

TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 2, Issue 4, September 1, 2011

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Above, Henry McCullough and Dave Schenk on the extreme south end of the Wapiti forest district in the Sheep Creek area. Part of their forestry work was to monitor the hunting of game. See Kakwa/Two Lakes Oral Histories collection on page 6. Photograph from the Schenk family collection, SPRA 256.03.29.

Are you a first-time reader of this newsletter? Would you like to receive it mailed to your home four times a year? It's free when you are a member of the South Peace Regional Archives Society. See the membership form on the back of this newsletter, call us at 780-830-5105, or check our website at www.south-peacearchives.org.

**Don't miss SPRA's
Film & Story Night
at the Golden Age Centre
on Saturday, October 1st.
Features film clips from the
1950s and 1960s, and
12 storytellers on the theme of
"Community Life."
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.
Program starts at 7:00 p.m.
Refreshments to follow**

September 1, 2011

Dear Members & Supporters;

This newsletter was an exciting one to put together because it is filled mostly with responses to the question posed by Bill Scott in the June newsletter regarding the history and location of a Prisoner of War work camp south of Grande Prairie.

Dr. David Leonard was the first to reply with general information from his extensive knowledge of the history of the Peace Country. He was also kind enough to order microfilm from the National Archives and go through it painstakingly, printing off pages relevant to us. You will find a couple of illustrations in the next few pages.

Newspaper editor Fred Rinne forwarded a very useful website to Bill Scott, who edited the information for inclusion in this newsletter. This information was corroborated by many others and also by the documents from the National Archives.

All sources agreed that it was the Ross Lumber Company, who had a planer mill where Canfor is now and used the POWs as a labour force in their sawmill about 40 miles south of Grande Prairie.

Alex Cameron knew where the site was and he took me out one sunny afternoon for a trek through the bush to take some photographs. (See p. 15)

We had a number of other calls and visitors, and we thank each one that contributed. This is what I really like about archives—we all share our knowledge and any documents or photographs we have, and together we can put together the stories in our history.

This topic naturally suggested other inclusions for the newsletter, such as the photograph collection and memories of Gaston Mencke, who worked in just such a lumber camp soon after the war, the Kakwa/Two Lakes Oral Histories collection as our featured fonds, and a tour of the Grovedale area.

Hope you enjoy it!

Sincerely,

Mary Nutting, Archivist

TELLING OUR STORIES

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

Prisoner of War Work Camp

In the last issue of "Telling Our Stories" we asked readers to help us with information regarding the history and whereabouts of a Prisoner of War Work Camp south of Grande Prairie during World War II. The responses were amazing and very interesting. We have posted some of them below.

Dr. David Leonard

"When Canada began taking prisoners of war, three camps were built in Alberta at Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Wainwright. To make use of the prisoners, they were engaged in various activities in the camps, but an agreement was also struck between the federal and provincial governments whereby certain non-violent prisoners, usually navy or air, could be let out to private companies operating in remote areas at - I believe - \$5 per day. The companies were either in road construction or lumbering, and the prisoners were sequestered within the camps and worked as groups under strict supervision. There was one north of Whitcourt where the buildings (dilapidated) can still be seen, and one at Fawcett Lake, where the camp director's cabin (built by the war prisoners) is being considered for designation as a provincial historic site. At Chisholm, one of the prisoners even returned to live after the war. On

the whole, they should have considered themselves very lucky.

"Therefore, whatever lumber companies were in operation in the area during the war could well have availed themselves of this offer - \$5.00 to the feds per worker per day, prisoners to be fed, clothed and boarded. Those stationed south of the Wapiti would have been in a regular lumber camp operating in the area with a bunkhouse sectioned off to house them, attempted escape being unlikely."

David also ordered microfilm from the National Archives (file 7236-34-3-80; roll C-5386), which he then researched and printed off for SPRA. This

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

OTTAWA, 10th October, 1944

MEMORANDUM TO: V.A.G. (2)
M.D.H.Q.

Grande Prairie Labour Project

An application has been received at this directorate from Hales H. Ross & Sons, Ltd., Edmonton, Alta., for the service of 50 prisoners-of-war for lumbering operations.

2. It is proposed to house the prisoners in a camp approved by an officer of this directorate 41 miles south of Grande Prairie, Alberta. The company requests that they be detained at the company's siding about ½ miles west of the Grande Prairie station. Postal address is c/o the company, Grande Prairie, Alberta. The rate of pay is .50¢ per day.

3. It is requested that a couple of Army personnel be provided to act as guards. They will be housed separately.

4. The R.C.M.P. has indicated co-operation.

[Rest of Letter Unreadable]

package includes instructions regarding medical and dental care for the POWs, instructions on how to transport them by train; duties of the Veterans' Guard escorts who would travel with the prisoners; correspondence from the Dept. of Labour and the Dept. of National Defence; movement orders from the Department of National Defence for the Lethbridge Internment Camp; two lists of fifty names of prisoners slated for Grande Prairie; and many more items. Two transcribed illustrations of these letters are included with this article.

Information from Website—contributed by Fred Rinne, edited by Bill Scott

By 1943, over 25,000 German prisoners were held in Canada. On May 10, 1943 the King Government put in place new regulations which gave the Departments of Labour and National Defence the authority to employ prisoners on work projects to help alleviate the labour shortages in the agricultural and natural resource sectors. The regulation clearly stated that only those POWs who volunteered to work would be used and that the work done by the POWs "shall have no direct connection with the operation of the war. In particular it is forbidden to employ prisoners in the manufacturing or transportation of arms or munitions of any kind or any transport of materials destined for combat units."

A few weeks later on June 2, 1943, the Department of Labour set up a Directorate of Labour Projects and appointed Lieutenant-Colonel R.S.W. Fordham as its first Director. The primary purpose of the new Directorate was to allocate POW labour to primary industries needing workers. The Directorate was responsible also for ensuring the work camps met Geneva Convention guidelines. To administer the work projects, the Department of Labour and DND co-operated within their respective jurisdictions. DND was responsible for security, discipline and supplying guards (Veteran Guards). The Minister of Labour was responsible for providing employment arrangements, accommodations, and supplies for the welfare of prisoners outside internment camps.

The Department established guidelines to accom-

modate the prisoners, set wage scales and collected monies owing to the government for the labour services of the internees. Businesses wanting to employ POW's had to first apply to the Department. Contracts between government and private lumber companies such as Ontario-Minnesota Pulp and Paper provided a fairly comprehensive framework for employment based on the articles of the Geneva Convention. For example, transportation to and from work was to be provided by the employer. Marching to the bush camp was permitted as long as the walk was not excessive. Clothing, boots and tools for bushwork was provided by O&M. Medical attention and compensation for accidents was stipulated by article 27 of the Geneva Convention. Hospital care was rendered in a civilian hospital if a military facility was unavailable.

The quota system of work for POW labour appeared to be used extensively in pulpwood production. Simply stated, once the assigned amount of wood to be cut was reached the cutter was at his leisure. In most pulpwood agreements the daily cut limit was 3/4 of a cord per day. One day a week was granted a rest day, usually Sunday. The pay rate for POW work was standardized at 50 cents per day. Prisoners were credited earnings and used the credit to purchase items from the company store. Items the prisoners could purchase were restricted to food or ordinary articles which were not tightly rationed.

Most of the camps seemed to contain between 100-125 workers, and the living quarters provided by the company appeared to be the same if not better than those conditions found in similar bush camps of the day. Under the terms of the Geneva Convention, the Department of Labour was responsible for ensuring that proper living conditions were supplied by the contracting employer. A pure water supply and adequate sanitary arrangements were especially important. The company was required to feed the POW's on a ration scale equal to what Canadian Army personnel held in depot would receive. The cost of feeding the workers was deducted by the company from the amount owed to the government for hiring the POW's.

The relative solitude of the camps did not allow the Department of Labour or the businesses hiring POW labour to stray from the regulations and International rules. It appears that inspections were conducted by Department officials and the Swiss Consulate which acted as the German Protecting Power in Canada. Finally, the POW's themselves through letters of complaint to the Swiss Consulate would have alerted the proper authorities of any serious problems within the camps. Responsibility for security of the bush camps, it appears, was delegated to the employer. The company was technically responsible for ensuring "to the best of its ability," that the POW's did not venture from the company's land, fraternize with locals or other civilians such as tourists. DND, however, was responsible for supplying guards and making the necessary on site security arrangements.

Throughout the last half of 1945 and early 1946 German workers went back to their primary internment centres in Alberta and Ontario enroute for repatriation to Germany. By May 1946 the last of the bush camps were closed. From the available evidence, the men who laboured in the bush felt they were fairly treated and well fed.

Source: Website out of Sioux Narrows in NW Ontario. The full address is <http://www.siouxnarrows-nestorfalls.ca/municipal-government/community-profile/history/german-prisoner-of-war-pow-camps/>.

Other Comments

Bill Bessent, Gord Percy, Harold Anderson, and Phil Briard all agree that the Ross Lumber Co.

had a railway siding and some buildings where Canfor is now. This is corroborated by the transcription of a letter from File 7236-34-3-80 on the first page of this article (p. 3)

Bill recalled that Cliff Wright used to meet groups of German POWs getting off the train. Gord added that "the men were housed on site in individual small homes - without running water as I recall."

Charlie Wales thought there was also about 10 POWs working at the Pete Moon lumber camp 17 miles north of DeBolt towards the end of the war, but that's another story!

HQS 7236-34-3-80 PW (3)

OTTAWA, 5 Feb 45

The Commissioner
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
OTTAWA, Ontario

Grande Prairie Labour Project - PW

Fifty (50) PW from Internment Camp No. 133, LETHBRIDGE, Alberta, are now employed by Hales H. Ross & Sons, at Grande Prairie, Alberta.

2. A request has been received from the spokesman of this PW party for occasional visits from a Lutheran minister.

3. District Chaplain (P), MD 13, states it would be impossible for his Lutheran Chaplain to make the trip to Grande Prairie, approximately five hundred miles distant. There is a Lutheran pastor, German speaking, Rev. J. Ohlinger at Wembley, and which point we are given to understand is approximately twenty-five miles away from the project.

4. Before making any further plans, it is requested that Rev. J. Ohlinger be investigated by your Department and report as to his suitability rendered as soon as possible, please.

[Signature Unreadable]

Director, Prisoners of War

Kakwa/Two Lakes Oral Histories Collection

Kakwa/Two Lakes Oral Histories collection. -- 2002. -- 21 sound recordings.

Agency History

The Oral History Project for the Kakwa/Two Lakes area in north-western Alberta was initiated by Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Division to collect information about historical land use in the area and about the people who lived and traveled there. This area contains two protected areas, the Kakwa Wildland Park and the Two Lakes Provincial Recreation Area, but the area of interest for this project extends from Nose Creek to the Kakwa Wildland Park.

In 2001, Jim Nelson, a Grande Prairie author and playwright, was contracted to interview long-time local residents who had lived or had consistent contact and experience in the area, or were descendants of some of the earliest residents. The interviews were completed over the winter of 2001-2002. Jim's intention throughout the interview process was to cover the history from as many aspects as possible: descriptions of the land, its flora and fauna; origins of aboriginal families that occupy the area as well as their grave sites; local folklore which includes tales of Big Foot, legendary characters and events such as plane crashes; guiding, trapping and "country" knowledge regarding survival in the wilderness and the use of plants for food and medicine; early settlers in the area and the development of communities such as Bridge Creek and South Wapiti; the role of the forestry department, early foresters, the growth of industries and their impact on the environment; fire fighting; development of trails, roads and ferries; and the recreational use of the area.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of 21 audio cassettes recorded by Jim Nelson as he interviewed twenty

longtime residents and travelers in the Kakwa and Two Lakes area: Phil Comeau, Forest Ranger; Bob Neufeld, member of the "Wild Kakwa" Conservation Group, and his wife June; Norm Drysdale, who worked with Grande Prairie Lumber during the 1940s and 50s; Dorothy Comeau, wife of Forest Ranger Pete Comeau; Fred Comeau, cat skinner, road builder and seismograph operator south of the Wapiti; Norman Eng, whose family rafted across the Wapiti in 1930; Dave Robertson, Fish & Wildlife Officer; Luther Kozowan, an employee of Procter and Gamble Woodlands in the 1970s; Rick Erlenstrom, who has organized horse camps and trail rides into the Kakwa/Two Lakes area since 1979; Ben Foster, grand-nephew of Mountain Man Lee Poole; Pete McCullough, who has been trapping in the area since he was 11 years old; Mable Tennant, daughter of Alex Moberly and a present resident of Nose Creek; Suzy Moberly, who lives at Kilometer 104 on the Two Lakes road; Lois Lofstrom and her brother Michael Ryan, whose family arrived south of the Wapiti in 1930; Don Nelson, a hunting partner of Pete Campbell, whose "dad rode with Louis Riel"; Dave Schenk, one of the early Rangers in the Kakwa/Two Lakes area; Norm Trepanier, whose brother was a fish and game officer; and Doug Tennant, recent immigrant to Nose Creek from Toronto via Grande Prairie.

These interviews cover a wide range of subjects:

Descriptions of the land: types of flowers, berries and mushrooms; finding alpine turnips, parsnips and onions and making medicinal tea; the bird life of the Lakes, which includes eagles, osprey, loons and humming birds; the wildlife, such as mink, otters, beavers, squirrels and bears; fish & big game species, such as wolves, bears, grizzlies, wild horses, moose, and horn ridge sheep; first stocking of fish at Two Lakes; dinosaur tracks on the Naraway River; and dinosaur bones at the mouth of Red Rock Creek on the Kakwa River.

Aboriginal families: Joachims, Moberlys, Campbells, Wilsons and Wanyandies, many of them traveled between Jasper, Grande Cache and Sherman Meadows and as far as McBride, BC.; early First Nations settlements at Two Lakes, Pinto, Nose Creek, and Kakwa; the "Smoky River Indians" at Nose Creek; and medicine men like Adam Kenney and Paul Wanihady. The recordings also include aboriginal knowledge such as tanning/sewing crafts, a step-by-step description of the tanning process, beadwork designs, berries in the area, and the making of "Indian ice cream", and stories about the origins of the Nose Creek community, the movement of the aboriginals off the Kakwa to Nose Creek, and the original campsite of the Campbells, an aboriginal family settlement dating back to 1900.

Gravesites: Sherman Meadows (dating back to the 1800s), Felix Campbell's grave near Entrance, the Buffalo Head Camp with its 1896 landmark grave, the graves of Adam Kenney's young brother and sister, Sam Wilson's aunt, and other graveyards on Nose and Copton Creeks.

Events: Carl Brooks' death in a plane crash on Kakwa Lake; airplanes and their remains lost in the area: a Hercules on the Smoky, a Twin tail closer to Valleyview, a plane in the belly of Kakwa Lake, and a Barclay Crow at Kakwa Lake. There are other planes lost in the area which have never been found: the Dale Trottier plane en route from Fox Creek to Prince George, and a Skywagon in the Red Rock Creek area.

Early settlers, trappers and forest rangers: Bert Osborne, Wapiti Brown, Carl Brooks, Henry & Pete McCullough and Lee Poole, Dr. O'Brien, Art Sherman of Sherman Meadows, Ray Smuland, Ole Overland, Ed Schadeck, Captain Bradley (dairy rancher), Sam Hammerwick, Norman Badger, Billy Sinclair, Art and Marianne Lowen, Doug & Mable Tennant.

Places and Landmarks: Kakwa Falls, Two Lakes, Hidden Valley, Paradise Valley, Kakwa Mountain, Pack Saddle Mountain, Mount Ida, Nose Mountain, Sherman Meadows, Jokers Flats, Coal Ridge, Gun-

derson Creek, Sulphur Ridge, the Torrens Chutes, Dinosaur Ridge, Gunderson Flats, and Brooks Falls; and places which have more than one name: North Side Horne Ridge (Lonesome Valley), Cecilia (Green Water) Lake, and Mouse Cache Creek (Bread Camp; Dead Horse Meadows). There is also historical information about places such as Nose Creek School, Nose Creek Store, Last Chance grocery store, Flower Creek Cabin, the Hudson's Bay cache on the Cutbank; the Old Cabin on Sheep Creek, the Cabin on Jarvis Lakes, the Brooks plane crash on Kakwa Lake, and the old farmsite not far from Sherman Meadows

Industry and employment: trapping, early Boundary crews, commercial logging, coal exploration, forest rangers and forestry cabins, oil exploration, the first sawmill (Henry McCullough's on Bald Hill), an early coal mine on Pinto Creek, the first oil well in the area on Chinook Ridge (1950s), the Cutbank Coal Mine, and prospecting for gold on Red Rock Creek, Gold Creek and Dan's Creek.

Transportation: original trails and roads, stopping places, crossing the Wapiti in all seasons, airstrip on Sherman Meadows, and the first roads (built by Albert Campbell).

To view a complete description of each interview, go to www.southpeacearchives.org, type "kakwa" into the google box at the top of the page, and hit Enter. To listen to an interview, call the Archives.



Photograph of the first Rainbow Trout plant at Two Lakes showing Curly Wren from Brooks Fish Nursery. (Schenk family fonds, SPRA 256.03.26)

Explore the History of Grovedale

For your tour of Grovedale, start at the bridge across the Wapiti on Highway 40 south of Grande Prairie. Until 1934, the only way across this river was by fording it. In 1934, the first ferry was built by the settlers themselves, from lumber donated by Cook's Mill and hardware provided by Alberta Transportation. A ferryman's house was built on the bank and occupied by Otto Sorley from 1934 to 1945. He was paid with food and supplies from the people who used the ferry, as there was no government wage. The government ferry was built in 1946, and the first bridge in 1958.

On the south side of the bridge, turn west on Highway 666. This flat was once the location of Cook's Lumber Mill, but in 1954 O'Brien Provincial Park was created and named after Dr. L.J. O'Brien, a well-loved physician and naturalist. He was Grovedale's first forest ranger in 1932.

Continue on up the hill road dating from 1964. The old road, built by the settlers themselves around 1931, wound back and forth on this narrow ridge, over treacherously steep banks and hair pin curves. At the top of the hill is the hamlet of Landry Heights. In 1966 Dale Landry bought an acre of land from Enos Kyle who owned a coffee shop at the top of this hill. They later purchased two quarters of land, and Landry Heights subdivision was approved in 1976.

Ahead on Highway 666, you will see a sign for the Nitehawk Ski Area and RV Park, a summer and winter recreation area. Turning south you soon come to Twp Rd 701A. Now it is the turn-off to the Grovedale Golf Course, but in 1938 this road led over the hill to Bain's General Store and the Grovedale Post Office. Helen and Duncan Bain had an 18 x 20 foot log building, the front half being the store and the back half the living quarters. Above was a loft where everyone slept. With no school for five years, the store was the center of the community for residents coming to pick up supplies

and mail, politicians and government speakers, and summer missionaries like the Anglican Van Ladies when they came to teach children and bring clothing for poor families in the summer. In 1946 the Bains built a much larger store of squared logs, and in 1949 it was moved to its present location in the hamlet of Grovedale.

Continuing south you see a commercial strip on the east side of the road. The first community building on this land was in 1971 when the old Ski Chalet from the Wapiti Ski Club was moved onto Percy Smith's land and converted to the Grovedale Community Baptist Church. Originally this land belonged to Pender Smith, the road foreman and a mainstay in the community.

Another mile south and you come to the hamlet of Grovedale. Now this is acreage country, but turn east on Twp Rd 700, and you will pass the nucleus of the community: Grovedale General Store, Penson School, Grovedale Community Centre which includes a large hockey arena, and the Grovedale Fire Hall. Several baseball diamonds are tucked into spaces around the buildings. Across the road from the store is the new post office and Grovedale Museum, where the first school stood. There was a second store, Cook's, south of this site for a few years in the late 1940s.

Grovedale School District 4910 was established in 1943 and classes started in a vacant cabin until the school was completed in 1945. In 1960, a new two-room school was built on the present site, and in 1967 it was enlarged and re-named Penson School. A community association had been operating in the school since it was built, and in 1962 the old school, renovated, became the Grovedale Community Hall. In 1977 a new hall was built jointly with the Agricultural Society.

Highway 666 turns west after the hamlet, past the Alberta Forestry Grovedale site built on Pete Comeau's homestead in the 1960s. Pete was a long-serving fire ranger.

Cross the newly paved Twp Rd 700 and head south on Rge Rd 64, up the hill to Grovedale Cemetery which is a lovely spot protected by a shelterbelt of trees on all sides. The first grave here was 97 year-old Marie Wanyandi in 1993, when the cemetery was established. Before that every body had to be taken across the river for burial.

Back on Rge Rd 64, the view opens up to the south of bush lands and farm fields. Once it was the Bridge Creek Trail which you would have taken to the next community, but now we will follow Rge Rd 64 to its end, where Bridge Creek School was built on the northwest corner of the curve in 1951. There was also a teacherage on site, but in 1952 it burned down, tragically taking the life of school teacher Margaret Courtney. The school continued to operate until 1960, when the students were bussed to Grovedale and the building moved to South Wapiti for the Elk School District.

Retrace your route back to Twp Rd 694. This road, flanked now by acreages, wanders south and east over creeks and old trails. Just past Rge Rd 63, the turn-off to the landfill, a trail is still clearly visible on the north side of the road. Perhaps this was the Bridge Creek Trail. At the last bend in the road, another trail comes in from the north-east and exits south. This was about where the main trail came from Joachim's Cabin on Campbell Ridge, past the Red Willow Slough. Campbell Ridge is named after Alexis Campbell who, coming from Jasper to the Grande Prairie in 1872, is acknowledged as the first Metis among the aboriginal inhabitants.

This trail led far south to the Cap Bradley Ranch on the Smoky River, where he operated a dairy. The Bradley family came from England around 1923, took a lease on the Smoky River where they built a big house with hardwood floors and a veranda on two sides. He shipped his cream and other products to Grande Prairie via the Smoky and Wapiti Rivers. The ranch was short-lived and the Bradleys left in 1929.

Twp Rd. 694 has now become 692. It crosses the Weyerhaeuser Haul Rd and passes the Grovedale Fish Pond, a day-use park created by Ainsworth in

1997 when Grande Prairie was the Forest Capital of Canada, and terminates on Highway 40.

In 1958, the Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce began to lobby for the construction of a highway between the south Peace and the Hinton-Jasper area as a means of bringing economic benefits not only to the Peace Country, but also to the community of Grande Cache. Three different routes were proposed, and the east-central route was finally chosen in 1981. The grand opening of the new gravelled highway was held in June 1987. Pavement was finally completed in 1992. One of the ways the Chamber attracted attention to this issue was with an annual cavalcade of cars, starting with the Forestry Trunk road as the route c. 1959.

Turn north on Highway 40. In four km you will begin to see fences along the sides of the road. At this point you are passing through the southern extremities of the Plum Ranch, established ca. 1920. In 1923 it became Haan's Ranch, and in 1926 the ranch was sold to Jack Thompson, who operated the ranch for many years. A side trip down Twp Rd 700 west leads past the north edge of the ranch Meadows. This is still an active ranch on a government lease. This road continues on to Grovedale, but we will head back to Highway 40.

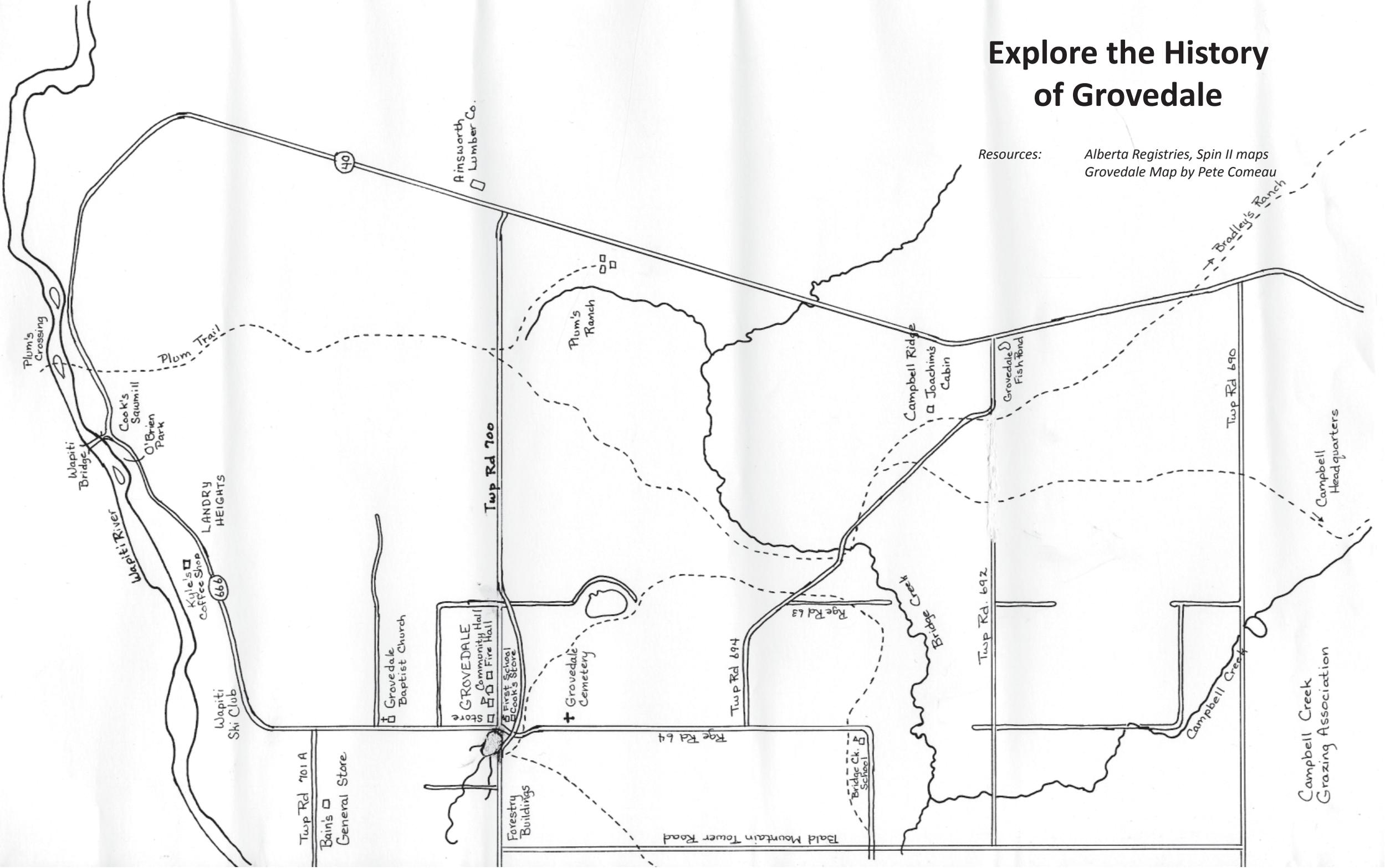
Just north of Twp Rd 700 is the Ainsworth Mill, built in 1996, with about 200 employees. Soon after the mill, Highway 40 curves west and begins its descent into the Wapiti River valley. About where the gravel pit is now, the old Plum Trail came up from the river on the beginning of the long journey to Bradley's Ranch. Many cattle also crossed here on their way to summer pastures on the Smoky River Flats.

The river is soon in sight. We come back to the Wapiti River Bridge and the end of tour.

Sources: *Place Names of Alberta, Volume IV Along the Wapiti History of Grovedale, written by Penson Elementary School Students in 1971*

Explore the History of Grovedale

Resources: Alberta Registries, Spin II maps
Grovedale Map by Pete Comeau



Campbell Creek
Grazing Association

Recollections of the Bush Camps, 1947-1955

by Gaston Mencke

Gaston's first experience was in the winter of 1947-1948, at a lumber camp subcontracting for McCrae Lumber Co. at Faust. In 1949, he went to work for Park Bros., which is the story he shares here.

Back in the late 40s up to the mid 50s revenue from farming was quite often below the costs of inputs and extra money had to be earned to cover these deficits if we wanted to survive. Working in a lumber camp for the winter was one means of supplementing our income and after a few years, it became a habit for many of us; the smell of freshly cut timber, the scent of the pine trees, the fresh air, the beauty of the wildlife; all these natural wonders created in us an urge to return the following year. It became an addiction.

Park Bros. had a different way of logging. Trees were felled, limbs were cut and topped at six inches. They were then skidded out of the bush by cats to landings, next to a jammer, where they were winched up, lowered on a V-bunk on a truck, snugged tight and dragged into the mill site.

The fallers were paid by the tree, 45 cents a piece (if I recall right). For the first three winters, we were using crosscuts and swede saws, since power saws were not out yet. On an average day, when we'd cut, limb and top 125 trees, we had a good day done and did not feel like going dancing in the evening. My partner would file his saw and I, my axe (since I was the "notcher"), and then go to sleep, too tired even to shut our radios off. Breakfast was at 6:00 a.m. and then in some cases, we would have to walk two to three miles in the dark to our designated patch. We had to pack our saw, our axe, our lunch, a wedge, and a can of kerosene (used to clean our saws when they got too gummed up with pitch and resin). We would rarely miss a day, unless sick. The colder it was, the better we liked it and the faster we worked since most of the branches and the tops would break off when the trees hit the

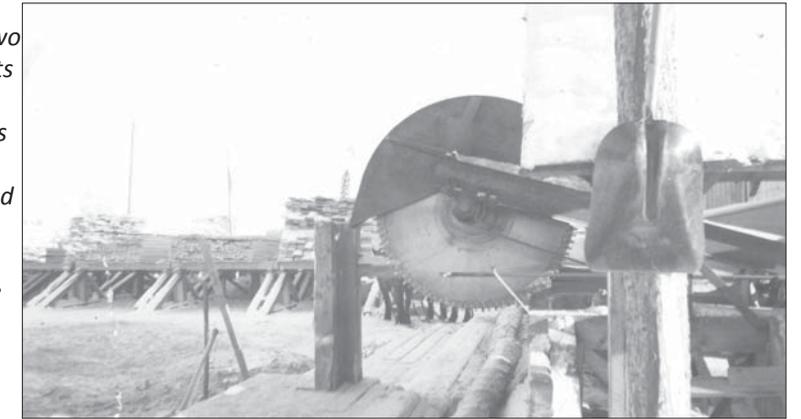
As indicated before, my job was notching the tree in the direction we wanted our tree to fall, which most of the time was to the southeast, due to the prevailing northwest winds. Our bush foreman wanted them all in one direction for easier skidding by the cats. The notch had to be deep enough so that the tree would not split and "barberchair" (kick-back) on the way down. The deeper the frost, the deeper the notch. It was also essential that you had a clear way out to prevent serious accidents in case this happened. It was also a good idea to take a good look at the tree, before starting to saw it down. On one occasion without realizing this tree had a "widow-maker" (a dead top) it suddenly snapped off as the tree started moving, and it was only a loud shout from my partner to "get the hell out of there" that saved my neck that day. Another unfortunate co-faller did get a smaller one on his head a while after, splitting his hard hat in two (they were made of a fibre composition). During the following summer, he developed severe headaches and by next fall he passed away from an internal hemorrhage. In another instance, a catskiner (whose canopy had been removed for repairing) was winching his logs in and without realizing it, one of his trees hit a dry spar, knocking it down and struck him at the back of the head. He died instantly.

We also had the opportunity to see many forms of wildlife. Moose could be seen quite often on the roads fighting together (maybe to keep warm). Deer were quite common and unafraid of our presence. They would munch on the limbs of the same tree we were working on. On one occasion near the end of February and with a warm Chinook wind blowing, I happened to notice bear tracks in the snow but didn't pay too much attention to them. As our tree that we had just cut started falling and we returned to a safer area, out came this bear from under an old rotten stump, right behind my partner. To this date I still haven't figured who ran the fast-

est, but the bear was last seen a short time later by a cat-skinner, ½ a mile away and still in high gear.

Park Bros. had quite a large 24 hour operation and required a larger cleared area of about 80 acres to store their trees. The camp buildings comprised of a long cook shack to accommodate 60 to 75 employees, an office and small store, a warehouse to store supplies, and three bunkhouses, one for the fallers, one for the catskinners and truckdrivers, and one for the millworkers. There was also two shops to repair and service the cats and trucks. The mill was originally powered by steam. Two big boilers had been installed and had to be serviced and supervised by licensed steam engineers. Within a few years, they were replaced by two diesel units: a large one to run the head saw, carriage, edger, trim-saws, and lumber conveyor chain; and a smaller one to run the tree conveyor chain, the suicide saw, and the log elevator chain. Within a couple years even this one (the smaller unit) was deleted completely since the trees were now cut on the landing by powersaws and transferred to the elevation chain by front end loaders.

Several smaller shacks had been erected by married couples, where they lived with their wives for several winters. Since I had also got married in the meantime I also built a small bunk shack on the outskirts of the mill site and shared it with my family for a few years. On one occasion upon retiring home for lunch, a strong wind had come up



Top: Park Bros. Sawmill yard site at Whitemud Creek north of DeBolt in 1951. Middle: Romuald St. Armand operating the "Suicide" Saw at the same mill. Bottom: The elevation conveyer which brought logs to the carriage and head-saw. (From the Gaston Mencke collection, SPRA 173.05, 12, and 14.)

and my brother-in-law invited us to his place for dinner since the trees around our shack were leaning pretty bad. Sure enough, when we returned, one had fallen on the corner of our home right over the kitchen cupboard, and we had a mess of scrambled eggs, flour, sugar and other ingredients all over the floor. It did not take too much convincing after that to cut the remaining trees down after repairing the roof.



During the weekends, many local workers would return to their farm and families, but for those who had to travel too far, we remained in camp. We had clothes to wash and mend, and letters to write. In the evenings, crib games were quite common and even a blackjack table was available for those who wanted to gamble a little. We, in the fallers' shack, though, had the best entertainment. With Rob Blimkie on the accordion, Clement Levesque (a Quebecker) on the fiddle, and a Cote boy from Whitemud on the guitar, we had the best old-time music ever played (and just as good as Mel Rodacker and his Old-Timers on our radios). I was very delighted to meet Rob on our retirement to GP and enjoyed listening to his fiddle playing at our Fiddlers' Jamboree.



See more of Gaston's photographs at www.southpeacearchives.org. Click on ANA Database and type "Mencke" into the search box. Choose "Gaston Mencke fonds", go to the bottom of the document, and hit "View photographs attached to this entry."



Above photographs were also taken at the Park Bros sawmill in 1951. Top: Trim saws cut planks into even lengths. Middle: Conveying chain brings the lumber to the loading ramp. Bottom: Slab & edging conveyor dumps the scraps in the fire pit. SPRA 173.15, 16, and 17.

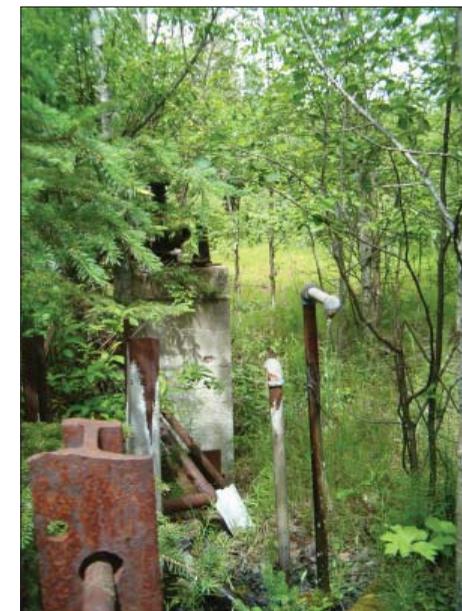
Remnants of the POW Camp Site

with Alex Cameron

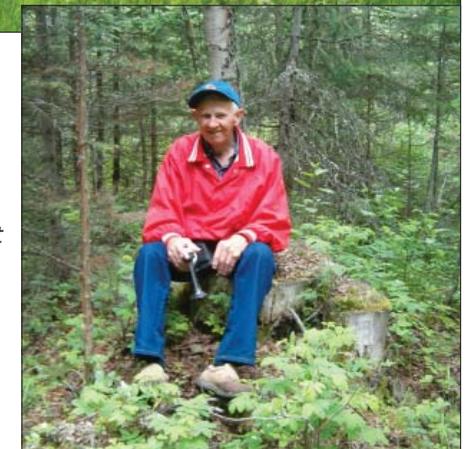
On June 29, 2011 Alex Cameron and I (Mary Nutting) set out to find the site of the Ross Lumber Co. Sawmill on the headwaters of Gold Creek, which had a large work crew of POWs. We traveled 70 km south of the Wapiti Bridge on Highway 40, and turned east towards the Compressor Station (11-15-65-5-W6), crossing Gold Creek just after the turn.

Parking the truck in the entrance to the Compressor Station, we headed into the bush on the south side of the road following deer trails (or not!). Alex's sense of direction is unerring, and before we had gone half a mile we reached the site documented by these photographs.

The Lumber Camp on this site was owned by HA Ross of Edmonton and managed by Ernie Ayres. As well as the sawmill and its steam boiler, the site contained bunkhouses for the single men, cabins for married men with families, a cookhouse or two, a



Clockwise from top, a collapsed smoke stack; the site where the bunkhouses for single men once stood; Alex Cameron sitting on a large stump, the tree having been cut some 60 years ago; and a pipe which brought water from a spring up the hill into the camp and is still running!



blacksmith shop, barns for the horses, and the office and commissary where they sold chocolate (10 bars for \$1.00), cigarettes, and some basic foods. A flume from a spring on the hill fed the boiler and the camp with water.

This area escaped the destructive forest fires which burned at the turn of the century, and the timber was big. Alex remembers cutting one tree which was four feet across. These larger trees were dragged out with steel cable by Caterpillar Tractors, but smaller cut sections were still being pulled out by horses.

Alex remembers coming to this camp, mostly in the evening, from his own camp (Stevenson's) about a mile and a half west. It was quite a sight to see the area lit up at night and to hear the constant whine of the saw, and the roar of the generators. The sawmill ran through the night, under yard lights powered by portable generators. There may have been about 100 employees, the POWs identified by their clothing—overalls with a large red circle on the back.

What Archives Do and Why We Do It

by Leslie Pearson, B Sc, MAS

Author's Note: You'll never guess what happened to us in June – we finally received our first question from one of our loyal readers! Thanks to Daryl White for an interesting question to address in this issue's column. Since that was three months ago, we'll hope he is still as interested now in finding out the answer as he was when he first submitted it!

Daryl's Question: "How archives negotiate decisions on when donated records will be open to the public. I know I've seen references in the national archives that indicate a series is permanently closed to researchers (I think they may be classified papers), but why would an archives accept records that could never be consulted?"

Daryl's question struck an important underling issue here – the balance in Archives between preservation and access. Both terms are prominent in our mandate and the mandates of most other archival institutions, but there is a conflict between preservation and access.

If archives are about access, why restrict things at all? Sometimes access to records are governed by law. Archives in Alberta are required to abide by laws such as the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP), the Personal

Information Protection Act (PIPA), and the Health Information Act (HIA). These laws describe when and how personal information contained in the records of various organizations and people may be disclosed. Some of the restrictions in these laws last a very long time, but in most cases, records held by archives that are covered under FOIP, PIPA, and HIA will eventually be available to the public. For example, SPRA holds many school registers containing information covered by FOIP. For this reason, they can only be partially disclosed at the present time. (See facing page for an example.)

Other restrictions are put in place by the Archives out of respect for the donor and their family or other people mentioned or shown in the records to protect their privacy, perhaps due to the presence of sensitive or embarrassing material or to prevent identity theft. For example, SPRA has some income tax records donated by individuals who are still living. It is unlikely that they would wish information about their income to be made public. These records also show the Social Insurance Number of the donor, which could be used to steal their identity. SPRA also holds records such as diaries and letters which contain embarrassing information about people still living that would cause uncomfortable

ER

Edmonton, Alberta, May 9 1936

Beaverbrook S.D. No. 3979.

Sir:

It would appear that the following case should be dealt with under the provisions of The Attendance Act:

1. Parent or Guardian _____

2. Address _____ Alta.

3. Name of Child _____ Age 12 Grade III Distance 1 1/2 mls.

4. Summary of Attendance April 1, 1935 to March 31, 1936.

Number of Teaching days in each month	19 Jan.	20 Feb.	21 Mar.	22 Apr.	23 May	24 June	July	Aug.	20 Sept	20 1/2 Oct	19 Nov	16 Dec.
Name of child												
	0	0	0	15	17				12	5 1/2	0	0

5. Preliminary Warning Letter was issued on _____

6. Warning Notice was issued on April 17, 1936.

7. Attendance for ten days subsequent to receipt of Notice by parent was (giving actual dates)

"Nil".

8. The teacher's investigation shows the following special circumstances.

"Able to attend part of time at least".

9. The teacher's opinion in the case is - "Has not attended since October 8 and I believe does not intend to. Attendance has always been irregular."

Mr. L. A. Walker,
Inspector of Schools,
Grande Prairie, Alta.

Chief Attendance Officer.
L. A. Walker

situations if made public at the present moment.

Other records may be closed because they contain material that is potentially libelous or defamatory, from an in-camera meeting, or involving industrial secrets, law enforcement, solicitor-client privilege, or national or defense secrets. Depending on the

nature of the information they contain, these records would be restricted for different periods of time.

In the case of donor-imposed restrictions, the Archives and the donor would negotiate to determine a reasonable length of time for the records to be closed. As an Archives, we dislike open-ended or perpetual restrictions because we want the material we hold to be used eventually. For this reason, we try to establish a definite date when the records can be opened to the public. What is considered a 'reasonable' amount of time varies from case to case depending on the kind of information the records contain and how sensitive it is. An individual's right to privacy ends upon their death, but the information in the records may also impact succeeding generations. In these cases, waiting until a second generation has passed before opening the records to the public is a better choice. If many different individuals are concerned, an open date of 75 to 100 years after the creation of the record might be chosen on the assumption that most, if not all, of the persons concerned would be deceased by that point in time.

If you've ever donated material to SPRA, you probably remember signing a gift agreement form. It includes a statement that goes

like this: "I agree that this material may be made available for research or reproduction on an unrestricted basis unless restrictions are identified." This is your chance to define restrictions. We would ask you why the material needs to be restricted and help you determine a reasonable length of time

for the records to be closed. If a donor is firm that the records should never be open to the public and we feel there is no justified reason for it, we might decide not to acquire those records.

Occasionally donors are not aware of what is in their records or that the contents of the records infringe on the privacy of others. When the Archives goes through collections during processing, we may find things that are sensitive and will again restrict them for a reasonable amount of time, even if restrictions are not required by law or by the donor. As an Archives, we would try to avoid accepting records that will be closed forever and as a small regional archives we are unlikely to be handling exceptionally secret material.

But back to Daryl's question, why would an archives keep records that can never be seen? Even those records which are restricted in perpetuity can usually be seen by someone, even if they cannot be

seen by the public. These records can still be used and need to be kept for reference by their creators. A good example of this is records used in national defense or law enforcement. Other records may be seen if a research agreement is set up between the Archives and the researcher if a particular project absolutely needs access to the records and the results of the project can be presented without disclosing the protected information. For example, records useful in conducting statistical research. Other records may also be open in the future, if some of the laws change. For example, lawyers' papers protected by solicitor-client privilege.

Well Daryl, I hope that answers your question. And for the rest of our loyal readers, I hope this column has enlightened you on a facet of archival work you may not have considered before. Keep those questions coming!

Society and Member News

Recent Acquisitions

Clete Roberts Films
1952
Maps and Plans
1958-1999
Recreation Dept. Photos
1950s-1960s
City of Grande Prairie

Kay Trelle fonds
[1950-1987]
Mae Trelle

Teodor Koda papers
1926-1972
Nick Woroniuk Biography
[1913-1970]
Dr. Jerry Petryshyn

Maurice & Jeanne Pivert
Wedding, 1928
Paulette Hrychiw

Hand-tinted Photograph
of Peace River town
[1920]
Greg Donaldson

A Life Revisited, 1992
Fern Gudlaugson

United Church of Canada
Northern Lights Presbytery
2010
Author David Sorenson



Sorry, we missed the photograph of the new South Peace Regional Archives Society Board of Directors in our last newsletter. From left to right they are: Gail Sherman, Beth Sande, Greg Donaldson, Gail Prette, Brock Smith (County of GP Rep), Eleanor Whitling, Dr. Irene Nicolson (President), Stan Bzowy (MD of Spirit River Rep), Janet Peterson, Daryl White, Judy Ross, Gord Mackey, and Lesley Vandemark (MD of Greenview Rep). Missing is Kevin O'Toole, the City of Grande Prairie Representative, who missed only that one meeting!

Looking for Volunteers to work on the following collections:

Transcribing the Prisoner of War Work Camp records
Requirements: good eyesight and lots of patience!
Time committment: about 20 pages of documents

*Transcribing the Isabel Campbell cards at the Grande Prairie
Public Library into an access database*
Requirements: typing skills, ability to work on your own
This is a long-term project and will use many volunteers



Box 687
Grande Prairie, AB.
T8V 3A8
(780) 830-5105
spra@telus.net

Accession No. _____

Date: _____

_____ *I am authorized to unconditionally donate the archival records described*

_____ *I agree that this material may be made available for research or reproduction on an unrestricted basis unless restrictions are identified. Any copyright or moral rights to this material is transferred to South Peace Regional Archives, insofar as I possess it.*

Please specify any restrictions of ownership/copyright/access:

I understand that any items donated to the Archives but not retained will be

_____ returned _____ discarded/recycled _____ shredded

Name of donor _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Signature of donor or authorized representative _____

Archivist's Signature _____

Donation acknowledged _____ Donor given copy _____

Accrual to _____

Processed as _____

GIFT AGREEMENT

In the interests of preserving the heritage of this region, I donate

Extent and Type of Records: _____

Inclusive Dates: _____

Contents of Records: _____

Creator of Records: _____

Contact Name and Phone (if different from donor): _____

Custodial History: _____

Physical Condition/Conservation Required: _____

**South Peace Regional Archives Society
Membership Application Form**

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Interested in being involved as a _____ volunteer _____ board member

There are two types of membership:

Full memberships are for individuals who want to be involved in the society, allowing them to attend meetings, vote on issues and run for office.

Associate memberships are for individuals who want to receive communications from the society to keep them updated on happenings at the Archives, but not attend meetings.

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: 831-7371
E-mail: spra@telus.net