



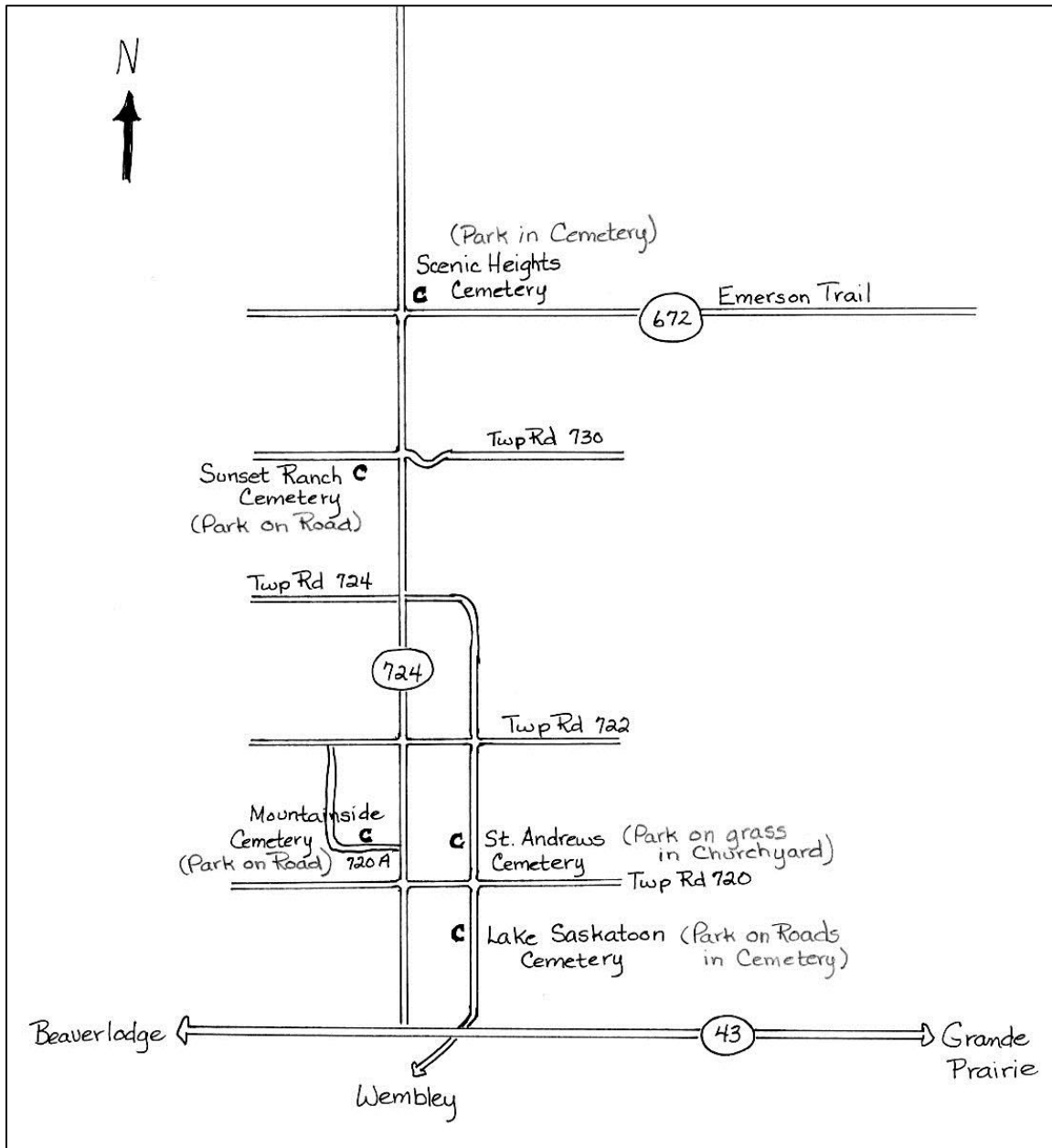
# County of Grande Prairie Cemeteries Self- Guided Historical Walking Tour

*Lake Saskatoon, St. Andrew's, Scenic Heights,  
Sunset Ranch, and Mountainside Cemeteries*





## Introduction



For several years, South Peace Regional Archives has run historical walking tours of cemeteries around the South Peace. This booklet features the text of the tour conducted in the Wembley-La Glace Corridor, stopping at the Lake Saskatoon, St. Andrew's Anglican, Scenic Heights, Sunset Ranch, and Mountainside Cemeteries.

The full tour takes approximately 2.5 hours to complete, including driving time. It may be done in sections over several visits, out of order, or skipping some stops. The above map shows the locations of the five cemeteries featured.

As you walk and read, watch for connections between the people on the tour and imagine their lives as contemporaries in this land. We hope you enjoy learning more about the people and events that have made this community what it is today. If you have any questions, please contact or visit us.

Special thanks to Art Rigby for contributing stories for the Lake Saskatoon Cemetery and Charlie Penson, and Trudy Edgar for contributing stories for the Scenic Heights Cemetery. Photographs of individual grave stones are courtesy of the Grande Prairie and District Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society.

## Stop A – Lake Saskatoon Municipal Cemetery

Lake Saskatoon Municipal Cemetery is one of the main cemeteries for the County of Grande Prairie, created by a forerunner of the County, the Bear Lake Rural Municipality No. 739, formed in 1912 for the area from Emerson Trail to the Wapiti River, and from Clairmont to Beaverlodge. It is named the “Lake Saskatoon Cemetery” after the Village of Lake Saskatoon, which was laid out on the south-west shore of lake, just to the north and east of the cemetery.

The village had its roots with the establishment of a fur trade post by Bredin & Cornwall in 1899 near where the aboriginal population camped to pick saskatoons in berry season. The post was manned by Alexander Monkman. At the time, there was already a small Catholic Church and priest’s house on the south side of the lake, and in 1902, the Hudson’s Bay Co. built another post close by. The first homes were those of the Metis and First Nations employees of the fur trade companies which had posts on the lake.



*Above, the Hudson’s Bay Company complex at Saskatoon Lake, ca. 1905. SPRA 1969.59.633.*

The big Grande Prairie land rush started in 1910. In 1912, the Lake Saskatoon townsite was surveyed. It was a proper town with streets and avenues, homes, schools and churches, curling rink and community hall, post office, stores and banks, livery barns, hotels and restaurants. It seemed to be where the doctors and lawyers of the day chose to live.



*Above, panoramic view of the town of Lake Saskatoon with the lake in the background, 1919. SPRA 2001.01.126.*

After the Rural Municipality was established in 1912, councillors began to discuss the establishment of public cemeteries. The final decision was for one cemetery, in the centre of the Municipality, but it took until 1921 for the land to be chosen and purchased. In the meantime, the 1918 Spanish Influenza epidemic killed a number of people, and so a temporary cemetery was placed on Fred Blanchard’s land about two miles west of the village, now known as the Mountainview Cemetery.

In 1921, Bear Lake Rural Municipality purchased this site, five acres of land, from Mr. A.R. Smith for \$100 per acre. It was surveyed into plots by Walter McFarlane, the Dominion Land Surveyor, and the first interment was the four day old baby of Mr. and Mrs. Archer in August 1921. In 1922, as the law dictated, the cemetery was fenced. There was one drive gate and one small gate on the east side. Many of those buried in the temporary flu cemetery were moved to this one.

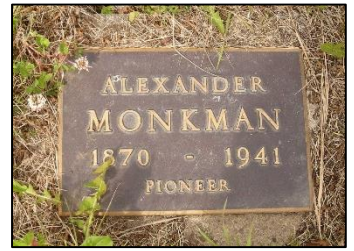
In 1925, the railway progressed from Grande Prairie to what is now Wembley, bypassing the Village of Lake Saskatoon, so in 1926, the village moved its buildings to the new townsite of Wembley, creating an instant town. As early as 1935, the Lake Saskatoon Community Club members took responsibility for tidying and beautifying the graves and the site. Like all community cemeteries, this one is virtually a “who’s who” of the families who settled the Lake Saskatoon area.



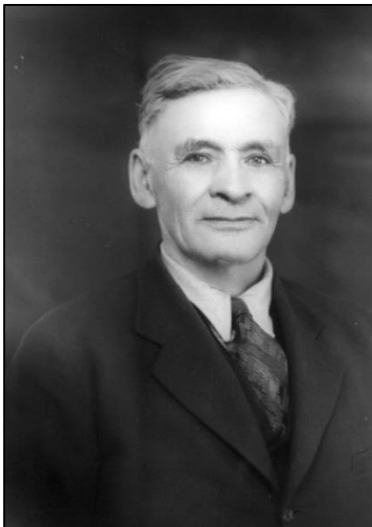
*Above, a team of men and horses move Bob Tilt’s restaurant from Lake Saskatoon to Wembley, 1925. SPRA 001.06.02.116.*

## Stop A1 - Monkman Family

Although the Monkman family is very significant to the history of this area, their graves are marked with small bronze plaques. Alex Monkman ran the first trading post here on the west shore of Lake Saskatoon. It also held the first post office, called Beaver Lodge Post Office. Monkman Pass and Monkman Park in the Rocky Mountains are named after Alex Monkman.



Alexander Monkman was a Red River Metis and a rancher. In 1898 he joined the Klondike Gold Rush, traveling from Edmonton, which at that time was known as "the back door to the Klondike". He never reached the Yukon, but he did go through the "grande prairie" and was so impressed by its potential that he stayed when Bredin & Cornwall asked him to establish a fur trade post for them. He chose Saskatoon Lake, where the Aboriginal people gathered to pick berries in the summer. He also started a ranch near Bear Lake, and in 1910 took a homestead on Cutbank Lake, which is now an historic site.



*Above, Portrait of Alex Monkman, ca. 1936. SPRA 0032.08.07.067.*

Mr. Monkman was a constant advocate for better transportation into the Peace Country, both for people coming in and products going out to market. In 1922, while trapping in the mountains, he came across a surveyor's marker on the Herrick River, from the Grand Trunk Railway Survey of 1904-1905. Alex realized he had found a mountain pass from the east slope. When he took the Canadian National Railroad engineer over the route, it was confirmed to be the lowest and easiest pass north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. There were only 132 miles of grade to put through and one major river to cross. The officials were impressed, but no action was taken. Annual appeals were made to the House of Commons but only idle promises were given.

Monkman's discovery led to one of the great stories of the Great Depression, how the

people of the Peace built a road by volunteer labour through the Rocky Mountains in 1937-1938. It was almost finished when World War II began and the project was brought to a halt. The road never was completed but you can still follow parts of it on the Monkman Pass Trail.

Alex Monkman was married to Louisa Tate, from Edmonton, in 1901, and she joined him here at Lake Saskatoon. Her mother, Nancy Tate, and brother, George Tate, are buried here with

the Monkmans. Several of the Monkman children are also buried here: son Henry and his wife Joey, who came here as a Salvation Army lass and was Grande Prairie's first social worker; daughter Christina Thompson; son Fletcher Monkman, who farmed the home farm; and Fletcher's son Billy.



*Above, Helmer Johnson's crew working on the Monkman Pass Highway, July 1938. SPRA 446.01.08.*

## Stop A2 - Elizabeth Loudfoot

Elizabeth Moore was born in 1860 in Arundel, Quebec, to Charles Moore and Margaret Bennett. She married Thomas Boyd on April 11, 1876, and he died in Arundel in 1892, leaving her with seven children. About 1895, she married James W. Loudfoot and had two more sons, James and William. They were living in the St. George Quarter of Ottawa when he also died, leaving her a widow for the second time.

In 1909, two of her older sons, Joseph and Ben were constructing the telephone line for the Bell Telephone Co. from Winnipeg to Edmonton. In Edmonton they heard about the Peace River Country. They established the Beaver Lodge Lumber Company, bought a saw mill and a steam tractor, and started north in the winter of 1909-1910. They finally arrived in 1911, and sent word for their mother to join them.



*Above, travelling over a poorly constructed portion of the Long Trail, 1914. SPRA 1991.09.01d. Left, Lebeueen's stopping place on the Long Trail in mid-October, 1913. SPRA 0362.02.12.01.*

In March 1911 Elizabeth and her two younger sons arrived at Lake Saskatoon, having traveled by train from Montreal to Edmonton, then by horse and wagon over rough trails up to Athabasca, down the Slave River and across Slave Lake by boat or steamer, and then by wagon again up to Peace River, then Dunvegan, Spirit River, and finally over the Saddle Hills to Lake Saskatoon.

When she arrived, she filed on a homestead, one of the few women who could because she was a widow, the head of a household. She thought this area was the future

for her seven sons. Four sons were already there, and two others, Frank and Charles, soon followed, as did a daughter, Louise, and her husband Tom Nash. Only Hugh, in New York at the time, did not come north with the family.

All of the boys except Frank eventually left Lake Saskatoon: Ben enlisted in World War I and was killed overseas, Joseph also enlisted but survived and returned to live at Prince George, as did Charles. James moved on to Calgary and William to Wainwright. Elizabeth, however, had found a community where she enjoyed an active social and church life. She passed away at Lake Saskatoon in 1924 and was buried here. Her descendants and shirt-tail relatives in this cemetery are numerous, and include the Campbells, Camerons, and Robertsons.



*Above, Revillon Freres Store and Beaverlodge Post Office at Saskatoon Lake, 1912, where Elizabeth Loudfoot served as postmistress for a few years. SPRA 1991.03.105.011.*

### Stop A3 - William and Annie Rigby

William Rigby came from Lancashire, England to Canada in 1907, having been educated in Westminster College in London as a teacher, majoring in chemistry and mathematics. He taught for a year in Manitoba, but it was obvious that in the Canadian west the money was in farming, not in teaching, so he hired on as a farm labourer with the family who had given him room and board as a teacher.

Annie Dolan came to Canada from Glasgow, Scotland, about 1909. She arrived with a ship full of young ladies in the charge of an enterprising woman who made a business of recruiting young women as domestic workers, with promises of the glowing opportunities available in the Canadian west. She registered with the Winnipeg immigration labor office, and was sent to the same farm where William was already employed.

William and Annie were married in 1910, and after spending some years in Manitoba and southern Alberta, were attracted by all the hype about good farmland in the Peace River Country. William decided to check it out, and arrived by train at Wembley in 1926. He chose land at Lake Saskatoon: one quarter known as the Loudfoot place, recently left vacant by Mrs. Loudfoot's death, and a quarter known as Indian free grant land, which had been farmed by Iroquois Metis Pierre Nease. The next year they moved to the area with their three children, Justyn, Lloyd, and Elizabeth.

In the early 1930s, the district agriculturalist at Grande Prairie formed a junior grain club. As members of the club, Justyn and Lloyd entered their first competitions at the local and provincial level. They went on to become national and

international champions: Justyn as the "Oat King" in the 1938 International Grain and Hay Show, and Lloyd as "Wheat King" for three years in a row from 1938-1940. The boys were 22 and 19 years of age when they won their first international championships.

The Rigbys may have thought that the future was in farm and land, but they didn't neglect their children's education. Both boys graduated from the Vermilion School of Agriculture and Elizabeth as a teacher from Normal School. Justyn stayed in farming but Lloyd continued his education to a PhD in Biochemistry. He specialized in research for breweries both in Toronto and Yakima, Washington, where he perfected a hop processing operation.



*Above, Herman Trelle, a neighbour and mentor of the Rigby boys and winner of several world grain championships, standing in his wheat crop, 1928.*

Both Justyn and Lloyd are buried here beside their parents, William and Annie.

**RIGBY BROTHERS WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS CHICAGO**

**Lloyd Captures Wheat Title  
Justyn Annexes Oat Title;  
Trelle Is Second In Wheat**

*Above and left, headlines from the Grande Prairie Herald, December 1, 1938.*

## Stop A4 - Mountain Men Carl Brooks and Henry McCullough

Carl Brooks and Henry McCullough were two well-known guides who led hunting and exploratory expeditions into the Rocky Mountains. They are buried here together because they were related by marriage; Henry married Carl's sister Crystal.

Carl Brooks arrived in 1917 with his parents, who eventually settled on a homestead at Pipestone Creek. In 1930 he married Agnes Watson. Lack of work during the Depression inspired the young couple to create their own business. Carl built up a pack outfit, making his own pack saddles, pack boxes, ropes, and other supplies. Agnes sewed tents, tarps, and canvas bags. They advertised in hunting magazines and began to build a good business, taking American hunters into the mountains during hunting season.

When the Monkman Pass Highway Association was formed in 1936, Carl Brooks and his outfit were some of the first into the Pass, blazing a trail for the work crews to follow. An enterprising group built a resort near Kinuso Falls so that the curious could see for themselves what was happening on the Monkman Highway, and Brooks was soon leading tourist expeditions into the Monkman Pass.

The hunting and guiding business continued throughout the war, but as business increased, so did the expectations. Beginning in 1944, Brooks chartered a plane which would land on Porcupine (Kakwa) Lake, rather than taking the hunters by pack horse back and forth to the camp at Pinto Creek. On the last trip out in October 1945, the plane crashed after taking off from the lake and Carl Brooks was killed.



*Above, an advertising postcard image of Carl Brooks and his hunting team showing hides and game trophies, near Wembley, 1937. SPRA 2003.51.19.*



*Above, site of the plane crash near Kakwa Lake that killed Carl Brooks in the fall of 1945. SPRA 0256.03.06.*



*Above, Henry McCullough delivers the City Charter to Mayor Jack Mackie, 1958. SPRA 2001.01.055.*

Henry McCullough also arrived with his family, but not until 1928. They took up land south of the Wapiti River and Pipestone Creek, and Henry was soon involved with the hunting and guiding business, again taking mostly Americans into the Rocky Mountains. In 1937, he married Crystal Brooks. They built a sawmill south of the Wapiti, with Henry managing the sawmill and Crystal cooking for the crews of local men.

In 1958, when Grande Prairie became a City, the local Chamber of Commerce sponsored Henry and his brother Pete to bring the City Charter by horseback from the steps of the Legislature Building in Edmonton to Grande Prairie. The 280-mile trek was meant to be a re-enactment of the journey the first settlers had made when coming into the Peace Country. It was bitterly cold, but after nine days on the road, Henry McCullough and his horse "Diamond" delivered the City Charter to Mayor Jack Mackie on the steps of the new Court House on February 14, 1958.

## Stop B - St. Andrew's Anglican Cemetery

The Anglican Church was established in here 1908, as a mission post. A two-storey, frame mission house was built just to the north, on the other side of the trees. This was where the family in charge of the mission lived and where the first services were held. It was also used as a boarding house for girls who wanted to attend high school at Lake Saskatoon. The old high school can still be seen on the north-west shore of the lake; it has been converted into a house.

This St. Andrew's Church building was erected beside the mission in 1911. A cement basement was added when it was remodeled, but the structure is still the original building. It is maintained as an historic site by the Lake Saskatoon Community Club.



Above, Reverend and Mrs. Robert Holmes on the porch of the Anglican mission house at Lake Saskatoon, 1913. This building was destroyed by fire around 1915. SPRA 2001.01.158. Below, stack threshing at the Anglican mission, 1913. SPRA 2001.01.157.



The cemetery was first used September 19, 1911 for nine year-old John Sinclair, a Metis child who had died as a result of paralysis after a fall from his horse. Twelve of the fourteen deaths represented here were from accidents or traumatic disease, not from natural causes and old age.

This cemetery was seldom used after the Lake Saskatoon Municipal Cemetery was established in 1921, but 50 years later, in 1971, there was one more burial, when Jessie Holmes was buried beside her husband Robert who had died 55 years earlier. In 1975, the community installed this memorial stone with the family names of those buried here.



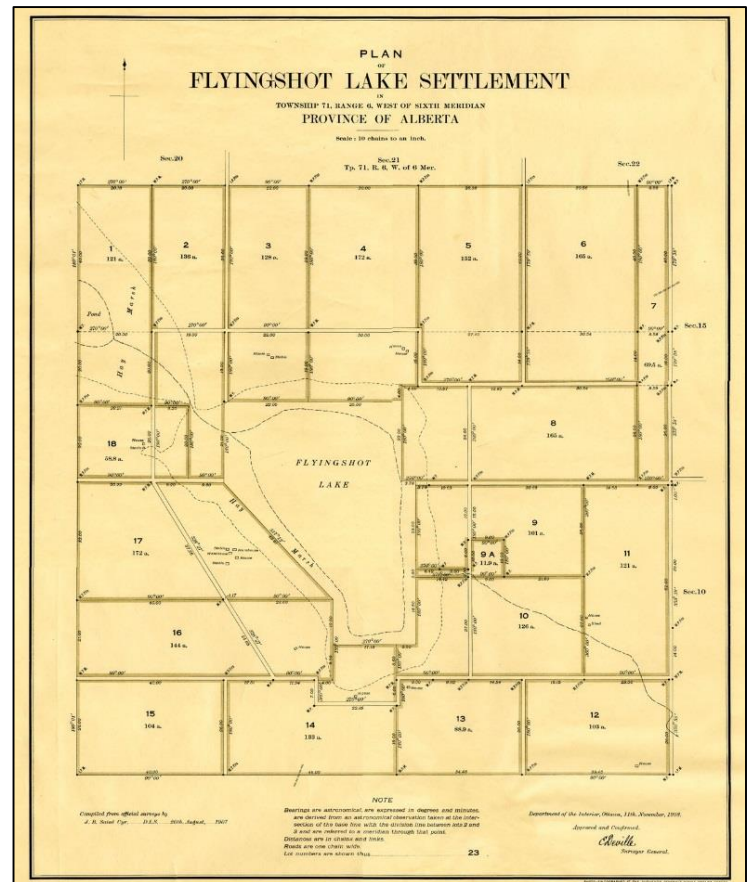
Above, dinner laid out on trestle table at the opening of a new church, possibly St. Andrew's Anglican Church. SPRA 2001.02.745.

## Stop B1 - Thomas and Christiane Sinclair (Plots 07-09)

The first three burials in this cemetery were all the children of Thomas and Christiane Sinclair. There are no stones for these. Thomas was a Hudson Bay Metis from Manitoba and Christiane a French Metis from Whitefish Lake. They arrived at Flying Shot Lake, where there was a Metis Settlement, in 1897, but later moved to the east end of Bear Lake where they trapped and lived off the land. In 1908, before the land was surveyed, they were given the land as a “free grant” because they had been occupying the land prior to the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899.

Thomas Sinclair worked on some of the earliest land surveys in the Peace Country, including the survey of the 19<sup>th</sup> Baseline south of Spirit River in 1904-1905 with James Wallace. The Sinclair home at Bear Lake appears to have been a common stopping place for settlers coming into the country. For example, the Rede Stone family in 1909 recorded that “At the east end of Bear Lake they stopped at Tom Sinclair’s to rest up and look over the country.”

According to the census records, Thomas and Christiane had ten children: Alex, Alice, Wilson, Caroline, Nellie, Emma, John, Louisa, Elizabeth and Mabel.



Plan of the Metis settlement at Flyingshot Lake, 1908. SPRA 437.01.01.

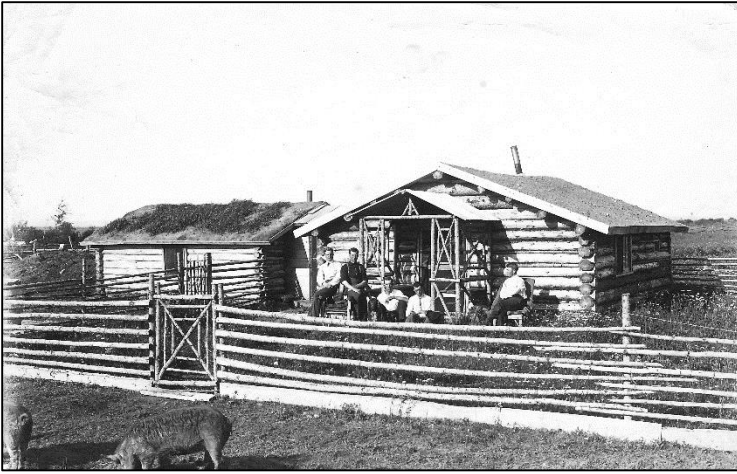
When their son John died after a fall from his horse, it was the newly-arrived Canon Frederick Charles Smith (from Richmond, England) who officiated. He recorded the following account in the registry: “...son of Thomas Sinclair of Bear Lake, age nine years. Death brought about by paralysis due to a fall and ensuing causes. Buried September 19, 1911 at dark behind the church on the mission premises at Lake Saskatoon. This is the first burial on this site. Rev. W.F. Moxhay took the actual commitment; Rev Canon Smith rendered the other part of the service within the homestead house which was then used for Divine service, and also gave an address on the Resurrection Life.”

Like many Aboriginal people, the Sinclairs’ children were highly susceptible to diseases the Europeans had developed some immunity to, but brought with them to Canada. The next two burials in the churchyard are of their son Wilson, aged 21, who died in December 1913, and their daughter Nellie, aged 16, who died less than 2 weeks later. Both of them died of tuberculosis. Thomas Sinclair himself died in 1917 of pneumonia, just after he had sold his land on Bear Lake and moved to Grande Prairie so the younger children could attend school there.



A view of Bear Lake and surrounding farmland, ca. 1945. SPRA 155.06.12.

## Stop B2 - Charles Buck (Plot 01)



*Above, homestead of Charles and Arthur Buck. SPRA 0298.06.*

*Right, interior of Charles Buck's homestead shack. SPRA 0298.04.*

One of the stones in St. Andrew's Cemetery is for Charles Buck, a gunner in the Tank Corps of World War I. A number of the homesteaders in this area were young British men, often bachelors. Charles and Arthur Buck were in their early 20s when they immigrated to Canada from Hertfordshire, England. They filed on two quarters in the Hermit Lake District in 1910-11, purchased two more with South African Scrip, and established "Poplar Grove Farm".



When World War I began in 1914, however, even in this distant part of the Dominion, recruitment drives and patriotic speeches convinced many of the British men to join up. Charles and Arthur enlisted in the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Infantry, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, on July 22, 1915.

The 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion was soon fighting in France. Arthur died in the Battle of Passchendaele on November 1, 1917 and is buried in Poperinghe, Belgium. Charles was gassed during the war and although he was ill, managed to return to Poplar Grove Farm in the summer of 1918. He brought with him an English War Bride, a nurse named 'Cis'. He died March 4, 1920 as a result of his war sickness and is buried here. You can see that the inscription on the stone reads, "In Memory of My Beloved Husband. Sleep on Beloved and Take Thy Rest."



*Left, WWI enlistees on the main street of Lake Saskatoon, 1914. SPRA 2001.01.156.*

*Right, Charles Buck in uniform, 1915. SPRA 0298.34.*

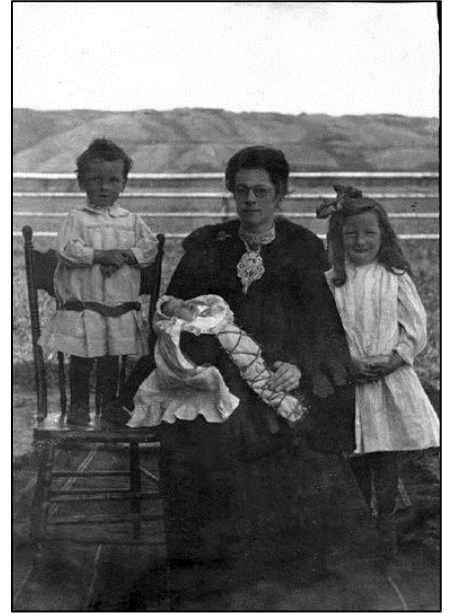
One of the Buck brothers must have been an amateur photographer, as a collection of their photos are held at the Archives showing their homestead activities, their cabin inside and out, their battalion during the war, and images of Arthur in the hospital. Some are addressed to their sister Edith, and it was one of her descendants who donated them to the Archives in 2010.



### Stop B3 - Jessie Holmes (Plot 03)

Jessie Hothersall grew up in the big city of Manchester, England and married Anglican missionary, Robert Holmes, in her early 20s. On August 7, 1902, Robert, Jessie, and their eighteen month old son, George, left Liverpool, England to travel to the Peace River Country in Canada's Northwest Territories. They traveled by ship to Montreal, arriving mid-August, and continued by train to Edmonton. At Edmonton, they purchased furniture for their home in the north, provisions enough to last six months and a shooting outfit (guns). Then they traveled over the Athabasca Trail by rented wagon and driver and down the Athabasca and Slave Rivers and across Lesser Slave Lake by York Boat. They arrived at the English mission on the shores of Slave Lake on September 18, 1902, 42 days after leaving England.

Their first post was running the Anglican mission farm on Slave Lake, where Jessie learned to speak Cree, and when her daughter was born, she raised her in lovely moss filled bags, just like the Aboriginal people did. Two years later the Holmes were transferred to the mission farm on Shaftesbury Trail where they had charge of the boarding house for the residential school, as well as the farm and gardens. In 1907 they returned to England for a few months, as Jessie's mother had died, and brought back with them her father, Knott Hothersall, to help them on the farm. Unfortunately, Mr. Hothersall later had a stroke, which resulted in them being joined by another daughter, May, to help take care of him.



*Above, Jessie Holmes with Nowel, Eunice, and baby Olive, 1910. SPRA 0157.18. Left, Robert Holmes and Knott Hothersall after putting out a grass fire, ca. 1910. SPRA 0157.24. Below, Robert Holmes' funeral procession from the mission house to the church, July 30, 1915. SPRA 0157.27.*



This extended family was transferred to the Village of Peace River in 1914, and in 1915 were assigned as the senior missionaries to the Lake Saskatoon Mission beside the church here. It was not to be a happy time. The next spring Mr. Hothersall passed away, and three months later Robert died suddenly of a massive heart attack

while all the children were down with chicken pox. The mission house was, of course, needed for the next family who would take over the parish, so Jessie took out a homestead in the Lake Saskatoon District. Here she raised their five children with a lot of help from the community. The Lake Saskatoon Hall is on her homestead, on land donated by Jessie. All of the children received university educations with help from church bursaries.



After the children had left home, Jessie moved to Edmonton with May and her husband, where she spent her remaining years looking after May's home. Jessie died at the age of 96 and her body was brought back to St. Andrews to be buried beside her husband and father. She was the last burial in this small cemetery. In spite of the difficulties, Jessie never lost her positive attitude. Her memoir, which is available online, ends with: "How much we have to be thankful for down through the years, especially for a Heavenly Father's Guidance."

## Stop C - Scenic Heights Cemetery



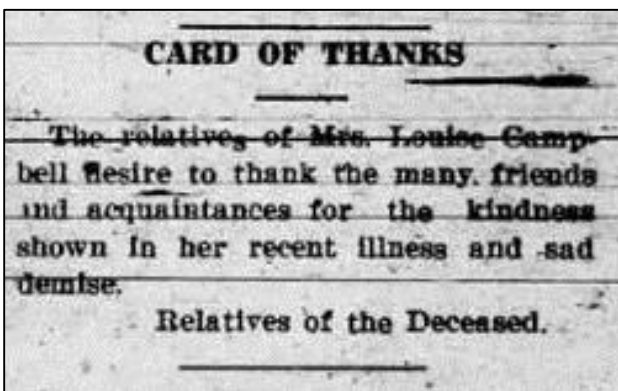
The Scenic Heights Cemetery was surveyed in 1924, across the road from where a small Methodist Church once stood. That church had been built in 1914 by Charles Hopkins, the Methodist Pastor-Carpenter, and was also used as the first school house. It burned down in 1920 and the new Big Horn School was built about a mile down the Emerson Trail.

*Below, the new Big Horn School building as it appeared around 1950.  
SPRA 063.02.015.1.*

The cemetery was situated on two acres of land belonging to Norman Anderson. At the time it would have been a very beautiful and peaceful spot, with a view for miles around; it is obvious why the district was called Scenic Heights. The first burial on the site appears to have been Louise Campbell, in March 1923, which would have been before it was surveyed, but this was not uncommon. Often it was the immediate need for a cemetery that stimulated its creation.



*Left, announcement in the March 6, 1923 Grande Prairie Herald after the death of Louise Campbell.*



Scenic Heights cemetery appears to have been the responsibility of the Municipal District of Bear Lake, since they were called for tenders to have it fenced in the summer of 1924. It was always maintained, however, by the Scenic Heights community until the County of Grande Prairie assumed responsibility around 1950.

There is still a community clean-up day when people in the area come to clean up the graves. They admit that a better job could be done killing the weeds in the cemetery, but that would also kill the wildflowers.

Most of the original settlers came in 1911. Landmarks include the Bear Creek, the site of the old school called Big Horn which was built in 1925, and the Sports Grounds across from the school where yearly events such as the Farmer's Day Picnic are still held.

## Stop C1 - John Richards (Plot B.07)

In the fall of 1920, John Richards of Gray, Saskatchewan came to the Scenic Heights District and bought a section of land. In the spring of 1921, he returned with his wife Elsie and family, along with a car-load of settlers' effects, to take up residence on March 1. They were accompanied by John's brother Fred. The older Richards children, Ella, Ted, Walter, and Wilbur, started school at the new Big Horn School which had opened in February just a half mile south of their farm.

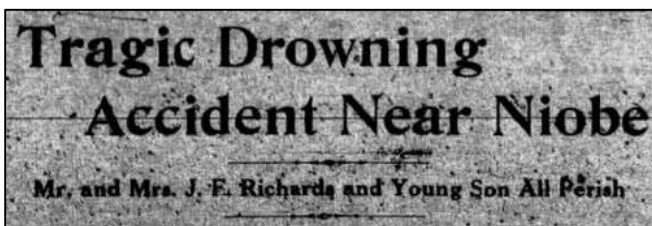
In the days before the household freezer, providing and preserving meat was a constant and time-consuming problem. John soon came up with the idea of establishing a "Beef Ring" at Scenic Heights: if each family in the area agreed to contribute one or two beef cows per year, these could be butchered on a regular basis and fresh meat delivered to each family after the butchering. There was enough interest in the idea that on the third Saturday of May 1922, the first beef was issued, and the ring continued, uninterrupted, on a weekly basis, for 34 years until the ring closed in 1956.

Originally, the rules were simple. Each member contributed a 500-lb. steer annually and drew out 500 lbs. of meat during the year. But as time progressed, half shares and quarter shares were sold, so that smaller consumers did not have to contribute more than they could use. Rules as to the quality of the beef were strictly observed and if any member was short or over on poundage, they were either assessed or refunded the difference on a per pound cash basis, determined at the beginning of each season.

The family was later touched by tragedy. On Saturday, May 2, 1925, John, Elsie, and their youngest son, 6 year-old Maurice, went to visit the Wallace Edgar family on the opposite side of Bear Creek. They crossed over a private bridge, which had been built three years previously, so that neighbours could visit each other without traveling several miles around to use the government bridge on the Emerson Trail. Spring floods had caused the creek to rise rapidly, and the current was swift, but the bridge had always been considered safe. Unknown to John Richards, the high waters had undercut the banks, and the weight of the horses and wagons made it collapse. Wallace Edgar, in his farmyard, heard the crack and came down to investigate. The horses were pulled out of the creek, and the body of six-year-old Maurice was found under the wagon. John and Elsie's bodies were found a quarter of a mile down the creek during the ensuing search. A news article concludes, "The tragedy has cast a gloom over the entire community".



Above, the Richards family. From *La Glace: Yesterday and Today, The Twilight Club* (1981), p. 174.



Above, headline from the May 11, 1925 *Grande Prairie Herald*.



## Stop C2 - Harold (Harry) Patterson (Plot B.10)

Harry Patterson was born in Nova Scotia in 1887, and was a true Nova Scotian. At age 14 he joined the Merchant Marine and spent seventeen years working on windjammers on the high seas. He had sailed into ports all around the world.

In 1918, he decided he needed a change of scene. He came west to Regina on a harvest excursion and was sitting in the CPR Station in Regina, along with many others, looking for a job. He was approached by John Richards who asked him if he would like a job stooking on a farm. Harry said he knew nothing about farming but would like to give it a try. He adapted quickly, did the stooking, and advanced to driving a team and a bundle wagon when threshing time came.

When the Richards family moved to the Peace River country in 1921, Harry joined them and worked for them that year. However, there was great opportunity here and he soon purchased the NW 12-73-8-W6, along the Edson Trail and just east of the school, from Milton White. He also bought two teams of horses from other neighbours. In the spring of 1922, with help from his old employer, he put in a crop. That summer he built a house and a barn and drilled a water well. The sailor had become a farmer.

Harry was a diabetic, having to give himself daily insulin shots. One summer his friend Bert Dixon noticed that Harry was drinking vast quantities of water and asked about his health. Harry had only one syringe, and after years of use it had become dull. Giving himself the daily shot of insulin had become so painful, that he had stopped, preferring instead to live with the consequences. The solution was simple. Bert took the needle into his shop, sharpened it, and it worked like a charm. Harry was back on insulin.



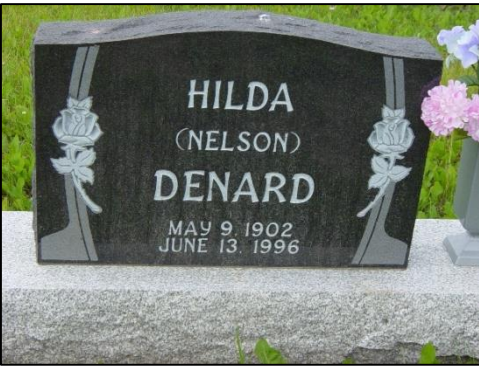
*Above, a fenced field of stoked grain with farmsteads visible in the background, 1928. SPRA 0107.54.*



Harry Patterson never married and has no descendants. He passed away in 1960 and is buried here at Scenic Heights, on the height of land west of his farm.

*Left, Harry Patterson and his team, 1921. From La Glace: Yesterday and Today, The Twilight Club (1981), p. 167.*

### Stop C3 - Hilda Denard



Hilda Nelson was born in Lancashire, England in 1902, the only child of Mary and Thomas Nelson. She was 37 when war broke out in 1939 and she took on the job of air raid warden in Manchester during the hostilities. It was her responsibility to sound the air raid sirens in her ward to warn of incoming bombers, staff and organize the public air raid shelters, patrol the streets during blackouts to make sure no light was visible, hand out gas masks, report the extent of the bomb damage, assess the local need for emergency services, and to evacuate any premises where a bomb fell but failed to explode.

It was during the war that she met David Denard, from Scenic Heights, better known to everyone here as "Pat". Pat had been born in England, in 1904, but was a "Barnardo Boy", one of those shipped to Canada after his parents died, in the belief that he would have a better future in Canada. Often these boys were simply unpaid labour.

It is unclear when Pat came to Canada, but he filed for a homestead in 1927 north-west of here, in the Old Post district (SW 25-73-9-W6). His story in the LaGlace community book speaks of him as *"a friendly, outgoing man with a keen sense of humor who found life on a homestead in the bush lonesome, so he liked to visit his neighbours... In pre-telephone days he was a welcome visitor as he always had all the neighbourhood news and gossip. He never, however, spoke unkindly of anyone."*

Because he had little wealth or machinery, Pat mostly worked for neighbours or in sawmill camps while he was developing his homestead. He was working on a threshing crew when the news came that World War II had been declared. He left immediately, looking for a ride to Edmonton so he could enlist in defence of England.

While in England he met Hilda, and they were married in September 1942. Sadly, Pat was killed in the Battle of Ortona in Italy in December 1943. After the war was over, Hilda, whose parents had both passed on, decided to come to Canada to take up residence on the homestead which Pat had left. The land was rented out, but she kept a small herd of cattle, whose company she enjoyed, as well as constant dog companions. As her obituary mentions the "special" birthday cards she gave to people, she is assumed to have been a creative individual.

Perhaps she sometimes felt lonesome living in the little log cabin surrounded by bush in a strange land, but perhaps she appreciated the peace. She never remarried and never had children, but she enjoyed those of her neighbours, the Shillingtons and Moodies. Her neighbours remember her as a tiny, very English lady with a tiny little car that matched her size. She passed away in 1996, at the age of 94 years.



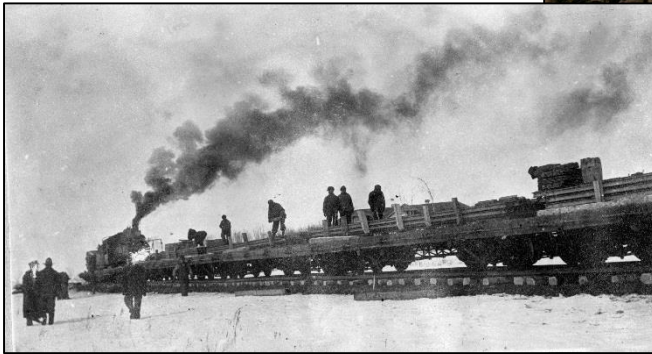
*Right, David and Hilda Denard. From La Glace: Yesterday and Today, The Twilight Club (1981), p. 279.*

## Stop C4 - Norman Edgar (Plot 01.2B)

Norman Edgar was born in 1898 in Huron County, Ontario, the second child in a family of four boys and one girl. Norman and his brother Wallace knew that the family farm would not support them all, so around 1910 they headed west. They looked for land, first around Edmonton, but eventually decided to check out the Peace River Country. The land here was just in the process of being surveyed, so Norman hired on as a teamster on a survey crew.

The survey crew came over the Long (Athabasca) Trail via Slave Lake, Grouard and eventually Grande Prairie. By that time a land office had opened in Grande Prairie, so he filed on a homestead for himself and one for his brother by proxy. After working as a rod man on the survey crew all summer, he returned to Edmonton and the boys began to assemble an "outfit" to begin homesteading.

In the spring of 1912, Norman and Wallace headed north, each driving a team of oxen with a year's supply of



goods, once again over the Long Trail. After weeks on the road, they finally arrived at their homesteads. They lived in a tent while they built their first log shack and started breaking land. During the years that followed, several trips were made out to Edmonton, the most important one being in 1916, this time by train from Clairmont, when Norman was met by his Ontario sweetheart, Miss Violet Davidson.

The railway was new that year, built by the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway Company, ED&BC for short, nicknamed the Extremely Dangerous and Badly Constructed railway. True to form, it did not arrive in Edmonton until almost midnight. The wedding took place shortly after midnight and the young couple travelled back to the Peace Country the next day.

The Edgars were a big part of the Scenic Heights community. The Methodist Church was built on the south-east corner of their home quarter by the first Methodist Missionary in the area, Pastor-Carpenter Charles Hopkins. After they sold that quarter, they purchased one across Bear Creek, where they allowed the community to build a 75 foot ski-jump to practise the Norwegian sport of ski-jumping using the slopes of Bear Creek Hill. The Edgar wives were very active in the Scenic Heights Women's Institute which sought to bring education, practical skills and social contacts to the women on the isolated farms.



When the schools consolidated to La Glace, Norman Edgar became one of the first school bus drivers. Norman and Elsie moved to La Glace in 1951, leaving son Ken on the family farm. In La Glace, he became the bulk fuel agent, first for Federated Co-op then UFA. After Norman passed away in 1958, his son and then grandson followed in his footsteps, so it became a three generation business, as did the family farm.

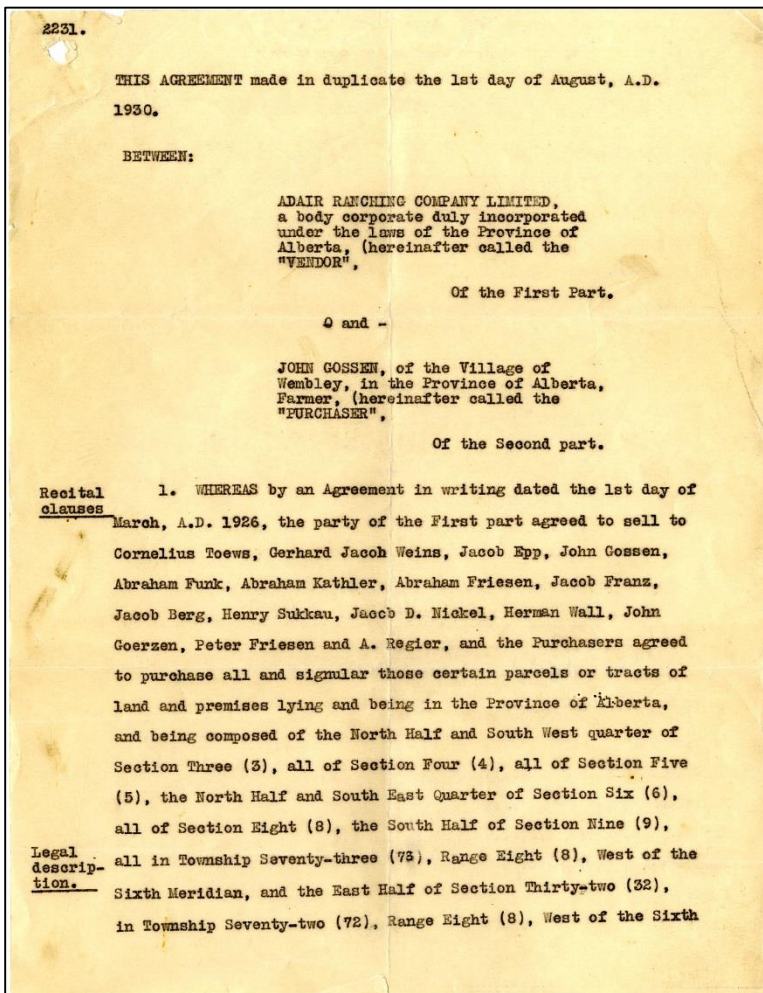
*Above, La Glace school buses lined up in front of the La Glace School. SPRA 483.01.25-03.*

## Stop D - Sunset Ranch Cemetery

This land was once part of the Adair Ranch. In 1906, Harry Adair left Montana and headed for the Peace Country with 700 head of horses, his wife and her sister, his 11 year-old daughter, and two or three cowboys. They finally arrived here in 1909. In 1910, Harry filed on a homestead and the party accumulated 10 more quarters by purchased South African Scrip. By 1915, all the land had been proved up and the ranch was a huge success. They built the home site of the ranch about a half mile north of here and named it Sunset Ranch. According to David Leonard in The Last Great West, the first site contained "six log houses and a central 18' x 36' dwelling..., one bunkhouse, one storehouse, one blacksmith shop, two cattle pens, 14 granaries, and one large 36' x 50' barn." (p. 572). Later, two big frame houses and a huge barn replaced the original log buildings.



Above, Harry Adair, in payment of losing an election bet, prepares to push William Innes in a wheel barrow in the Grande Prairie sports day parade, July 2, 1917. SPRA 2009.95.02. Below left, the first page of the sales agreement between the Adair Ranching Company and John Gossen, one of the Mennonite farmers. SPRA fonds 441.



But the adventure was beginning to pall, so in 1926, Adair began to make arrangements to sell the land to a group of Mennonite immigrants and returned to the United States. There were twelve families in the partnership, Russian Mennonite families who had left southern Russia in the face of economic loss and cultural and religious persecution. When the group arrived at Sunset Ranch, they built a small log church, the Sunset Ranch Mennonite Conference Church, across the road south of the main Ranch site. It was used regularly until the 1950s, but fell into disuse as most of the congregation moved away from the area.

The cemetery was established east of the church around 1933. There are only seven gravestones in this tiny cemetery: Gerhard Sukkau (November 11, 1932 – January 23, 1933), Victor Wiens (May 24, 1934 – November 27, 1935), Helena Toews (1894-1935), Anna Peters (1901-1939), Margaretha Enns (1873-1940), Jacob Enns (1870-1957), and Abram G. Friesen (1900-1962). The cemetery is no longer used, but is maintained as an historic site.

## Stop D1 - Helena Toews

Helena Toews was born Helena “Lena” Berg in the Russian Caucasus where the Mennonites had created farms in the wilderness. About 1915 she married a young teacher, John Siemens.

When the Russian Revolution began, the educated class was one of the first targets of the revolutionaries. John was hauled out of his teacherage, taken to the edge of the village, and shot. Lena took their two young children to live with her parents in another settlement, where she met Franz Peter Toews and married him in 1921.

In 1924, leaving behind almost all of their wealth and belongings, they immigrated to Canada, now with four children. The youngest was only seven days old when they left on the long journey – a total of 98 people and their belongings crammed into four freight cars. In Moscow, they received their papers and then on to Liebau where they boarded the “Baltimore” for England, then the “Minnedosa” for Canada.



Barn on the Adair Ranch, Circa 1930

For almost five years, they moved from place to place, finally settling with the Mennonite community at Sunset Ranch north of Wembley in 1929. Here the family began the difficult job of creating a farm out of the bush.

In June 1935 Lena contracted pneumonia and died. Her family, however, survived and many still reside in the Peace Country. Almost all of Lena’s brothers and sisters who did not leave Russia died after they had been banished to Siberia.

*Above, a barn on the Adair Ranch and right, houses on the Adair Ranch, ca. 1930. SPRA 2011.11.03-.04.*



## Stop D2 - Jacob and Margaretha Enns

The Enns family came from the Ukraine, where the Mennonites had established farms 400 years earlier. In the Ukraine, Jacob was a cabinet maker and a painter, an entrepreneur running a factory with about a dozen men. Jacob and Margaretha had a successful and busy life. Fourteen children were born, and although several died as children, there were at least eight still living when the Russian Revolution began in 1917.



The revolution drastically changed their lives. The farms became the property of the Communist government. While they were still allowed to farm, the government could and did confiscate anything they wanted: horses, crops, even the sons whom they conscripted into the army. People eking out a bare existence had no money to buy new furniture or paint their buildings, and the factory lay idle.

Some people thought it would change, but Jacob's son in the army said it wasn't likely, so the family applied to immigrate to Canada. They were sponsored by a family in Rostern, Saskatchewan, and in 1926, Jacob at age 56 and Margaretha at age 53, came to labour on a Canadian farm which they did not own. Seven of their children came also, but to various farms in the Canadian west. The son in the army had applied to join them, but that was considered treason and he was shipped to Siberia. He died enroute.

By the time he arrived in Canada, Jacob's entrepreneurial spirit had died. Two of his sons came to the Peace Country, Nick to farm near Beaverlodge and Pete to farm with the Mennonite group on the Adair Ranch, and eventually Jacob followed them.

They lived in Beaverlodge, but the small Mennonite Conference Church near the Ranch was the home church. When Margaretha died of a stroke in 1940, they buried her in this small cemetery.

Jacob's sons often said that Jacob died with Margaretha, although they did not bury him until 17 years later. Grandson Bill Enns remembers him as a "sorrowful fellow". After she died, Jacob lived with various children, mostly in Chilliwack, but the promise was that when he died they would bury him beside Margaretha. Jacob died in 1957. Although the church was no longer active at that time, they buried him in this cemetery.



*Above, congregation of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Below right, Peter Enns' home. From La Glace: Yesterday and Today, The Twilight Club (1981), p. 33, 222.*



## Stop E - Mountainside Cemetery

Sometimes, when burial lands were needed before a permanent cemetery could be established, a few acres of land would be offered to the community, or a plot of land would be staked out beside the trail. This plot of land was donated by Fred Blanchard at the time of the 1918 Spanish Influenza epidemic. For that reason it is sometimes called the Blanchard cemetery. Many people in this area died in the epidemic, but most of those were reinterred in other



cemeteries, including the Lake Saskatoon Municipal Cemetery after it was created in 1921.

Only four burials remain here. Once the Lake Saskatoon Municipal Cemetery came into use in 1921, Mountainside Cemetery was no longer used. Those remaining are John Cochrane, age 26, Frederick Ernest Galt, age 18, Priscilla Evelyn Wood, age 8, and Annabelle English. You can still see remnants of the white wooden crosses which once marked the gravesites. Whether these are from original graves or a later renewal of the site is not known.

*Left, Mountainside Cemetery, date unknown. From Lake Saskatoon Reflections, Lake Saskatoon History Book Committee (1980), p. 10.*

## Stop E1 - One Interconnecting Story

There is only one grave stone in this cemetery, for Frederick Galt. His death is connected to another buried here, although their deaths were separated by a period of about a month. Their stories can be found in the Grande Prairie Herald newspaper accounts of the time.

On October 29, 1918, three men were hunting ducks along the icy shore of Lake Saskatoon. They had an old boat to assist their efforts, but since it would only hold two of them, eighteen year-old Frederick Galt was left on shore while his friends John Cochrane, age 26, and William Thompson, age 37, ventured out over the thin ice into the lake. They commenced shooting at ducks passing by and in the excitement, the boat capsized. Fred began to wade out to help, but was told to go back and start a fire on the lakeshore to warm them when they got out. This he began to do, but soon realized one of his friends had disappeared and the other was in trouble. Once again he waded through the ice and water in an attempt to rescue them. When both men disappeared under the surface of the water, Fred gave up and barely made it to the nearest farmhouse alive.

One month later, on December 3, 1918, another article appeared on the front page of the paper. Fred Galt was dead, having accidentally shot himself while getting ready to go hunting. The newspaper article in the Grande Prairie Herald read, *"The gun was a 22 calibre rifle, and slipped from Mr. Galt's hands, and the trigger struck against the piano stool in his father's home, discharging the weapon... the bullet struck above the heart, either piercing the same or a large artery or vein, as he expired a short time afterwards, before medical attention could be secured."*

Although Fred had a homestead in Happy Valley, near Spirit River, and died in his father's home there, he was buried in the Mountainside Cemetery alongside John Cochrane and William Thompson. Mr. Thompson's body is no longer here. It was disinterred and moved to the Lake Saskatoon Cemetery in 1927 when his mother died.



*Above, Mrs. Mary Thompson, William's mother, outside her home at Bear Lake, 1924. SPRA 0362.02.09.11.*

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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.

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