

THE MANDATE OF SPRA 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, THESE RECORDS REFLECT THE PERSONAL, CULTURAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL LIFE OF THE SOUTH PEACE RIVER COUNTRY OF ALBERTA AND ARE IN ALL FORMATS AND MEDIA, INCLUDING TEXTUAL RECORDS, MAPS, PLANS, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES, FILM, VIDEO, SOUND RECORDINGS.

TELLING

OUR

STORIES

LOCAL HISTORY

ARCHIVE NEWS



VOLUME 7

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ISSUE 2



PRODUCED BY

SOUTH PEACE REGIONAL ARCHIVES

ESTABLISHED IN 2000, THE FIRST

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On the cover: Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia rails reach Grande Prairie's northern limits, 1916 (SPRA 2001.1.037)

Take Note

Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers

Saturday, April 2, 2016, 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- 10:00 Friends of the Archives AGM
- 10:30 South Peace Regional Archives AGM
- 11:15 Volunteer & Beth Sheehan Awards
- 11:30 Guest Speaker, Dr. Daryl White
"They Came Along Highway 43: Post-War Immigration and Diversity in the Peace"
- 12:30 Lunch and Tours of the Archives

Save the Date!

Friends of the Archives Fall Fundraiser

Join the Friends of the South Peace Regional Archives for a fall fundraising supper on Saturday, October 15, 2016 at the Pomeroy Hotel, Grande Prairie. The evening will have a barn-dance theme and is sure to full of laughter and fun, so reserve a spot on your calendar and start prepping your costume! Details to follow.

March 1, 2016

Dear Members and Supporters;

This issue features the Municipal District of Greenview, with such articles as the East Smoky School Division fonds, and an "Explore the History" article about the South Wapiti District.

The MD is also the catchment area for the records used in Archivist Patricia Greber's article about using school fonds for genealogy on pages 17-19. She has used as an illustration a hand-written yearbook from Five Mile School archived by teacher Phyllis Stewart.

We are pleased to include some excerpts from an interview by Roy Bickell, who grew up in the MD of Greenview when it was still known as Improvement District No. 16. This is a timely article, as the new school in Royal Oaks has just been named the Roy Bickell School!

Hearing so much positive feedback on the Dr. Carlisle serial of 2015, we are starting another for 2016. This time we are using the diary of Maria Wozniak which was translated from Polish by her son Mathew, a long time supporter and volunteer at SPRA.

If you're wondering what "The Friends" of the Archives are up to, check out page 25 and you will see a familiar face! The Society News on pages 23-25 will tell you what's been happening with the Society and our Volunteers, and p. 26 will give you an update on the latest donations and processed collections.

And of course, don't miss our Annual General Meeting on April 2nd. This year the guest speaker is Dr. Daryl White with a very timely talk on the history of immigration in the Peace River Country.

Hope to see you there.

Happy Spring! Mary Nutting, Editor

TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY
South Peace Regional Archives Society

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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.

Wanted: Letters from the Front World War II

One of our projects at the Archives this year is to build a section of our website where we can offer local material from World War I and World War II for teachers planning Remembrance Day Services at our area schools. This section of the website will include documents, photographs, paper artifacts, newspaper clippings, sound clips and stories about those who left the Peace Country to enlist in the wars, or who came here to live after the wars were over.

For World War I we have a good selection of photographs and documents, and a few original letters written from the Trenches. In addition, the Grande Prairie Herald regularly published letters from soldiers overseas—often on the front page. The letter on the right is an example.

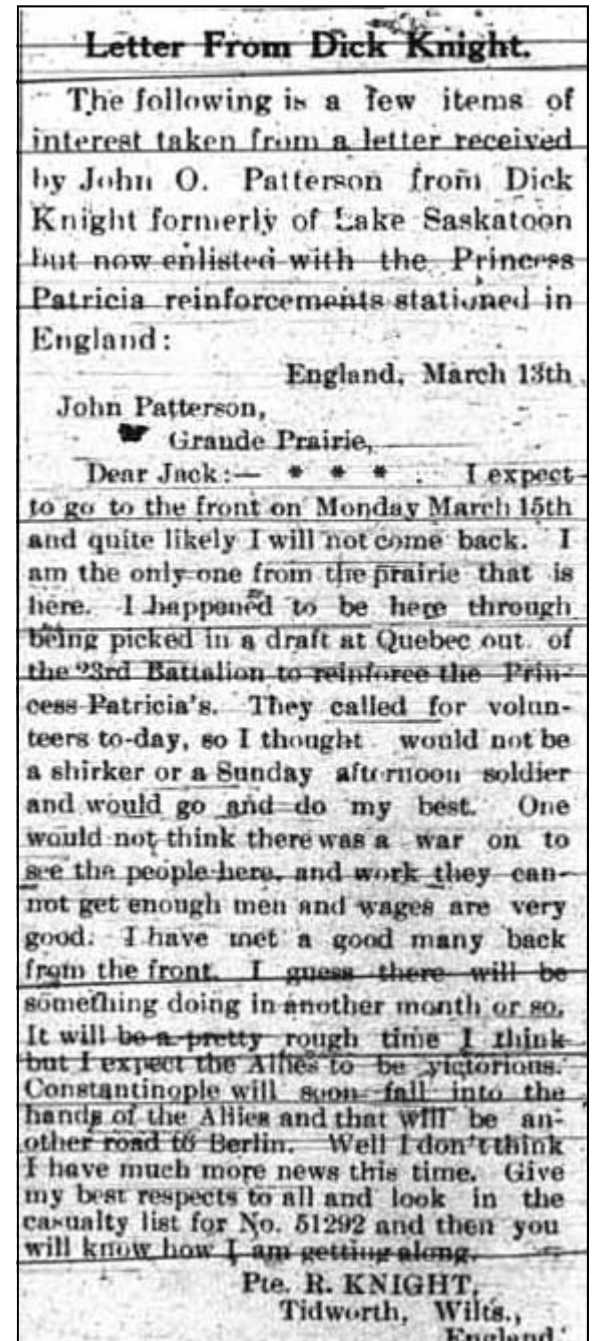
Unfortunately, the Grande Prairie Herald did not publish letters from soldiers during World War II, and although we have documents and photographs, we have very few letters from the front for World War II.

Do you have letters from soldiers in your family collections which tell of their experiences or the conditions overseas? And do you have any photographs of those same soldiers? Would you be willing to let us copy them for use on Remembrance Day? They would be identified by the name of the soldier and credited to your family.

Of course, if you have material from World War II that you are ready to archive, we are very interested in preserving the original records. You can always ask for copies, either at the time of donation or later, for no charge.

Thanks for your help. I am always so amazed by the quality of the documents and photographs in family collections.

And by the way, Dick Knight (author of this letter) was not killed in battle as he feared, but returned to farm in the Peace Country.



Featured Fonds: East Smoky School Division

No. 54 fonds

East Smoky School Division No. 54 fonds. — 1935-1991. — 157 cm of textual records.

Agency History

The East Smoky School Division No. 54 was established February 19, 1945 by Proclamation of the Alberta Government Department of Education. The division covered schools east of the Smoky River with Valleyview as its eastern border, which in 1945 was 13 school districts: Calais No. 3992, Edson Trail No. 4082, East Smoky No. 4198, Ridgevalley No. 4563, Sturgeon Heights No. 4606, Darwin No. 4639, Mountain Springs No. 4640, Clarkson Valley No. 4663, Smoky Valley No. 4682, Cornwall No. 4700, Simonette No. 4750, Ravenna No. 4822, and Sturgeon No. 4858.

Until the division was formed, each school district operated under its own board: building schools, hiring teachers and collecting its own taxes. The formation of a school division was seen as a way for the schools to have collective power and economies of scale. Capital projects, school supplies, financial records and hiring of teachers was a responsibility of the division, leaving the local parent board able to concentrate on the upkeep and day to day operation. Mr. Carl B. Johnson was the first Superintendent of the East Smoky School Division and Robert Mehlum was the secretary-treasurer, operating out of the divisional office in DeBolt. He was responsible for getting supplies, both educational and janitorial, out to the teachers in each small school.



Ridgevalley teachers Lillian Reid and Ruth Rogers, 1946. Ridgevalley School was part of the East Smoky School Division. (SPRA 116.09.01.01.0189)

Under the direction of the division, schools which were still using outdoor washrooms and barrel wood stoves for heating were modernized with furnaces and indoor plumbing. As teachers became harder to recruit, the small schools were combined into centralized schools, the final move being to Ridgevalley.

With more settlers coming into the Peace Country, East Smoky School Division continued to expand as new school districts were added. Later the division was enlarged to include Valleyview and Fox Creek, and a new divisional office built at Valleyview, then a more centralized location. Eventually it was responsible for nine schools with students from approximately 75 school districts. About the mid 90s, school divisions in the Province of Alberta were re-organized, and the East Smoky School Division area was divided between Peace Wapiti School Division and the Northern Gateway Division.

In 1988, the East Smoky School Division No. 54, with the assistance of Marie Stevenson, Mary Werklund, Elsie Kronholm and Irene Riding to do the research and the writing, published a book called *Beginnings*, which chronicles the history of the Division and its preceding school districts.

Custodial History

The records were preserved by DeBolt and District Pioneer Museum and transferred to Grande Prairie Regional Archives in 2001.

Scope and Content

The fonds consists of one Capital Account Receipt Book from the East Smoky School Division for 1956-1961 which records debenture, grant and capital information; and financial records and Daily Registers from School Districts around DeBolt, some of the earliest districts in the division. The financial records consist mainly of Cash Books from before the formation of the East Smoky School Division, and detail receipts and expenses such as government grants, teachers' salaries and building costs. The registers record the name, birth date, post office address, parents' names and addresses of each pupil. There are Annual Financial Statements and Audited Reports, teachers' declarations, yearly summaries called teachers' returns, and transfer, attendance and promotion records. The research files and proof copy of the book *Beginnings* are also included with the collection.

- 113.01 East Smoky School Division No. 54. — 1945-1983. — 1 cm of textual records.**
- 113.02 Clarkson Valley School District No. 4663. — 1937-1945. — 2 cm of textual records.**
- 113.03 Cornwall School District No. 4700. — 1937-1959. — 4 cm of textual records.**
- 113.04 Darwin School District No. 4639. — 1935-1954. — 5 cm of textual records.**
- 113.05 East Smoky School District No. 4198. — 1937-1954. — 6 cm of textual records.**
- 113.06 Edson Trail School District No. 4082. — 1936-1959. — 17 cm of textual records.**
- 113.07 Harper Creek School District No. 4968. — 1950-1957. — 3 cm of textual records.**



Putting up the basketball net at East Smoky School. Photograph taken by teacher Martha Gudlaugson, 1939 (SPRA 2008.46.26)

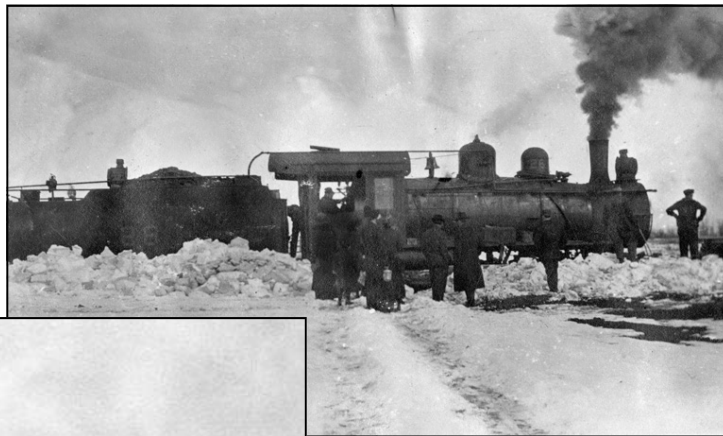
- 113.08 Mountain Springs School District No. 4640. — 1941-1954. — 5.5 cm of textual records.**
- 113.09 North Goodwin School District No. 5002. — 1952-1959. — 3 cm of textual records.**
- 113.10 Ravenna School District No. 4822. — 1938-1954. — 7.5 cm of textual records.**
- 113.11 Ridgevalley School District No. 4563. — 1943-1963. — 22 cm of textual records.**
- 113.12 Simonette School District No. 4750. — 1938-1957. — 6 cm of textual records.**
- 113.13 Smoky Valley School District No. 4682. — 1936-1955. — 8 cm of textual records.**
- 113.14 Sturgeon Heights School District No. 4606. — 1944-1955. — 4 cm of textual records.**
- 113.15 Sturgeon Lake School District No. 4858. — 1942-1955. — 5 cm of textual records.**
- 113.16 Valleyview (Calais, Sun Valley) School District No. 3992. — 1944-1959. — 36 cm of textual records.**
- 113.17. Beginnings Book Files. — [1930]-1991. — 15 cm of textual records.**

Featured Photos: 100th Anniversary of the Railway

One hundred years ago this month, the first train rolled into Grande Prairie on the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway. It was a long-awaited and celebrated event!

Right, Workers preparing the track for the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway in the early months of 1916. (SPRA 1993.46.1b)

Below, a Train traveling on the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia railroad to Grande Prairie in 1916. (SPRA 024.01.09.33)



Above, Engine on the new Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway into the Grande Prairie area, 1916. (SPRA 1993.46.1e)

Left, Grande Prairie villagers greet the train as it reaches the end of steel on March 29, 1916. (SPRA 2001.1.038)

LAST SPIKE WILL BE DRIVEN THIS WEEK ON GRANDE PRAIRIE BRANCH

The Announcement Has Been Made by Officials That the Track Laying Will Be Completed by Wednesday.

The Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway are completing the last lap in the line of steel that connects Grande Prairie with the "outside" world. The dream of the earliest pioneer has been realized. After years of waiting and for the first time in the history of this wide and fertile district, transportation facilities to markets of the south and east, have become an established fact.

On Friday the pioneer track layer with its several hundred workmen, entered Clairmont, the new town at Twin Lakes, and on Saturday after putting in the siding at that place, proceeds along the last seven miles toward this place, which is to be the terminal of the Grande Prairie Branch of the E.D. & B.C. On Sunday at five o'clock steel was only four miles away; yesterday another long move was made; today the smoke of the work trains can be seen easily from any part of the village, and the shrill whistle of the "pioneer" can be heard at intervals, gaining in volume as the distance between it and the town decreases.

It is probable that a general demonstration will take place when the steel actually reaches this point. Scores of people will be present to witness the driving of the last spike. Preparations are being made by the Grande Prairie brass band to meet the tracklayer upon its arrival here.

Grande Prairie Herald, March 21, 1916



Above, the Grande Prairie Railway Station in 1917. (SPRA 024.01.09.34)

Until the railway was built, all products coming in or out of the Grande Prairie area had to be dragged in over the hilly Edson Trail with oxen or horses. This included all heavy equipment (e.g. the printing press for the newspaper, farming implements, sawmill equipment), and all of the fresh produce for local grocery stores. Having a train was a great boon, even though there were frequent accidents.

Below left: Mrs. Benson driving the Golden Spike on the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway in Grande Prairie on March 22, 1916. (SPRA 2001.01.106)

Below right: Train wreck on the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia line between Edmonton and Grande Prairie, 1917 (SPRA 2001.01.004)



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.

On June 24 at 9:00 in the morning, our train took us to our pre-arranged place, Wanham. The conductor came and told us by motion that we should put our clothes on. The train stopped only for a moment, we picked up our belongings and left the train. Outside it is pouring rain, we are sitting on our belongings. We have sacks with feather ticks and two sacks with quilts and pillows and a trunk covered with tin.

I sent my husband to the little town, about a half mile away. Everyone could see a man walking in oxfords and short pants and long stockings up to the knees. He got to the town, there were a few houses and one store and that was all. An elderly gentleman (Mr. Stepaniuk) came up to him and asked him in Ukrainian, "Did you just come from the Old Country?" Upon convincing him that it was so, he led Antoni to our friend, Elco Sanoski, a local farmer who had immigrated to Canada in 1929 and whom we knew from the Old Country. Fortunately, it was only one mile. Our friend harnessed his horses to a wagon and came for us at the railroad station where we were waiting. The wagon is plowing through mud.

While I was sitting with the children on our baggage, someone came and indicated to us to go into a small building and be out of the rain. I remember signs yet in Poland, "Guard yourself against thieves." At 11:00 in the morning, we are at the farm of our friend who

took care of us and foremost gave us breakfast.

The first task was to send \$100.00 to my mother in the Old Country. We take an interpreter and go to the post office, buy a money order for that amount, and send it with a letter that we got here. The next step was to earn some money. We take advantage of the fact that our friend has much bush to be cleared. We take one acre to be cleared for \$12.00. Chopping on this piece of land from morning till night. Mosquitoes and little flies don't let you work. They get into your eyes and don't let you breathe. After working eight days, we found that we were only half finished. This acre must have been extra large. Our friend said that an acre was forty-five steps and made them as large as he could. This made the acre much larger.

It looked like we would make very little wages on this job so we went to pay for a homestead. We got a piece of land two miles west from the school and two miles north. The first function was to build a home before the oncoming sever winter. As soon as we filed on the homestead, they gave us the remaining \$250.00 for further expenses. We bought a cow and calf for \$100.00

September 20, 1930 we moved to our homestead. Before we could get there, we had to make a trail. It was a very uncomfortable ride, the wagon bounced over stumps and roots but somehow we got there.

Our friend has a sawmill and because he had borrowed \$80.00 from us now, in return gave us two kubiki of lumber. We began to build our home, not understanding Canadian winters. We covered the walls with boards and put tar paper on the outside. Naturally, when the wind came, the paper ended up in the bush.

September 25, a rainy day and our roof is not yet

covered. Everywhere it is pouring like from a tub. We covered the children with whatever we had and even opened an umbrella. What will happen now, the rain is not stopping. With our good fortune and God's mercy, the rain stopped. Tomorrow we have beautiful weather. Hurrying to town to buy stiff paper and bring it on Antoni's back. With edgings from the sawmill, we are covering the roof. It later turned out that this also did not withstand the wind. This paper ended up in the bush also.

The next problem was water. The first few days we carried water from far away so we decided to dig a well. Our efforts and planning did not give us positive results. The water was with silt, salty and bitter. They told us that there is no water underground here. Misfortune began to look us in the face, the first was that we had no water, the second was that we did not have ample money. Our son that was so sick on the way had recovered and the convulsions stopped. Our oldest son, seeing all our problems, takes the axe and begins to chop. As he was working, the axe bounced off a tree and hit him in the leg. Blood began to pour, the axe had gone all the way to the bone. I was covering the wound with bread to stop the bleeding. Without any medicine or proper bandages, thank God, he became well.

I have to mention bears, frequently they visit us at night and come up to our home. The cow and calf we have to put in the barn every night. When Antoni goes to town, he always takes the 22 rifle with him. I would take the children up in the attic and pull the ladder up with us.

Around our house were many large poplars of both kinds. What we could, we cleared before winter. Approaching us is our first Canadian winter. We ran out of money and were forced to write to Antoni's brother,

Thomas, in the USA for help. With many thanks, we received on the twentieth day of October \$100.00. We bought two bushels of potatoes at \$1.00, six bags of flour at \$4.50, two tons of hay for the cow and a rifle with a peep sight.

October 28, our first snowfall. We are gathering snow and melting it for water. It is thick with bugs so we are straining it through dense cloth and boiling it to make drinking water. In a few days the snow melted and the weather became warm.

Christmas and New Year were sad in Canada. After the new year, Antoni managed to shoot a moose. Up to the middle of January, the weather was quite bearable but after that it snowed and became severely cold. We kept the fire going day and night and sometimes the temperature was not much different inside than what it was outside.

The cousin that came from Poland with our family, after a few days here got a job in a small café (St. Piers) at \$15.00 a month. There she sold things, washed clothes and ironed them without knowing a word of English. After a half year, she got a boyfriend, a farmer, and without much thinking, married him. His name was Piotr Howenka. Knowing Canada much better, he advised us not to keep the land we were living on.

On the twelfth of April, 1931, I traveled to Sexsmith with all the children to stay with my cousin, hoping to find a piece of land that did not have such big trees on it. I found that there were better pieces of land, but they were ten to twelve miles from town or school. I returned to Wanham.



Antoni & Maria Wozniak with their two oldest children, Boleslaw (Bill) and Mathew, at the time of their immigration to Canada in 1930. Twins Marian and Cecilia were infants at the time and are not in the photograph. (SPRA 279.02.01a)

Explore the History of South Wapiti

By Mary Nutting

The “Explore the History” section of our newsletter focuses on rural communities that were once the economic, educational and social centres in the country. In an age of urbanization and centralization, it is easy to forget that the history of the South Peace is found in these places. Settlers arriving throughout the first half of the last century settled largely in the countryside. They made their living farming or utilizing the natural resources the region offered. Distance, time, and poor roads were often obstacles to travel, so once arrived, people tended to work and play locally. As transportation improved, services began to centralize. The small communities faded to become distant, but hopefully, fond memories. In this issue, we explore an area south of Wembley, across the Wapiti River.

The South Wapiti area was once directly connected to Pipestone Creek via the Pipestone Creek Ferry. To get there today, we have to start south of Grande Prairie on Highway 40 and take Secondary Highway 666 west on the south side of the Wapiti River. Following the highway for 22 km, we come to a curve south at Rge Rd 82. This is where our tour begins. My tour guides are Dave and Bunny Schenk, who have called this area home for most of their lives.

Instead of taking the curve south, go straight ahead on Twp Rd 700 and turn north on Rge Rd 82. This was the road to the Pipestone Creek Ferry, built in the early 1930s, making it easier to bring the furs, logs and lumber (by then a thriving business) across into the Grande Prairie area. The ferry stopped running ca. 1970 and the By car, you can still get to the top of the river bank and walk the “Hogs Back” down to the river, but be warned it is a distance of about 3 miles there and back.

On the way back to SH 666, note the log house on the west side of the road. In 1935, a two-story log home was built for the McCullough family on this land.

Henry McCullough was the intrepid mountain guide, who with brother Pete and a party of friends for support, rode his horse Diamond from Edmonton to Grande Prairie (in -40 degree weather), bringing in the City Charter in 1958.

Back at our original starting point, take the paved highway for a short distance and then the first right on Rge Rd 82. This was the original road in the area before the highway was built in 1979. Looking at the township maps based on surveys from 1906 to 1929, this road appears to follow an old pack trail which led to the crossing over the Wapiti River and overland to Saskatoon Lake.

Sela Watts, owner of the Pipestone Creek Store, recalled that the ...old Indian trail from Jasper to the Hudson Bay Post at Lake Saskatoon passed through our place... The Indians had a stopping place down on the bank of the Wapiti and one could see many decorated wigwams among the less elaborate ones. (Along the Wapiti p. 279) The camping place on the bank of the Wapiti is where Pipestone Creek Park is today, and the Indian burial ground there contains some of the men and women who used this trail.

The trails south also led to Pete Shuttler’s ranch and the Pinto Creek Trading Post, which he ran as an outpost for the Pipestone Creek Store (Along the Wapiti p. 12), and to Ft. Porcupine. This trading post was built in 1935 by Dan St. Arnault and Henry Joachim, advertised as “carrying a complete line of trappers’ supplies and groceries... with electric light and long distance radio... and first class mail three times yearly. (Northern Tribune Sept 12, 1935). Along the way, travellers could stop at the blueberry patches on Ryan’s Meadows (Along the Wapiti pp. 276, 305), where Jim & Edith Ryan homesteaded in the 1930s. This is the area we now know as Stoney Meadows.

Now it goes through Aspen Grove Acreage which was first approved as a Metis settlement in the 1960s, but is now a small clearing at the first bend in the road shows where the St. Arnault home was located. Dan St. Arnault was a well-known guide in the area.

Follow the road through the subdivision to Twp Rd 694. The north-east corner of this intersection was where an Indian mission school was located. This became Elk School under the Northland School Division for a short time, and then the children were bussed to Grovedale School. (Along the Wapiti p. 9)

Take Twp Rd 694 west and turn south on Rge Rd 83. Some trails are still visible, both from the road and on Google Earth, and I wonder if these are remnants of the old pack trails. When you arrive at the intersection between Rge Rd 83 and Highway 666, you are in the heart of the South Wapiti community. On the north-east corner of the intersection, the Wapiti Post Office was established in the home of Robert Rutledge in 1931. Mr. Rutledge was also the mailman, hauling mail from Wembley to Pipestone Creek and the Wapiti Post Office each week. Later the South Wapiti Store and Post Office were managed by the Gerow family, and then moved to the Sutherland home kitty-corner across the road. The post office closed in 1967. (Library & Archives Canada)



Students from South Wapiti School beside the log school ca. 1950. (SPRA 255.03)

A mile west on 666, you can still see the first log school being used as a farm building on the north side of the road. A few hundred meters west, just past Rge Rd 84, you can see the last school still standing on the

south side of the road in what is now Lofstrom Park. South Wapiti School District 4623 was formed in 1933 and a log school was built on this site, which eventually included a teacherage, an ice house and a barn. The new school was built in 1954. It closed in 1962 and the students were bussed to Grovedale.

Across the road from the school, a community hall was built on George “Ted” Day’s quarter in 1952. This was originally the cookhouse from the Hystad Mill south of the community, and it was used until 1964. A little further west was Clarence and Martha Troyer’s home where church and Sunday school were held. (Along the Wapiti pp. 285, 299)



Joyce Ryan with poster advertising a Valentine Dance at the Wapiti Hall, 1945. (SPRA 255.10)

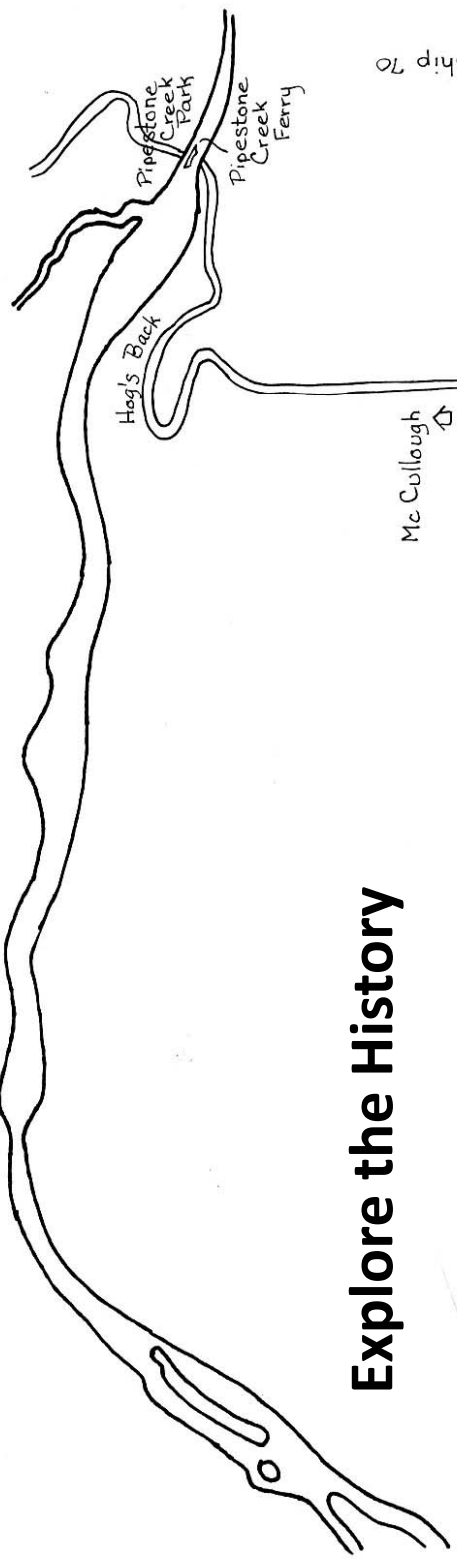
Rounding the speed curve south, you can still see Johnny & Nora Ryan’s small log house on the west side of the road if you are not too distracted by the huge Wapiti Gas Plant across the road.

Another mile south, is where the South Wapiti Ranger Station was located on the west side of the road. This station was established ca. 1950 and in 1957 a new home was built to replace the original forestry cabin. Forest rangers are responsible for the protection of the forests from illegal use, disease, and especially from fires, and it was from here that my guide, Dave Schenk, served as the forest ranger from 1958 to 1977. In 1978, the Station was moved to new headquarters at Grovedale, which you can see on the return trip along Highway 666, just before the Hamlet of Grovedale.

Resources: [Along the Wapiti](#)

[Alberta Registries Survey Plans](#)

[Family Names in Newspapers database on www.southpeacearchives.org.](#)



Explore the History Of South Wapiti

Resources: Township Maps on Alberta Registries
 Along the Wapiti community history book
 Tour of area with Dave and Bunny Schenk

--- 18th Base Line ---
 Range 8, West of the 6th Meridian

South Wapiti Ranger Station
 TWO LAKES

Featured Paper Artifact:

DeBolt Country Club Pioneer Days Poster



The DeBolt County Club hosted sporting events for many years in their community. Their Pioneer Days, as this 1938 poster indicates, had many different activities to entertain the whole family. The event finished off with a celebratory dance held at the community hall. This poster is a part of the DeBolt County Club and Agriculture Society accrual which is currently being processed at the Archives.

The DeBolt County Club and Agriculture Society is still active in their community with numerous volunteers and a variety of events held each year. <http://www.deboltagsociety.com/>

Exploring School Records for Genealogy

By Patricia Greber

Editor's Note: Archivist Patricia Greber's keen interest in genealogy has inspired us to begin a new column in our newsletter. Genealogy is one of the key demands in any archives. In each issue of our newsletter this year, Patricia will share with us the wealth of resources the archives can offer as you delve into your family's history.

School records are a potential gold-mine of valuable information for the family historian.

They can contain names, birthdates of students, land locations, attendance records, course marks, correspondence, parent's/guardians names, medical information, transfers, holidays, closures, student's absences and more.

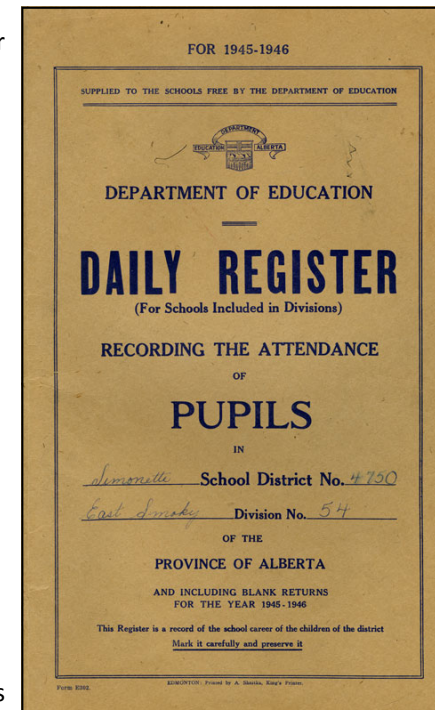
I wanted to delve further into the school records we have at the Archives so I searched on our website for a school and grabbed a box from the back to see what information is hidden inside! The file I pulled was for the Simonette School and according to the description of the school on our website it "... was established in 1936 and a school site approved on NE 36-70-27-W5. A log schoolhouse was built with volunteer labour and a small grant from the provincial government, and school opened in September 1937. The first teacher was Ella Hughes. In 1945, the Simonette School joined the East Smoky School Division, and in 1957 the school was closed under consolidation. The series consists

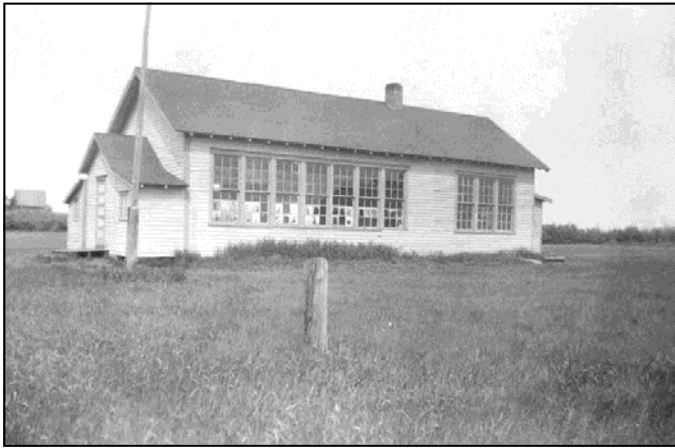
of 11 Daily Registers for Simonette School District No. 4750 dating from the time of amalgamation with the East Smoky School Division, 1 bank book, and 1 Cash Account Book detailing receipts and payments for the school district before it was annexed by the East Smoky School Division in 1945."

This file on the Simonette School contained daily registers, teacher's names, student's names and although this particular file didn't have a lot of correspondence some of the other schools do. For instance the records for Calais School (602.06) contained notes requesting student's absences so she can "help at the station" or requesting a child come home at noon as they are needed, these records are a window into the day-to-day life of your relative!

Having a closer look at the Simonette School daily registers revealed an under-used resource. The registers included student's name, age, grade, and attendance or lack thereof. One of the most exciting records hidden inside was a census! What a great discovery for the family historian! What questions did the school census ask? Names of Children, Dates of Birth (includes day, month, year), distance from school, full name of Parents Or Guardians and Addresses. Later registers also included the family's land location. Now you can actually confirm those stories of your parent/grandparent walking those 2 miles

Cover of the 1945-1946 Daily Register from the Simonette School District No. 4750 (SPRA 2001.48.7.1)





Five Mile Creek School, ca. 1948 (SPRA 059.02.03.01.05)

to school! (I have often heard that it was uphill, both ways)! 1921, is the last census that we have access to in Canada, and the 1926 census (Prairie Provinces) is not due to be opened to the public for a few years. These school census records are readily available, you just need to find them!

This particular file contains records on the Ratzlaff, Giesbrecht, Bower, Frakes, Wolchyn, Clarke and Issac families who lived in and around Ridge Valley. If you knew your relative was a teacher these records could have information on their time at the school.

Finding Your Ancestor's School Records

How do you know if the school your ancestor attended has records to be viewed? That can take a bit of searching. If you know the school they attended then you have a place to start. Check for the closest Archives to where the family was living (via a google search or contact the local genealogy society to see if

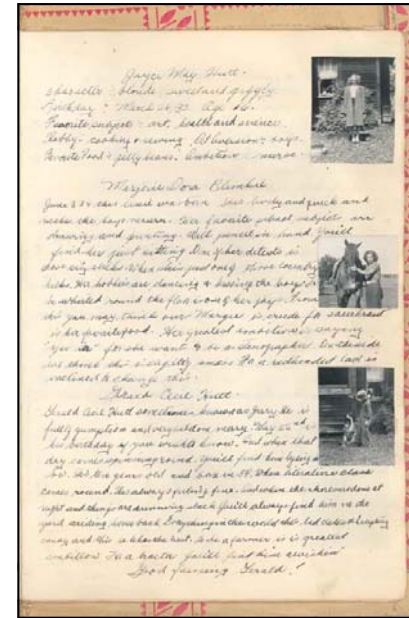
you can locate one). Once you locate the Archives you can look at what they have on-line, send them an e-mail, or phone them to see if the records you are looking for are held there. If you don't know where your ancestor went to school I would suggest finding their land location and again getting in touch with the local Archives. The staff at Archives are usually quite knowledgeable about the area they cover and can tell you what records they have.

How to Find School Records at SPRA

The South Peace Regional Archives has all their fonds (description of holdings) uploaded onto the website. Once you are on the home page type in a search (in the top right search bar) and you will usually find what you are looking for if we have the records. We have quite a few school records from various places in the South Peace. We also have a published book that describes all the school districts in the County of Grande Prairie, it is called *A Grand Education: One Hundred Schools in the County of Grande Prairie, 1910-1960*. This is a vital resource for doing research into schools in the County of Grande Prairie. Another book worth consulting is *Beginnings – A History of the East Smoky School Division #54*. If your relative lived in either place these books are an important resources. Both books can be found in our library at the Archives. The information on each school can vary, I have come across records from a school that is full of correspondence and others with very little. Reading through the letters in the correspondence file can be quite interesting. For example, if you don't have a letter written by your great grandmother you may find she wrote the school board to ask for indoor

plumbing or to find out about housing the family's horse during the school day. You can also e-mail or call us to find out what we records we have.

Page from a handwritten yearbook from Five Mile Creek School for 1948-1949, with photographs and biographies of each student in the school (SPRA 059.02.03.01)



More Records to Check

More Records to Check

While looking for school records also keep an eye out for other records like maps, photographs and yearbooks. Maps can be useful tools to discover which school your relative attended. Once a map is located for the area your ancestor lived you can plot the distance to the closest school. That should be the school your family attended but if not, look closely and you may notice that there is a body of water making the closer not an option. Once you have located possible schools, look for an Archive who may have the records. Photographs would be something else to keep an eye out for, as many Archives have photographs of schools in their area. These photographs can be pictures of classes or of the school itself. Another great item to keep an eye out for is yearbooks. Not all schools had yearbooks but what a find if you locate a picture of your grandfather in one, or to find out your grandmother was class president!

When it comes to school records you don't know what is available until you look! We hope to see you here at South Peace Regional Archives to research the school records of your ancestors!

Here is a list of some of the Archives in Alberta to get you started on your hunt for school records –

Provincial Archives of Alberta:

<https://hermis.alberta.ca/paa/>

Esplanade (Medicine Hat Archives):

<http://archives.esplanade.ca/>

Glenbow:

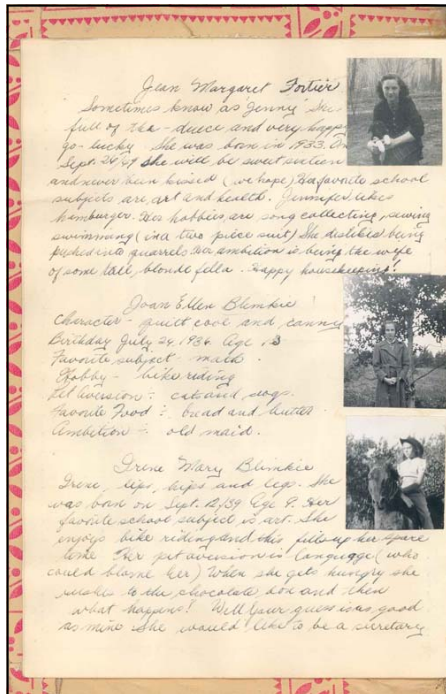
<http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainSearch.aspx>

Lethbridge:

<http://galtmuseum.com/archives>

South Peace Regional Archives:

<http://southpeacearchives.org/>



Page from a handwritten yearbook from Five Mile Creek School for 1948-1949, with photographs and biographies of each student in the school (SPRA 059.02.03.01)

Darwin School Students with teacher, Hazel Coogan. Back row, left to right: Mrs. Coogan, Earl Weegar, Bud Sheffield, Harvey Weegar, Jake Doerkson, and the Miller brothers. Second row, left to right: Margarite Brown, Lorice Weegar, Dorothy Brown, Wilbert Brown, Ian Morrison, and Dennis Brown. Third row, left to right: Noreen Coogan, Loraine Gitzel, the Millen sisters, Tony Graves, Gerry Coogan, Delmar Weegar, Jackie Coogan, Doug Groves, Herb Groves, and Donald Gitzel. (SPRA 116.09.01.01.0561)



Roy Bickell Remembers

From an Oral History Interview by Lynda Drysdale-Hancock in 2008



Ed and Don Wilburn, Richard and Roy Bickell, Leota and Jean Wilburn, Charlotte and Bob Bickell, and Evelyn Wilburn, Christmas 1936 (SPRA 116.09.01.01.0287)

Roy Bickell was born at DeBolt, Alberta, where his parents and grandparents had homesteaded in 1928. Along with his brothers and sisters and about 40 other students, he attended Edson Trail School, so named because it was situated beside the old Edson Trail. As the Bickell children reached high school age, they were sent back to the States to live with relatives while they finished school.

World War II changed all that. In the summer of 1941, the border between Canada and the U.S. was closed, and the older children were cut off from their schooling. Mr. & Mrs. Bickell made a quick decision to move the family to Grande Prairie, a trip that Roy will always remember:

“The day before school, we left DeBolt early in the morning on what they used to call the milk truck, because it picked up anybody that was on the highway or milk cans that people would bring to the highway. He would carry the mail, eggs, butter, milk and cream. It was a single axle 2 or 3 ton truck, and the fellow who drove it was Bill Sargeant. Later

they got into the bus business—Morrison and Sargeant Busses—and had the first busses in Grande Prairie, ran a route to High Prairie, and eventually to Edmonton. Because it had been a very wet year, he had hired someone else to drive the truck and he was driving a little Ford Ferguson tractor. My father had been raising hogs and they were ready to be shipped, so he decided to take an old John Deere tractor with steel wheels to Grande Prairie with two wagons behind it. So he left early in the morning, and we went down to the local store to get on the milk truck. The highway didn’t come in from the four mile corner in those days, but in from the west end of Grande Prairie. And when we got to Glen Leslie, Bill Sargeant was covered with frozen mud, and he got an axe out of the truck and cut the railing off the bridge (the old dry wood around) to start a fire, dry out his clothes, and warm up. As a child, I was so worried—you can’t do that—but I realize now it was the only sane thing to do. He had to pull that truck probably a hundred different times. And my father beat us to Grande Prairie with that old John Deere put-put-put on steel wheels. We were all day on the road from early

Old Grande Prairie Lumber Co., purchased by Canfor in 1961 (SPRA 050.08.02.62)



morning until well after midnight. That was how you got to town.”

The Bickell family lived on 104th Avenue, near the edge of town, and what is now 108th Avenue was then a big drainage ditch. Dray horses still delivered milk, water, ice and coal to individual homes. Everything was still shipped into town by train, and the dray horses met the train to convey groceries and freight to businesses in the area. After high school, Roy went to work with his dad. By the time Grande Prairie became a city in 1958, Roy was back living on a farm in DeBolt, married, raising a family, and working at Canfor with his father and partners.

The local economy was built on agriculture, which had always been there, but also on lumber, which was where the Bickells were involved. The first mills were scattered all over the country, logging out Spruce and some Pine during the winter, and the sawed lumber was hauled into town. Then it became more efficient to bring the logs to a central place and run the mill year round. There was always Aspen amongst the spruce and pine, so Mr. Bickell explored the idea of turning Aspen into veneer and then plywood. In the early 1950s, he and his partners (including Roy) built a Veneer Plant where Superstore is today. The only complaint was that the plant was so far out of town. With continual expansions, this later became the Plywood Plant and employed over 200 people. Canfor was the marketing agent for their products, which were so popular that Canfor bought out the partners and went into business with Bickells. Again the plant doubled in size, twice. In 1961, Canfor bought out the Bickells, as well as the Grande Prairie Lumber Co. mill on the other side of town. When OSB came on stream, plywood was too expensive to make and the Plywood Plant shut down.

A lot of people were employed in the mills, so there was little complaint about the ash which drifted over the homes from the burner at the lumber mill, even



Walter Mueller with Canfor Lumber Manufacturing Equipment. Panda Camera photograph

though staff would occasionally have to clear out a homeowner’s eaves trough clogged with ash. Today that wouldn’t be tolerated. Now the bark,

sawdust, and shavings are burned to make electricity. Technology has made a huge difference to the lumber industry: logs were peeled at higher and higher speeds, drying faster, improvements to the resin, high tech machinery to make patches. In the sawmill, from one single saw blade, 3/8” wide, to finer and finer multiple saws. Eventually, computers profiled the log for best use so there was less and less waste. Quite a change in one person’s lifetime.

“Grande Prairie has been very successful—we often joke about the multi-legged stool, but a lot of towns and villages are driven by one industry—we have agriculture right from the beginning, forestry from a way back, oil and gas for the longest time, and then becoming a regional center. The service is so broad, the banking and the hospitals, and the doctors, and all the amenities. We’re so far away from Edmonton that we’ve become a center in ourselves. And that’s what brought the box stores; and now we have to build a new hospital. Grow, grow, grow.”

Grande Prairie has seen phenomenal growth, with a few little dips and dives, but it is a great place to live. One of the challenges is the ever-increasing costs brought about by that growth.

“And they’ve done a good job, it’s a great community. I know, as a long-time employee at Canfor, when we used to hire people from out of town, it was a good city to invite people to come and see the amenities that were here, rather than just take them to the



Fire at Canfor in 1978. Panda Camera photograph

office and talk about their job. Show them all the things, take a walk in Bear Creek, drive around and show them all the things in Grande prairie, that was unbelievable, really valuable in hiring new staff that didn't know the Grande Prairie area."

Among Roy's most vivid memories were the two log fires, one in the 1960s, when the whole yard was cleared, and another in 1979.

"Another interesting time was in the 1980s, when Grande Prairie had a terrific thunderstorm. It lasted long enough for some professional photographers to set up and take advantage of the show. I was working for Canfor in Vancouver at the time, and my secretary told me there was someone from Grande Prairie wanting to see me. I was always glad to see someone from Grande Prairie, so I invited him in, and the gentleman had a beautiful picture of the lightning strike on the mill that burned the de-barker down, the whole building. Of course he had a sale! I was responsible for that mill... When the lightning hit, we were down—boom! It took the guts right out of the manufacturing process. Unbelievable lightning storm. I remember that. I have that picture at home."

In later years, Roy became involved with the Grande Prairie Museum, as the president and

fundraiser when they expanded their two sites. He was also on the board of AGT for 18 years, during the transition period from a Government owned utility to a publicly owned Company.

Roy's hobby is fossil collection, and he has the largest fossil collection in private hands in northern Alberta. Portions of his collection are in the Grande Prairie Museum, the DeBolt Museum, Grande Prairie Regional College, and about 12 more exotic pieces in the Tyrrell Museum, but the bulk is being saved for the Pipestone Museum yet to be built.

"What has living in the north meant to me? I've enjoyed it. I worked for Canfor for thirty-seven years, the last eight of them in Vancouver, the last five as president of the company. We lived in a large city, yet when we retired we moved back to Grande Prairie. We love the open space, the quiet traffic, our family and the people we knew. We enjoyed it in Vancouver, every moment we were there, but it would not do for the place we would retire. My hobby, of course, for the longest time was fossils, and this is a great place for fossils. I have yet to find, in the south Peace, any stream that's called a river, starting at the Peace and going down, which does not have fossils. And whether you find them or not, it doesn't really matter because it's a great outing. We've been living here now for seven years, and we'll probably stay here."

Roy & Noreen Bickell and daughter Judy Brewster with Roy's fossil display at the Grande Prairie Museum



Friends of the Archives



New (and Old) at the Friends of the Archives

At their most recent meeting, the Friends of the Archives decided to hire an executive assistant to help with their various initiatives. However, their new assistant, Leslie Gordon, is an old, familiar face around the Archives. It's a

good fit for both Leslie and the Friends; Leslie is still on maternity leave from the Archives, but this job with the Friends is a small time commitment and can be mostly done from home. At the same time, Leslie is familiar with the Archives, the Friends, and their aims and has helped with Friends matters before.

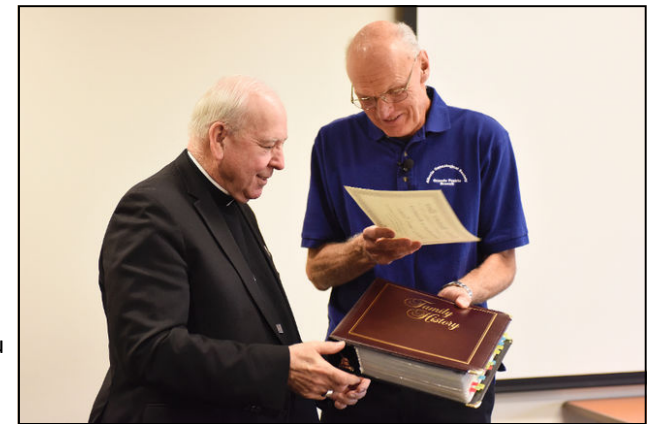
One of Leslie's key tasks will be to assist in planning the fall fundraiser. The date is still somewhat tentative, but please mark October 15 on your calendars. We are gearing up for a fun-filled, barn dance-themed event to help raise the Archives. If you attended either the "Raising the Archives" event in October 2014 or last summer's "Horse Drive of Harry Adair", you know this event is not to be missed. And it is never too early to start planning your costume...

Leslie will also be helping the Friends promote themselves with a revamped page on the Archives website, monthly blogs, and pamphlets. Stay tuned for more about the Friends and the fall fundraiser in the months to come.

SPRA Society & Member News



Our volunteers at the 2015 Volunteer Christmas Luncheon



Another successful Family History Day, with 10 workshops, was held on Saturday, February 20th. We introduced a new feature called "Who Do You Think You Are?" Above, Al Bromling, president of the Grande Prairie Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society, makes the presentation to Archbishop Gerard Pettipas, whose family has been in Canada for over 400 years. Research was done by Genealogist Gail Schau. Photo by Daily Herald-Tribune.

From the Blog

By Kathryn Auger



Above: An Ice Boat, 1980. Courtesy of Kathryn Auger

Right: Frontier Signal, December 10, 1914

Kathryn selected these two past blog posts to represent the Municipal District of Greenview, which is being highlighted in this issue.

Ice Boat Adventure

Originally posted on December 9, 2014

An item from the Moose Creek City Notes in the Frontier Signal of Dec. 10, 1914 describes a hair-raising boat ride on the ice of Buck Lake. Moose Creek City appears to have been another name for

ed him to tack from one point to another. Sophie attained a 60 mile speed and as Dan tore around the lake on his strange steed, he called for some one to stop Sophie. As it was dangerous to get in the way, nothing could be done, but throw him a coat and a dried fish as Sophie flashed past. To run the boat in to the bank would be almost certain death. Dan was becoming visibly exhausted when Mr. P. A. Robb, who was watching Dan's adventurous ride with remarkable interest, suggested that Sophie be roped. The suggestion was immediately acted upon by Jack Renshaw, who put on his chaps, seized his lariat and secured a most advantageous position. Sophie's next appearance was now awaited in breathless silence. The company's native helpers lined the shore to watch this strange contest, their copper hued immobility faces giving no expression of the interest they felt. Sophie came in sight, the white sails flashing in the wind. Dan was seen to be on his knees grasping something in his hand, the spread of Sophie at this time was described by Red Moose as—heap fast cayuse. Jack's rope began to circle around his head and as the boat shot past the smoke-like rope darted out with a hiss and caught the prow. Quicker than the eye could see, Jack was jerked off his feet and the lariat became entangled in his chaps and Jack followed in the wake of the boat at the end of a 50 foot rope. Matters were now worse than the previous condition, as it will be readily understood, that Jack's pants would not long stand the strain at such a rate of speed over the ice, but the Indians enjoyed the performance, staged for their benefit. Wah, wab, exclaimed Red Moose, white man devil heap strong. Buckskin Charley's team of oxen were then brought to the edge of the lake, Baldy Robb attached his rope to the oxen and then waited until Sophie II appeared in sight. With Jack behind, faithfully following Sophie's lead, Baldy's rope described a circle, shot out, caught the tiller and the oxen were swept off their feet, but the added weight brought Sophie to a standstill within three hundred yards. Later in the evening at a white fish banquet, Dan was asked to describe his feelings, while racing around the lake, he said his nerves were badly shattered as a result of his race with death. While on Sophie II, a panoramic view of his past life was vividly forced upon him and out of the mist of past misdeeds arose—banquet at the feast—in the shape of Mike Anderson with whom Dan had refused to take a drink of skitawaboo. This Dan solemnly declared would never happen again. Jack Renshaw, the next speaker, replying to the toast said that he had rode in several bucking contests, where silver cups were the prizes and in one instance a heart was at stake, but never before had he been in a roping contest where a life was at stake. The banquet ended by singing God save the King, in Cree.

Emerson's Cache Stopping Place, located about 20 km southeast of Sturgeon Lake, but it isn't certain where Buck Lake was. No matter where it took place, it was quite a ride.

To read Kathryn's weekly posts online, visit: <http://southpeacearchives.org/blog/>

Sturgeon Lake Coming Summer Resort of North

With its fine sandy beaches, abundance of shade, excellent water to bathe in and the wonderful fishing possibilities, for the water literally abounds with white fish, pickerel, perch, pike and other varieties, Sturgeon Lake, with a good road to it, could never be prevented from becoming the most popular place in the whole North country during the summer months; and that isn't all—there are several mineral springs at the west end of the lake—that if investigated, might be developed into a health resort that would attract people from far and wide.

The above is the opinion of the writer after having made a visit to the Lake on the first of July for the last four years.

This year nearly everyone from the DeBolt district and several people from west of the Smoky River journeyed out to the Lake to take part in two days of Indian sports on the 1st and 2nd. The fun developed into such proportions that it extended to the end of the fourth day; when descendants of all nations joined in with the ex-Yankees in costume, for a 4th of July parade. The procession started from Williamson's store and consisted of about fifteen people marching to the tune of Yankee Doodle, which was played on two Tom-toms and three kazoos. The fire works were two muske loader shot guns and a 22 revolver, in able hands, with plenty of ammunition. They marched east past the Mission to the Hudson's Bay store under the able leadership of Tom Rice, an ex-Yankee, and also an ex-Canadian soldier. All along the true people donned comical costumes and joined in. Then back they came, A. J. McLarty took a covered wagon for the small children and some of the ladies who did not feel equal to a six mile march. After reaching the Police barracks, which is three miles west of the Hudson's Bay store, the parade had swelled to nearly one hundred people, twenty or more saddle-horses and six or eight more shot guns and Winchester rifles, the party lined up for a photograph to be taken. From there the parade march was conducted to the Chief's house, where songs were sung and fire works discharged. The Chief was then tossed up in a blanket six times and then raised on the shoulders of two big ex-Yankees for three cheers from the crowd. The parade ended in front of the Mission, where the participants were cheered by the Father and Sisters.

Summer Resort of the North

On the morning of the 5th, the last of the visitors were seen on their way departing for their homes, with the feeling, openly expressed, that they were keenly disappointed because their stay at Sturgeon Lake could not have been a month or more. Right here I will say that if you enjoy camping on a nice sandy beach, where there is an abundance of shade, good swimming and extra good fishing—try Sturgeon Lake once and you will never need to be invited again.

In closing, I wish to thank the people of Sturgeon Lake for their generous hospitality, especially do we wish to thank Mr. and Mrs. Williamson and family for the dance and supper on the night of the 1st; also Mr. and Mrs. Bellinger and the ladies who assisted them for the two fine dances and lunches on the nights of the 2nd and 3rd.

Don't forget that if you give Sturgeon Lake a highway connection with Grande Prairie and High Prairie, you will have made the right start on the development of a summer resort that every person in the Peace River country will point to with pride.

Grande Prairie Herald, July 13, 1925



Left: A view of Sturgeon Lake from the Keillar's Resort. (SPRA 175.030.04)

Below: Sturgeon Lake Sports, 1925 (SPRA 430.01.30)



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.

La Glace Gazette, 1940-1941
By Myrna Peterson

Buffalo Lake School Minutes & Records, 1918-1940
By Stan & Barb Moe

Scriba Family Records, 1927-1967
By Fred Scriba

Experimental Farms Reports, 1915
By Danny Somerville

Alice (Shearing) Dale scrapbook, 1920-1980
By Tina Dale

Grande Prairie Golf & Country Ladies Club records
By Jan Shields

Recently Processed and On the Website!

Grande Prairie Guild of Artists fonds 626
Clarence & Nora Shields Family fonds 627
Navy League of Canada, Grande Prairie fonds 628
Business & Professional Women's Club fonds 629
Wozniak Family fonds accrual 279
Hodgson Family fonds 630
Gass Family fonds 631
Armstrong Family fonds 632
Hawkesworth Family fonds 633
Greber family fonds 634
Herman Klukas Family fonds 635
Nick & Mary Poohkay fonds accrual 329

New On the Website

We have recently re-organized our website to make it easier to Search for records and photographs

One Search Tab for **Finding Aids, Photographs,** and **Databases** such as the **New Index** for the

Spirit River Echo and

MD of Spirit River Tax Records for finding the history of each quarter section in the MD of Spirit River.

There is a new page for the **Friends of the Archives** which will be updated regularly by Leslie Gordon (see p. 23)

A new **"Soldiers"** tab on the menu where we will add material for researching **Soldiers of the South Peace.**

A **"New"** tab on the menu for recent projects such as the **100th Anniversary of the MD and Town of Spirit River.**

Newspapers on Flickr

Clairmont Independent Newspaper
Lake Saskatoon Journal Newspaper
Spirit River Echo Newspapers

Maps on Flickr

MD of Spirit River ca. 1937
County of Grande Prairie, 1955

South Peace Regional Archives

is funded by
City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, MD of Greenview, MD of Spirit River, grants from the Archives Society and the Province of Alberta, and donations from people like you!

South Peace Regional Archives Society

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Interested in being involved as a: _____ volunteer _____ board member

There are two types of membership:

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

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

This membership is _____ new _____ renewal

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


Associate Member
\$15.00/person _____

I wish to donate to the
South Peace Regional Archives _____

Total Membership and Donation _____

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