

TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 1, Issue 4, September 1, 2010

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Inside This Issue:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Letter from the Editor | p. 2 |
| Contact Information | p. 2 |
| Greenview Archival Records Survey | p. 3 |
| Museums Preserving Archives | p. 4 |
| Ridgevalley Cooperative Assoc. | p. 5 |
| Pass the Cheese, Please | |
| <i>by Fran Moore</i> | p. 6 |
| Explore the History of Sturgeon Lake | p. 8 |
| The Lee Pooler collection | p. 12 |
| A Handful of Memories | |
| <i>by Peggy Mair</i> | p. 14 |
| In Honour of Remembrance Day-- | |
| <i>Ben Hall Story</i> | p. 16 |
| <i>John Peters Story</i> | p. 17 |
| What Archives Do and Why | p. 18 |
| Society & Member News | p. 19 |
| Membership Renewal & Application | p. 20 |



Above, "An Army Sense of Humour". See article on the Lee Pooler collection, pg. 12.

Would you like to receive this newsletter four times a year?

It comes in the mail when you are a member of the South Peace Regional Archives Society. See the Membership Form on the back of the newsletter.

"Growing Up Albertan"

Join us at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 2, 2010 in the Grande Prairie Museum Community Room for an evening of memories about growing up in the South Peace, featuring a variety of live speakers, stories, photographs, and film.

Film clips are from the collections of the Griff James family in Grande Prairie and the Gordon & Anne Donaldson family in Eaglesham.

CELEBRATING ARCHIVES WEEK IN ALBERTA

September 1, 2010

Dear Members & Supporters;

As the editor of this newsletter, one of my privileges is to pick what gets published.

You may have noticed that each issue includes a map which attempts to record the old farming communities in relationship to older trails and modern roadways. This became a passion of mine when I noticed that almost all the signs in the countryside had to do with current oil patch activity. I wanted to protest that the countryside held so much more, most of which has disappeared.

Prior to 1950, the population in the Peace Country was largely rural, served by country stores and post offices, community halls and cemeteries, one-room schools and small churches, and if you were on the railway, by railway stations and elevator companies.

Although the Community History books do an excellent job of recording the histories of their communities (and no resource is used more often at the Archives), often there is no map showing the layout of the public and commercial buildings. By researching the history books and using maps and plans from Alberta Lands, I am attempting to re-create the layout of the rural farming communities.

This task is very difficult to do from research alone, so if you are from one of these rural farming communities and can remember where public buildings were located, we would love for you to draw a map of your own area.

We are also very interested in records and photographs related to these communities. One of the aims behind the Archival Records Surveys was to uncover archival records from them, but I am sad to say we did not find much.

Let's not neglect the preservation of our rural roots!

Sincerely,
Mary Nutting, Archivist
South Peace Regional Archives

TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY

South Peace Regional Archives Society

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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.

Greenview Archival Records Survey

The Municipal District of Greenview No. 16 Archival Records Survey was a project designed to document the archival material existing within the boundaries of the M.D., as well as in the Towns, Hamlets and Communities.

Between July and December in 2009, surveyor Ann Martfeld traveled all over the M.D. looking for original documents relating to the settlement and development of the area. Because her strategy was to follow the creator of the records, she visited municipal governments, First Nations, and local organizations. She also interviewed many individuals about their own personal collections and the whereabouts of the records of defunct organizations.

The results of the survey show that one of the largest archival records holders in the M.D. are the municipal governments. They preserve minutes and bylaws, tax and assessment records, financial records, building and development permits, maps, and often have a collection of scrapbooks and/or photographs that detail the history of their town. Some of the records are restricted by legislation, but some of the most informative, such as the minutes are open to the public. They also have cemetery records for the cemeteries they are responsible for.

The next largest collectors are the museums and historical societies, which often have research collections about the families and groups in their area as well as the records of individuals and organizations.

Although there was virtually no access to First Nations records because of privacy issues, we found that many of the First Nations groups are focused on preserving their own stories, and there are some excellent websites that give access to their history.

The surveyor found that a large body of records had already been archived and were in the holdings

of other organizations and archives, such as South Peace Regional Archives, Societe Historique et Genealogique de Smoky River, Glenbow Archives of Alberta, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, and/or Library and Archives Canada. We found this to be the case with most of the school records.

The records which are of most concern are those relating to defunct organizations and rural communities. The records of organizations which once provided many of our social and recreational facilities are often preserved by the last executive members who, realizing the importance of that history, hang on to the records. We are encouraging these organizations to archive their records with a parent organization or an archives such as South Peace Regional Archives.

Even more at risk is the evidence of our rural communities—the general stores, highway garages, post offices and community halls which were once the center of rural life. There appears to be very little of this record left, except in family collections and memory, and it is very difficult to access. The exception is the records of the community halls which are mostly with the hall boards. The cemetery records appear to be mostly in the hands of the organizations or individuals looking after the cemeteries. Sometimes there is a copy at the district office, but this does not appear to be consistent.

Family collections have some of the earliest and most interesting documents, and the most extensive photograph collections. These personal collections can be quite extensive. They are often handed down in the family as part of the family history.

The goal of this survey was to educate the general public and holders of records about archives in general and the South Peace Regional Archives specifically. In this we feel we were successful.

Museums & Historical Societies

Preserving Archives

When it comes to collecting and preserving the records of rural communities, local museums and historical societies have a crucial role. They are members of the given community and have a interest in history, so are naturally the ones local residents go to with historical materials. A good example is the DeBolt & District Pioneer Museum, where Fran Moore is the go-to person for history.

The Greenview Archival Records Survey documented archival material from the following collections at DeBolt:

- DeBolt & District Pioneer Museum Society
 - Administrative records
 - Photograph collections
 - Library

- Edson Trail Maps
- Caroline Kramps collection
- Goodwin Livestock Improvement Association
- DeBolt Beautification Society
- United Church of Canada
- East Smoky Legion
- Spirit of the Peace Museums Association
- DeBolt & District Agricultural Society
- Frank Stevenson Funeral Card Albums

Because DeBolt Museum staff and volunteers do not have the time or the specific storage required to preserve their paper records, they routinely send archival collections to the archives. To date, we have processed the following collections for them:

- the Museum's Publication files
- C.E. Calberry
- Charlie and Winnie Moore
- DeBolt Country Club
- East Smoky Recreation Board
- Goodwin Co-op
- Ridgevalley Co-operative Association
- East Smoky School Division No. 54

- Clarkson Valley School District 4663
- Cornwall School District 4700
- Darwin School District 4639
- East Smoky School District 4198
- Edson Trail School District 4082
- Harper Creek School District 4968
- Mountain Springs School District 4640
- North Goodwin School District 5002
- Ravenna School District 4822
- Ridgevalley School District 4563
- Simonette School District 4750
- Smoky Valley School District 4822
- Sturgeon Heights School District 4606
- Sturgeon Lake School District 4858
- Calais (Valleyview) School District 3992

For each collection we receive from them, we write an Agency History or Biographical Sketch, arrange the materials in series, and describe each series, as in the example on the opposite page. We also re-house the materials in acid-free envelopes, folders and boxes, digitize any photographs, and upload the photographs and a description of the collection to the web. We then store the collection.

On the web, the materials are available to both the DeBolt Museum and any other researchers who want to access them.

Looking back over this page, it is evident that the history of the rural community of DeBolt is quite well documented, with some spillover on the communities around them. This is thanks to the efforts of the DeBolt & District Pioneer Museum Society. SPRA is very happy to be partners with them.

The Greenview Survey also documented several historical societies which are collecting archival materials in their own communities. Hats off to Grande Cache Historical Society, and the Fox Creek Historical Society.

Ridge Valley Cooperative Association fonds. – 1938-1945. – 32 cm of textual records.

Agency History

The Ridge Valley Co-operative Association was formed on April 8, 1939 for the purpose of establishing a Cheese Factory in the Ridge Valley District of the Peace River Country. The organizers were mainly Mennonite farmers who had come to the area in the 1920s: P.I. Loewen, Gerry DeVeer, A. Bartel, Jasper Bronson, Abe T. Reimer, Aaron F. Reimer, Joe Taylor and Ger. Thiessen. Shares were sold to settlers in the area at a value of \$25.00 each, which could be paid for in cash or by work in lieu of cash. There were 45 initial subscribers. The business was administered by an executive board of five people elected by the shareholders. A frame building was built on land donated by Joseph Taylor on the south edge of SW 14-71-26-W5, beside Deep Creek which was dammed to provide water for steam. There was also an air cooled cold storage room where the cheese was stored and aged. Operating money to start the venture was borrowed from the Linden Cheese Co-op in southern Alberta, and the factory opened in 1939. Garnet Summers was the first cheese maker. Milk was purchased from local producers who depended on ice houses to cool the milk and keep it sweet, as there was no refrigeration. For many of these farmers, it was the only regular cash income they received. The Cheddar Cheese product was made daily and sold to individuals as well as being shipped to Swift's in Edmonton and Horne & Pitfield in Grande Prairie. By 1941, the total annual production was 44,000 lbs of cheese. In 1942, the group considered incorporation. At the time there were 27 milk shippers and they were processing 2,300 to 2,500 lbs of milk per day. In 1945 there were 51 members in the association, but in 1948, the factory closed due to competition from the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool, who could offer a better price for raw milk.

Scope and Content

The fonds consists of executive records, financial records, correspondence, labour records, and printed materials from associated organizations. Series descriptions are as follows:

161.01 Executive records. – 1938-1945. – 2 cm of textual records. The series consists of a letter of relinquishment from Joseph Taylor regarding the land for the cheese factory, a description of the operation along with a 1941 financial statement, a few minutes from an undated year, employee contracts, insurance policies, tax notices and receipts, receipts for purchase of shares, share statements and transfers, and operational reports submitted to various levels of government.

161.02 Financial records. – 1939-1945. – 14 cm of textual records. The series consists of financial statements from 1941-1944, financial ledgers, records of cheese sales and milk purchased, accounts receivable and general expenses.

161.03 Correspondence. – 1939-1946. – 3 cm of textual records. The series consists of correspondence between the Ridge Valley Co-op and the Government of Alberta as well as their sister co-op in Linden. Subjects include the hiring of a cheese maker, incorporation of the business and Dairy Commissioner directives.

161.04 Labour records. – 1941-1945. – 1 cm of textual records. The series consists of tenders and bills for cutting and supplying firewood for the factory, unemployment insurance records, letters regarding wages and hours of work regulations and employing veterans, and copies of the 1943 Unemployment Insurance Act and the 1943 Workman's Compensation Act along with forms, payment receipts and correspondence.

161.05 Associated Organizations. – 1938-1945. – 2 cm of textual records. The series consists of printed material from organizations such as the Alberta Department of Agriculture, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, and the Consumer Cooperative Association which would have affected decisions made.

Pass The Cheese, Please

by Fran Moore, DeBolt & District Pioneer Museum Society

Old-timers still say, “Garnet Summers made good cheese”. Yes, there was a cheese factory in the South Peace, the Ridgevalley Coop Cheese Factory that operated between 1939 and 1948, at Crooked Creek, Alberta.

Farmers had a surplus of milk and no market for it, when they heard from friends and relatives in Linden, Alberta where people were able to make a profit selling milk to a cheese factory. They formed a coop (\$25.00 per share) in 1937. Members could pay in cash or by logging, sawing lumber or building. They began building and borrowed operating money from the Linden Cheese Coop. The factory was located on the south edge of SW14-71-26-W5.

The board of the cheese factory were mostly from the Mennonite community, but included some other neighbors, whose names included: DeVeer, Reimer, Hauff, Loewen, Bartel, Bronson, Taylor, Thiessen, Esau, Ratzlaff, Klassen and Fast.

The cheese factory was built beside the Deep Creek in which a dam was built to maintain a water supply. The water was filtered through sand and gravel leading to a well. The water supply was also of great importance because steam heat was needed for the curding of cheese. In high water often the dam was damaged and needed considerable repair. Thanks to ‘Mother Nature’, the beavers moved in and took on the repair job.

Much could be said about the early hardships of the cooling and delivering of milk. Without deep wells for real cold water and no electricity, it was hard to cool milk fast and keep it good. Many of the milk shippers had ice houses. Ice was taken out and added to the tubs or barrels where the milk cans were cooling. Often milk was hauled by wagon and by buggy.

Cheese was made daily. Garnet Summers was an

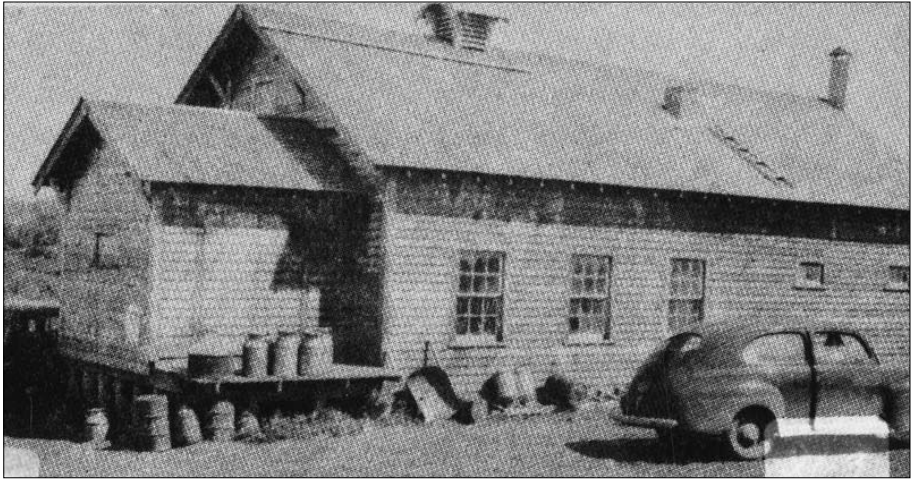


Garnet Summers, with some of the trophies and ribbons his cheese was awarded.

award-winning cheese maker. His services were followed by cheese maker, Mr. McKinley, then Dave Friesen, and then once again, Garnet Summers. Donald Dierker did apprentice with Garnet for a while.

The Summers family moved from southern Alberta and included Mrs. Summers, son Merle, and daughters Betty Lou, Lorraine and Yvonne. The children attended Ridgevalley school. They lived in a house (still standing) that was located close to the cheese factory.

It is believed that cheese was made and sold just under \$.20 a pound and that the price for milk was about \$.70 cwt when the factory first opened. This income for many was the only real cash income they received. Cheese from the factory was sold to Horne and Pittfield Wholesalers, and Frank Ratzlaff hauled much of the cheese as he was one of the first truckers. Cheese was also sold to other small grocery stores and to individual customers.



The Ridge Valley Cheese Factory ca. 1940.

In 1948 many milk shippers were realizing a slightly better price for their raw milk in Grande Prairie at N.A.D.P. In time N.A.D.P. took on more milk shippers. So on October 1, 1948 the cheese factory closed and remained closed. Records show that in 1948 twenty eight boxes of cheese weighing 2,337 pounds were sold for \$747.84. There were about twenty milk shippers left this last year and the price of milk was \$2.04 - \$2.13 cwt, with cheese makers wages that year being \$125.00 per month.



Some of this information has been taken from [Across the Smoky](#), the DeBolt & District Pioneer Museum Societies first history book. Contrary to what it says in the book, the records of the cheese factory were not lost. They were kept at a couple different homes in Crooked Creek, and then forwarded to the DeBolt Museum, who in turn forwarded them to the new South Peace Regional Archives. (If you want to look at any of these records, just visit the archives.)

er items, with the story of this unique business told all around the walls. The DeBolt Museum thanks two ladies for the boxes of records: Mrs. Thiessen and Mrs. Isaac, also Mr. Charlie Coulter for the steam engine, and Mr. Alfred Reimer for the collection of items. The machine that measured butter-fat quality of the milk was sold to Billy Rogers a dairy man in Valleyview, and this has now be donated back to the community--it is in the display, also.

Also, some of the equipment from the Ridgevalley Coop Cheese Factory was saved and donated to the DeBolt Museum. There is a display (behind the white door) that includes the steam engine from the cheese factory, and there is a collection of many oth-

The DeBolt & District Pioneer Museum is open two days a week year round, but the buildings in Hubert Memorial Park (where the cheese factory is) are only open seasonally, mid-May through mid-September. Phone 957-3955 for hours open.

Explore the History of Sturgeon Lake

Author's note: Most of the information for this article came from "Journey to the Millennium", the historical display about the Valleyview area housed at the Valleyview Library and Gallery, the text and photographs of which are archived at SPRA. The numbers refer to what part of the collection the information came from. See www.southpeacearchives.org for more information.

Sturgeon Lake is the scene of some of the earliest interactions between First Nations and European settlers in the south Peace. It was a favoured fishing and hunting base, first for the Beaver then for the Cree First Nation; and after the first fur trade post was set up on Lesser Slave Lake around 1800, a good source for supplying the fur trade posts with meat and furs. After 1870, the Beaver and Cree were joined by Metis of various ethnic origins, including Iroquois and Assiniboine.

Coming from the west on Highway 43, the first turn-off into Sturgeon Lake is on Rge Rd 251, which heads around the west bay to Young's Point Provincial Park. Here a community hall and old church is all that is left of Sturgeon Heights, which once boasted three service stations, a store, cafe and school as well. The cemetery still exists in a grove of spruce trees on the south side of the highway. The land north of the highway now belongs to the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Following the route of the old Edson Trail, we continue east on Highway 43 and go north on Twp Rd 704, which was surveyed in 1932 (the black boxes on the map show where homes and buildings were at that date). The well-gravelled road leads through a forest, past Rge Rd 250 which provides access to Cosy Cove, then Rge Rd 245 to Sturgeon Lake Bible Camp and the Riverview Golf Course, and finally, Rge Rd 244 which leads to The Narrows and Boyd's Lake Properties. This is cottage country. Camping is available at Sturgeon Lake Campground and Captain's Cove; and Williamson Provincial Park is day use.

We are now in the Sturgeon Lake Indian Reserve 154, and homes and gardens can be glimpsed through the trees on the one side, and the lake through the trees on the other side. Captain's Cove is next. In 1877, the HBC post at Lesser Slave established a "flying post" on Sturgeon Lake with the "Old Captain" in charge of a band of hunters. His house was "across the bay" from the main settlement, possibly here at Captain's Cove.

Next around the lake is Calais. When the Reserve was surveyed in 1907, this land belonged to three Metis hunters. In the 1930s, it was the location of Tom Kerr's home, store and cabins. It was also where the Sturgeon Lake Sports were celebrated. Les McLaughlin, in Granddaddy of the Peace described the sports as "A highlight of the summer.... There were horse races, tee dances, and many games. The most fun was the tug of war, a simple sport but very effective in showing off team spirit. Tom Kerr always set up a stand during Sports Days. His variety of pop and candy was a big hit with the crowd. People came from all over the Peace Country by horse and car to take part in the games. Native people built traditional teepees and served traditional foods during Sports Day. The sweet smell of bannock fired in bacon or moose grease lingered in the warm spring air. They served moose stew in large helpings, but certainly not on paper plates...." (175.026) In 1932, Arthur Taylor built a dance hall, cabaret and confectionery by the lake. The Northern Tribune reported on May 17, 1934 "Empire Day, Thursday, May 24, is the day set for the official opening and a program of sports is being arranged to precede the big dance at Taylor's Pavilion in the evening. The famous Lake Orchestra has been re-organized and no expense nor effort will be spared to make it the best dance band in the district.... Thursday, May 24, is the date when the greatest blues-chasing resort in the district hangs up its welcome sign." (175.086)

The small cluster of homes remaining on the

shore of the lake at Calais is where Keillar's Resort was developed after the war. It began with seven little log cabins, which were gradually replaced by more modern cabins. Calais was a popular resort during the 1950s, and Kate Keillar recalls one Sunday when they served *"30 gallons of ice cream in cones, 20 lbs. Of wieners in buns and 40 lbs of hamburgers in buns with nothing but an old wood stove to cook on."* (175.030)

The 1930s was, perhaps, the busiest time at Sturgeon Lake. *"Sturgeon Lake Whitefish were considered by many to be the finest whitefish in Alberta. During the 1930s a major winter commercial fishery developed at Sturgeon Lake to supply eastern Canadian and American markets. Whitefish was iced and trucked or flown out of Sturgeon Lake by ski plane. The market disappeared in the 1950s..."* (175.055)

Crossing the bridge over Goose Creek, we follow the curve north around the lake through Sturgeon Lake Settlement. This is the heart of historic Sturgeon Lake, where modern homes surround the few remaining historic buildings. The first fur trade post was established by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1877 (175.020). By 1879, when George Dawson came through the area via an established Indian trail across the Wapiti and Smoky Rivers, a settlement had been established there with a few log homes and several gardens containing barley, potatoes, turnips, carrots, beets and onions. The settlement increased substantially in the early 1880s and by the time the NWMP conducted their first inspection tour in 1897, there were about 40 homes and 4 fur trade posts, including the Hudson's Bay Company compound of shop, fish house and factor's house.

After Treaty No. 8 was signed in 1899, Sturgeon Lake Indian Reserve No. 54 was established beside the lake. Sturgeon Lake Settlement was surveyed in 1907, with lake-front property granted to the HBC, the RNWMP, the Roman Catholic Mission and Revillon Freres Trading Co. Metis families living in the settlement prior to 1907 were also granted 40 acres each (175.071). That same year, the Residential School was established at St. Francis Xavier Mis-

sion on the lake shore. The Oblate fathers had been visiting the area since 1884, and built the church in 1905. They added a Mission Farm behind the mission building where they produced grains, garden crops and raised livestock. The Residential School also accepted day students such as the Bodeker, Kerr and Williamson children, whose families were resident around the lake.

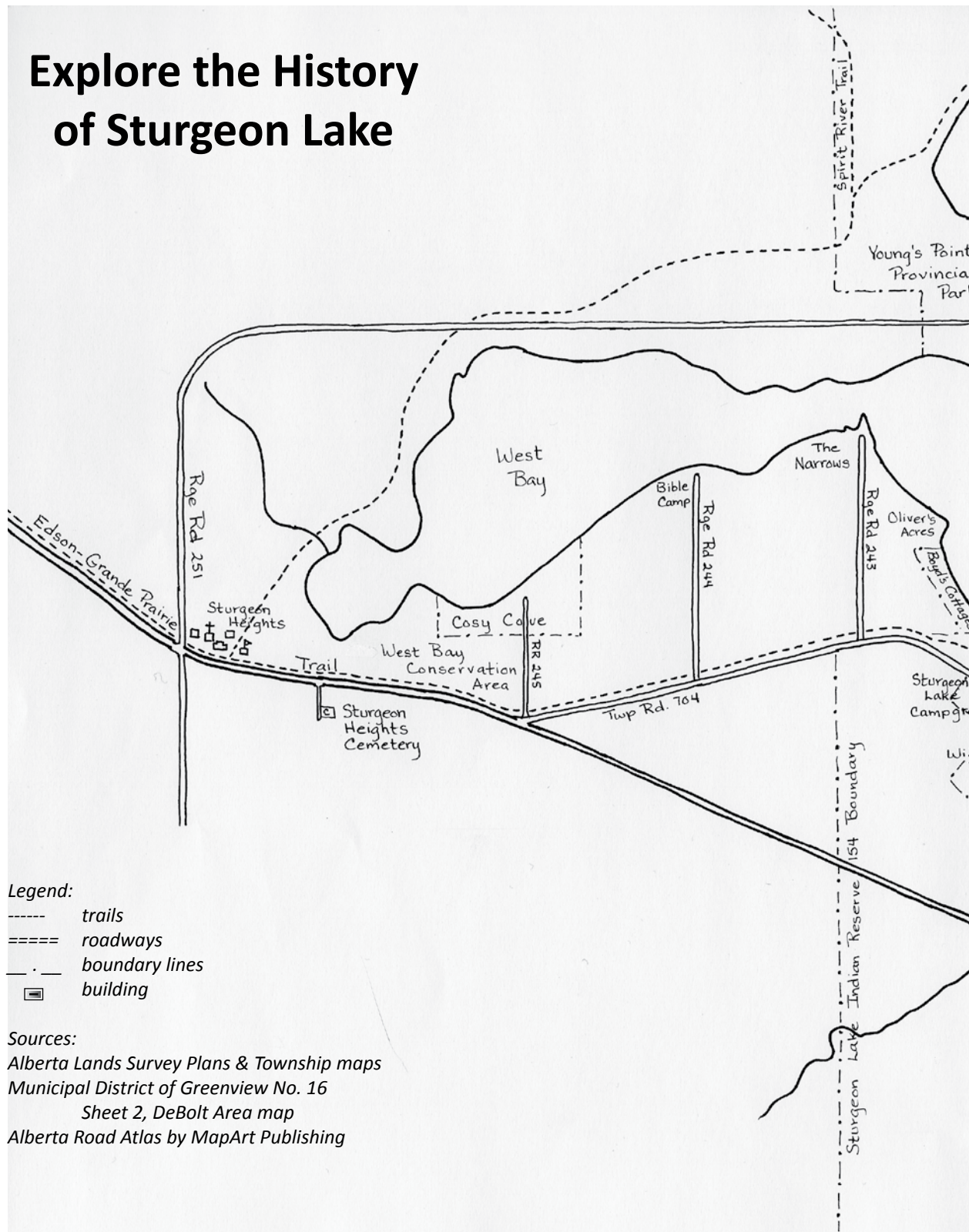
Metis families, such as Eli and Eva Badger and their three sons, Paul, Alex and Dan, were among the area's first settlers. They were experts at building log cabins, craftwork such as snowshoes, and gardening. Paul's wife, Emily Montagnais, was a famous Metis midwife. Paul Badger raised the first crops in the area, about 1905, on his land at Red Willow Creek (now Valleyview). (175.15)

Now there is only an abandoned store on the south side of the road, with a faded "Ogilvie Flour" sign. This was the Williamson Trading Post, and the site of the first post office in 1911 when it was owned by Revillon Freres. (175.022) On the next site, the St. Frances Xavier Church marks where the Mission and Residential School once stood, with the Mission Farm stretching out behind it. Across from the church is a large cemetery on the bank of the lake, the graves marked by wooden crosses. It is flanked by two smaller graveyards. In 1920, Clough's Store (175.053) was established just north of the HBC on land once occupied by the Royal North West Mounted Police. At this time the Bodeker family ran the Hudson's Bay Co. Store (1921-1931). In the 30s, the Sturgeon Lake Café, run by the Suek family, took the place of Clough's Store.

Where the main road curves south, take Rge Rd 233 north past where the Girl Guides and Navy Cadets once had group camps. Continuing north you can turn west and visit Sandy Bay or east back to Highway 43. I hope you enjoyed your tour of historic Sturgeon Lake.

Sources: "Journey to the Millenium" (fonds 175 at South Peace Regional Archives); and Where the Red Willow Grew.

Explore the History of Sturgeon Lake

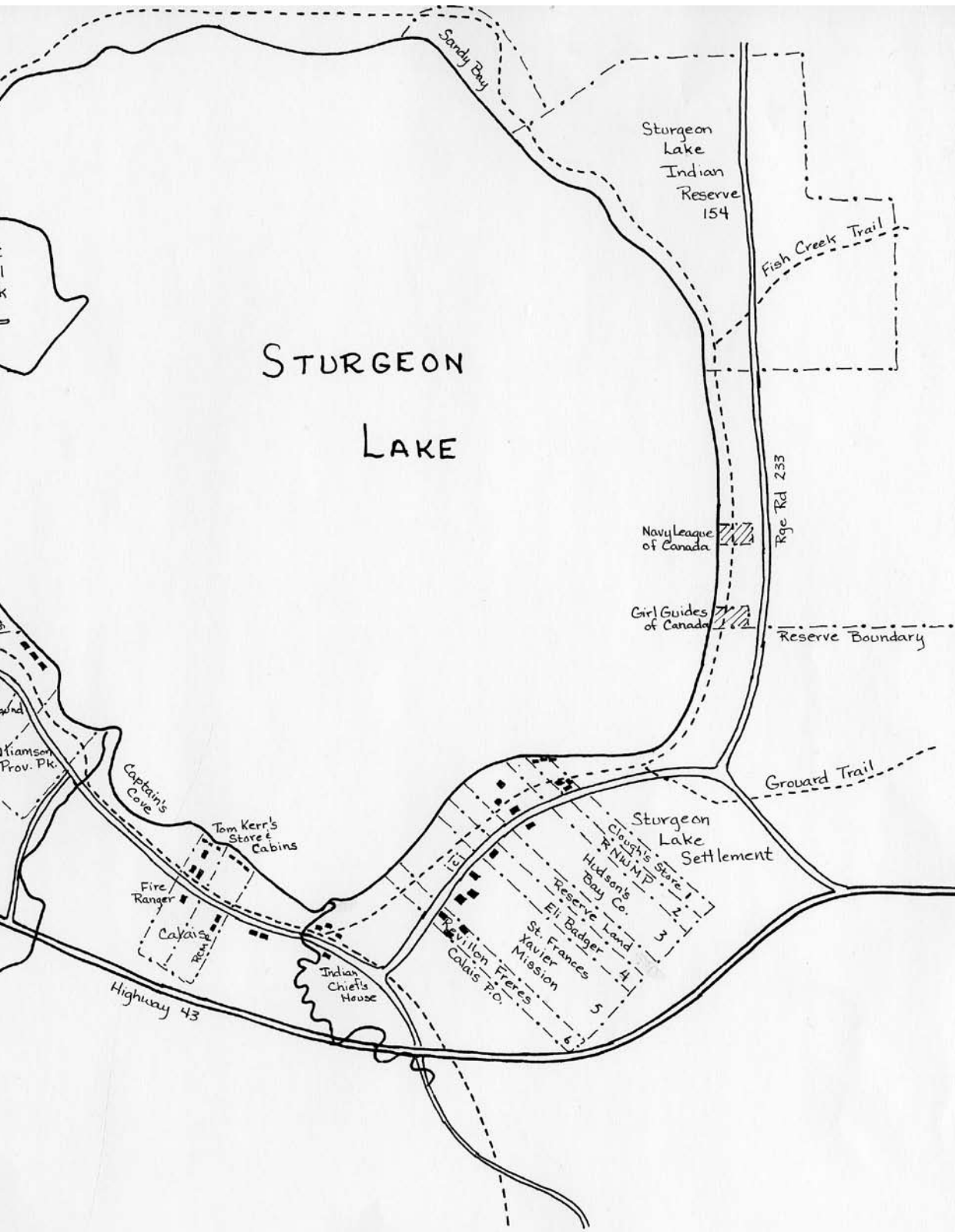


Legend:

- trails
- ===== roadways
- boundary lines
- ▣ building

Sources:

Alberta Lands Survey Plans & Township maps
Municipal District of Greenview No. 16
Sheet 2, DeBolt Area map
Alberta Road Atlas by MapArt Publishing



The Lee Pooler collection

Lee Pooler was a weatherman with the United States Army Air Force who was stationed at the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals Repeater Station on the old Valleyview-High Prairie Road during World War II. This station was later moved to the north side of Valleyview. His collection at the archives includes an oral history of his experiences there, a hand-drawn map of where the repeater station was, and 22 photographs taken in 1942, some of which are shown here.



The long low log building above is the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals Repeater Station at Little Smoky during the second World War. Behind it is the maintenance building, and the weather station. SPRA 294.02

On the front cover: *An Army Sense of Humour. The Repeater Station personnel took great delight in scaring the new weather station personnel when they were in the outhouse, by shooting at the building. They took care not to shoot through the roof, as they did not want to be dripped on when they were in the outhouse. SPRA 294.06*



Above: Jeep crossing the bridge at Little Smoky. Supplies, such as gasoline and groceries for the Repeater Station and Weather Station at Little Smoky were brought in from High Prairie. 294.08



Left, an Alaska Highway Convoy Truck, bound from Edmonton to

Dawson Creek and the Alaska highway, stopped in front of the temporary weather station and behind the Repeater Station at Little Smoky. 294.04



The weather station at Valleyview, above, was a pre-fab Army Signal Corps building with barracks for four men and the weather report station. On the roof was an observation platform. Staff had to report cloud ceilings because all the planes “flew contact”, including the B25 Pursuit Planes which were being flown to Russia (many by women pilots) to help with the war effort. SPRA 294.10

Left, inside the USAAF weather station at Valleyview during World War II. SPRA 294.15

The complete Lee Pooler collection can be seen by going to www.southpeacearchives and clicking on “ANA Database” in the right-hand column. Type Lee Pooler into the search box, read his biography and click on “View photographs” at the bottom of the page to see the pictures. Sorry, the oral history isn’t available on line—you will have to come in to the archives to listen to that.

A Handful of Memories

The stories on these two pages are from the pen of Peggy Mair, who came with her parents to the Flying Shot Lake District in 1926.

Hallowe'en at Harvest

Back in the late twenties and thirties threshing was a long process. Grain was cut by a horse-drawn binder. The bundles then had to be stooked by hand and left in the field to await the threshing machine and its crew. Usually one thresher served a whole community and moved from farm to farm. Most of the farmers helped each other by serving as the crew. Some brought their teams and hayracks to haul the bundles to the machine while others (stook pitchers) tossed the sheaves onto the load. Farmers whose farm was near the end of the list often experienced a late completion of their harvest. This was the case on the Cameron farm, where the threshing crew arrived at Hallowe'en.

I remember this particular night because my mother was helping Mrs. Cameron with the cooking for the crew. The men had retired to the bunkhouse when two young ladies called on Mrs. Cameron. They had arrived on horseback. They tied their mounts near the barn and came to the house for tea. During conversation over tea, Mrs. Cameron asked the young women if they thought their horses were OK, since perhaps the men might have remembered that it was Hallowe'en. They opened the door and looked toward the barn. Yes, their steeds were still there. Imagine their surprise when they went to leave and found two cows saddled and bridled in place of their horses that they later found hidden in the bushes.

The ladies got their revenge. Next morning one man, after searching in vain for his harness finally had to borrow some. On climbing up on his load of bundles, there was his harness. Another fellow hitched up his team, climbed on his load and shook his lines to start up his team. The team started up but left him perched on the load because the girls

had removed the pin that attached the double trees to the wagon.

No harm was really done in those days. Tricks were done in fun without any vandalism.

Remembrance Day Remembered

Back in the 1930s Remembrance Day was called Armistice Day. We children didn't have a holiday from school but at two minutes to eleven we were required to stand with bowed heads for two minutes of silence. Then we would salute the flag, the Union Jack, and repeat our pledge of allegiance. Children in those days were taught respect, loyalty and patriotism in school as well as at home.

In the morning of that day, the veterans of World War I paraded and held a service. My father, who had service in the British Army, wore his medals and proudly marched with his legion buddies.

In the evening a banquet was held to which wives and older children were invited. When I was thirteen my parents decide that I could accompany them. How grown up I felt in my white crepe dress with its powder blue collar! There was a guest speaker. I don't recall his speech but I do remember that he got quite excited and loud and waved his arms about a lot. At the height of his excitement somewhere in the hall a cuckoo clock sounded the hour. I got thoroughly scolded by my mother for having a giggling fit.

In my early teens daughters of ex-service men were asked to sell poppies. We received ten cents for every dollar that we collected. Since this was a time that depression still lingered it helped a lot. I saved my earnings and sent it to Eaton's for my first really new winter coat. The cost usually ran at about ten dollars. Until then most of my friends and I wore hand-me-down coats.

At that time little did we foresee that our generation would be called upon to serve in another war.

VE Day Memories

It was a Monday morning. I had spent the weekend in town at my parents' home and was leaving to resume my teaching duties at Flying Shot School. I usually rode a bus that traveled from town to the American Air-base at the airport. I would get off the bus three miles west of Grande Prairie and walk south and west another three and a half miles to the school.

My mother boarded a young radio announcer. As I was about to leave he told me not to bother as they would be announcing the war's end. I told him I had to go because the children would be at the school. Just as the bus approached the airport corner, the news came over a radio on the bus. I hiked on to school anyway.

When I arrived at school the children began arriving. Some had heard the news but others who had no radio at home had not. Everyone was too excited to settle down. Near noon I gave up trying to get the children to concentrate on their lessons. We all picked up our lunches and hiked a couple of miles to a tiny creek and had a picnic. The next day was proclaimed a holiday for everyone.

An Un-Sung Hero

In the Grande Prairie cemetery is the grave of an un-sung hero. The name on the headstone is Charles Crosby. Charles worked for the local newspaper, The Grande Prairie Herald owned by J.B. Yule. At the age of twenty-one, he hoped to follow a career in the newspaper business.



Above, Florence, Charles and Edith Crosby in front of their mother's boarding house ca. 1937. See "An Un-Sung Hero."

One summer evening in the late thirties he was going to pick up his sister who, along with several other girls including myself, were camping at Bear Lake. My mother and the mother of one of the other girls were traveling with him to bring us extra food supplies.

Near the top of the hill, west of town, about where Fas Gas is now situated was a house and barn owned by Albert Partlow. Mr. Partlow earned his living by hauling goods in his horse-drawn wagon. Smoke was billowing from the hay loft of the barn. Crosby stopped the car and ran to the house to alert the owner. Since nobody seemed to be home, he ran to the barn and led a horse out. Then he returned to the barn to get the other horse. When he failed to emerge, my mother ran to the house and called the fire hall. Then

she summoned some passing men and told them that Charles was still in the barn. The men acted immediately and brought Charles and the other horse out. Crosby seemed to be injured so he was sent to the hospital. Before he left he tried to reassure the ladies by saying that he thought his arm was broken, but at least he'd saved the horses.

Sad to say, the next morning he passed away. Evidently the terrified horse had crushed him against the side of the stall, causing internal injuries.

Thus a budding newsman ended his career a hero.

Ben Hall, Germany

In 2006, Alice Fortier and Bob Scott interviewed Ben Hall, a Royal Air Force veteran, about his experience as a prisoner in Germany during World War II. Both Bob Scott and Ben Hall have passed away since that interview, so we are grateful to have his story, part of which is told here. Visit the archives to listen to the complete interview and story.

After Ben and his crew were shot down, he found himself alone in a clearing in the German forest. His only hope was to walk out of Germany and into Switzerland, and this he attempted to do with the aid of the silk map in his escape kit. He made it to a little village where his disheveled appearance drew the attention of some children who brought the police, and he was arrested.

“He put me against a wall and told me to stay there. He was a very nice man, no problems. Whilst I was there, a crowd gathered to look at this animal who was standing by the wall. Never been so popular. I began to hear this constantly repeated phrase: Moiderer, Terrifiger, Luftganster and Kinder, meaning bombing and killing our children. But the guard came back and took me to the local jail and put me in the cell. “Are you O.K?” he said, and I said I was hungry. He gave me some black bread and some coffee. “Go to sleep” he said.”

The next day Ben was moved to a big Luftwaffe station where there were five other RAF airmen who had been shot down. Although they were fed and treated well, they were told they would have to go to the interrogation centre to be interviewed. So the group of six airmen, with two guards, were put on the train to Frankfurt. During the night they ran into an RAF raid which destroyed the tracks and the railway station ahead. They had to walk to this station where the guards left them on the platform while they went to the soup kitchen to get food.

“Whilst they were away we six of us stood out like sore thumbs in the light. And then the crowds really started to get awkward. It was a very unpleasant time. They started shouting the same thing again, Terrifiger, Luftganster, Moiderer. They

were mostly women, but they were close, really close, frighteningly close. And then the guards came along and they roused the crowd, and got to us and told us to go down the hole underneath the tracks and hide there. So we went through the crowd, and down the ramp into the underpass, and there was a wall there and we stood there because they were pressing on us. I can remember the wall. It was white tile.

“This went on for some time. The crowd was getting bigger and noisier and more difficult to cope with. We just kept as quiet as we could. I was scared stiff at this point. It was a pretty horrible feeling because you think, well this is it! They’re really going to go for you. Then the guards came along again and told us to run again underneath the tracks and hide in the dark, and we did that again and we stayed there until morning.”

They were in Frankfurt about 10 days, alone and insulated in separate cells. When he finally went for the interrogation, the interrogator showed Ben the identification tags from his crew. There were seven in all, a complete crew.

“I realized after why he had counted the discs made seven, a total crew. If there had been eight, it would have been difficult. Cause at that time we had been dropping people into Germany and France as spies. So that is what they were after—these people who were going to be spies. If there was one more person in the airplane they wanted to know why. In my case it didn’t occur because there were seven men, one crew.

From there I went into the main group of the prisoners—airmen, soldiers, what have you. I was a prisoner of war from Feb 15, 1945 to May, 1945. Then I was sent back to England. There weren’t any bands playing. Nobody shouting in the streets that we were heroes. All they did was pepper me with disinfectant, to make sure I didn’t have any bugs, and give me a new uniform. They sent us all on leave to get rid of us. Gave us double ration cards and told us to go home. I went home and I was bored to tears, so I volunteered to go to France and they sent me to Marseilles where I served on the ground until the end of the war. “

John Peters, Italy World War II

In 2009, Lon Rubie donated this letter written by her father, John Peters, about his experience in Italy during World War II, and a photograph of his platoon at the Grande Prairie Training Centre.

“There were many times in Italy where I know that but for the grace of God I should have been one of those that were dead all around me. There was one time in particular I recall, we had advanced about 50 some miles that day and in the evening after sundown we tried to hide our convoy in a beautiful orange orchard. (Can you imagine the damage we did to that orchard?)

“Anyway ‘alas’ the enemy had observed all, as we should of realized; as I am sure some of us did. Never before had I had such conviction that I should dig a trench to sleep in, and I did. Some laughed but I dug it anyway, even though I had not done this before.

“The enemy came and dropped bombs on us, then after all was on fire, which gave them lots of light on the ground, they came back & strafed us with shell fire. We had no air support at all that night & it literally was hell on earth--the screams. Others from farther out who had not been hit came and shoveled the debris off of me, so I could get up. There were dead all around me, but God, I realized, had spoken and I had obeyed and that had saved my life.”

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PTC



What Archives Do and Why We Do It

Author's Note: In lieu of receiving any actual questions from our readers, Mary has suggested an explanation of our website for you web-savvy readers and researchers. If this doesn't apply to you, please submit a question that does!

If you've ever tried to find a photograph from South Peace Regional Archives or wanted to find out about a collection of materials held here, chances are we directed you to our website. One of the key functions of archives is to provide access to material and one of the key ways we do that is through our website.

Why? Well, our website allows us to connect with a larger number of people in more locations than would be possible for us to reach by phone, mail, or face-to-face contact. It also links us with Provincial and National databases which broadcast our holdings to an even wider audience all over the world. How can people use our archives if they don't know who we are, what we have, when we are open, where we are located, etc?

Here's a quick sampling of the kinds of things you can find on our website. Incidentally, it would probably help if I tell you what our website address is! You can find us at <http://www.southpeacearchives.org>. This is called our "Home page" and it is the root from which other pages on our website are accessed. The home page gives a brief description of the Archives, our contact information, announcements of Archives news and upcoming events, and links to other pages.

Looking for archival photographs? Click on the "Alberta InSight" link on the top right of the page. This will take you to a search page where you can type in what you are looking for and come up with a page of results. We have about 4500 digitized photographs on this site, which is only a fraction of our total holdings, but we try to upload a representative sampling of what we have. What about digitized documents? We have a few of those available too

through the "Alberta InWord" link. For descriptions of the records we hold, try the "ANA database" link on the right or the Holdings/Finding Aids link on the left. These descriptions will tell you what kinds of records you can find from a particular person or group or on a particular subject as well as give you a brief history of the collection. You can also try searching the entire South Peace Regional Archives site using the Google search box at the very top of the page. Follow the "Making Inquiries" link on the left side to guide you when you need to ask questions about information in the Archives holdings.

Also on the right side of the page is a list of links to pages about our municipal and museum partners. These pages give a brief description of these groups and links to the finding aids of the records they have donated.

If you want to find out more about the Archives itself and our activities, look to the links on the left. The "About us" link gives information about the history of the Archives and our mandate. The "Society" link takes you to an information page about the South Peace Regional Archives Society including society by-laws and membership information. Use the "Contact us" link to find a map of our location and our open hours.

If you missed out on either of our two previous exciting "What Archives Do and Why We Do It" columns, you can find them through the "Newsletters" link. (Note for avid readers: This column is always on page 18, although the rest of the newsletter is interesting as well).

The Archives also has several products you might be interested in purchasing. Try the "Ordering Reproductions" link if you are interested in ordering photographs, maps, digitized audio and video recordings, etc. Or, if books are more your style, click on the "Publications" link to find a list of books produced by the Archives. *(cont'd across page)*

Society and Member News



A lovely time was had by all on our first Walking Tour of the Grande Prairie Municipal Cemetery. Archivist Leslie Pearson led the tour with well-researched and informative stories.

We will be doing the tour again on Tuesday, Sept. 21, this time for the Grande Prairie Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society.

Photograph courtesy of Mark Harrison Rodgers from Q99. For gravestones and stories covered by the tour, see Mark's blog at <http://www.q99live.com/dj-blog.php?id=181&mlD=5134>.

One of the Reasons We Have Archives

(from an e-mail to SPRA on August 18, 2010)

I FOUND MY FAMILY YESTERDAY! Because of you I was able to put the correct spelling into a Yahoo Canada search engine! The name that came up was ***** who is a child case worker for the province (Edmonton I think). I sent him an email and before the day was done his father called me and this morning I talked to his father again. He and I share the same grandparents! It has been the most exciting days for me to talk to my father's side of the family. I always felt so alone! It is good today! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!
Martha

(cont'd from across page)

The "Links" link will take you to outside websites related to the Archives and the area we cover.

Are you lost yet? No problem. Just click on the "Home" link on the left side of whatever page you are on to return to the homepage and start a new adventure.

A Few of Our Recent Acquisitions

Hermit Lake School history book, 1916-1977
Ellen Craig

Original Copy of Memoirs of DW Patterson, 1956
Garry Roessler

Peace Country Overture Concert Assoc., 1975-1986
Sydney & Patricia Larter

Club 54 records, 1954-[1985]
Herb Janzen

North Kleskun Community Club & Ladies Club
Gail Steinke

Copies of 41 oral history interviews from Rycroft
Joan Margel

Monkman Pass Highway Photographs, 1937-1939
Frances Watt

Grande Prairie Book Club, 1939-2004
Alice Lorenz

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

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Phone: 780-830-5105
Fax: 831-7371
E-mail: spra@telus.net