

Volume 15

December 2023

Issue 1

# TELLING **OUR** STORIES



## WINTER FESTIVITIES

CELEBRATIONS IN THE SNOW

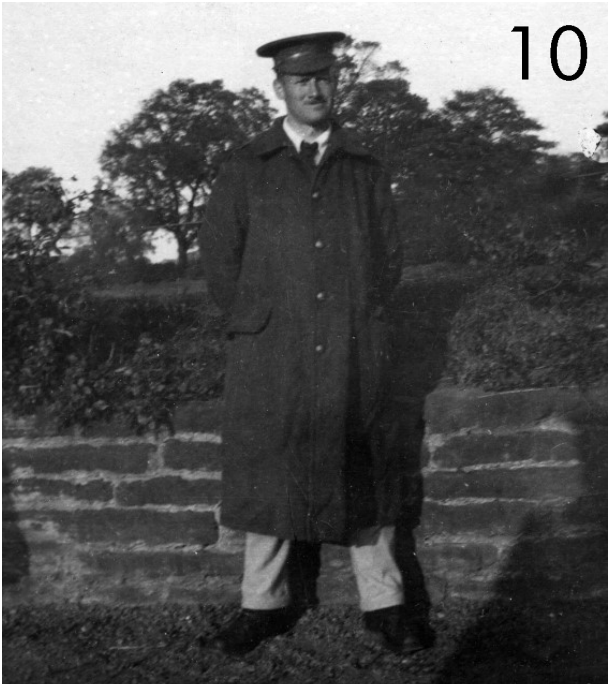
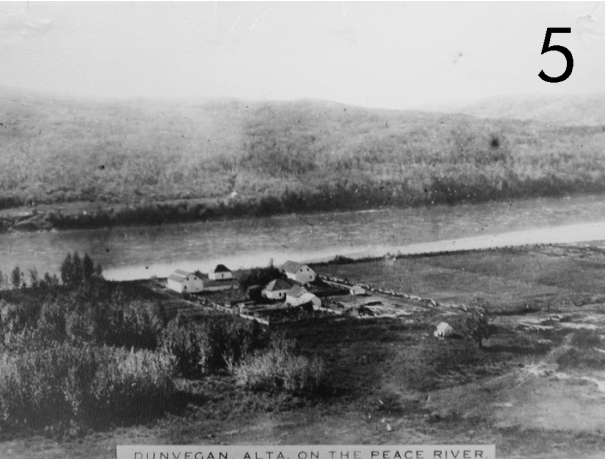
A PUBLICATION OF THE



South Peace  
REGIONAL ARCHIVES

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*This issue was sponsored by the Grande Prairie & District Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society*



*Cover: Fireworks display in honour of Fairview College's 50th Anniversary, 2001. (SPRA 190.02.01.1497.40)*

*Note on Photographs: Photographs featured in Telling Our Stories are unedited, apart from minimal cropping. In cases where substantial cropping may impact the context of the photograph, this will be noted in the caption.*

## A Publication of the South Peace Regional Archives

**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.

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# Letter from the Editor

Winter is a difficult season in the Peace Country. Cold days, hours of darkness, and traveling through snow and ice can provide challenges even today. But at the same time, winter can be a time of joy. It is when some of our most beloved holidays fall. Join us in this holiday edition of *Telling Our Stories* as we explore all there is to celebrate this winter.

First, join us for a sleigh ride back through time with guest contributor Stephanie McLachlan in “Fort Dunvegan Festivities.” Then come inside and learn about how temperature affects records in this issue’s Archiveology. Take a moment of silence as we explore the history of Remembrance Day in “We Shall Remember Them.” In the long winter nights, don’t forget to grab your mask for Halloween hijinks in “Trick or Treat.” Learn how one woman showed her heart in “Hearts of Wood” and take a leap for love in “It’s Not Just an Extra Day.” Bundle out into the snow to explore the Winter Carnivals of Grande Prairie in “Carnival Queens & Cabin Fever.” Finally, take in the beauty of the holiday season in “Parties & Parades,” and send some holiday cheer in “Seasons Greetings.”

I would like to take a moment to thank all of the staff and volunteers who helped make this issue of *Telling Our Stories* possible. A special thank you to our guest contributor Stephanie McLachlan, and to the Alberta Genealogical Society: Grande Prairie and District Branch, for supporting our publication. And to all our readers, may you have much to celebrate this winter, and a wonderful new year.

Ellyn Vandekerkhove  
SPRA Executive Director

# Take Note:

## Holiday Hours

The South Peace Regional Archives will be **closed to the public from December 24, 2023 – January 8, 2024** for the holiday season. Thank you for your understanding!

## Archives Relocation

The South Peace Regional Archives will be moving to our new home in Centre 2000 in 2024. The archives will be closed during the move.

Check our website for closure information at:  
**[www.SouthPeaceArchives.org](http://www.SouthPeaceArchives.org)**

## Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that the South Peace Regional Archives is located on the ancestral and traditional lands of many Indigenous peoples. This territory is covered by Treaty 8, signed in 1899. The continuing relationship between Indigenous peoples and this land contributes to the rich knowledge and culture of the South Peace region.

We are grateful to serve the people on this land and honor the Calls for Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

# Fort Dunvegan Festivities

## Celebrating Christmas & New Year’s Eve with the Fur Traders

*The following article was contributed by Stephanie McLachlan, Program Coordinator at Historic Dunvegan.*

What makes *your* holiday season complete? Is it fruit cake? Latkes? Bannock? Lighting a menorah, a Christmas tree, or a kinarah? Gathering with friends and exchanging gifts? How old or new are the traditions you participate in? Where did they originate?

The Beaver people who first inhabited the areas bordering the Peace River have been gathering at Dunvegan for thousands of years. Like other Indigenous peoples, before the arrival of the fur traders and missionaries, it’s possible they may have celebrated the Winter Solstice while camping in the area.

When Northwest Company fur traders arrived in 1805 and established Fort Dunvegan, they brought with them the customs of European Christians, particularly those of the Scots. You’ve probably heard

of Kwanzaa, but have you ever heard of Hogmanay? In Scotland, Christmas was celebrated quietly, while Hogmanay or New Year’s Eve was a party! Since many fur traders originally hailed from Scotland, those traditions came with them over to what is now known as Canada.

This is reflected in the journals left by the men in charge at Fort Dunvegan through the 1800s. In some cases, Christmas isn’t even mentioned at all on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. When it is mentioned, it’s often to say that nothing of importance happened. But every entry that was made on January 1<sup>st</sup> (at least between 1822 and 1844) mentions everyone gathering at the fort for their usual treat of a ration of the best in the store. This included gifts of tobacco, rum, sometimes

*Right: Panoramic view of Dunvegan on the Peace River, ca. 1920. (SPRA 2001.01.178)*





Above & right: Holders for hanging candles on Christmas trees. Photographs courtesy of Stephanie McLachlan, Historic Dunvegan.

meat, sometimes biscuits...even lime juice has been mentioned as a special treat given to visitors.

That's not to say that Christmas wasn't celebrated at all. With the founding of the St. Charles Catholic mission at Dunvegan in 1867, community members had a place to go to celebrate mass. When the church was built in 1886, it is highly likely that the priests would decorate it for Christmas with evergreen boughs and young trees with candles hung on them,

and of course a nativity scene. A post journal entry on Christmas Day 1897 says that it was a glorious day and everyone was off to church. Even the Protestants of the community went to the Catholic church.

Dances were often held for both Christmas and New Year's at Fort Dunvegan. On Christmas Day, 1897, Albert Tate, the man in charge, recorded in the fort journal, "We are to have a dance tonight, but as it is Saturday of course we will stop at or before Sunday. At least the 'Boys' say they will." It is known that Albert played fiddle and his wife Sarah not only had a formidable singing voice, but also was a master of the Red River Jig. One source describes: "Endurance is a sign of merit in the Red River jig. A man or woman steps into the limelight and commences to jig, a dark form in moccasins slips up in front of the dancer, and one jigs the other down, amid plaudits for the survivor and jeers for the quitter." Apparently, Mrs. Tate could out-jig anyone!

And what of trees, cards, and gifts – the



Right: St. Charles Catholic Church and Mission at Dunvegan, complete with its outbuildings in 1909. (SPRA 1990.30.094, fonds 155)

trimmings of Christmas we're most familiar with today? Unfortunately, there is no hard evidence of these items at Dunvegan, or what they might have looked like. But a few clues can help us make some educated guesses. When restoring the Factor's House, crews found pine needles between the baseboard and the walls which may indicate that Christmas trees were in use at Dunvegan. Christmas trees had become popular in the later 1800s thanks to the trendsetting Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert (who brought the tradition from his native Germany). There is evidence that candle holders for Christmas trees were manufactured in Fort Chipewyan in 1890, so it's not unlikely that Dunvegan may have received some of these decorations.

Christmas cards became commercially available in Britain in 1843 and then in America in the 1870s. By the 1880s, one company was producing five million cards per year. It is likely that in the 1890s, the Tate family would have received and/or sent at least a few Christmas cards.

As for gifts, the Tate children were probably quite lucky. Mrs. Tate was well-known for her handiwork in activities like sewing, beading, and lace making. Mr. Tate enjoyed woodworking and, as the man in charge at Fort Dunvegan, had ready access to the HBC



catalogue. Perhaps a pretty new dress or a carved top would have been under the tree for the children on Christmas morning.

While holiday traditions vary from person to person and change through time, many celebrations include common themes such as sharing food, gifts, and light with others. Certainly, this has been the case at the area now known as Dunvegan over the years.

#### Sources:

Cameron, Agnes Deans. *The new North: being some account of a woman's journey through Canada to the Arctic*. New York & London: D. Appleton & Co, 1909.

Larmour, Judy. *St. Charles Catholic Mission: A Narrative History, 1867-1903; Material History of St. Charles Mission; Material History of the H.B.Co Factor's House (1877-1900)*. Prepared for the Fort Dunvegan Historical Society and Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, December 1990.

Leonard, David W., and Michael Payne, eds. *Dunvegan Post Journals for 1822 to 1830; Dunvegan Post Journals for 1834-1845*. Peace Heritage Press, 2016; 2019.



# Climate Control

## This Issue's Archiveology

The motto that describes the purpose of the South Peace Regional Archives is *Gather, Preserve, and Share*. We accept donations of historical documents, photographs, film, and other records and we safely store them in the vault to protect them from adverse environmental conditions. This is to ensure that the public can access their documentary heritage into the future.

Protection makes up a large portion of an archivist's work as it needs to be proactive and ongoing to be effective. Ensuring that records don't deteriorate or get otherwise damaged requires us to monitor a variety of environmental factors and control the environment within the vault.

Temperature is one of the big environmental factors that actively deteriorate records. As temperatures rise, chemical reactions within a material speed up



and permanently damage the structure and integrity of a record.

For the majority of records in an archives, such as paper, the general rule of thumb is to maintain vault temperatures between 18-22°C year round. It is also important to avoid major and recurring fluctuations to prevent stress and mechanical damage from the material expanding and contracting.

Certain materials, like colour film, have low chemical stability and are most susceptible to temperature damage. According to the Canadian Council of Archives, "archival records stored, for example, at 20°C rather than 15°C will have half the life expectancy."

Very unstable materials may need to be stored at 2°C in specialized cold storage depending on how they were made. In addition to directly affected records, temperature also has an impact on what the relative humidity will be in the vault.

Humidity has a significant impact on the safety of records. For chemically reactive materials like film, high humidity can dramatically increase its chemical breakdown. For paper based records, humidity too low will make them brittle and humidity too high will physically distort them.

The biggest danger from humidity comes from how it encourages the growth of mould and is welcoming to pests. Both

*Left: Mouldy book, maxcommunications.co.uk, 2022*

*Right: Inside the vault, SPRA, 2022*

present a severe risk as they will eat or otherwise permanently damage and destroy records.

General guidelines from the Canadian Council of Archives recommend maintaining a stable relative humidity between 30-50% for most records and caution against fluctuating humidity. For chemically unstable records like colour photographs, a significantly lower humidity of around 5% is often recommended.

Air quality and light are two environmental conditions that should also not be underestimated. Light damage is easier to track and occurs when ultraviolet (UV) light permanently fades or discolours records. The main way this damage is controlled is by storing materials in opaque containers and keeping the vault dark when not in use.

Air quality can be more difficult to manage since there are many contributing factors. A pollutant or particulate in the air can rub against and physically damage records, or in some cases chemically react with and deteriorate certain records. There are external sources or pollutants like smoke or vehicle exhaust, but there can also be sources from within the vault. Some paints and chemicals can off-gas for long periods of time and deteriorate air quality. Some chemically unstable archival records can impact air quality and potentially damage other records.



Most archival organizations argue that vaults should be well ventilated and air should be filtered without compromising a stable temperature and relative humidity. It is also helpful to monitor air quality over time to know when there is an issue that needs to be solved.

Preparing for natural disasters or other climate events is another important aspect in protecting records. This can be hard for many archives to tackle as it often comes down to the location or design of a whole building. If there is a forest fire, is the building well sealed enough to prevent smoke from reaching the vault? Is the building located on a flood plain and at risk of water and flood damage?

While challenging, these issues can be mitigated through careful planning and procedures. Creating disaster response plans, monitoring ongoing risks in a building, and training staff on how to be safe in an emergency can help mitigate risks to people and records during a natural disaster.



# We Shall Remember Them

## Honouring Our Veterans

Honouring local veterans is part of the ongoing work at the South Peace Regional Archives. At least six past and current volunteers have spent hundreds of hours researching and writing content for our virtual Soldiers’ Memorial. We have also partnered with the Grande Prairie Museum in past years to create Remembrance Day displays. These are our ways of participating in our region’s long history of honouring those who have served in the military.

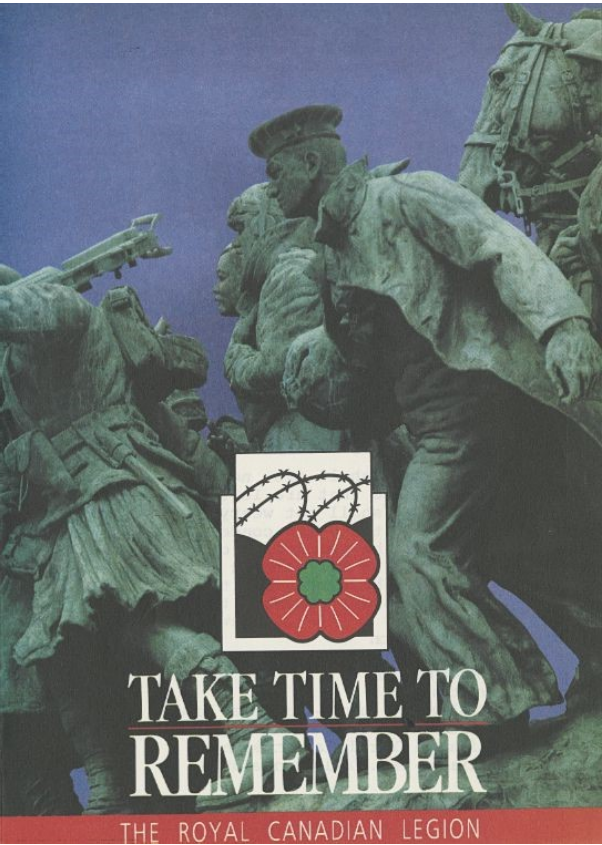
Ever since 1919, one year after the end of the First World War, Canadians have set aside a day to remember veterans. According to the Canadian War Museum, Armistice Day, as it was originally called, was combined with Thanksgiving Day and observed on the Monday in the week of November 11. It was only in 1931 that the federal government declared November 11 a national holiday. They also renamed it Remembrance Day to “emphasize the memory of fallen soldiers instead of the political and military events leading to victory in the First World War.”

Historian Isabel Campbell described how various communities throughout the South Peace observed Remembrance Day in 1936 (SPRA 510.17.19). In Grande Prairie, a memorial service was held at the Capitol Theatre, including an address by Reverend Goddard, the singing of “In Flanders Fields,” and the sounding of the Last Post and Reveille. A banquet attended by over 100 veterans was held at the Grande Prairie Hotel that evening. Reverend Fisher reminded those gathered that Remembrance Day calls us to look back, but also to look forward: “Now comes the chal-



Above: Private Arthur Buck in hospital in 1916, after being wounded at the Somme. The caption provided by the donor reads, “We think Arthur was wounded more than once and spent time in hospital here.” Arthur died from shrapnel wounds on November 1, 1917. (SPRA 298.38)

lenge to make a better world. Let us do it with the same courage as these comrades did in 1914 and the four years following.” Spirit River also hosted a banquet for “150 veterans [and] their wives and sweethearts.” Roland Kerr, son of Victoria Cross recipient Chip Kerr, sounded the Last Post at this event. The Spirit River Remembrance Day service included the laying of wreaths by Laura Harper and Marie Innes, both of whom had served as nurses during the First



Above: Cover of a Remembrance Day order of service, 1990. (SPRA fonds 327.04)

Below: Remembrance Day service at the cenotaph in Jubilee Park, 1962. (SPRA 421.04.13)



World War. Based on Isabel’s descriptions, many elements of Remembrance Day observances have remained the same through the decades.

The editor of the *Northern Tribune*, J.B. Yule, spoke up at the Grande Prairie Remembrance Day banquet in 1936: “Eighteen years have gone by since the termination of that terrible struggle, yet up to the present not even a small pile of stones has been erected in the Grande Prairie district to recall that men from this area laid down their lives... The *Tribune* believes that the time is long overdue for the erection at Grande Prairie of a War Memorial which will stand as a constant reminder.” The *Herald-Tribune* echoed this sentiment on November 15, 1951, citing the lack of a city park where a memorial could be built as one reason for the delay. The cenotaph was unveiled on Sunday, August 9, 1959 by Dave Burgess, then the Dominion president of the Canadian Legion.

Although our memorial is not “a pile of stones,” our goal is the same as J.B. Yule’s: to remember the veterans of the South Peace. We have completed the First World War portion as far as possible, and are currently working on completing the Second World War portion of the memorial. We hope to add other conflicts in the future. Love the idea of the South Peace Sol-

diers’ Memorial? You can help! Contact us for more details about how you can get involved.

**Source:**

“Remembrance Day.” <https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/remembrance/remembrance-day/>



# Season's Greetings

## Sending Holiday Cheer

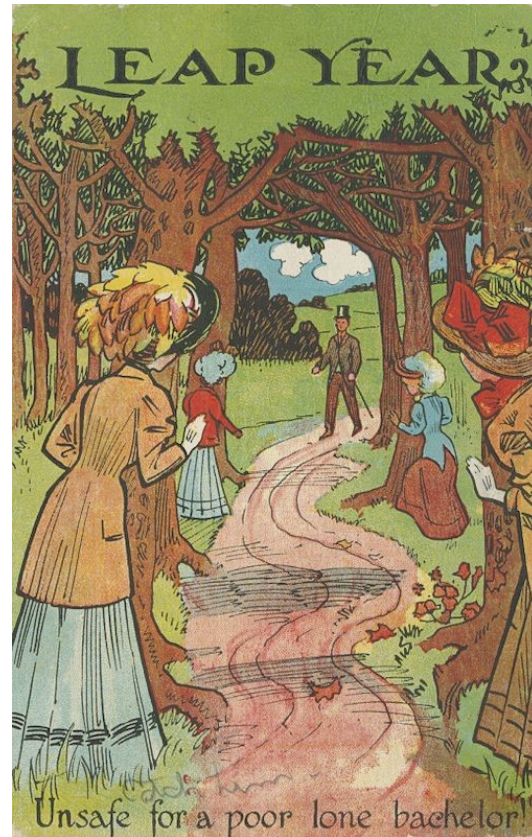
For as long as I can remember, my mom has prominently displayed all the greeting cards our family received during the holiday season. These days, the cards obscure the mantle over the fireplace, many of them including family photographs of aunts, uncles, and cousins I haven't seen in years. Even brief notes sent out once a year can help keep people who rarely see each other connected. And as seen by the sampling we've shared here, people cherish greeting cards received on any occasion, sometimes for decades.



Above: A Leap Year card, 1908. (SPRA 1993.1.1.069, fonds 043)

Left: A Valentine card with moving parts; the fish can rock to and fro on the wave. N.d. (from SPRA fonds 131)

Right: A New Year's postcard sent to Willie Salmond when he was living in Ontario. The postmark is dated December 28, 1909. (SPRA 1993.1.1.108, fonds 043)



Right: A Halloween postcard sent to Jack Grant in Grande Prairie. The note on the back reads, "Hope you have a good time on Hallow'een. A.J.M." N.d. (SPRA 992.48.008d, fonds 136)

Bottom right: A Christmas card addressed to Aunt Lottie and Uncle Nels, from Ivan, Irella, and boys. N.d. (SPRA 988.1.4111i, fonds 001)





# Trick Or Treat

## Halloween Mischief & Mayhem

For as long as Halloween has been celebrated, there have been stories shared about the potential for danger and mischief. Many Halloween tales find their source in rumors rather than fact and can spread far beyond their origin. The three stories we have included here can be traced back to actual events in the Peace Region through textual records.

In 1959 right before Halloween, the Alberta Safety Council received a letter from a woman living in Grande Prairie. The letter warned about an item easi-

ly available in wholesale stores that was extremely dangerous to children who would be out trick-or-treating. In reaction to the letter the Alberta Safety Council identified the wholesalers and worked with them to burn the entire stock of the particular item.

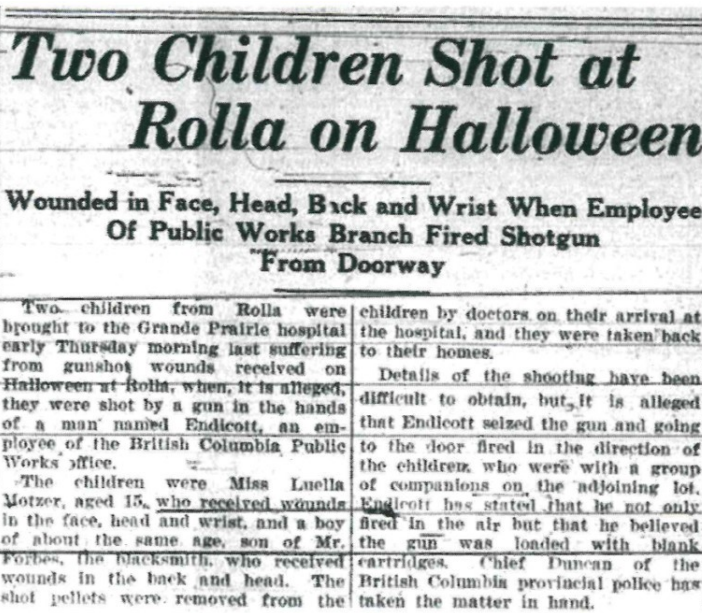
What was the item? As it turns out, it was a plastic bag that was used to store apples, a bag that for the holiday season was decorated with printed Halloween mask designs. While this may not immediately seem concerning, the public at the time were aware

of recent cases in which children were injured or killed by plastic bags. People feared that a child might try to use the bag as a mask and have difficulty breathing.

The October 23, 1959 issue of the *Herald-Tribune* shared the recommendation from the Alberta Safety Council to destroy any of the bags they may find at home, stating that “The bags were potential killers and should be kept away from all children.”

Other dangerous events have occurred on Halloween night. An undated newspaper clipping tells the story of two teenagers who were shot in Rolla, just north of Dawson Creek. They arrived at the hospital having been injured by pellet shot. The doctors removed the pellets and treated their wounds before sending them home to their families. According to newspaper reporting, the

Left: Herald-Tribune 1959-10-23 (SPRA 0510.22 Reference Files)



Left: Unknown newspaper clipping (SPRA 0510.22 Reference Files)

Lyne relates pranks popular at the time, including smearing the windows of buildings and cars in a thick grease called ‘dubbing’ as well as breaking the doors and roofs of publicly accessible buildings like outhouses.

Halloween nights of the modern day tend to be more relaxed with parents and children going trick-or-treating together along neighborhood streets. However, the practice of Halloween washroom vandalism remained popular in the Peace Region for many years after E.J. Lyne’s letter.

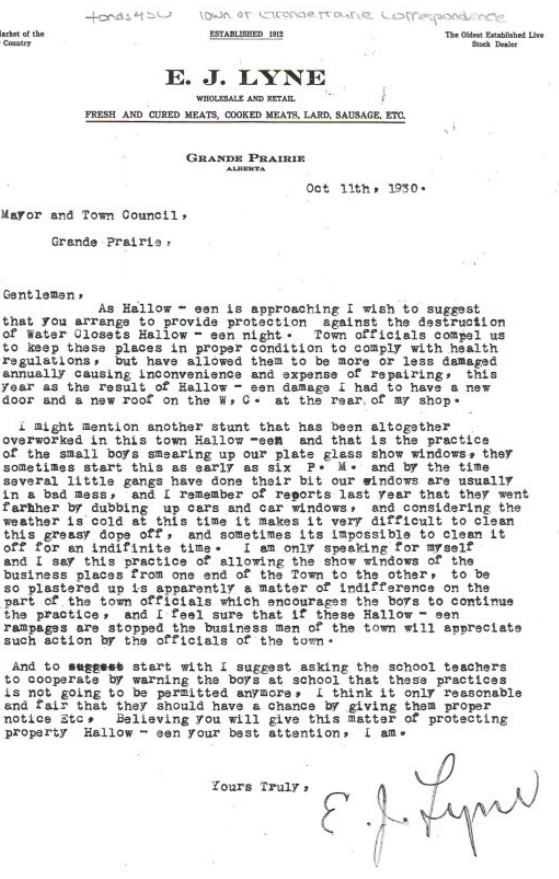
teenagers were hanging out with a group of friends on a land lot adjoining the Endicott residence.

The teenagers alleged that Mr. Endicott had stepped out of his home and fired pellet shot at the group. Mr. Endicott stated that he had fired into the air with what he believed to be blank cartridges. The incident was investigated by the B.C. Provincial police.

In our reference files, we also have a set of 1930s correspondences between an E.J. Lyne and the Mayor and Council of Grande Prairie. The letter at right includes E.J. Lyne’s request: “As Halloween is approaching I wish to suggest that you arrange to provide protection against the destruction of Water Closets on Halloween night.”

Surprisingly, in the 1930s the ‘trick’ part of Halloween trick-or-treating was more popular. E.J.

Right: E.J. Lynne’s Letter to Grande Prairie Council 1930-10-11 (SPRA 0510.22 Reference Files)





# Hearts of Wood

## How One Valentine Became a Lifelong Hobby



Above: Beth and Everett in the yard of their first farm home southeast of Clairmont. 1944. (SPRA 002.01.03.030)

The following article is a transcription of a story written by Beth Sheehan (SPRA 002.06).

On Valentine's Day, 1954, my husband gave me a rich orange-red wooden heart which he had made, little realizing that he was starting me on a hobby I still pursue.

We were camped in the Arizona desert where many varieties of trees grew along the banks of a "wash". There was then no water, but in flash flood season the trees were battered with rushing torrents that broke branches and bared roots. Here the Bitter Condalia tree grew that was used for my Valentine.

"Why don't we see how many kinds we can find here?" I asked. By the time we arrived back home we had nine hearts finished and several more pieces of wood collected.

The hearts were made the hard way, with axe and hand saw first, then a coping saw, wood files and finally sandpaper. Each was approximately one and

three-quarter inches in size, tapering from a high point in the middle to the edges, to expose the grain of the wood. I have refined the process since then.

Back in Canada I gathered local woods. Within two years I was well on my way to a good collection.

A bona fide wood collector happened to visit us. He belonged to the Wood Collectors Society of America which I did not know existed. Their specimens are small boards, 3 x 6 x 1/2 inch, and identified by a number which is catalogued. This did not appeal to me at all. I would stay with my hearts—hearts of wood seemed so appropriate—and they could be caressed in the hand like a fine jewel.

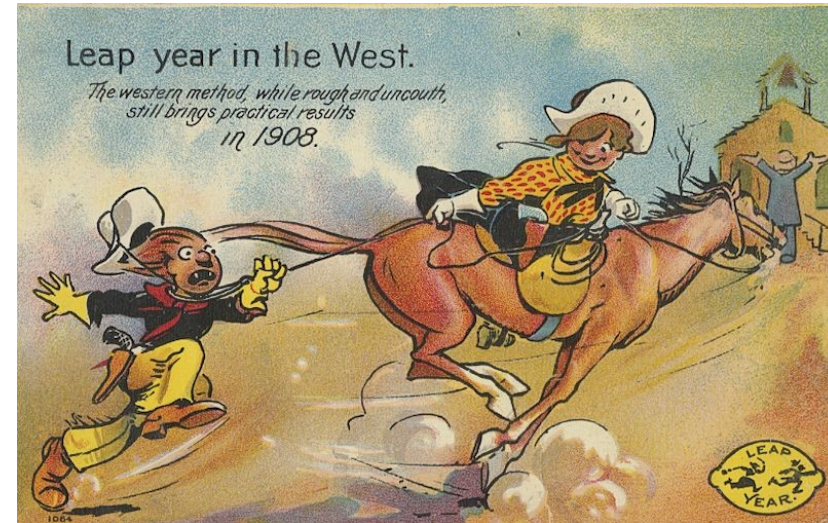
I now have nearly 400 hearts all identified on one side with its name, locale, year acquired, and if the wood was a gift (which many are now), the donor's name. A little catalogue and history lies with the hearts in a basket in our living room where all can feel and enjoy, including me, and I continue to add to them.

Below: Some of Beth's wooden hearts. N.D. (SPRA 002.06.02)



# It's Not Just an Extra Day

## Revisiting *This Week in History*



Above: Leap Year postcard, 1908 (SPRA 1993.1.1.101, fonds 043)

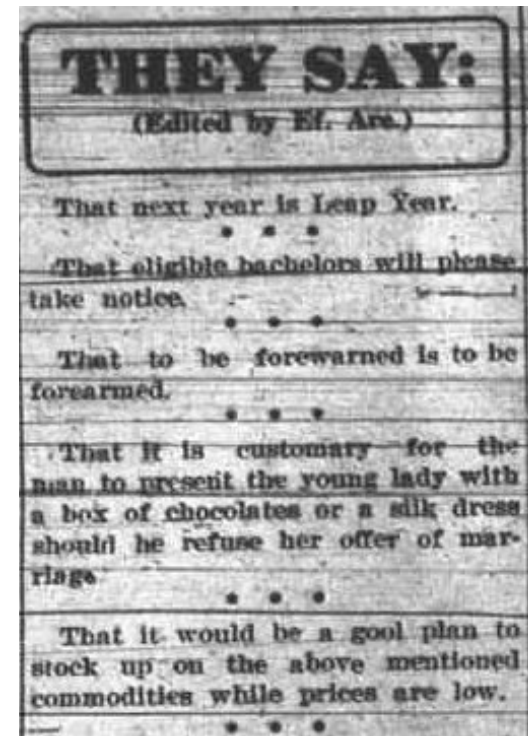
Kathryn Auger volunteered at the Archives from 2011 until her passing in 2017. Kathryn's blog series, "This Week in History," featured articles published in Grande Prairie newspapers between 1913 and 1950 and developed a tremendous following. This post originally appeared on February 25, 2016.

There are many traditions about Leap Year which say that women may propose to men on February 29. Many countries had specific penalties if the proposal was refused, so it was a win-win situation for the woman – she either got a husband or leather gloves, roses, enough fabric to make a skirt or a silk gown, for example. In some parts of Europe the fine was twelve pairs of gloves, assuming the woman would need a lot of gloves to wear to hide the embarrassment of not having an engagement ring. The Sadie Hawkins Day tradition originated in the Li'l Abner comic strip and inspired "real world" Sadie Hawkins dances, where the girls asked the boys out. Sometimes the Sadie Hawkins idea gets intertwined with Leap Year, as in this ad for a dance in Beaverlodge in a leap year.



Above: The Herald-Tribune, February 19, 1948

Below: The Grande Prairie Herald, December 24, 1931.





# Parties & Parades

## This Issue's Featured Photographs

The winter months up north can seem long and dark for many of us. Celebrating seasonal holidays and participating in local carnivals gives us something to look forward to and makes the months pass more quickly. Here we see South Peace residents enjoying various wintry festivities. What celebrations do you look forward to most throughout the winter?



Above: Marching down main street in the Remembrance Day Parade, 1962. (SPRA 421.04.02)

Left: Jim, Mary Jean, and David Carlisle decorating the Christmas tree, 1939. (SPRA 399.01.72)

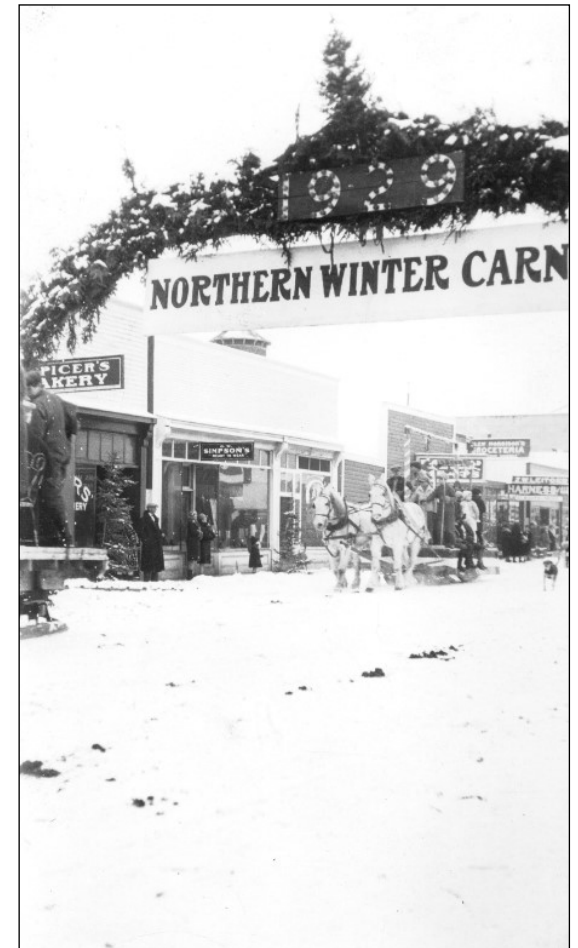
Below: Sharron and Anna dressed in costumes for the Hythe Carnival, ca. 1948. (SPRA 630.08.164a)



Above: School photograph of students standing outside dressed up for Halloween, 1939. (SPRA 1999.52.02)

Right: Richmond Avenue is the scene for this Northern Winter Carnival parade. A sleigh pulled by two white horses passes Spicer's Bakery, Simpson's Shoe Store, Morrison's Groceteria and a Harness shop. 1929. (SPRA 1969.59.646)

Right: Joyce Ryan holds a poster advertising a Valentine Dance, Wapiti Hall, Admission \$1.00, Ladies with lunch free. 1945. (SPRA 255.10)





# Carnival Queens & Cabin Fever

## Winter Carnivals in Grande Prairie

Historically, winter has been a time of big community events. This makes sense for communities that were tied to agriculture. As the days shortened and turned cold, work on the farm changed with the season and created an opportunity for gathering to celebrate.

Often these events were tied to specific winter sports or activities. As early as 1914, Ice Carnivals were being held at local skating rinks. On December 18, 1914, the *Grande Prairie Herald* announced that a skating party would be held at the Grande Prairie Skating Rink.<sup>1</sup> Four days later, on December 22, the *Herald* reported that the idea had become wildly popular. So popular, in fact, that community members began planning secret additions to it. A sleigh party was added, and community members began planning costumes and disguises. The organizers embraced the idea, adding Japanese lanterns for light and prizes for the best dressed participants.<sup>2</sup>

Other winter events were more general and included a range of activities. The first community Winter Carnival in Grande Prairie was held in 1924. The carnival organizers stated that their intention was

to make the carnival an annual event, not a money-making scheme, and was focused on cheap fun. The carnival was a week-long event, and featured dog races, people races, hockey, skiing, and skating. There was also general entertainment, like concerts, “pictures” playing at the Grand Theatre, and even burlesque entertainment. Richmond Avenue was decorated with evergreen trees, with a banner announcing the festival at the end of the street. The festivities were not limited to Grande Prairie itself, with events also being held in Clairmont and Lake Saskatoon.

This carnival proved more successful than anyone could have predicted. The *Herald* announced that “not only the youngsters but the older people have taken in the events with enthusiasm unsurpassed at any celebration hitherto held north of Edmonton.”<sup>3</sup> Beautiful weather allowed nearly all of Grande Prairie’s 1500 residents to attend, as well as many from the regional community. It seems that in the aftermath it was hard to find someone that hadn’t been there. Hilda Clifford had the honour of being crowned the first Carnival Queen, and rode in the parade on a float bedecked with the Union Jack.<sup>4</sup>

The success of this event did



Right: Hilda Clifford, Grande Prairie’s first Carnival Queen. 1924. (SPRA 557.17)

Right: Winter carnival parade, ca. 1925. (SPRA 032.08.08.0780)

make it an annual occurrence. In 1929 there was a range of athleticism on display, from hockey games to foot races. Prizes were available with the largest category being “Ski Race with horses,” where the winner stood to win \$3. If you didn’t want to take your chance on physical challenges, you could instead enter the “Car Guessing Contest” where you could win your own Ford car. There was even a “Vaudeville Variety Concert,” and shows by local bands and orchestras. There was fun to be had for everyone, though organizers were quick to clarify that “neither the Carnival Executive nor the Town of Grande Prairie will be responsible for any accident or damage done.”<sup>5</sup>

In the late 1900s Grande Prairie tried to bring back a winter carnival event several times. First, in the late 1970s there was “Cabin Fever.” In late 1978 organizers pitched a “new old-time winter festival, aimed at releasing the pent-up energies housed-in during the long winter months.”<sup>6</sup> The planning committee had big ideas of the event, and suggestions came in from the whole community. The suggestions ranged from smooch races to ice derbies, and snow sculptures to hot air balloons. The event even had its own mascot, which was a giant trumpeter swan named “Freddy Fever.” This event lasted for several years, with a 1983 program boasting dog-sled races, bathtub races, and a best beard competition.<sup>7</sup>

In the late 1980s the Grande Prairie Winter Carnival once again received a new face as “Winterlude.” In 1988 the Winterlude schedule of events included the Grand Opening of the Nitehawk Ski Hill as well as a



minor hockey tournament held at the Sexsmith Arena. Competition in these events could be fierce. In 1991, the Dog-Sled race turned into a mother and son showdown, with Vince Turner, age 12, finishing second just behind his mother Jane. And holding large events in the winter can prove to be a challenge for organizers, such as in 1990 when extreme weather forced organizers to cancel both of the festival’s main events, the sled-dog competition and the snowmobile races.<sup>8</sup>

While Winterlude was ultimately cancelled in 1996 citing a decrease of community interest<sup>9</sup>, Grande Prairie has a strong history of winter gatherings. Perhaps we will see another new version in the years to come.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup> Grande Prairie Herald, December 18, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> Grande Prairie Herald, December 22, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Grande Prairie Herald, February 12, 1924.

<sup>4</sup> Daily Herald Tribune, February 16, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> SPRA 1969.60.464.

<sup>6</sup> Daily Herald Tribune, December 4, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Daily Herald Tribune, February 1983.

<sup>8</sup> Daily Herald Tribune, February 19, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> Daily Herald Tribune, February 15, 1996.



# New at the Archives

The last few months at the archives have been busy, largely because of progress towards our move to Centre 2000. Since our last update, the renovations have begun and the new space is slowly taking shape. The renovation process involves biweekly construction meetings so the archives and the builders can easily communicate.

As we get closer to the completion of the renovation and start to pack for the move, we will temporarily stop accepting donations. For now, we are still accepting smaller donations if a donor is unable to store their records until after we have moved. Please contact us to discuss any archival donations before bringing your records in.

Another thing that has kept the archives busy has been public events to share documentary history with members of the public. This includes regularly held events in the fall like Folktales Tours with the Grande Prairie Museum and Ghost Stories with the Bear Creek Funeral Home.

We also tried new events this year; the archivist traveled to Blueberry Mountain to hold a workshop and answer preservation questions for Saddle Hills County residents. As this is a new event, we are looking forward to any feedback from participants on what worked well or what could be improved for future workshops.

The archives also just recently wrapped up filming a series of episodes with Eastlink Community TV. This project was completed over the course of 2023 with help from staff, board members, and volunteers. The episodes are currently available to subscribers to Eastlink TV.

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