

# TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 9

DECEMBER 2017

Issue 1

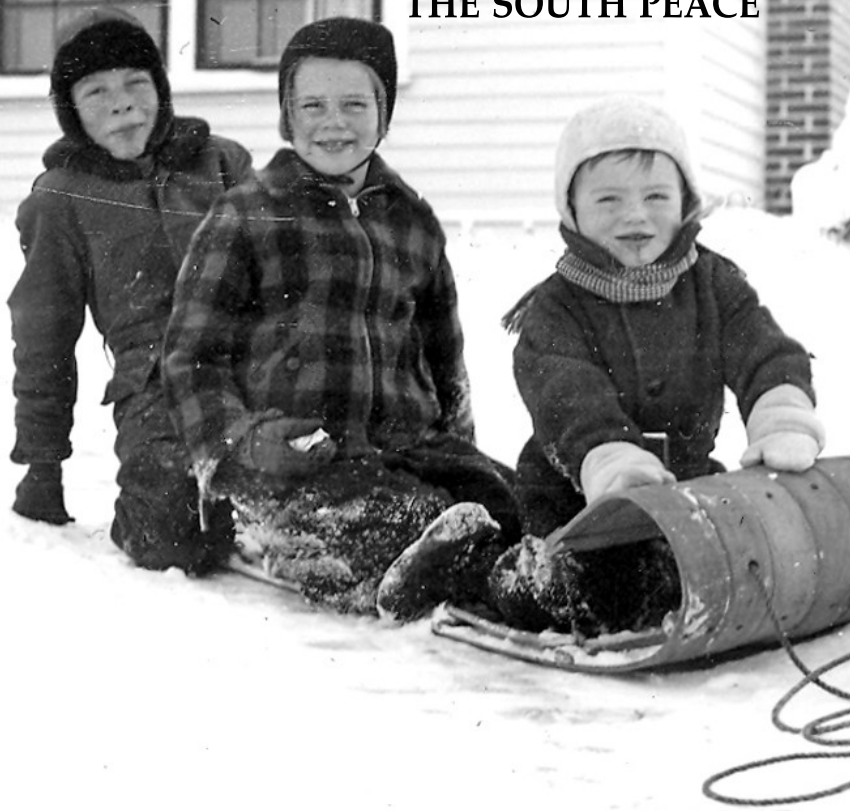
## CHILD'S PLAY

GROWING UP IN  
THE SOUTH PEACE

RESEARCHING  
ROBERT GUEST

OH BABY!  
ISABEL CAMPBELL'S  
BABY BOOK

OLWEN'S  
SCRAPBOOK:  
JOURNEY TO THE PEACE



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Cover: Jim, Mary Jean, and David Carlisle on a toboggan,  
1939 (SPRA 399.01.14)

**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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Teresa Dyck, Administrative Assistant

### Mailing Address

Box 687, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3A8  
Telephone: 780-830-5105

E-mail: [director@southpeacearchives.org](mailto:director@southpeacearchives.org)  
[www.southpeacearchives.org](http://www.southpeacearchives.org)



# Letter from the Editor

As we approach the holidays, recall the childlike wonder that so often accompanies the winter season. In this issue of *Telling Our Stories*, we explore the diverse experiences and aspects of childhood in the South Peace area.

Discover the identity of "Little" Jeannie whose cards were featured in last issue (p. 7) and learn about the earliest years of Isabel Campbell's life from her baby book (p. 10). Read about our searches in the archives, both for Robert Guest's early life and influences (p.12) and children's records (p.22). Through these articles, we hope you can reminisce on your own childhood and reflect on what it means to be a child in the South Peace.

In this issue, we also debut the Archives' most recent digitization project and publication: *Olwen's Scrapbook: A Journey to the Peace Country in 1933*. On the facing page, you will find an excerpt from Olwen's scrapbook that documents a popular childhood activity in the early settlement of the area: the annual school fairs. In the centerfold, you will find a sample of the exemplary watercolor and ink paintings created by Olwen and reproduced in *Olwen's Scrapbook*.

As the snow continues to fall and the temperature drops, we at the South Peace Regional Archives would like to wish you the happiest of holidays! We invite you to grab a blanket, pour yourself a cup of hot chocolate, and curl up with this issue of *Telling Our Stories*.

# Take Note

The South Peace Regional Archives is partnering with the Grande Prairie Museum to offer new adult evening programs. We will present "Preserving Your Family History," on 27 November 2017 and "Telling Your Stories" on 12 March 2018. The workshops run from 6:00 to 8:00 pm in the GPM Community Room. Call the museum at 780-830-7090 to register.

Next year, the South Peace Regional Archives and the Peace Country Historical Society are partnering with the Centre for Rupert's Land Studies to host their biennial Rupert's Land Colloquium.

The colloquium will take place 16-19 May 2018. The event kicks off with a meet and greet at Centre 2000, with paper and poster presentations taking place at the Grande Prairie Regional College. Saturday features a field trip out to Historic Fort Dunvegan. More information can be found at the Centre's website, <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/rupertsland/colloquia/colloquium-2016.html>. We hope to see you there!



The Roman Catholic School in Grande Prairie

# Olwen's Own Words: Peace Country School Fairs



Currie School (One Room)

In 1933, Olwen Sanger-Davies travelled from England to the Peace Country, documenting her journey in two scrapbooks. "Olwen's Own Words" features excerpts and illustrations from these scrapbooks.

The Archives latest publication, *Olwen's Scrapbook: A Journey to the Peace Country in 1933*, is now available for purchase. For more information, see page 14.

*Tuesday Sept 12<sup>th</sup> As Secretary of the School Fair, Morgan had been busy with preparations for some time. On the previous Friday, he & the president Mr. Chaffel, (minister of the United Church) & I drove round to various schools to leave forms & papers.*

*On Monday afternoon he went in to town to get it ready, & on Tuesday he was at it all day.*

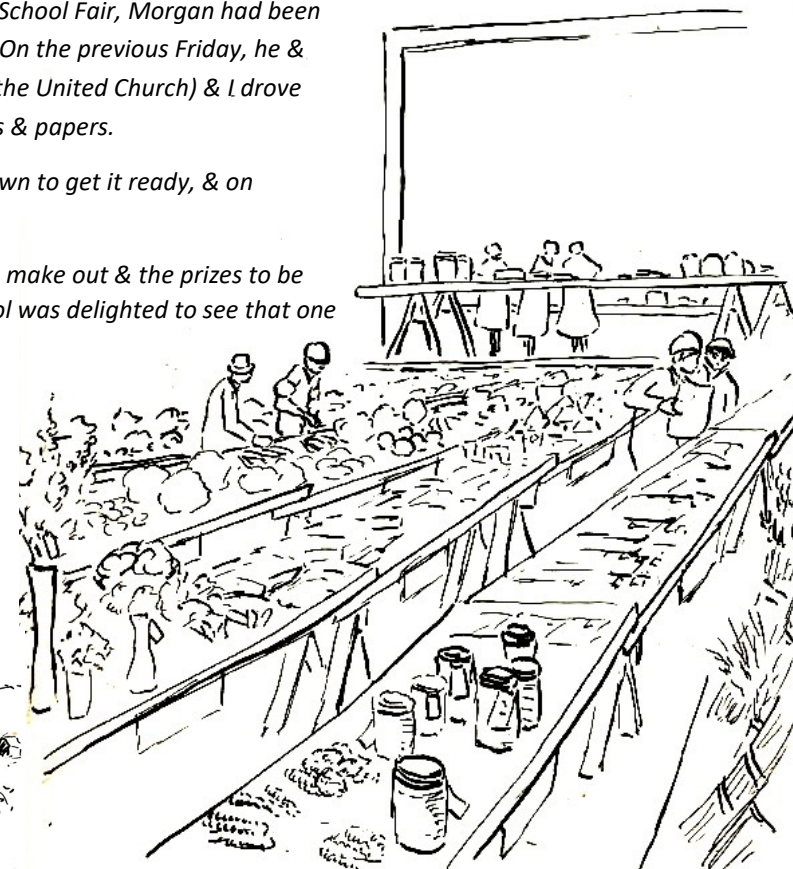
*Afternoons there were the prize lists to make out & the prizes to be distributed. The Sister at the R.C. School was delighted to see that one of her very poor scholars had won a substantial sum as her clothes were threadbare & very inadequate for winter.*

*Reaping goes on & the fields get covered with stooks for miles & miles around.*



Teacher's House - One Room Barn

Flying Shot School





# “Dear Hilda”

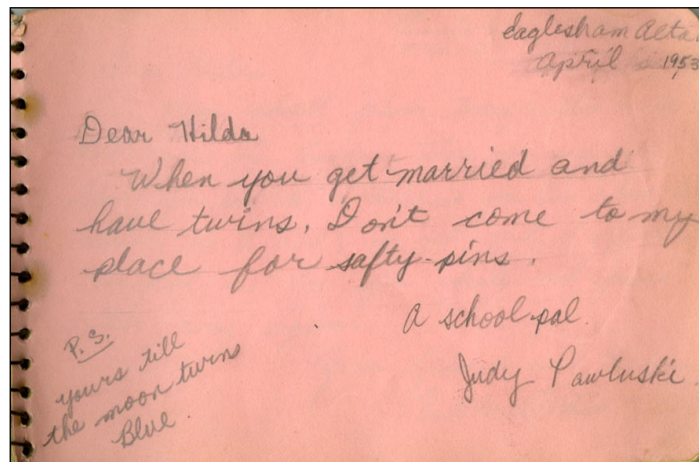
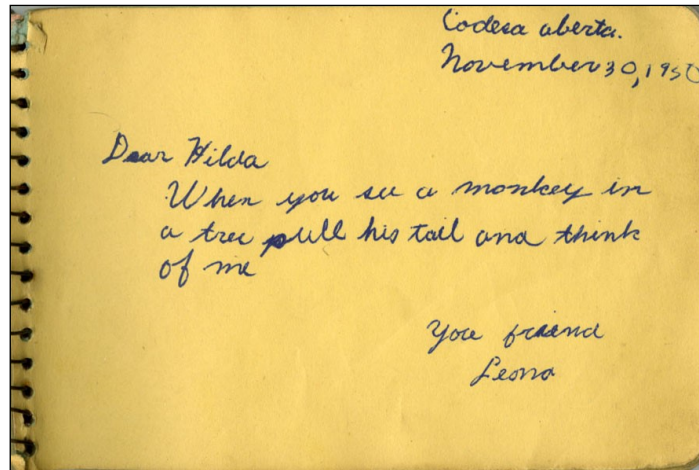
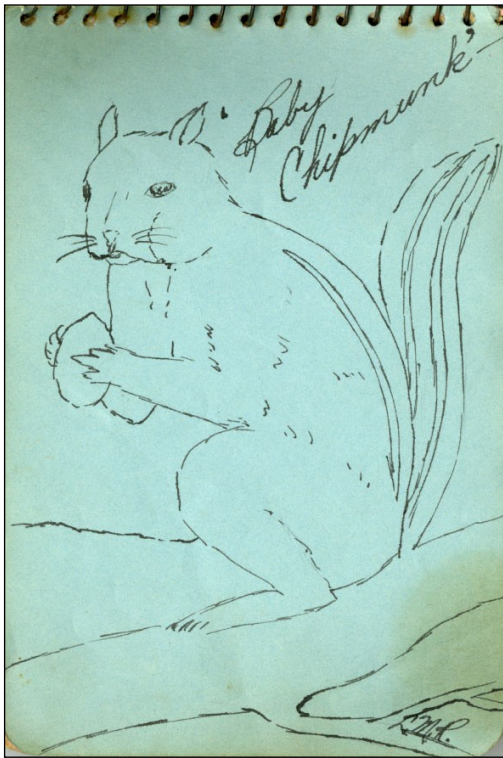
## Hilda Thibeault’s Autograph Book

Children too are creators of records. Whether it be artwork, school assignments, diaries, correspondence, or autograph books, children record their experiences and perspectives on the world around them. This autograph book, selected from our collection of paper artifacts, exemplifies a keepsake that remained popular through the 1940s and 1950s.

Hilda Thibeault Mazo kept this autograph book during her school days in Eaglesham and Codesa. She

collected words of wisdom, humorous rhymes, and simple sketches from her classmates and relatives, creating this delightful memento. The book remains in good condition, suggesting Hilda cherished it enough to preserve it.

*Do you know the identity of Hilda, or have any information to share about her? Let us know!*



Hilda Thibeault Mazo’s autograph book, 1949-1955 (SPRA Fonds 501, 2010.40.01)

# Unraveling the Past

## A Reader Contribution

The September issue of *Telling Our Stories* features the article, “Embroidered Cards: Unraveling the Past.” The article touches upon the history of these lovely and very personal mementos soldiers from the trenches of the Great War sent to loved ones back home. The three postcards from our collection are from two different soldiers but all of them are addressed to the same person – “Jeannie.” While we were able to determine that the two soldiers were most likely Private Robert Bruce Leslie and Lieutenant John Pringle, we could not figure out who was their “dear little friend, Jeannie.”

Luckily, good friend of the SPRA, Margaret Bowes, was able to tell us. “Little” Jeannie was Margaret’s mother, Jean Emilie Alexander O’Brien. Jean was born in 1906 and was one of five surviving children of William Alexander (originally from Scotland) and Emilie Dannhauer of Pembroke, Ontario. Jean was only ten when her mother died of Bight’s Disease and shortly after, watched as friends and family, including Bob Leslie, walked away from the family farm to enlist in the war. Jean later told her children, “My memory is one of sadness.” She knew she’d never see her friends again and she never did.

Little Jeannie became a teacher, married and had three children. Widowed at a young age, she taught at Appleton until 1942, when she moved to Grande Prairie. She then continued her career at Montrose School and the Grande Prairie Composite High School until retiring in 1975. Jean was also very involved in the Grande Prairie music festival and served as church organist for the United Church for many years. She

died in 2001 and is buried in the Grande Prairie Cemetery. You can find out more about her and her family in the family papers held at the SPRA in the Alexander Family fonds 572. You can read more about the postcards in the September issue of *Telling Our Stories*, available on our website.



Jean & Maggie Alexander, ca. 1918 (SPRA 2014.041.014)

Thank you to Margaret Bowes for passing this information on to us, as well as a transcript of a letter from Jack Pringle to Bill Alexander (from The Trenches, Sept 12, 1915), and an explanatory Addendum written by Jeannie’s youngest daughter, Erin O’Brien Woolley.



# Growing Up

## ...in the South Peace

We've selected this issue's featured photographs to showcase the varied experiences of growing up in the South Peace River area.



Above: W.D Albright and children Eileen and Bruce churning butter, ca. 1915 (SPRA 362.02.11.03)

Below: Jim, David, and Mary Jean Carlisle playing croquet, 1943 (SPRA 399.01.59)



Above: Mary Jean and David Carlisle with Carolyn and Dick Harris skating on Carlisle's backyard rink, 1941 (SPRA 399.05.05)

Below: Marion Tingstad bathes her children Joan and Ken in front of their home in 1937 (SPRA 175.082.02)



Top left: Ann Roberts at age two feeding the hens and turkeys, 1918 (SPRA 177.047)



Top right: Henry Hommy's boys, Larry, Gordon, and Milton, play with "famous stick with tin can lids – pushed them all over the country." Date unknown (SPRA 388.01.08)



Left: Wives and children of the Metis threshing crew at Tom Sheehan's farm near Clairmont include Louise Webber, Mrs. Dave Capot and Mrs. Dan McLean. The babies are strapped into the traditional moss bags which took the place of diapers. 1933 (SPRA 002.01.06.23)



Bottom left: The Sharp twins, date unknown (SPRA 2001.02.380)

Bottom right: Robert Mehlum and Dale DeBolt in a homemade boat on Mehlum Creek, 1929 (SPRA 116.09.01.01.0296)





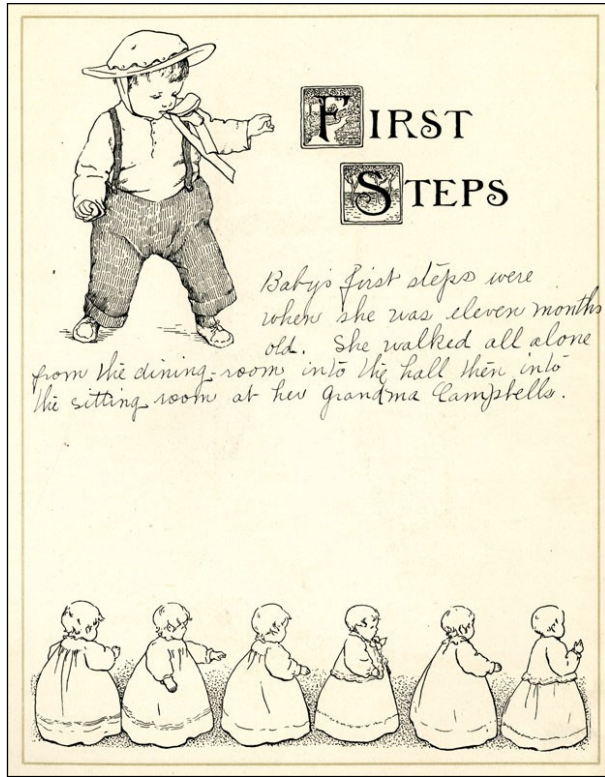
# OH BABY!

## Isabel Campbell's Baby Book

Isabel Campbell left a remarkable legacy, having worked throughout her adult life to preserve the history of the South Peace.

Her mother, Myrle Campbell, created this record of Isabel's early years: from her birth on March 18, 1907 until her early school days in 1913. In addition to keeping notes about important milestones in Isabel's infancy and childhood, Myrle tucked in her favorite snapshots, party invitations, and even early samples of Isabel's artwork.

This paper artifact provides insight into how families documented childhood during the turn of the century. In many ways, little has changed.



Top Right: Isabel and her mother Myrle Campbell, ca. 1907

Bottom Right: "Baby's first steps were when she was eleven months old. She walked all alone from the dining room into the hall then into the sitting room at her Grandma Campbell's."

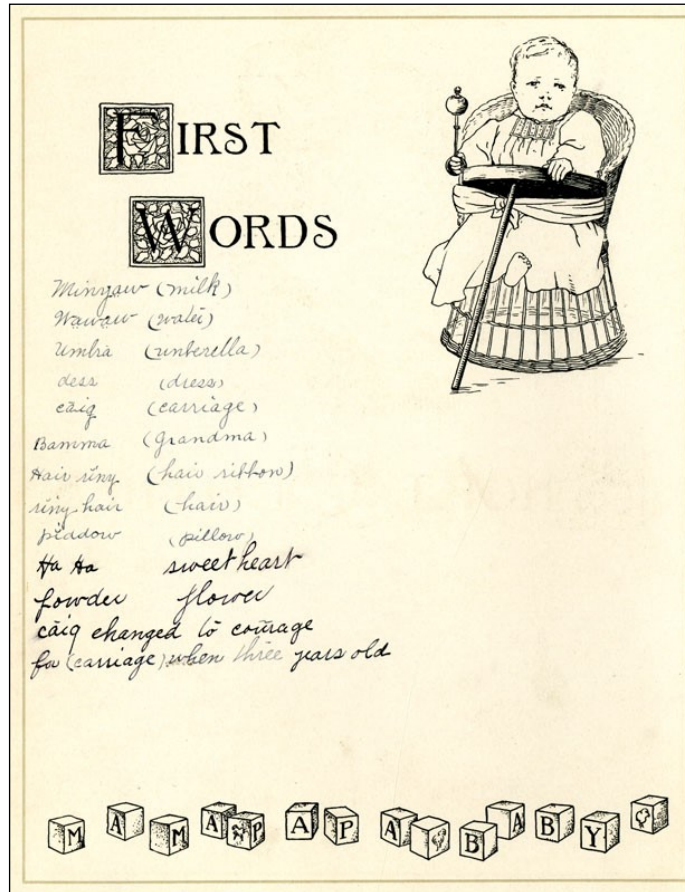
Left Isabel's handprint at one year

Right: Isabel's hand print at the age of four months

Below right: Isabel's first words

- Minyaw (milk)
- Wawaw (water)
- Umbra (umbrella)
- Dess (dress)
- Caig (carriage)
- Bamma (Grandma)
- Hair riny (hair ribbon)
- Riny hair (hair)
- Piddow (pillow)
- Ha ha (sweetheart)
- Fowder (flower)
- Caig changed to courage for carriage when three years old

Below right: Isabel's first professional portrait, ca. 1907





# There's More to Bob:

## Researching Robert Guest



Saddened to hear of the death of Robert Guest, we looked to our collections to learn more about this important man. The archive contains documents and photographs related to Robert Guest in several collections, including our reference files and library. We discovered that, in addition to his many artistic accomplishments, Robert Guest promoted art and community interests at the local and the national level.

The newspaper clippings in our "Guest" reference file show that Guest's artistic and nature loving temperament was inherited. His father Wilfred Llewellyn Guest, a published poet, wrote often of nature and Robert illustrated his two books of poetry (Daily Herald Tribune 9 December 1977).

Wilfred was born in April 1908 in Worcestershire, England and followed his brother Ivor to the Peace Country (DHT 9 December 1977). In the community

history book, *Grande Cache: The People*, we learn more about Guest's family. Wilfred married Grace Brown of Rio Grande. They had five children: Barry, Robert, Phillip, Margaret and Colleen.

Recognition for Robert's artistry came early: as a young student, his works were selling in Spokane, Washington, through a man who "recognized inherent native talent" (DHT 6 December 1957). The article also recorded Robert's artistic philosophy: "Not to interpret [natural scenes], but to show them as they really are." Robert won many art contests, including scholarships in 1956 and 1957 to attend the Banff School of Fine Arts.

Guest studied at the Alberta College of Art and Design and the University of Alberta. As a student, he met his wife, Myrtle with whom he had one daughter, Moya. In his *Grande Cache* entry, Guest wrote about his early years flying out to northern locations to teach art while teaching at the Grande Prairie Regional College. He also shares his pivotal activities in the art scene – the founding of the Prairie Gallery, the Watercolour Society (Grande Prairie) and the Watercolour Society of Grande Cache.

Returning to the reference files, we find Guest also helped set up the new Pioneer Museum (DHT 11 August 1970); played a part organizing the Peace Region Arts Festival (DHT 20 February 1975); co-founded the Upstairs Gallery Co-op (DHT 9 November 1977); founded the Canadian Wolf Defenders (DHT 28 March 1969); and co-founded the Wild Kawkwa (DHT 3 June 1975). Robert also frequently used his artistic skills to design logos, for wine (DHT 16 November 1989), the City of Grande Prairie (DHT 9 March 1977), and even a new Canadian Flag (DHT 24 March 1961).



*Bob Guest showing a gentleman the college art display. (SPRA 0192.05.04.01-1971n)*

Besides his art and activism, Robert was an active outdoorsman. He spent nearly twenty years working on remote fire towers and was chased by a bear hiking the backwoods on a painting project (DHT 5 September 1985). Robert also holds a rather interesting record: he swam one day each month in the Wapiti River. This record was made "official" on 1 Feb. 1988. He swam, nude and alone, in the early morning, on a snowy, -30° day in tribute to the Calgary Winter Games (DHT 19 February 1988).

Robert was deservedly well loved and respected by all who knew him. He left the South Peace with a marvelous legacy: his art, the vibrant arts community he supported, and the Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park. He will be missed but not forgotten.

*Above: Robert Guest, [1975] while teaching at the Grande Prairie Regional College in the 1970s.*

*(SPRA 0192.05.03.18)*

*Below: Haven School students beside their school. Back Row: Frank Sawchuk, Barry Guest, Jack Smith, Mike Smith, Randall Howatt, Jill Guest, Rose Marie Metcalf, Doreen Metcalf, Joe Sawchuk. 2nd Row: Carol Metcalf, Lawrence Howatt, Billy Jarczyk, Ione Unruh, Robert Guest, Verna Howatt, Delbert Howatt. Front Row: ?, Eddy Guest, Betty Metcalf, Ronald Unruh, Coleman Graf, Laura Howatt. Photo from Doris Mc Neil Smith (SPRA 502.2009.048.08)*



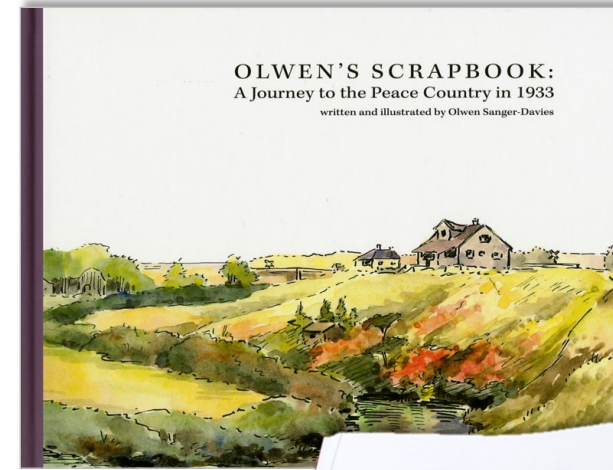


# OLWEN'S SCRAPBOOK: A Journey to the Peace Country in 1933

On June 7, 1933, Olwen Sanger-Davies boarded the train in her home town of St. Leonard's on Sea in East Sussex, England to begin a long journey. The first leg was to the port of Southampton by train, then to Montreal, Canada, aboard the SS *Montrose*, by Canadian Pacific train across Canada to Banff, and up to the Peace River Country on the Northern Alberta Railway. The purpose of her trip was to visit her younger brother Morgan, who lived just outside the Town of Grande Prairie...

Olwen documented her journey and time in the Peace Country in two scrapbooks, containing approximately 500 drawings and paintings. Published by the South Peace Regional Archives, *Olwen's Scrapbook* captures her story in Olwen's own words and illustrations. It is a nostalgic, educational, and artistic gift.

***Olwen's Scrapbook: A Journey to the Peace Country in 1933* can be purchased from the South Peace Regional Archives for \$40<sup>00</sup> + \$2<sup>00</sup> GST. Cash and cheques are accepted. Limited copies are available.**



See page 5 for an excerpt from the original scrapbook



Don't miss out!  
Purchase your  
copy today

**ONLY \$40.00 +GST**  
while quantities last





# A Lumberjack Remembers

by Phil Nilsson

*Our serial this year will feature excerpts from A Lumberjack Remembers, written by Phil Nilsson. Phil is the grandson of Peter and Johanna Nilsson, who emigrated from Sweden in 1906. Phil was born on March 8, 1920 in Battle Lake, Alberta to Peter and Johanna's son Nils Hjalmar and his wife Harriet. This final installment begins in 1974 with the sale to Canfor.*

With the dilemma before us concerning North Canadian Forest Industries and their need for plywood peeler logs from the timber piled in the yard, Earl and I put our heads together and agreed we didn't want to get involved in this type of operation again. We had several things we felt were alternatives to us. We could quit the operation as we didn't have a signed contract with them, or we could insist that the contract price would have to be raised to make up for the lost revenue we would incur in making peelers from the timber, or we could sell them the complete operation and we would then be free from the whole problem. We decided to pursue the last alternative as the better way to go. We did our homework on what the value of our going concern was worth to us and to them, and then I went in to offer our plant and equipment to them.

Vice President in charge of NCFI at the time was Roy Bickell, whom I had known since the first year we were in the Grande Prairie area. He was a hard-nosed businessman, as well as a square shooter and a gentleman. When I met with him, his first thought was that we wanted to negotiate the necessary contract for our continued operation. I told him that we would like to sell them our plant and equipment and he was certainly taken by

*Right: Logging operation on Big Mountain, south of Grande Prairie. (Photo courtesy of Fay Brederson)*

surprise and said, "I haven't ever even considered that you might want to sell." After the reasons we had for selling at that time were explained, he agreed he knew the problem we were talking about because of his experience at their Camp #5 sawmill trying to get production sawing the leftovers of the trees.

We then entered into all the possibilities of the possible sale of our operation. He was very thorough in his concern for people to run the plant, because it would be three years before they could use this timber quota in their Grande Prairie plants. I assured him we would be available to run the plant for him for that long, if he so wished. He then took our price list on the various equipment and mill components we had prepared, and thinking they were reasonable said, "I will get hold of the Operating Group in Vancouver with the suggestion, and I feel sure they will accept your offer." I left there with my head in the clouds, because what had seemed to be a real problem at first was well on the way to being solved. We had planned together for a June 1, 1974 closure of the deal.

We were elated with this possible turn of events that was now before us. But with everything in this world there is nothing that is a surety until all the negotiations are over. We waited patiently for the



*Right: One of the first logging/sawmill operations in the Crooked Creek area. (Photo courtesy of Fay Brederson)*

reactions of the Operating Group of Canfor in Vancouver. Finally, one day Roy Bickell drove into our mill yard and we thought that was fun, for the June 1 deadline was getting quite near. But that's not what happened! Roy had come to inform us that the Operating Group had turned down our offer in very certain terms (they didn't want our sawmill and equipment). But Roy, noticing our fallen faces, said, "Fellows, I would like you to give me another chance to convince the Operating Group that buying you out would be the right thing to do. It will take some time, but I am convinced that they will change their decision and buy your plant and equipment." So we still had hopes that a deal would be struck.

We kept on producing lumber without a contract. We had also been spared the cutting of peeler logs out of the timber, so our mill production remained high. A month soon went by, and still no deal with the Operating Group. We were almost of the opinion that our chance to sell out had come and gone, and that we had better accept a different plan for the future. When we were in the first week of July 1974, Roy drove into our mill yard again. This time his first words to us were, "Canfor has decided to buy your plant and equipment, effective July 15, 1974." This was the good news we had been longing to hear and my prayers had been answered.

The details of the deal had been already worked out between us and Roy. They had almost been accepted as they were originally planned, with only minor adjustments. We had only a few days to plan the changeover in ownership and all was ready for the July 15 closing of the deal. Of the sale price, we were to receive fifty percent down payment and the balance one year later. We had to clear the yard of all the lumber we had sawed up to the last shift on July 14, so the plant was shut down for a day or so. All crew and management people we had would continue as they had been in our employ. Earl became Maintenance Superintendent and I became Plant Superintendent in the new owner's scheme of



things.

We continued producing well for the new owner, as the crew was the same throughout the plant. We still kept our lumber truck and high-boy, so all the crew Nilsson Bros. had was one truck driver, who hauled the sawn lumber into the Grande Prairie planing mill. The upper echelon administration certainly changed though. Everything was now coordinated with the operating plan for NCFI, requiring daily reports to head office, all purchases and repairs were bought by the head office purchasing agent, and the budget I was to function under was twenty million dollars a year. This meant that every nickel of costs of logging, sawing, hauling, planing, and shipping of the products was charged to the budget for this plant. It didn't make much sense to me because I had no control over much of these operations. But no doubt there was some reason for this that wasn't explained to me.

Just shortly after we had sold the plant and equipment, the lumber market took one of its worst downturns in the recent experiences of the industry. In fact, it was so general and severe that the Alberta Government relaxed the volume quota system for required cutting. This was a blessing to me for this meant the three year stint I had agreed to would be shortened. The months passed by quite uneventful, although there were decisions made higher up in administration that had to be adhered to that made no sense to the way our crew had been treated under Nilsson Bros. administration. But all in all, things went along smoothly.

# Canada 150: John Davis's Will & the Five Mile Creek School Yearbook



Left: John Davis, a Hudson's Bay Factor who came to Canada in 1801, wrote this will in 1820 to protect the interests of his Métis wife and their children (SPRA Fonds 484)

leave my dear wife and the children..." This will and codicil were likely prepared in England during the period John travelled there with his two eldest daughters, Elizabeth and Mathilda. He left them there to be educated in English schools when he returned to Canada in 1823 as Chief Factor at Escabitchewan and Cat Lake near Lac Seul in what is now northern Ontario. The next year, John drowned in Hannah Bay on a journey to Mistassini, where he was going to take charge of the fort there.

## The 1820 Will of John Davis, Hudson's Bay Factor

John Davis, of Clerkenwell, London arrived at Fort Kenogamissi (Ontario) in 1801 when the country was still Rupert's Land. John worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. By 1812, he was Master at Pine Lake and eventually climbed the ranks to become chief factor in 1821. John married Nancy Hodgson, the daughter of a Cree woman and John Hodgson who was Chief Factor at Ft. Albany. John and Nancy had seven children: John [birthdate unknown], Elizabeth, [1812]; Mathilda Anne, [1814]; Anne (Nancy), [June 30, 1816]; William, [1820]; Catherine, [1822] and George, [Apr 23, 1824].

In 1820, John Davis prepared his will. It is clear that he was concerned about the welfare of his wife and children because in 1822 he added a Codicil stating "...I am induced to add this codicil to my Will on reflecting on the uncertainty of life and the situation I

Despite his efforts to secure his wife and children's future, nearly 30 years after his death, Davis' will remained unsettled. It was probated in 1850 and 1856, naming first his daughter Elizabeth and after her death, his daughter Matilda as Administratrix in an attempt to have all the financial issues dealt with. We have no evidence for the ultimate fate of John's attempted legacy.

Based on the text of the probate documents, we believe that Mathilda was eventually in possession of the will. She and her brother George both lived in St. Andrews, Manitoba. So how did the will end up in Grande Prairie?

Mathilda died a single woman so it is likely that the George received the will at some point. George's daughter Hattie married Robert Currie. They moved to the South Peace and had two sons, Douglas and

Robert. Robert married Lois Coulter. The wills, along with other documents related to the Davis, Hodgson, and Coulter families, were found in the log cabin once owned by Robert and Ruby Coulter and donated to the archives. This will stands of evidence of the care and concern of a father for the future of his children.

## Five-Mile Creek School Yearbook, 1949

Schools play an important role in communities. Short of funds, small communities erected small, one-room schoolhouses that served not just as a site for education but often as churches and community centers. Even in larger communities, schools often serve as sports centres and after school adult programming. In 1949, teacher Phyllis Stewart, in true pioneer spirit, did not let the lack of funds or equipment stop her from creating a treasured yearbook for her students.

Phyllis was born in Consort, Alberta to Fred L. and Mabel Mattoon. Phyllis's mother was the first woman editor of a newspaper (the Consort Enterprise) in Alberta in 1913. Phyllis completed teacher training during the war and came to the Bezanson area in May 1946 to teach at the Bezanson School. In 1947, Phyllis married Charles Bevan Stewart. The young couple lived on his father's farm until they built their own residence on S.E. 35-71-3-W6 in 1949. They had four children: Cherry Lynn, Marvin Lee, Shannon Kelly, Creston Zane.

Phyllis spent many years teaching and in 1949 she was teaching at Five Mile Creek School. The yearbook she created is 15 pages long and celebrates each of her grade eight graduates. Jean Fortier; Joan, Gustave, Anne, Mary, Marjorie, and Irene Blimkie; Joyce, Nancy, and Gerald Hutt; Alfred and Isabel Richards; and Richard Lawrence. Many students with the same surnames were, no doubt, siblings or cousins.

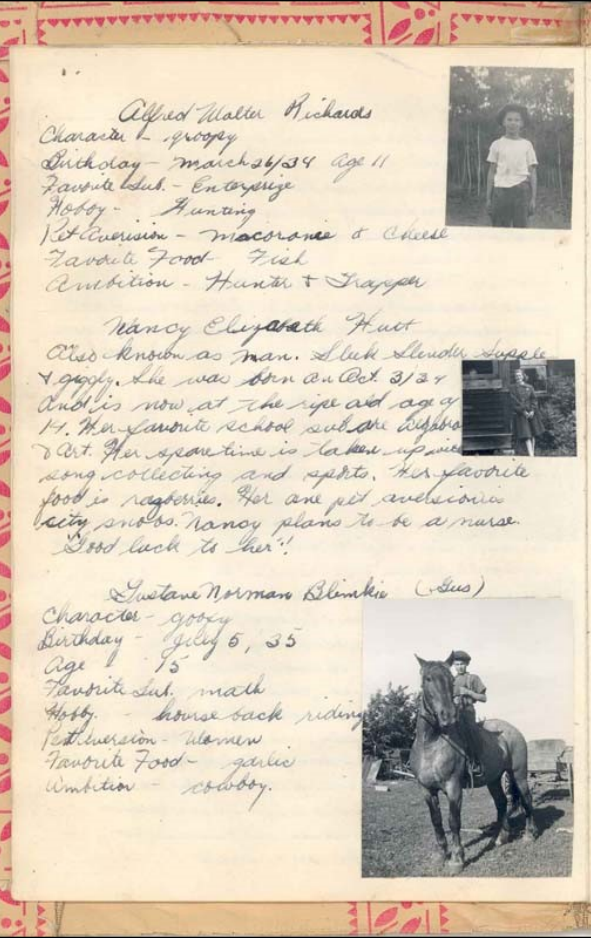
The yearbook includes a short biography of the students with a photograph, roles they played in the Christmas concert, their favourite foods, and what

Right: Phyllis Stewart's 1959 Five Mile Creek School Yearbook (SPRA Fonds 59)

they wanted to be when they grew up. It also included reports on school events such as hikes, sports, and the following sage advice to her students:

1. Always be a friend for if you are you will meet friends and make friends wherever you go.
2. Learn to be independent yet do not neglect to fill your place in society.
3. Do not build a habit of borrowing what you are unable to repay.
4. Let your thoughts dwell on clean subjects, your words speak only clean and happy thoughts and always strive to learn more and better yourselves.

Sound advice from a truly remarkable teacher and a wonderful window into the daily life of children in this region.





# Featured Fonds: Prentiss Family



Above: George Sheer & Mack Prentiss (SPRA 123.06)

1918-1955. — 93 photographs. — 12 postcards.

## Biographical Sketch

In 1919, Marion Little Prentiss arrived in the Peace River Country with his father-in-law George Sheer, intending to purchase a general store. Instead, they bought a section of land by Bear Lake (S.W. 15-72-7-W6) from Fred Roberts, complete with horses, machinery and household furnishings. After the purchase, the rest of the family (which included Nancy Sheer, Mary Sheer Prentiss and child Mack Prentiss) came from the Vancouver area where Marion had been operating a lumber camp on Vancouver Island, and his wife Mary had driven taxi for a time.

Mack Prentiss, their only son, started school at Hermit Lake in 1923. That same year, Marion had an auction and sold everything but the land. From 1923 to 1928, the family spent some time in Burns Lake and then Vancouver, but eventually returned to the farm, this time with modern power equipment. This included a gas 30 Caterpillar Tractor and Holt Combine

which were reputed to be the first machines of this type northwest of Edmonton. At the time, Mack was 11 years old. Marion retired to Edmonton in 1944 and rented the family farm to Mack.

In October 1945, Mack married Jean Kathleen Asp from Wetaskiwin. Jean was born in Camrose in 1921 and had trained as a nurse at the Misericordia in Edmonton before her marriage to Mack. They had four children: Marion Jean, William Harding, Carolyn, and Bette.

Mack and Jean farmed the family land for many years before retiring to Edmonton in 1988. Mack died in 2005, followed by Jean in 2008.

## Custodial History

The collection was donated to Grande Prairie Regional Archives by Mack Prentiss, son of Marion Prentiss and Mary Sheer, in 2003. An accrual of Prentiss family

Below: Mack Prentiss & ? (SPRA 123.38)



records was donated in 2010 by Mack's daughter Marion Hoveland.

## Scope and Content

The fonds consists of a computer disc containing 86 images of the Prentiss and Sheer family, their farm on the shore of Bear Lake, Mack's activities as a child on the farm, workers and farm activities throughout the seasons, and a few scenes of Grande Prairie. Most of the photographs on the disc have descriptive captions or accompanying notes identifying the people, places and events. There are also 7 photographs relating to the personal life of the Prentiss Family, including Hermit Lake School students, a photograph of Marion and Mack Prentiss, and an aerial photograph of the farm; and some newspaper clippings, mainly from Grande Prairie papers, relating to the Prentiss family and their activities. Topics include agriculture, family and personal life/biography, curling, education and student activities, Job's Daughters, Masons, and the Grande Prairie Museum.

Below: Mack Prentiss & Tim Seymore (SPRA 123.18)



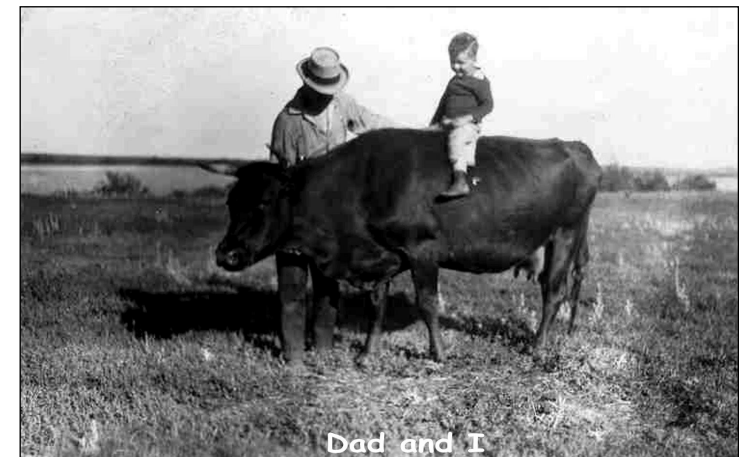
Tim Seymore and I



Me and my Teddy

Above: Mack Prentiss & his teddy (SPRA 123.15)

Below: Mack Prentiss & his father (SPRA 123.07)



Dad and I



# Archiveology: Finding Children in the Archives

One of my favourite finds while researching Robert Guest in our collections was finding his school photograph. Many of us are somewhat delighted to discover a person's starting point in life. Childhood is that crucial period that helps us define who we are. This is why records from this period of our lives is so important.

At first glance, looking through our finding aid, you might be forgiven for believing we do not hold many records related to childhood at the archives. We do not have a collection titled "South Peace Regional Archives Childhood collection" as we have the

"Photograph," "Paper Artifact," and "Map" collections. This makes sense when you consider that a) we do not organize fonds by topic but rather by creator, and b) the SPRA collections— odds and sods with uncertain provenance— are organized by format. However, we do have a considerable amount of records related to childhood, captured mostly in family collections.

*Below: 1929-1930 Hermit Lake School Report Card for Isabel Kennedy, teacher signs M.A.C., principal is Alberta Cox, guardians are Johan & A. Craig (SPRA 1969.60.245)*

19	TO	19	TO	REMARKS BY TEACHER	SIGNATURE OF TEACHER
JULY	HALF PAYMENT	0	0		
AUGUST	TIMES LATE	0	0		
SEPTEMBER	CONDUCT	0	0		
OCTOBER	READING	0	0		
NOVEMBER	WRITING	0	0		
DECEMBER	SPELLING	0	0		
JANUARY	NATURE STUDY	0	0		
FEBRUARY	MUSIC	0	0		
MARCH	DRAWING	0	0		
APRIL	ARITHMETIC	0	0		
MAY	HYGIENE	0	0		
JUNE	COMPOSITION	0	0		
	GRAMMAR	0	0		
	ENG. HISTORY	0	0		
	CAN. HISTORY	0	0		
	ANCIENT HISTORY	0	0		
	GEOGRAPHY	0	0		
	LITERATURE	0	0		
	BOOKKEEPING	0	0		
	ALGEBRA	0	0		
	GEOMETRY	0	0		
	PHYSICS	0	0		
	BOTANY	0	0		
	AGRICULTURE	0	0		
	CIVICS	0	0		
	LATIN	0	0		
	FRENCH	0	0		
	SCIENCE	0	0		
	HANDWORK	0	0		
<p>TO PARENTS OR GUARDIANS</p> <p>Please examine this Report carefully and return it, properly signed, to the Teacher.</p> <p>When letters are used in the above spaces: E indicates Excellent, 90-100; C, Commendable, 80-90; O, Good, 70-80; F, Fair, 60-70; U, Unsatisfactory, 50-60; P, Poor, below 50.</p> <p>This certifies that the pupil herein named has been promoted from <u>Grade IV</u> to <u>Grade V</u>.</p> <p>Teacher <u>M.A.C.</u> Principal <u>Alberta Cox</u></p>					



Left: Hermit Lake School, 1932 (SPRA 2000.73.032)

school photograph or yearbook for her grandfather. She knew the name of the school and the years he attended. Unfortunately, we had no photographs or yearbooks for that school for those years. It is very disappointing to have to tell someone that there is no trace of their ancestor at the archives especially since it does not have to be this way.

The bulk of our childhood is spent at school. School records, especially yearbooks, provide a rich account of this period in a child's life. Yet school records are vastly underrepresented in the archives. While there are issues to be addressed surrounding privacy, these records have untapped potential for helping families find their loved ones.

Another quick look at our finding aid might make you think that we do have good supply of school records. There are over one hundred fonds for various school districts in our holdings. Most of the documents within them are board meeting minutes; some few have daily registers. They contain very little information about the children.

A corrective to this situation would be a healthy collection of school yearbooks. We sometimes laugh when we look back at our own but yearbooks are full of the rich detail that provide insight into this foundational period in all our lives. We would like to have more yearbooks in our archives so that the next person who comes looking for evidence of their ancestor's past will find it.

Photographs are our most abundant and most accessed records related to childhood. Event photographs, family portraits, and school photographs can tell us a lot about the types of activities children engaged in, clothing styles, and living standards. Official documents and newspaper clippings record important events like births, awards, and sadly, the deaths of children at every age and stage of their lives.

Relying on personal photographs and newspaper clippings can be hit and miss if you want to research a family member. Many families could not afford cameras so the evidence available is skewed toward families with more favourable financial means. Images for children of poorer families are often found in some other family's records, institutional records, or that archives catch-all, "Photograph collection." They can be hard to find. Computers certainly make it easier to search but this only works if the child's name is noted on the photograph.

Another concern with relying on personal collections is not everyone donates their records to the archives. People are often disappointed to find their research efforts thwarted by the dearth of evidence available for their ancestors. We can only provide access for the material other people have graciously donated.

Earlier this year, a woman called us in search of a

Right: Hermit Lake School students going skating: Olive Gillespie, Ivy Gilmour, Barbara Gillespie, Bruce McLevin, Doreen Gillespie, ca. 1938 (SPRA 440.01.09)





# THE GREAT WAR GALA

The South Peace Regional Archives would like to extend our deepest thanks to all those who supported our fall fundraising event: The Great War Gala. Thank you for supporting our mission for a new Archives facility!

Our volunteers and staff contributed countless hours to provide activities that were both educational and entertaining. The students and faculty of the Grande Prairie Regional College's Fine Arts Department provided exceptional entertainment in the form of live, WWI-themed music. Our talented artists provided works for both our live and silent auction while our auctioneer assisted us fetch the best possible donations. Last, but certainly not least, our many donors provided decorations, door prizes, and auction items in support of our event. Thank you, to everyone, for making the Great War Gala a success.

<b>Auctioneer:</b>	Canada Post	Municipal District of Greenview	<b>Music:</b>
Tarril Rosvold	City of Grande Prairie		GPRC Fine Arts Dept.
	County of Grande Prairie	Municipal District of Spirit River	
<b>Artists:</b>	Alyssa Currie	Mary Nutting	<b>Volunteers:</b>
Corinne Cowan	Delta Helicopters	Pomeroy Hotel	Meg Archer
Gordon Currie	Wayne Drysdale, MLA	Prairie Coast Equipment	Kaylee Dyck
Darla Lukac	Dunes Golf Course	Josephine Sallis	Teresa Dyck
Loraine Newby	Keddie's Tack & Western Wear	Scenic Heights Community Club	The Penson Family
Cathy Scott	Dr. David Leonard		Gail Prette
Pat Wearmouth	Todd Loewen, MLA		Cathy Scott
<b>Donors:</b>	Fran Moore		
Karen Burgess	Mr. Mikes Steakhouse		
Brown's Social House			



# Meet Donna Richards

## SPRA's New Archives Technician

Hi! My name is Donna Richards and I am the new Archives Technician at South Peace Regional Archives.

I was born in Grande Prairie and have spent most of my life in the Peace River regions of Alberta and British Columbia, except for four years when I attended the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Education degree, I was offered my first teaching position with Peace Wapiti School Division #76 at Sexsmith Elementary School. Three years later I transferred into Grande Prairie. I taught at Harry Balfour School, which was only two shorts blocks from my childhood home, for three decades. After 33 years in the teaching profession I retired in 2014.

After retiring, I felt I needed to keep myself active and engaged. The past three plus years I've been busy

substitute teaching at local schools and facilitating student teachers from Grande Prairie Regional College. Now I can add Archives Technician to the list! I am thrilled to be given this opportunity and look forward to learning and working at South Peace Regional Archives.



Grande Prairie Herald, October 23, 1936

## Tell Us Your Story

South Peace Regional Archives is currently accepting submissions for the next themed issue of *Telling Our Stories*:

## WEDDINGS: Timeless Love

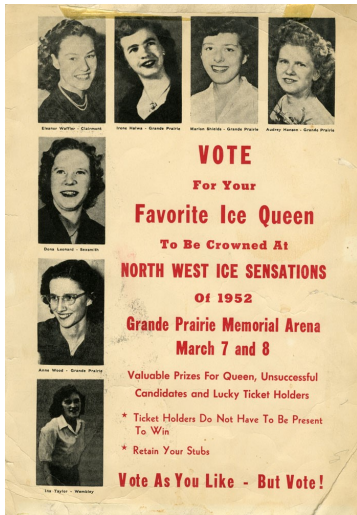
Share your stories (max 350 words), artefacts, and photographs related to weddings and you could be included in our next issue.

Contact: [director@southpeacearchives.org](mailto:director@southpeacearchives.org)  
Deadline for consideration: 5 January 2018.

# New at the Archives

## Thank You Donors!

The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie recently donated 9 linear meters of textual materials and over 1000 slides to the Archives. The material includes exhibition records dating back to 1977 and minutes from the Prairie Gallery Board dating back to 1975. This remarkable, new collection will shed light on the development of the arts in Grande Prairie.



Thanks also Harvey Pearson who donated documents and ledgers related to Hanson's store in Sexsmith and Valhalla. Records from the regions we serve outside of the City of Grande Prairie are always a welcome addition.

*Top: from 2017.042 Harvey Pearson donation.*  
Another recent donation consists of master copies and documentation for the film *The Edson to Grande Prairie Trail*. Thanks to the Edson Trail Historical Society for making the SPRA the repository of this valuable material.

We appreciate all the unique donations we receive. They will form a lasting legacy for years to come.



## Dave Schenk

The South Peace Regional Archives is sad to announce the death of long-time supporter, Dave Schenk. Dave passed away on Wednesday, October 11, 2017.

David "Dave" Schenk was born and raised in the South Peace area. He passionately enjoyed the outdoors and diligently documented the history of the South Peace area.

The Schenk family fonds includes: a collection of early Grande Prairie photographs belonging to Jack Mantle; a series of railway scenes and train accidents belonging to F.W. Schenk; and a series on working for the Forestry Service in the south Wapiti belonging to Dave Schenk.

*Above: Dave Schenk, Coal Exploration, 1972 (SPRA 256.03.41)*

*Below: Sarah Hubert, Christine Schenk, Bill Henderson, Jack McCullough, David Schenk (on Bill's lap), 1933 (SPRA 256.03.01)*



## South Peace Regional Archives Society Membership Application/Renewal Form

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

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

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

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

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

I am interested in being involved as a:  volunteer  board member

Select your membership:

**Yearly membership:** receive communications to stay informed about issues and happenings at the Archives, get involved in the society, attend meetings, vote on issues, and run for office.

**Lifetime membership:** receive all of the benefits of a regular membership, without the hassle of yearly renewal, and know that your membership could have a greater immediate impact.

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

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

Lifetime Membership  
\$500.00/person \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Please pay by cash or cheque to:**  
South Peace Regional Archives Society  
Box 687, Grande Prairie, AB. T8V 3A8  
Phone: 780-830-5105  
Fax: 780-831-7371  
Director@southpeacearchives.org

Eco-option: I would like to receive a digital subscription to *Telling Our Stories*; I will receive an email link to a full-color copy of each issue. By selecting a digital subscription, I understand that I am opting out of receiving paper issues of *Telling Our Stories*.

Effective 1 December 2017, associate memberships have been discontinued.  
Applications and renewals for 2018 associate memberships received before this date will not be affected.



*Thank you for supporting*



[www.southpeacearchives.org](http://www.southpeacearchives.org)

