadian Pacific Airlines, with McConachie as general manager of the western lines. It was Canadian Pacific Airlines which built the Yellowknife Airport in 1944. In 1947, McConachie became president of CPA, a position he held until his death in 1965.

Finally, driving into Old Town Yellowknife to deliver my daughter to yet another birthday party, a neighbourhood sign for "Peace River Flats" caught my eye. Knowing that the Peace River runs nowhere near this area, I figured that the name must relate to the people, rather than the geography. An historical plaque erected nearby confirmed my hypothesis. The name originated with the many settlers in that particular area who had come from Peace River during the late 1930s. Yellowknife as a settlement was itself quite new at the time, with the first free (visible) gold having only been found in 1933 and the Con Mine going into production in 1938. Peace River Flats was one of the first settled areas. Drawn by the recent gold discoveries and boomtown hype of Yellowknife even as their own farms were experiencing difficulties due to the economic depression and drought of the Great Depression, the settlers of Peace River Flats travelled 1000 km by boat and barge up the Peace River, up the Slave River to Fort Resolution, and then across Great Slave Lake to Yellowknife. In July 1936,



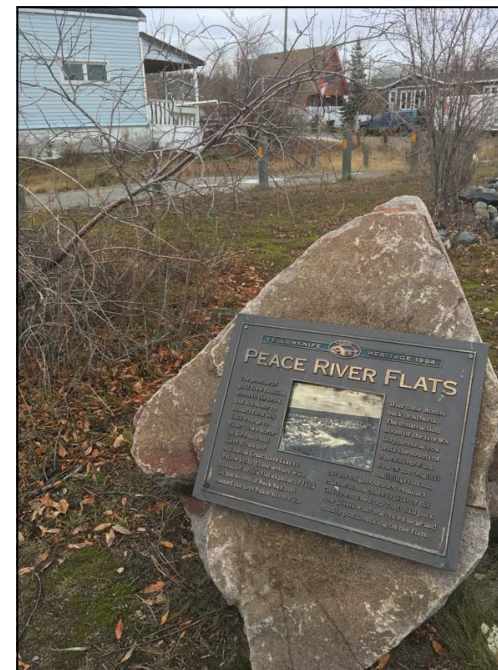
P.J. Tooley at the doorway to P.J. Tooley Real Estate, Farm Lands, Insurance, ca. 1920 (SPRA 1988.23.01b)

the power scow *Beulah*, bearing several people, including Harry Weaver, Bud Devore, Micky Hagen, and Frank Sedore arrived. The Weaver & Devore Trading Ltd. store is still in operation near the site. Other Peace River families followed, making up the majority of the people arriving in Yellowknife in 1937. The Frank Buckley family, whose small collection of photographs is now in the Northwest Territories Archives, lived in the Peace River Flats from 1938 to 1942, before returning to Alberta, though not to Peace River. Their two horses were the first in Yellowknife. From Wembley came John Malcolm McDonald, Colin McDonald, and Ken Dixon, putting in at the Bezanson ferry on the Smoky River in May 1939 and arriving in Yellowknife in July. These early Yellowknifers certainly had a more adventurous trek north than I.

As a new resident of Yellowknife, missing the Peace Country, it was a delight to find these connections and discover that the links between my new and old homes are stronger than Grande Prairie merely being the destination of choice for Yellowknifers doing their annual Costco shop. I am not the first Peacelander to make the trek north and certainly will not be the last. In fact, the last bag of potatoes I bought from the Co-op here made the journey from the Peace Country itself, having been grown in Eaglesham!

Sources:

Peace River Flats neighbourhood, Old Yellowknife Self-Guided Tour <http://baladodecouverte.com/circuits/466/4585/peace-river-flats-neighbourhood>
Yellowknife Heritage Map <https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/living-here/resources/Heritage/Heritage-Map.pdf>
Buckley Family Collection Finding Aid, Northwest Territories Archives http://www.nwtarchives.ca/finding_aid.asp?Accession_Number=N-2015-001



Peace River Flats

The promise of gold drew families north in the 1930s and 40s. Many an Alberta farm boy built a barge to float "down north" on the Peace and Slave Rivers and sail across Great Slave Lake to Yellowknife. These settlers were attracted to this flat expanse of land on the shores of Back Bay, and named the area Peace River Flats after their homes back in Alberta. The construction boom of the late 80s is apparent as you walk the streets of Peace River Flats. Few of the original buildings remain, but the neighborhood retains a relaxed atmosphere typical of the Old Town. The Fritz Theil ball park now covers what was once a large and muddy pond, backing on the flats.

Yellowknife, The Canadian Encyclopedia <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/yellowknife-nwt/>

www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/yellowknife-nwt/

Old Town Heritage Walking Tour of Yellowknife <https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/discovering-yellowknife/resources/old-town-heritage-walking-tour-of-yellowknife.pdf>

John Howard Sissons (1892-1969) <http://pubs.aina.ucalgary.ca/arctic/Arctic43-4-404.pdf>

Justice in the Arctic <http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/judica41&div=41&id=&page=Sissons, John H.> <https://albertaonrecord.ca/sissons-john-h>

A Synopsis of W. R. (Wop) May's Life <http://www.wopmay.com/a-synopsis-of-w-r-wop-mays-life/>
May, Wop <https://albertaonrecord.ca/may-wop>

03-001: Early Airplanes and Airmen who Pioneered the Peace <http://calverley.ca/article/03-001-early-airplanes-and-airmen-who-pioneered-the-peace/>

1929 Wilfrid Reid 'Wop' May http://www.nwttimeline.ca/1925/1929_WopMay.htm

Bush Pilot with a Briefcase, by Ronald A. Keith

Jock McMeekan's Yellowknife Blade edited and abridged by Gladys McCurdy Gould

Yellowknife, N.W.T An Illustrated History Edited by Susan Jackson



Bezanson Townsite's First Postmaster: Cecil Evans

By Wanda Zenner

Cecil Samuel Montague Evans was born in Carleton, Ontario to Samuel Evans (1836) and Elizabeth Lees (1862). Samuel passed away in

Cecil to assist in the development of the Bezanson Townsite. As a Land Office had been opened in Grande Prairie, Cecil filed on SW 20 71 2 W6 in November 1912 as soon as he turned 18. He lived with his stepfather, Sidney, while proving up his land. Cecil's land bordered the Bezanson Townsite to the north and in fact the trail down to the ferry crossed his property. Cecil was kept very busy with his homestead requirements and assisting his stepfather with the improvements being made at the Townsite. As reported by the Daily Herald Tribune in 1914, he became the first unofficial postmaster at the Townsite with his stepfather being the mail courier.

In July 1915, Cecil answered the call of duty and enlisted in Edmonton with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force. He served with the 66th Battalion. His attestation paper listed him as 5' 4 1/2" tall with blue eyes and blonde hair. Cecil wrote a letter home, a portion of which was published in the Grande Prairie Herald:

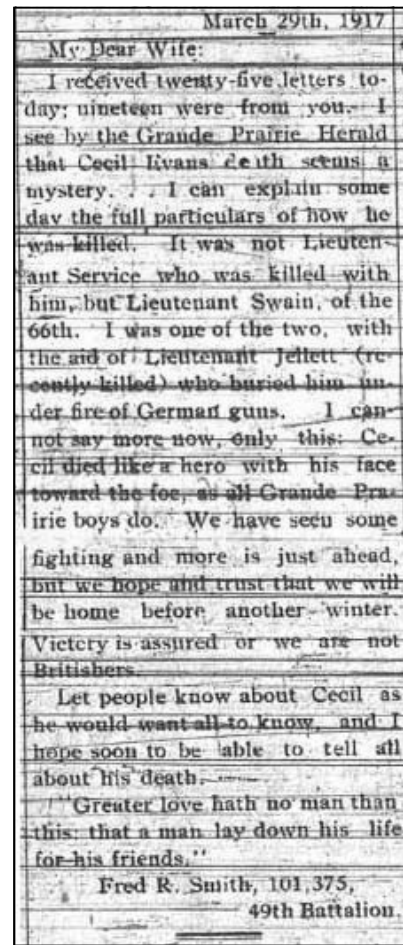
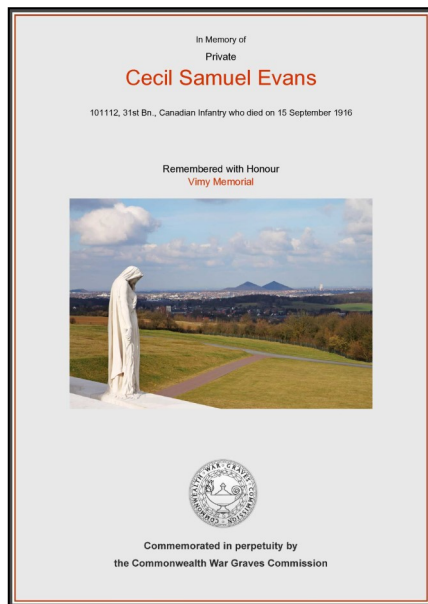
"We had a very pleasant trip across the 'pond' and find much pleasure in visiting these different historic and romantic cities of England. We sailed on the *Olympic* from Halifax to Liverpool. The *Olympic* is certainly a most wonderful ship and deserves the name of a 'floating palace.' She is very well built and has a capacity over 48,000 tons. There were 7,000 all told aboard, but she has had 13,000 at one time. From Liverpool, we had an eight hour

Left: Mother Canada statue is located at the centre of the Memorial & overlooks the valley where so many Canadians lost their lives

May 1898, leaving Elizabeth with three small children to raise: Grace (1892), Cecil (1894), and David Wesley (1897). She subsequently married Sydney James Webb in 1899 and they had three children: Ethel (1901), Eva (1902), and Harold (1903).

Mr. Webb was engaged in a mixed farming operation when he became interested in the opportunities for land ownership in Northern Alberta after he had read A.M. Bezanson's book, *The Peace River Trail*. As circumstances dictated, Mr. Bezanson was in Ottawa during the winter of 1909/1910 to meet with Dr. William Saunders, who was in charge of the Canadian

Experimental Stations. Here he met Sydney Webb and as he was in need of someone to assist him with his cattle operation, A.M. Bezanson and Mr. Webb entered into a partnership. In June of 1910, Mr. Webb left Ontario along with his 16 year old step-son, Cecil, who was also interested in experiencing the "Last Great West" as written about by A.M. Bezanson. Sidney purchased Revillon Frere's cattle on behalf of Mr. Bezanson and managed the cattle operation that was located on the shore of Bear Lake. Soon thereafter, Mr. Bezanson required Mr. Webb and



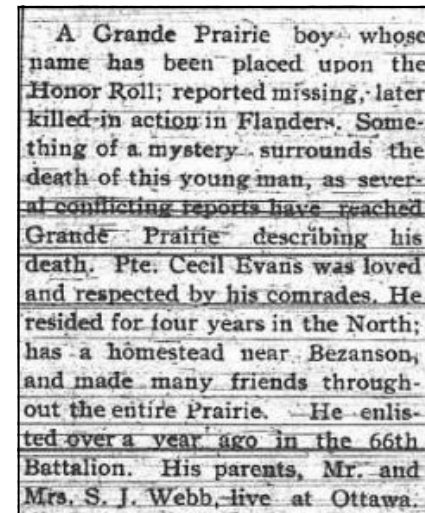
Grande Prairie Herald May 8, 1917

journey by rail to our camp which is situated on a hill at a little village called Otterpool, about 53 miles from London and seven miles from Shorncliffe, the regular army barracks. We are living in tents, but enjoy camp life in England quite well."

Unfortunately Cecil was killed in the advance from Pozieres to Courcellette during the Somme Offensive on September 15, 1915. A letter

written home by Fred Smith reported that "Cecil died like a hero with his face toward the foe as all Grande Prairie boys do." Mr. Smith was one of two soldiers who buried Cecil under fire of German guns. It was noted that a group of soldiers, of which Cecil was one, became cut off from their company and fought to their deaths.

Cecil's name appears on the Vimy Memorial at Pas de Calais, France. This memorial is Canada's most impressive tribute overseas to those Canadians who fought and gave their lives in the First World War. The Vimy



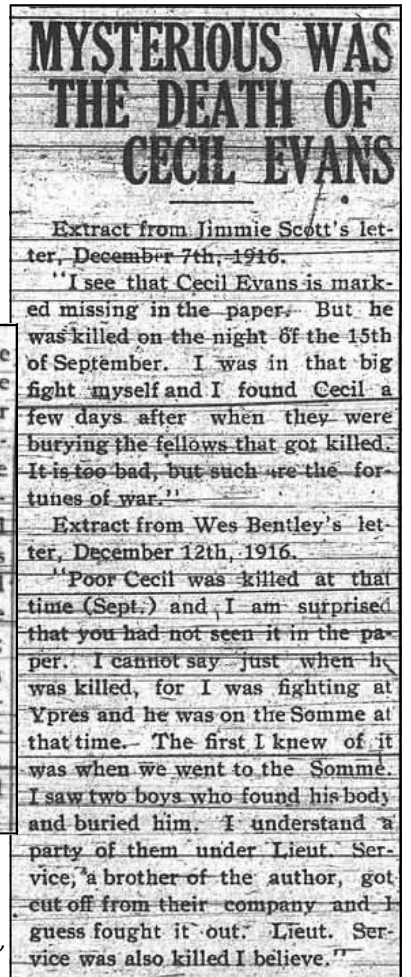
Above: Grande Prairie Herald, February 6, 1917

Right: Grande Prairie Herald, January 23, 1917

Memorial, which overlooks the Douai Plain from the highest point of Vimy Ridge, is a majestic and inspiring tribute to lives lost, with many bodies never being found. Cecil is commemorated in the First World War Book of Remembrance.

Although Cecil's life was cut far too short, he will always be remembered not only as the first postmaster at the Bezanson Townsite, but also for the contributions he made in regard to the development of the Townsite. That being said, what Mr. Evans will be remembered most for on a global level is the greatest sacrifice of all – answering the call of duty to maintain the country's freedom and dying in the effort to do so.

His position as postmaster was officially taken over by W.A. Leonard in December 1915. Cecil's land was inherited by his mother, Elizabeth Webb, with the patent being issued in August 1917.



Do You Recognise this House?

Research Request from Italy



On September 6 we received the following email and accompanying photographs from Cristina Timò, who visited the Archives on August 12, 2016:

Let me first thank you very much for having received me with such a short notice and for having helped me in finding some traces of my family presence in Grande Prairie in 1955.

I am very excited that I could find some information and articles written by my mother and published on the newspaper!

Now we are back in Milano, Italy after a tour through the Rocky Mountains to Vancouver. Very impressive!

I gave a quick look to the photos I have at home and I found these three photos dated February 1955. It seems to be the house where my parents lived in 1955, but unfortunately there is not the name of the street.

I am sending you the ones I have, but I have still to look into other boxes which I have stored in the basement, not reachable very quickly.

As soon as I find something else, interesting for your archives, I'll be happy to share with you the material and contribute to your project of South Peace Regional Archives.

Thank you very much again and take care.

With gratitude,

Cristina Timò

The photos to the left are of Cristina's mother inside and beside their home in Grande Prairie. Do you recognise this house and know the address or whether it is still standing? Please call us at 780-830-5105 if you can help.



Friends of the Archives: "Raising the Archives" Barn Dance

Thanks to you, it was a great fundraiser and we were able to add over \$10,000 to the Archives building fund!

*Many thanks to
All our supporters in the sell-out crowd;
Artists Tina Dale, Amos Wiebe, Holly Crichton, Emily Lozeron, Shanda Thiessen, and Jennie Adair,
and Auctioneer Tarril Rosvold
for a very successful Art Auction;
"Vintage" Band
For their lively dance music;
And everyone who donated for Door Prizes and the*

*amazing Silent Auction:
Barb & Ian Campbell
Beaverlodge Cultural Centre
Quilter Karen Burgess
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Prairie Concrete
Prairie Coast Equipment Ltd
Cathy Scott
MP Chris Warkentin
Watson's Foto Source
Windsor Motors*

Thanks for supporting a new Archives facility for the South Peace!

Photos by Amos Wiebe of Famous Amos Photography



New at the Archives

Thank You Donors!

The holdings 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:

Postcards from the Jack Soars collection, 1925-1980
By Gail Frey

Gordon & Edna Moyer fonds accrual, 1920-1960
By Alice Lewis

Spirit River Immigration Hall Register, 1917-1930
By Spirit River Museum

Montrose Junior High School Yearbooks, 1968-1969
By Gordon Mackey

Gordon & Anne Donaldson accrual, 1940-2013
By Greg Donaldson

1968 Aerial Photograph of Grande Prairie
By Marg Johns

Photos & Artifacts from the Crerar family, 1915-1940
By Doug & Angie Crerar

Premier's Prayer Breakfast Tape & Documents, 1970
By Oswald Throness

Unchaga Area Scouts Documents, 1956-2000
By Gail Schau

Adam Tolway Photographs
By Mary Fowler

Henry and Charles Kirkness Family Papers, 1905-2006
By Melanie Moore

Laurence & Marguerite Thompson family papers
By Marie Brand

Thank You!

Hythe Homecoming Committee 2016

For Your Donation of \$5,500 to the Archives Building Fund



Grace Wideman presents a cheque for \$5,500 from the Hythe Homecoming Committee 2016 to SPRA President Jan Shields at the September Board Mtg.

The cheque represents a Thank You from the Homecoming Committee for the assistance of Archives staff in finding photographs and research material to celebrate the history of Hythe.

South Peace Regional Archives Society Membership Application/Renewal Form

Date: _____

Name: _____

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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

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