

TELLING

OUR

STORIES

LOCAL HISTORY

ARCHIVE NEWS



VOLUME 6 SEPTEMBER 1, 2015 ISSUE 4

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SOUTH PEACE REGIONAL ARCHIVES

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On the cover: Marion Heller at HMCS Stadacona in Nova Scotia, ca. 1945 (SPRA 341.04.63). See pages 6 and 7 for more about Marion.

Take Note

Our 2015 Summer Fundraiser was so successful

(see report pp. 24-25)

that we have decided to forego this fall's fundraiser and concentrate on

Raising the Archives October 2016!

Archives Week October 3-9, 2015 Theme: Alberta For Sale!

come see our new display
in the Grande Prairie Museum
Community Room

Happy 100th Birthday Clairmont! Help them Celebrate Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015

Google "100th Anniversary of
Clairmont" for more information

Dear Members and Supporters;

We are now well into the era of 100th Anniversaries in the South Peace, which started with the centenary of the survey in 1909. This quarter the community of Clairmont is celebrating 100 years. What better way to recognize it than through the work of the late Beth Sheehan, historian for that area, whose collected photographs are featured on pages 8 and 9.

This article fits nicely into the featured area for this issue, which is the County of Grande Prairie. Other County areas include Lake Saskatoon, as revealed in the memories of Dr. Andrew Carlisle; Beaverlodge in 1908 as written by O.H. Johnson; the drawings of Olaf Vekved who lived at Northfield; and the old communities of Lymburn and Demmitt, as explored by SPRA volunteer Pat Wearmouth. Kathryn's article about 1000 people at the Rainer Barn Hop reminds me that there are so many stories and people that are new to me. We will never run out of stories!

The fall of the year is the time we generally feature schools and war remembrance. Our featured fonds is Marion Hill, who was both a teacher and a WREN, a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service.

One of our projects this summer has been the cleaning of archival film so that it can be stored in the freezer for long-term preservation. Since we don't have a lab with a fan, we had to clean it in the shop with fresh air for ventilation. Leslie has written about the project in her article on "What Archives Do."

Don't miss the Friends Report on "The Horse Drive of Harry Adair," and our Society News which features a memory from Phyllis Stewart and the Goodwin-DeBolt-Crooked Creek cemetery tour.

You can follow all of these in more depth on our website, blog, and Facebook page. If you ever have difficulty finding what you're looking for, just give Archives staff a call.

Thanks for your interest in the Archives, and I hope your fall is a little easier than O.H. Johnson's!

Sincerely,
Mary Nutting, editor

TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY

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Our Vision: Preserving and Sharing the Past.

Our Mission: The purpose of South Peace Regional Archives is to gather, preserve, and share the historical records of municipalities, organizations, businesses, families, and individuals within the region, both now and in the future.

100th Anniversary of Clairmont

One hundred years ago, on September 10, 1915, Clairmont Lake School District was formed by settlers in the Clairmont area, then known as Twin Lakes.

At the time, they were anticipating the arrival of the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway being built from Watino, on the Smoky River, through Spirit River, and on to Grande Prairie.

It was the practice of railway companies to lay out townsites on the right-of-way along the track six to ten miles apart. Counting back six miles from Grande Prairie, it was apparent that there would be a townsite on the flat land between the twin lakes of Clairmont and Ferguson.

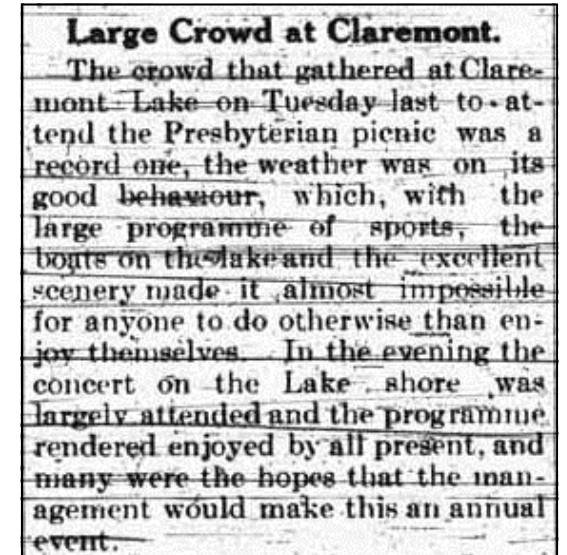
As it happened, the railway went closer to Clairmont Lake, and the resulting townsite was laid out on the SW quarter of section 25, township 72, range 6, west of the 6th meridian, being homesteaded by Melvin Spencer. The townsite was named after the lake.

Buildings went up quickly once the railway was through. Before 1916 was over, there was a Railway Station, two or three grain elevators and an agent's house, the Buffalo Lakes Lumber yard, Clairmont Hotel, a Union Bank, a Butcher Shop, several stores, a Baptist Church, and a handful of residences.

While waiting for land and money to build a school, classes were held in various places: the Baptist Church manse, the upper floor of George White's pool hall, and "a little brown shack" on 100th Avenue. In 1918, a lovely frame school was built on the southwest corner of the village.

In August 1916, the Clairmont post office was established on Lot 13, Blk 2, and managed by postmaster Lachlan MacDonald, who would hold that position until 1952.

Clairmont was incorporated as a village in 1917. The first reeve was Crofton Cady, assisted by Councillor



As seen in this news article dated July 29, 1913, the spelling was originally "Claremont" Lake, named by Walter McFarlane after his hometown of Claremont, Ontario when he surveyed the land in 1910-1911.

Mashburn and Secretary-Treasurer W. Coblentz. Their first concerns were fire protection, police protection, road maintenance, and animal control. As well as maintaining municipal services, the village helped residents build a park and sports grounds, a curling rink, a skating rink, and a tennis court.

By 1945, however, population in the village had decreased and Clairmont reverted to the status of hamlet under the Municipal District of Grande Prairie No. 127, which later became the County of Grande Prairie No. 1.

Clairmont is celebrating their 100th Anniversary on Saturday, September 19th. Check for details on www.countygp.ab.ca.

Resources:

Turn Back the Pages, by Beth Sheehan

Isabel Campbell Newspaper Index, www.southpeacearchives.org.

Post Offices and Postmasters database Library and Archives Canada

Featured Fonds: Marion Hill fonds

Marion Hill fonds. – 1920-2008. -- 6 cm of textual records. – 893 photographs

Biographical Sketch

Marion Marie Heller was born in 1921, the first child of Edward and Laura (Davis) Heller, on the homestead near Beaverlodge, AB. She started school in White Rock, BC, where the family lived while her father received surgery and rehabilitation for war wounds. When they returned to the Peace Country in 1930, she attended Appleton School, a one-room log school southwest of Beaverlodge. High school was taken in Beaverlodge.

By that time, World War II had started and there was a strong demand for teachers to fill the positions left vacant by young men enlisting in the war. After a year of Normal School (Edmonton) in 1941, Marion taught in one-room schools in the South Peace, first at Elmworth, then at Kleskun Hill.

In 1944, Marion joined the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service and became WREN Heller W3700. She served as a Supply Assistant until 1946, and after discharge taught in Victoria while she waited to rejoin the Navy.

The Navy, however, continued its policy of not accepting women when there was no



WREN Marion Heller W3700 at HMCS Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service, 1944-1946 (SPRA 341.04.01)

war. After waiting for five years for the Navy to change its policy, Marion gave up on her hopes for a navy career and joined the Air Force in 1951. This was the era of the "Cold War." Marion was the first female instructor in English at Air Force School at Saint-Jean, just south of Montreal. As an instructor, she never

really felt a part of the Air Force, so in the summer of 1953 she returned home again to Beaverlodge.

That summer Marion was offered the position of principal of the old Montrose School, for grades 1 to 3. This she did for a few years before she married Vernon Hill from Rio Grande. In 1962 they moved to a farm near Beaverlodge where they raised two sons, still on the family farm, and one daughter, Shannon. Marion continued her teaching career in the Beaverlodge Regional Junior-Senior High School from 1965-

Marion arriving at HMCS Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, April 1944 (SPRA 341.04.02)



Marion Heller and other staff at HMCS Avalon in Newfoundland, 1944 (SPRA 341.04.27)

1969, and then in Wembley until 1981 as librarian and junior high school teacher.

Marion loves to travel—by car, bus, train, plane, and cruise ship. Because of her interest in many crafts, she has taught sewing and other handwork to her grandchildren, and gives classes in tatting and sand-painting to anyone who is interested

Custodial History

The textual records were originally donated to the South Peace Centennial Museum in Beaverlodge by Marion Hill. They were transferred to South Peace Regional Archives in November 2008. An accrual in 2011 included five photograph albums donated by Marion Hill. Many of the photographs in the early albums were taken by Laura Heller, Marion's mother.

Scope and Content



The fonds consists of a family history album for the four lines of the family: Hill, Thayer, Heller, and Davis; and five photograph albums documenting the life of Marion Hill, including her childhood in Beaverlodge and

Above: Staff at HMCS Cornwallis, on the east side of Nova Scotia, where Marion served as a supply assistant, 1944 (SPRA 341.04.10)

Left: A captured German submarine in the harbour at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, ca. 1945 (SPRA 341.04.65)



White Rock, B.C.; her life as a young adult in Beaverlodge, White Rock, and Victoria; her teaching career in Beaverlodge and Victoria; and her life as a Navy WREN from 1944-1946. The textual records include a series of Grade 9 High School Entrance examinations in mathematics, science, health education, English language and literature, and general

knowledge; and brochures from musical and dramatic events from 1975-1979 which were preserved by her daughter.

Notes: Title based on the contents of the fonds.

Related Records: Ed Heller fonds



Featured Photos: Beth Sheehan fonds



Left: Spencer farm on the west shore of Clairmont Lake ca. 1915, where Clairmont was later established. The district was known as Twin Lakes because of its location between Clairmont Lake and Ferguson Lake. (SPRA 002.04.03.003)

Below: Clairmont, Alberta ca. 1917, when there were only three elevators. From left, buildings are identified as the Community Hall, Cady & Evans Lumber Yard, Evans' big house with the dormer window, Hardware Store with the big window. The barn behind was owned by Evans, and the tall house was George White's. (SPRA 002.04.03.002)



Beth Sheehan lived in the country near Clairmont for all of her married life. As the author of *Turn Back the Pages: Clairmont 1908-1992*, she created research files of interviews, news clippings, and paper artifacts to document the people, businesses, and events that made up the community. She also collected and took photographs which recorded the changes in the hamlet over a period of 90 years, from ca. 1915 to 2004. They include early hamlet scenes, farm buildings, schools and children, and the buildings, businesses, homes, and street scenes in the town as Clairmont developed. The photos on these two pages show some of the early photographs. More can be seen on www.southpeacearchives.org under Finding Aids, fonds 002 Beth Sheehan fonds, by clicking on the photograph at the top of the page.



Above: Mrs. Melvin (Ella) Spencer on the platform of the NAR Station at Clairmont, Alberta, ca. 1940. The railway water tower can be seen in the background. (SPRA 002.04.03.021)

Top left: Clairmont Lake School children at the side of the old building being used for a second classroom in 1928. (SPRA 002.04.03.016)

Middle left: Conrad's cutter on Clairmont's Main Street, ca. 1945. Harley Conrad is driving and Beth Sheehan is sitting on Mrs. Conrad's knee. In the background is Sim's Auto Service and Feed Barn. (SPRA 002.04.03.024)

Bottom left: Sheehan's car on Mercer Hill, going down to the hamlet of Clairmont, ca. 1925 (SPRA 002.04.03.013)

Facing page, bottom: Lillian Moore, the daughter of Arthur & Golda Patrick, on the bench in front of the A. Patrick Store in Clairmont, ca. 1918. Note the hitching rail for the horses. This store burned in January 1920. (SPRA 002.04.03.008)

Memories of a Pioneer Doctor: Part 3

By Dr. Andrew Murray Carlisle

Our 2015 newsletters will feature the memories of Dr. Andrew Murray Carlisle in serial form. Dr. Carlisle moved to the Grande Prairie area in 1921 and had many fascinating and humorous stories to tell about his early years as a country doctor in this region.

If you wish to listen to the whole recording, you can find it on our YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilPnMdFJU2g>

I just stayed three and a half years in Lake Saskatoon. Our famous railroad in 1924 was extended 15 miles west to a point three and a half miles south of Lake Saskatoon, and eventually the whole town moved down to the railroad and it became a new town they called Wembley. The buildings were dragged or skidded down on logs in the winter time. But I had been accepted as an intern for a year in surgery at the Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto by Dr. William E. Gallie who became the professor of surgery at the Toronto University and later was in charge of all the Shriners hospitals on the North American continent. It was a highly sought after internship and I was very fortunate. Interns got no salaries in those days, just their room and board, uniforms, and laundry. I was there all of 1925. It was strenuous work but a great opportunity. I stayed on three months more, and in 1926 in paediatrics with Dr. Alan Brown, the famous paediatrician. Then we looked over Ontario for an opening, but encouraged by a warm invitation from the new town of Wembley, we returned west again in April 1926. I knew that was a place where I was needed the most and where we both had relatives and good friends. We had sold everything before going east except our house and piano. We had had our house moved down to Wembley in the winter time but the snow must have obscured the land marks for it was placed crookedly on our lot and it is still crooked to this day. Wembley was our home for

the next ten years. Our three children were born there.

The only hospital was in Grande Prairie and I made that 15 mile trip each way nearly every day and often two or three times a day, and eventually we lived in Grande Prairie for twenty-one years. After my 15 months at the Sick Children's Hospital I felt much better equipped but I still had a lot to learn. For instance, I started holding baby clinics. At the first one I gave a prize for the best baby. Well, that was a mistake! I never did that again. Mothers, grandmothers, and even grandfathers were mad at me for that. But the clinics were valuable. Many of the young mothers did not know how to feed their babies properly. There was no literature available to instruct them. I found many babies with rickets and I had one baby die of rickets, which you know was caused from the lack of fat-soluble vitamins, especially D vitamin. Boiling the milk kills the vitamins and were not being replaced by cod liver oil or other vitamin products or exposure to sunshine. I got literature from the Children's Hospital and gave it out freely for years to every mother after her first child was born, a new copy of Dr. Alan Brown's book "The Normal Child," and most of them followed it explicitly. When doctors examined the youth from that part of the Peace River country for the Army in 1939 they reported that they found the least disqualifying disabilities in them, than in men from any other part of the province. I gave Dr. Alan Brown's book a lot of the credit.

Our famous railroad was called the "Edmonton Dunvegan & British Columbia" or the "ED&BC" or the "Extremely Dangerous & Badly Constructed Railroad." There are many funny stories about it. My wife was on it once when it ran off the tracks five times in 45 miles. It was a real Toonerville trolley but it was the only connection we had with the outside world for eight years after I got there. There was no road out in

any direction, no telephone connection, only telegraph, no radios, there was airplanes, just the passenger train once a week, and later twice a week, so we doctors had to cope with everything that came along and almost everything did.

Dr. O'Brien and I removed a brain tumor once but we sure sweated on that all one night. First learning how to locate it and then how to remove it, which we did in a day or so successfully.

The government started building a road to Edmonton in 1928 and finished it in 1929. It was called the Sunshine Trail and for good reason. If there was no sunshine there was no trail. Once in the thirties my wife and I left Edmonton on a sunny Sunday morning with our city clothes on and ran into a rain shower. When it had stopped we made only six miles in four hours. We had to get out every three or four hundred yards and with our bare hands claw the gumbo out from under our mud-guards to free the wheels. Oh, I guess some of you know what that's like. We barely made shelter for the night. In 1928 the Canadian Medical Association of all Canada was meeting in Edmonton and I wanted to be there. The road was just being built but my wife and her brother and I went on it anyway. We made it in 21 and 3/4 driving hours, beating a previous record of 27 driving hours, so the Edmonton Journal told us. The men working on the road would say, "Turn and take a run at it, we will pull you," which they did many times, often for a mile or so.



Murray Carlisle on wash up duty on a camping trip to Monkman Pass, 1941 (SPRA 0399.09.47)

The next issue of the Toronto Star Weekly had an article and a big cartoon of us saying, "Doctor drives 555 miles to attend the medical convention." We had started out in a fairly new Durant but it wasn't quite so new when we got back. They let us run the

railroad track once for a way but it wasn't used much anyway, so there was very little danger of being run over.

Soon bush pilots started coming up north performing at Fairs etc. Some took supplies up farther north to Fort McMurray and Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory. And soon we got a field for them to land on. Grant McConachie, later president of CPA, came up from Edmonton twice in a three engine Ford boxcar so-called, a cargo plane and flew me about 60 miles or so north, two years apart, to treat his mother-in-law. We landed on the back field of their farm.

On one mercy flight that I was on fifty miles east, we crashed. A woman had been kicked by a horse which split one of her kidneys and she was bleeding a lot. The roads were absolutely impassable and the ferry was out. I flew out with a young pilot to Debolt and we landed on a ploughed field and we got the patient bound up and loaded on our little plane. She was a big woman weighing over 200 pounds. A patch of straight road had been cleared by the local folk who pushed the plane out from the muddy field onto the narrow twenty-foot road and we took off. We just got a few feet off the ground when our right wing dipped a bit and we hit one fence post after another each nearly tearing a big rip in the canvas of the wing. But we landed back on the road with nobody hurt. The patient was taken to the house and the pilot and I spent the rest of the evening and the night standing on boxes, sewing the rips on the canvas wing, with our hands way above our heads, by lantern light. It was very painful work and our arms ached badly and there was a chilly breeze blowing, and besides, we were in a hurry. I had brought two rolls of six inch adhesive tape and we wound these around the wing over the stitching to reinforce it. By the time we finished it was daylight. We got the plane pushed out on the road again and the patient back in it. This time we made it. Got to the hospital in time to give the lady blood and operate. She made a good recovery. This incident was written up in the papers at the time and resurrected again two years ago by the Calgary Herald. I have a copy here of the article in the Calgary Herald in 1967.

Explore the History of Lymburn & Demmitt

The “Explore the History” section of our newsletter focuses on rural communities that were once more than they are today. In an age of urbanization and centralization, it is easy to forget that the history of the South Peace is found in these places. Settlers arriving throughout the first half of the last century settled largely in the countryside. They made their living farming or utilizing the natural resources the region offered. Distance, time, and poor roads were often obstacles to travel, so once arrived, people tended to work and play locally. As transportation improved, services began to centralize. The small communities faded to become distant, but hopefully, fond memories. In this issue, we explore an area in the westernmost part of Alberta’s South Peace region near the B.C. border. Two settlements are featured, Lymburn and Demmitt, as well as the stopping place at Brainard Lake.

European settlement here started early in the 1900s. Homesteads were taken up as the more easily cleared land of the Grande and the Pouce Coupe prairies to the east and west became settled. There were as many reasons for homesteading in this area as there were people who did it. The land was covered with dense stands of trees, some of which are still visible on the landscape. It required much hard labour to turn it into farmland. But people did come. Some for inexpensive land, some to escape the southern prairie droughts, and, as one resident reminds us, simply to own a piece of land where no one was shooting at you, as was the case in the ongoing wars of Europe.

Both communities were already established when the Northern Alberta Railway (N.A.R.) arrived in 1931. They became the rail supply and shipping points for their respective districts, and had their heyday up into the 1960s.

Note: Almost all of the sites mentioned in this article are on private land, but can be seen from public rights of way. Please do not trespass.

Lymburn

Drive west from Grande Prairie on Highway 43 for about 60 km until you reach Secondary Highway 672 at the outskirts of Hythe. Turn west and proceed to Range Road (RR) 123 then turn north for two miles. This will bring you to the intersection of Township Road (TR) 734 and RR 123 just across the railway tracks. Turn west for 0.3 km and you will come to a fork in the road, facing a sign with several County addresses listed. Take the right fork which leads into the north side of the Lymburn town site.

Lymburn is named after John Lymburn, Alberta’s Attorney General from 1926 to 1935, who agreed to give his name to the new siding on the N.A.R. The map illustrates the village as it was at its peak. The most obvious building left north of the tracks is one of the two stores (Gerlinger’s), which now serves as a church. South of the store you will see a fenced field that runs alongside the tracks. This was the location of the elevator, the stockyards, and the N.A.R. station.

Turning back to the forks, proceed south over the railway tracks and then west along TR 734 again. As shown on the map, you will pass the location of the railway section and bunk houses, as well as the teacherage and community well.

Proceed farther west along this road about a half mile, and you will come to the site of the community hall, two buildings attached with an arch rib structure. This yard was the site of the original Lambert School which opened in 1922. Over the ensuing years, other nearby schools were closed (Preston to the west, and Aldergrove to the north), and students came to the Lambert school. When it closed in 1960, there were three school buildings on the site used to split up the grades from one to nine. After that, students were bussed to Hythe.

Continuing west, two more points of interest can be seen. The first is the original location of the Lymburn Mennonite Log Church three and half miles west of the village, at the intersection of TR 734 and RR 131.

The Church is gone, after having been first moved east closer to Lymburn. It was well known for its choir, which sang in English, German, and Ukrainian. There is still a cemetery at the southwest corner of the crossroads.

The second is the previously mentioned Preston Lake School. It can be found by proceeding a bit further west along TR 734. Watch for the peak of the school roof sticking out of the trees on the south side of the road. The building is in its final state of collapse and is unsafe to enter.

Demmitt

Return to the intersection of TR 734 and RR 131, and turn north. Seven miles north and just across the railway tracks, turn west along the north shore of Ray Lake. This is part of the old Ft. St. John Highway and you are heading into Demmitt along what is now TR 745.

Ray Lake is named after one of the first European settlers there, Tom Ray, who with his native wife trapped and traded fur in the area. Demmitt takes its name from Chelsea Demmitt, another early settler whose residence was near the intersection.

Driving west along the old highway you will approach the site of Demmitt’s first school. About 1.5 km west on the north side of the road, along a curve and well into the trees, are the remains of a log building that served this purpose. The remains are obscured by trees now, but would have given views of the lake when it was opened in 1931. It quickly became the community entertainment centre as well as the school. Among other groups, a Dramatic Club and a Literary Society met here, and there were the usual dances and concerts. The school building deteriorated over time, and in 1952, a new one was built just to the northwest.

Proceed another tenth of a kilometre along the road and again, look north up a trail to see an old building. This was the original Demmitt store and later the post office. From here, drive a short distance to the intersection of TR 745 and RR 132.

At this crossroads, turn south. On the west side of the road is the site of the Lee Borden mill. Borden had

operated railway tie camps north of Demmitt for several years, and in 1946, he opened a planer mill at the Demmitt siding. It operated for about 25 years and provided employment for people in the community. Lumber was loaded on rail cars and shipped to both Canadian and U.S. markets. The large concrete blocks in evidence across the fence were the foundations for heavy mill equipment.

Farther south and on the east side of the road is the Old Mill Road, now only a narrow trail. Along here there were houses and access to the N.A.R. station. Cross the railway right of way, and on the east side of the road, you will come to a Quonset hut structure. This was a community hall that, among other things, housed the Ray Lake Square Dancers who were well known throughout the Peace Country and beyond.

Turn around here and proceed back north along RR 132. As you drive north towards Highway 43 you will see a timber frame hall which was completed very recently. The hall sits on the site of the 1952 school mentioned previously. From here proceed north to Highway 43.

At the highway, you will see a clearing at the southeast corner of the intersection. This was the final site of a newer store that replaced the one previously mentioned.

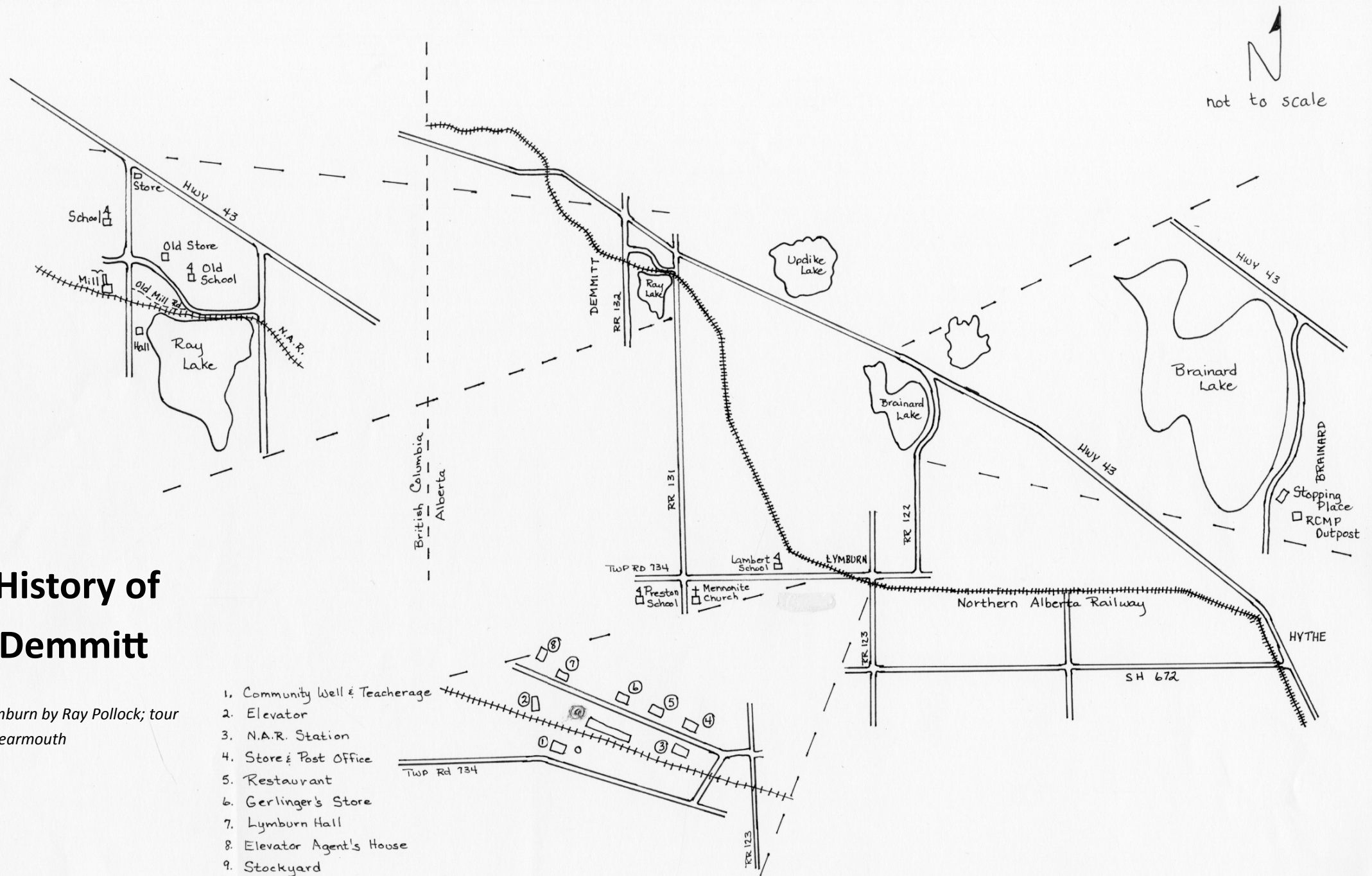
For an interesting stop if you are returning east, turn south off the highway onto RR 122. The road curves around Brainard Lake (formerly Sinclair Lake) before continuing south, and again, is part of the old Ft. St. John Highway. As shown on the map, across the road from the south end of the lake is the site of a well-known early stopping place run by a woman known as Ma Brainard. She was famous for her chicken dinners, and served them to travellers for many years in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Her customers included royalty, salesmen, and freighters. She also served as the postmaster for many years. Nothing is visible now of the stopping place, nor of the RCMP building that was once in the same area.

From this site, you can either proceed south and connect with Highway 672 again, or turn around and return to Highway 43 to make your way home.

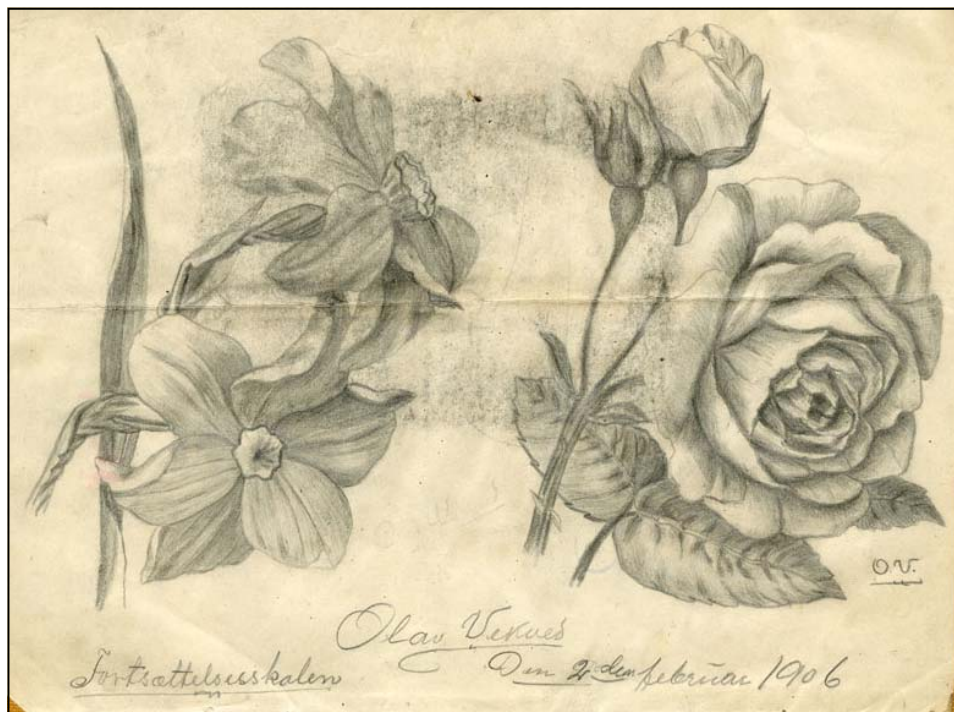
Explore the History of Lymburn & Demmitt

Resources: Hand-drawn map of Lymburn by Ray Pollock; tour of area by Dave Loewen and Pat Wearmouth

1. Community Well & Teacherage
2. Elevator
3. N.A.R. Station
4. Store & Post Office
5. Restaurant
6. Gerlinger's Store
7. Lymburn Hall
8. Elevator Agent's House
9. Stockyard



Featured Paper Artifact: Olaf Vekved's Drawings

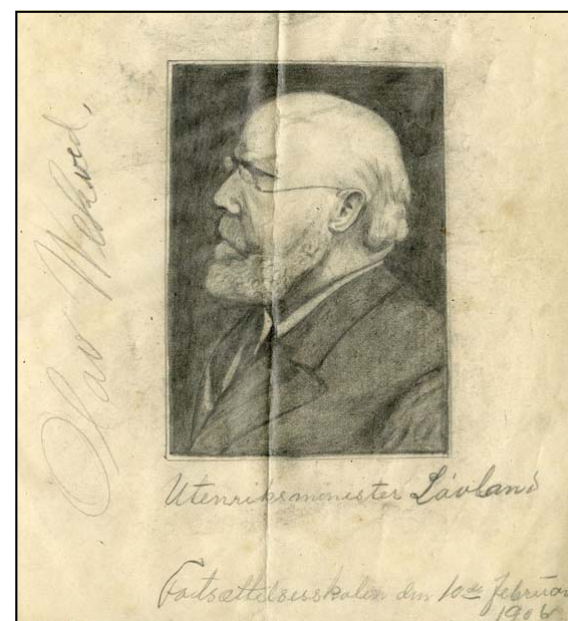


Olaf Vekved (aka Wekved) was born in Norway and came to Canada in 1910 with his brother George. They settled at Tofield, Alberta, where another brother, Ingebrigt, had settled in 1909.

In 1913, George moved north to the Peace Country and filed north of Bear Lake. Olaf followed in 1915, but chose land further north in the Northfield area, where a number of other Norwegian families were settling. They were joined that same year by brother Ingebrigt, who skied up over the Edson Trail. Ingebrigt had married Alma Johnson, whose parents, the Lars Johnsons, had moved from Tofield to Northfield in 1912. In 1924-1925, Olaf's father, and then the rest of the family, also arrived from Norway and settled in the LaGlacé district.

It appears that Olaf never married. From the records, we see that he was a gifted artist. He farmed in the Northfield district until ca. 1960. He died in 1969, at the age of 82, and is buried in Norden Cemetery, 1 mile east of LaGlacé.

Pencil drawings by Olaf Vekved, scanned from an unlined Norwegian School scribbler labeled "Tegnebog for Olav Vekvic." The drawings are signed by Olav and dated 1906, when he was 19 years old. Most of them are floral bouquets, but one is a portrait of an elderly man described as "Utenrikeminister Lavland." (SPRA 547)



What Archives Do and Why We Do It

by Leslie Gordon



Archivist Leslie Gordon viewing the films to check for damage.

Author's Note: Our "frozen" collection is growing! And no, that doesn't mean we've branched into Disney movies or ice cream confections. What it does mean is that we have added more items to our preservation freezer, specifically our motion picture film collection.

At SPRA, we have a large number of fonds which contain motion picture film. Many of these are what you might call "home movies." From the 1930s onward, hand-held 8mm (and later Super 8mm) movie cameras were available and popular and many families took films of their everyday activities, special events and celebrations, and family vacations. Some of the more adventurous used 16mm, which provides larger individual images. The majority of our home movie collections date from the 1950s to 1970s. Being able to see the motions and mannerisms of people of past, even without sound (since many home movies weren't able to

record sound) is extremely interesting and enlightening. In more recent times, home movies on film gave way to home movies on video tape in the 1980s and, most recently, digital recordings that can be made with a camera or even a cell phone.

SPRA also has a couple of collections of professional motion picture film documenting the growth of the area and the forestry industry. We showed an example of these films at our Film and Story Tea last October. They provide a more polished, but less candid, look at life and industry in this area, with sound tracks, background music, scripted narration, and skillful editing. Both the amateur and professional films give researchers valuable

insight into various facets of life in this area and we want to preserve them and make them accessible for as long as possible.

In the last issue of this newsletter we reported on the film digitization work that had recently been completed for us by the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Over the summer, we completed the next phase of that project, placing the film in cold storage.

Those of you who are long-standing readers may remember the article in the September 2012 newsletter that described the freezer project for the Panda Camera collection. The principles used for motion picture film are approximately the same. Like the still negatives already in our freezer, most motion picture film is also made from unstable plastics that deteriorate over time. Our motion picture collection, both amateur and professional, is on acetate film. We have noticed that some of the films are already being affected by what's called "vinegar syndrome." As the film breaks down, one of the side effects is the release of acetic acid, causing a vinegar smell and

inspiring the name of the syndrome. The images on the film also fade, the emulsion layer becomes soft and sticky, the film becomes shrunken and brittle, the emulsion and film bubble, the plasticizers recrystallize on the surface of the film, and the film finally disintegrates into dust. Since the chemical reactions causing film decay speed up with high temperature and humidity, one of the best ways we can protect our film is by putting it in cold storage in our freezer.

We wanted the film to be in good condition prior to putting it into the freezer, so we first cleaned the films and wound them onto plastic cores (if they weren't already on plastic reels). Since plastic cores are not made for 8mm or Super 8mm film, our very accommodating friends from the Museum volunteers cut 16mm cores down for us. As with the still negatives, we used the Critical Moisture Indicator method to package the films for the freezer. Each film on its reel or core was put in an appropriately sized

Mary cleaning a reel of film.



Executive Director Mary Nutting suited up in protective gear, setting up another reel of film for cleaning.

and labelled, resealable, polyethylene bag. Polyethylene is a stable plastic that won't deteriorate or cause additional damage to the film. Several films were placed in each box with a few packages of silica gel to absorb moisture before it reaches the film. The outside of each box was labelled with its contents, date of packaging, and a humidity indicator card, which will allow us to monitor the humidity inside each package and repackage as necessary. Finally, each box was placed in a larger, resealable, polyethylene bag

and packed into the freezer.

Since we don't want to have to take the film out of the freezer very often, the previous stage of digitization was crucial to ensure that researchers (and family members) still have access to the images on the films. Even if the films weren't destined for the freezer, digitization would still be a good idea to avoid the use of a projector for viewing, which is a lot of trouble to set up and causes large amounts of wear and tear to the film.

Perhaps you have home movies of your own just sitting around. They may be one form of record that you hadn't considered donating to the Archives; however, they can give valuable and unique insight into life in this area that isn't possible with just textual records or even photographs. So give us a call or bring them down to the Archives. We would love to make a home for them with our other frozen treasures.

Autumn in the Life of an Early Homesteader: the Diary of O.H. Johnson

Editor's Note: Oliver H. Johnson's diary from 1908-1909 was donated to the Archives by his great-granddaughter Marion (Boyd) Field. Oliver came to the Peace Country in 1908, seeking land for his family. The entries below were written that autumn, just before he left for Edmonton in December to meet his family. They give an account of what life on the prairie was like for the very early bachelor homesteaders.

Autumn 1908

September 1 Hauled poles before dinner. Hauled hay on barn. Fine. Cloudy and sprinkled.

September 2 Huge wind. Hauled hay on barn and killed 2 grouse. Rede brought beef up. Very windy and cloudy.

September 3 Hauled hay and finished barn. Cut load spruce poles for bears.

September 4 Rained this morning and windy. Lot west wind. Percy mixed mud and I daubed the house and we went to Stone's after supper. Stayed all night.

September 5 Mr. Stone and Archie and I went to Flying Shot and stayed all night at Clifford's.

September 6 We went to Bredin's to attend road meeting and had dinner at Bredin's. Went to Smith's and stayed all night. I got seven letters the 5.

September 7 Mr. Allie Brick brought the mail. I got 2 letters from Arnold at Edmonton and one from Minnie Pool and we came back to Revillon Bros. and I settled my account with Ferguson at the Hudson Bay Co \$1.16. Mrs. Ferguson gave me a pair of moccasins and I welded wagon. Rode.

September 8 We came to Stone's for dinner. Wrote note to Hardin by Rede.

September 9 I came home afoot. Put in window glass. George Stone was here for dinner hunting horses south of creek. Mr. Hardin brought mowing machine

home and I gave him some beets. Slim came up with team.

September 10 Slim commenced digging hay pen post holes. I went to lake to cut hay after dinner.

September 11 Slim and I went to lake to cut hay. I killed 7 ducks and Slim killed 4 grouse.

September 12 Mr. Bernard came up with rake and Little Rede came up to hunt ducks. We built hay pen. Had 3 ducks for dinner.

September 13 Slim and Rede and I went to lake to make hay. Killed 4 ducks. Rained. Too wet to make hay.

September 14 Slim and Rede killed 12 ducks and it rained. I went out on the lake. Slim got one shot in the head.

September 15 Horses broke loose and I went after them. Too wet to hay.

September 16 Slim raked some hay. I killed 20 ducks.

September 17 Rede, I got shot, went home with 22 ducks. Hauled 5 loads hay. I finished raking. Rede, Slim killed 5 ducks.

September 18 Hauled 7 loads of hay. Rede came back home. Windy.

September 19 Hauled 1 load to top out stacks and came home 10 o'clock. Slim went down to Stone's with rack.

September 20 Mr. Stone and I went to Saskatoon Lake to attend road meeting.

September 21 Walter Eaton and I went to cut poles. Pearne[?] boy told us about seeing a black bear. We went to hunt him. Riled a brown cub bear then hauled poles. Very windy.

September 22 Came to Stone's. Met Benson and Hurceff[?] and Germaine. Stayed at Stone's.

September 23 Settled up with Mr. Stone all accounts, except breaking. Archie came up and we are getting ready for a moose hunt. Settled up with Archie Stone in full. Snowed a little.

September 24 Started for a moose hunt. Camped at forks Beaver Lodge Creek for dinner. Beaver Indian and family went with us. Camped at Sucker Lake overnight. Had ducks.

September 25 Frosty. Lots of geese on Horse Lake. Left trail for moose range. Came by some fine lakes. Moose scarce.

September 26 Indian turned back and we came on through the bush to W. Reynolds place on Swan Lake, British Columbia.

September 27 Rained and snowed. Mr. Reynolds caught 2 fish in net. Slim hunted geese and got none.

September 28 We packed up and are going to start out on trail. Lost trail and camp at 5 Swan Lake. Tracks of 2 horses going east.

September 29 Met Beaver Indian boy. Camped on Beaver Lodge Creek. Moose meat supper. Beaver Indians drying meat.

September 30 Left Beaver camp west. Camped at Muskrat[?] Lake. Saw some moose signs.

October 1 Slim saw 1 moose about 600 yards off. We did not shoot at him.

October 2 We went out in the swamp after moose, but did not see any. I saw 4 bear tracks on the logs in the frost but could not find them. Rained all day. Came back to Rat Lake.

October 3 We went up to Kowesekow River. Fine mountain stream. No game at all.

October 4 Cloudy. We went up to Koweska River. Fine mountain stream. Rained on us most all the way.

October 5 We started back home. Camped at forks. Beaver Indians gone.

October 6 Came home to my shack before dinner. Went down to Stone's and Archie came back and stayed all night.

October 7 Slim went home and I dug spuds.

October 8 I pulled carrots and beets and onions.

October 9 I went down to Slim's place after carrots and onions. Little Rede brought me home. Shot a mallard at saw mill on wing.

October 10 Heavy frost. I went to Arnold's place but could not dig spuds with hoe, too frosty. Turnips froze some. I dug spuds on Arnold's place.

October 11 I went up around Spruce Grove. I saw 1 moose track and 2 coyotes and beaver dam. Warm. Clouding up this evening.

October 12 Dug spuds. Warm. Killed 1 duck.

October 13 Finished spuds. Windy. Went to Stone's and Percy came up and hauled them in. Killed one duck.

October 14 Got ready for Saskatoon Lake. Took 3 ducks to Stone's.

October 15 Stayed at Mead and Grant's overnight and at Lowe's for dinner. Branded colts. Came home to Stone's.

October 16 Came home. Percy up with team. Puled rutabagas. Mr. M. Gogins, Mr. McDonald from Duluth, Minnesota, U. S. A., Mr. Robinson from Lesser Slave Lake, Indian from Crossing stayed all night.

October 17 This party left for Saskatoon Lake. This morning frosty. I pulled turnips and killed 2 pheasants and 4 ducks.

October 18 I pulled turnips. Windy and warm. 2 Beaver Indians and 1 boy came up for turnips and brought me some moose meat.

October 19 They went home and I pulled 2 piles turnips 1 Beaver Indian for dinner. He claims to have killed 2 moose south of creek.

October 20 Cold. I went over south looking for moose. 2 Beavers were at camp when I got home. Gave a piece dried moose meat. Stayed all night. Snowed a little.

October 21 They left for home. I gave them some turnips and I went with them to Stone's. I went home on the south side of creek.

October 22 I piled wood. George Stone came up. Hauled turnips after dinner.

October 23 We went to lake and fenced hay. Came home and hauled 4 loads wood.

October 24 Mended overalls. Cooler wind. I went to Stone's and brought Prince back.

October 25 Rained. Had a boiled dinner. I went up to the lake. Found trail leading northeast. Discovered Spruce Lake 1½ miles east on B line.

October 26 Windy. Threatening storm. I went to Stone's and stayed all night. Snowed a little. Cold.

October 27 Stayed at Hardin's for dinner. Went across to coal bank on Red Willow. Up Creek to Mr. J. Cory's place and stayed all night. Snowed some more. Colder. Snowed all day.

October 28 Snowed all night. Cleared off and sunshine at 10 o'clock. Still windy. Snowed again.

October 29 Snowed all day.

October 30 Snowed until 10 am. I started home after dinner. Got to Stone's 4 PM. Stayed all night.

October 31 Cold and clear. I went up home. Clear and fine, thawing a little. Baking bread and cooking moose meat for tomorrow's moose hunt. Snow 4 inches deep.

November 1 Snowed all day.

November 2 Clear and sunshine. Snow about 1 foot deep. I am daubing inside of shack today.

November 3 I went south to Lodge Pole. No moose tracks. I saw one rabbit track. Cloudy in the west. Fine today. Sunshine.

November 4 Thawing. I laid floor. Chinook wind.

November 5 I finished floor. Very warm and soft sprinkled.

November 6 Warm wind in southwest. Thawing. I went east on Spring Hill to Saskatoon Mountain. Found spring at southwest end. Stayed at Stone's all night.

November 7 Came home after dinner. Wind in southwest. Thawing.

November 8 Clear and sunshine this morning. I stayed at home.

November 9 I discovered coal on Spring Hill and went to Stone's for dinner.

November 10 Cut house logs all day. Clear sunshine.

November 11 Cut logs all day.

November 12 I went to spring and then to Stone's. Stayed all night. Stone got cow and calf home. I got my woolen mittens from mother Stone.

November 13 I came home. Wind in southwest. Warmer, thawing. I cut logs.

November 14 Clear. Southwest wind. Thawing. I washed towels and dish rags.

November 15 Sunshine and warm. Finest day this month. Tom Sinclair and 2 sons arrived on trip to trap. Left sleigh and packed and one dog team from here.

November 16 Left this morning up stream. Percy Stone Came up and skidded logs. Warm.

November 17 We skidded logs. Warm. Thawing.

November 18 We skidded logs. ½ went to spring. Logs after dinner.

November 19 We cut logs. Very warm.

November 20 We skidded logs. Hauled one load. We hauled logs.

November 21 Hauled logs.

November 22 We went to Stone's. Got 63 pounds beef, 1 pound butter from Hardins.

November 23 Hauled logs. Cut new road. Cloudy. Colder. Mr. Corey came over from Red Willow Creek.

November 24 We went to spring and set camper[?].

November 25 We commenced building at spring.

November 26 Worked on house.

November 27 Laid off today.

November 28 Put up 2 rounds. Chinook today. Warm. Storming tonight.

November 29 Stormy snow about 4 inches deep. Percy went home.

November 30 Cold. Put 1 round on house. 4 Beaver Indians come up to hunt moose. I bought 2 pair moccasins \$3 sold 1 sash \$1.00. Clear. Very cold.

SPRA Society & Member News

Kathryn's Pick

By Kathryn Auger

Grande Prairie Herald, July 12, 1935



Left, celebrating the 90th Birthday of SPRA member Bill Bessent, the great storyteller, are Cam Henning, Max Henning, Bill, and Roger Field. Photo submitted by Jane Pilling-Cormick.

Below, the Goodwin-DeBolt-Crooked Creek Cemetery Tour on Sunday, August 16.



Honourary Member Phyllis Stewart, sent in the following memories of John Boyle, who died in April 2015.

"Many of the Golden Oldie Retirees knew and depended on Boyle's Hatchery (one block west and one block south of Windsor Ford) which supplied chicks for much of the Peace River area from January to late June. Bernie Ollenberger, from Goodlow, B.C. told me: 'I remember coming from Fort St. John in the spring getting baby chicks. They always did well and tasted so good!'"

"John [Boyle] was director of the poultry section at the County Annual Fair and Exhibition. He managed the entrants' birds and always had a display of exotic breeds. I don't know where he found them."

"When I grew pedigreed seed, John came to check my small plots of Garnet wheat, about 1 1/2 acres. The plots had to be free of weeds and other stalks of grain that could not be separated from the intended variety. He likely checked plots for others too."

Record Breaking Attendance At P. Rainer Barn Hop

With an attendance estimated at close to one thousand, the barn dance celebrating the completion of one of Bear Lake district's finest farm barns, at Paul Rainer's home last Thursday night, was easily the largest gathering of this kind ever recorded in the north.

From miles in every direction merry makers accepted the hospitable invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Rainer and enjoyed a most pleasant evening of dancing and socialability.

During the evening Penson's orchestra were given a respite while all gathered to consume a most delicious lunch served by Mrs. Rainer assisted by the ladies of the district.

The new Rainer barn, on the west end of Bear Lake enjoys the distinction having practically every board and shingle used in its construction painted before being nailed into position. The quality of paint used, being pure Canada Paint white lead and pure linseed oil, is out of the ordinary but ensures long life and additional protection from weathering.

The building was erected under the painstaking supervision of Wm. Remple by a competent staff of carpenters in about three weeks. It is 30x60 feet in size with a round bell-shaped roof 34 feet in height, and has full concrete foundation.

Inside is accommodation for 16 horses and about the same number of cattle, together with harness and feed-grain storage rooms.

Beatty Brothers steel stanchions are provided for the cattle.

Friends of the Archives: The Horse Drive of Harry Adair in Review



We had a great time at the Horse Drive of Harry Adair! The weather was perfect, the content was riveting, and the Scenic Heights Players did a great job with the play. Thanks again to all our volunteers, our donors, and the Scenic Heights community. Thanks also to all those who came to the event and made it such a success. We had a total of 245 people at the event, and made a profit of just over \$7,000. A bonus was the \$10,000 donation to our building fund from one of the attendees, so that made it a very profitable event!



Above: Actors Heidi Balisky, Morgan Siemens, Myles Edgar, Todd Balisky, Quinn Throness, and Leslie Gordon; and the "bear" that scared the horses. That would be Kevin Throness.

Below: the crowds gathering in the stands, waiting for the play to begin; and musicians Lloyd Alstad and Stephen Soles.



This Page:

Top left: Archivist Leslie Gordon interviewing Gary Dixon about the Adair family; and Kyle Bidewell's chuckwagon arriving on the scene.

Right: roping instruction with Todd and Lexi Balisky

Below: Actors Myles Edgar, Brock Penson, Gavin Penson, and Morgan Siemens; and the sound booth under the direction of Cody Flynn, with SPRA Executive Director Mary Nutting and Charlie Penson, President of the Friends of the Archives Society and the MC for the evening.



New at the Archives

Thank You Donors!

The collections at SPRA have all been donated by individuals, organizations, and municipal governments. You are our only resource for the preservation of the history of the south Peace. Here are a few of our recent donations.

Grande Prairie Herald, 1913-1939
Northern Tribune, 1932-1939
Herald-Tribune, 1939-[2005]
Spirit River Echo, 1917-1919
By Grande Prairie Public Library

Sexsmith Legion & Sexsmith Museum photographs,
1914-1987 *By Jean Rycroft*

Homesteading in the Near North, 1984
By Stephen Friesen

ED&BC Railway Land Seekers Map, 1914
Barbara Stanich & John Markovich

Artist Colleen Stewart Scrapbooks, 1987-2001
By Mary Dever

Jack Shields Korean War records, 1951-2001
By Jan Shields

Ernie Watts, Bob Scott, and Alice Fortier fonds,
[1880-2008] *By Alice Fortier*

Lake Saskatoon Community Club Scrapbooks,
1945-2007 *By Kathy Sebastian*

South Peace Regional Archives

is funded by

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

Grant Recognition

Thank You

to the Edmonton Community Foundation
for a grant

from the Bill & Laura Turnbull Fund

“to support the work of the South Peace Regional Archives Society.”

Bill and Laura lived in Grande Prairie for many years, teaching school and participating in community events and organizations such as the Grande Prairie Genealogical Society, the Legion Track & Field, and many Grande Prairie running clubs.

On the Archives Website

Newsletter Back Issues

Misplaced your copy of one of our quarterly newsletters? Not to worry! Each issue is available as a PDF on our website. Go to the web address below to find the links.

<http://southpeacearchives.org/society/newsletters/>

At the same link there is an index to past newsletters if you are looking for a specific topic/article.

The Perfect Introduction

If you hear someone say: I have reels of 8 millimeter film in the attic, and recordings of Uncle Charlie telling stories about his early days living in the South Peace. What can I do with them?

You can tell them: Have you thought about bringing them to the archives? They take more than just documents and photographs.

South Peace Regional Archives Society

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

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

There are two types of membership:

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

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

This membership is _____ new _____ renewal

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

Associate Member
\$15.00/person _____

I wish to donate to the
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