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Issue 2

TELLING **OUR** STORIES

IMMIGRATION STORIES

CHANGING COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH PEACE

A PUBLICATION OF THE



South Peace
REGIONAL ARCHIVES

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Cover: Exterior view of Grande Prairie's Immigration Hall in winter, 1917. (SPRA 032.08.08.1038)

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

The history of immigration has had massive impacts in the history of Canada and the South Peace. It has shaped many parts of our region, from the communities and culture to the land itself. Because of this, we wanted to take some time to explore the history of immigrants and immigrant communities in this issue of *Telling Our Stories*.

To start off the issue, we will stay a little closer to home and share a bit about our new location in Centre 2000, and also explore “Silence in the Archives” in this issue’s Archiveology. From there we take a journey with Jessie Holmes in “All On Board,” and lay down roots with homesteaders in “Land Ladies.” See how people maintained contact with family in their homeland in “Dear Jean,” and see how historic mail led one man to find his family in “In Memoriam.” Finally, see some of the impacts settler culture had on Indigenous peoples in “Treaty & Land,” and learn about early Chinese immigrants in “A Friendly Community.”

As we settle into our new home at Centre 2000, I would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers who have made this magazine possible. I would like to especially thank guest contributors Paul De Groot and Duff Crerar, and the Genealogical Society of Alberta, Grande Prairie and District Branch. Finally, I would like to thank all of you for coming along on this journey with us, and hope you enjoy “Immigration Stories: Changing Communities in the South Peace.”

Ellyn Vandekerkhove
SPRA Executive Director

Take Note:

The 2024 **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** for the South Peace Regional Archives is taking place on

Saturday, May 4th at 10:00am

Centre 2000, Lower Level

Full meeting details will be available at
www.SouthPeaceArchives.org/2024AGM

Meeting will include:

2023 Annual Reports

Election of Board Members

Beth Sheehan Award

Tour of New Facility

As a member of the South Peace Regional Archives Society, your voice and vote are essential to the well-being of our organization. We hope to see you there!

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.

Moving to Centre 2000

A New Home for Our Region’s History

Since it was founded in 2000, the South Peace Regional Archives has operated out of the Grande Prairie Museum building. As early as 2007, however, it was clear that the Archives would one day have to move. Our collections were rapidly growing, and our space was finite. But the special needs of an archival collection meant that we needed the perfect location to make a safe and permanent home for our region’s history.

In 2021, that location finally arose in Centre 2000. Renovations were needed, which gave us a unique opportunity to develop a facility specific to our needs. With the generous support of the Government of Canada, Government of Alberta, City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, M.D. of Greenview, and local businesses and individuals, we were able to undertake this project and are currently in the process of moving. I am writing this early, but by the time you are reading it we will be halfway through the move, working out of boxes, probably a little stressed, but still so excited for the opportunities this new facility will provide.

First, adding 5631 sq. feet to our space addresses our long-term space requirements. Not only will this give our collection room to grow, but it will also allow us to enhance collection care and security. We will even be adding our own small conservation room, making us better equipped to care for our collections.

Beyond the collection, we are also able to

expand our public workspace. We will have a larger dedicated Reading Room where volunteers and researchers can comfortably work. Large coated windows will allow natural light into our workspace, while still protecting records from UV light. We will also have a small meeting room, a place where our community can gather and connect. Finally, we will be adding a small exhibit space where we can showcase our collection and regional history.

While all of those developments are exciting, the bricks and mortar make up only a small portion of this project. This has been a monumental undertaking for us, and would not have been possible without the hard work of all of our staff, board, volunteers, and community partners. We have been truly humbled by the incredible outpouring of support from our community throughout this process, and we look forward to serving you all in our new home very soon.



Silence in the Archives

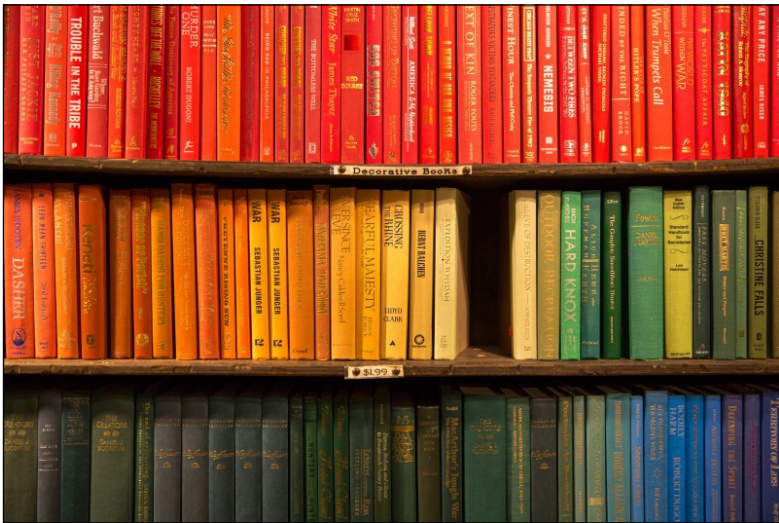
This Issue’s Archiveology

In popular media, archives are often depicted as repositories full of history and memory. Sometimes archival staff are depicted as engaged advocates for the past and other times as barriers to it, but rarely is the collection itself considered. The composition of an archival collection, what is and is not preserved, has an immense impact on how people are able to access and contextualize history.

It is rarely talked about, but no archives preserves history in its entirety. There are always important historical records that do not get preserved and voices that are missing from the vault. In archival practice these are called *gaps* or *silences* in the historical record.

That not everything of material culture can be preserved for posterity is not terrible. Archives must manage the reality of limited space and staff labour. Making decisions about what records should be preserved in the vault is an important aspect of archival work. As archivist Miranda Mims puts it in *Archival-Futurism: Archives as Social Justice*, “... archivists have to be pragmatic and judicious and understand that selection is inescapable; it is impossible to collect everything.”

Making decisions about what records to preserve in the vault also helps to separate records that contain valuable historical information from transitory documents that do not have anything to share. That selec-



Above: Wooden bookcase filled with books, Credit Jason Leung (2018)

tion and later description work help to make an archival collection more navigable for researchers. A large mass of material culture becomes something more manageable and comprehensible.

However, selection also means that there have been and will be important archival records that do not get preserved. The decisions about selection and preservation that archivists make shape the kinds of records that get preserved and, in effect, what history gets to be remembered in the archival record. It is important to ask how those decisions are made and why. When do gaps in the archival record silence the voices and perspectives of underrepresented communities?

Historical evidence found in an archives is often assumed to be true and the institution to be neutral. In

reality, biases in society are reflected in the archives. This can be present in the practices of archivists managing a collection, but it can also refer to the archival collection itself. Gaps made by selection and acquisition decisions can become silences in the vault, an absence of communities that have been ignored by the archives. For archivist Rodney G. S. Carter, the ability to decide what gets preserved is how archives exert their own perspective and power; “[t]he power to exclude is a fundamental aspect of the archive. Inevitably, there are distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences in the archive.”

In recent years, the archival field has considered how current modes of acquisition, selection, and arrangement can silence the voices of underrepresented communities in the historical record. However, the current gaps common in archival collections cannot be addressed without intentional and proactive work.

What steps can the South Peace Regional Archives take to tackle our own gaps in the collection? Miranda Mims recommends that archival staff should recognize the power of archives and “... be aware of problematic narratives in their holdings and proactive in representing alternatives to the ‘official’ records.” For the UMNC Library special collections, they fill gaps and provide alternatives by focus on adding items from underrepresented communities to their collection and seeking partnerships that prioritize diverse sources.

The Saint Alberta Hall Library strategy for libraries and archives for addressing silences is to perform an inventory of a collection to answer

these questions:

- ◆ What is missing?
- ◆ Whose perspectives are not represented?
- ◆ What could be the reasons for these archival silences?
- ◆ Can you find evidence for the missing perspective in another archives or in the community?

An equally important step is in how an archives approaches outreach. Are we making connections with all of the communities in the South Peace region? Are we able to share a more comprehensive historical record of everyone in the region as a ‘total archives’? Working more closely with communities can help ensure we are better preserving their voices in our vault, but we can also help fill in the gaps by assisting community-based groups who are preserving historical records in their own custody.

Below: Books in shelves in room, Credit ubahnverleih (2020)



Land Ladies

Women Who Homesteaded in the South Peace

Perhaps the most common image we have in mind when we hear the word “homesteader” is that of a young man eager for adventure, or perhaps a family in search of a new life. In the absence of an adult male, however, women could also file on a homestead. Some of them were unmarried women, perhaps veteran nurses of the First World War, while others were widows with families to support. Read on to learn about some of the women who settled on the Grande Prairie.

Elizabeth (McPhee) Moon and her family immigrated to Ontario from Scotland when she was a child. She married Charles Moon at 16 and was widowed at the age of 40, leaving her with nine children to support. Elizabeth’s parents and siblings had moved to Alberta several years earlier and sent her glowing reports of their home in the west. In 1905, Elizabeth and eight of her children (the eldest daughter stayed in Ontario to complete her training as a nurse) moved to Edmonton to join her family.

Elizabeth ran boarding houses in Edmonton for a number of years. But when her now-grown sons decided to homestead in the South Peace in 1912, Elizabeth decided she was ready for a new adventure as well. In February of 1913, at the age of 49, she traveled to the Bezanson area by caboose, accompanied by her family. She filed on the northwest quarter of 27-71-3-W6, near several of her sons.

Along with working with her family to develop their land, Elizabeth contributed to medical services in the area. She delivered several of her grandchildren and acted as midwife for other women in the community as well, since there was only one doctor serving the region at the time. Later, Elizabeth worked as a cook in the Grande Prairie hospital. She died in 1946 and was buried in the Glen Leslie Cemetery.



Above: Elizabeth Moon, ca. 1910. (SPRA 1996.38.1b)

Louwina (Engels) Ganzeveld emigrated from Groningen, Holland in 1913 with eight children, the youngest of whom celebrated his first birthday on the voyage to Canada. Her husband Peter had made the journey a year earlier. The family lived near Calgary until 1921. At that time, they ventured north to the Peace Country, where Peter and his grown sons worked for Harry Adair. Sadly, Peter died of the flu in 1923.

Louwina filed on SW31-74-7-W6 in 1924, with her sons acquiring land nearby as well. Although little is known about Louwina, her son Peter described her as



Left: Ganzeveld and Jazzard threshing crew, 1929. (SPRA 2001.02.021)

Weatherup lived with the Holmes family and supported Jessie in managing the household and farm.

Jessie was active in the Lake Saskatoon community and St. Andrew’s Church until 1926, when she moved to Grande Prairie to live with her sister and brother-in-law. Two years later, they moved to Edmonton, where Jessie died in 1971. However, she was buried at St. Andrew’s Church alongside her husband, back in the community where she’d homesteaded.

a hardworking woman. In *Buffalo Trails* (page 30) she appears in a photograph labeled “Ganzeveld’s breaking outfit,” indicating that she was likely an active participant in running the family farms. Louwina retired to Summerland, British Columbia to be near her daughter and died there in 1954.

Jessie (Hothersal) Holmes, her husband Robert, and their infant son traveled from England in 1902 to work as Anglican missionaries in northern Alberta (for more details about their voyage, read the article on the following page). After spending time at Slave Lake and Peace River Crossing, they eventually arrived at Lake Saskatoon in 1915. Robert died suddenly of a heart attack on July 21, 1916, leaving Jessie to support herself and five children, aged 2 to 15.

Mere days after Robert’s death, Jessie filed on a homestead at NE9-72-8-W6. With the help of Lake Saskatoon community members, more than 15 acres were cleared for farming and a vegetable garden, a frame house was built, and a well was dug. Jessie’s sister May and hired hand John

Right: Jessie Holmes with her children and sister. Standing in the back are George Holmes, Eunice Holmes, May Hothersal, and Jessie Holmes. In front are Aubrey Holmes, Nowell Holmes, and Olive Holmes. Likely taken in 1916. (SPRA 157.28)



Mary (Danielson) Knutson emigrated from Norway to North Dakota in 1892 at the age of 21. She was married in 1896 and in 1921, she moved to the Sexsmith area with three of her children, her son-in-law, and her granddaughter. Her husband remained in the United States.

Mary filed on a homestead at SW17-74-5-W6 in 1925 and had a home built the following year. She supported herself by keeping chickens and cows, and cooking for threshing crews. She and her daughter Nellie also worked as cooks at the Buffalo Lake Sawmill. Mary died in Grande Prairie in 1952.

All On Board

Excerpts from Jessie Holmes's Diary

In 1902 Jessie Holmes, with her husband Robert and son George, left Liverpool, England to immigrate to the Peace River region in Canada. In the early 20th century, this journey was arduous, requiring travel by ship, train, and wagon. It took the Holmes family forty-two days in total to travel to the English Mission of Slave Lake. Included here are excerpts of Jessie's diary describing their immigration journey:

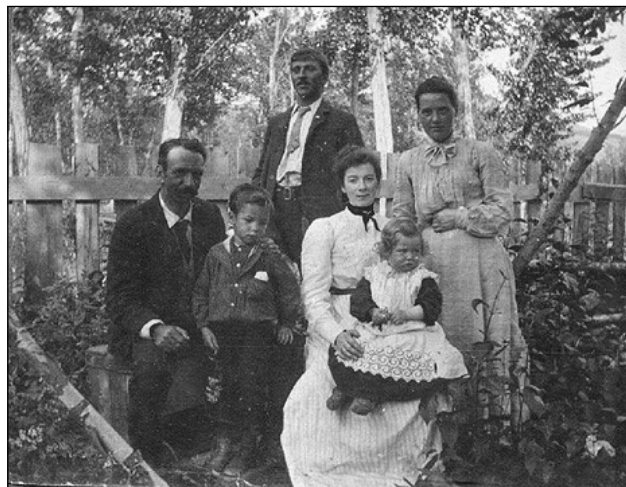
My husband and little son 18 months old and I left Liverpool on the vessel "Tunician" (Allan Line). We left Liverpool docks in a drizzling rain, which seemed somewhat to be in harmony with the occasion and when the call came: "All on board for the Tunician" it brought tears to the eyes of many who were saying "good-bye" to dear relatives and friends. Those of you who have crossed the ocean know what a thrill such an experience gives you – especially the first time. Onboard ship many friendships are made and experiences discussed by different passengers which gives a world of information in a nut-shell [...]

For the next few days horrible fog engulfed us. On Sunday night a tragic event occurred which cast a gloom over us for a while. A cry was heard: "Man overboard" and the engines were reversed and lifebelts with blazing torch attached were thrown out in the direction of the cry. We all rushed to that side of the boat in which the poor fellow was last seen; but too late, he had drifted past into the foam and it was thought probably drawn in under the vessel and killed

by the propeller. On enquiring it was found that the man had been drinking and gambling heavily and after parting with his last shilling, jumped overboard.

As we neared the straits of Belle Isle, a heavy mist again enclosed us. On rising early we realised the vessel was scarcely moving. We were just over the "grave of the Scotsman" as it was called – the place where that fine vessel had foundered some years ago.

The outlook was not too cheering. At 7:30 A.M. a wind suddenly arose which seemed to roll the mist before it like rolling up a window blind, and disclosed a huge black cloud and presently the rocks of Belle Isle loomed out into view – grim and terrible. Our course was at once altered and we stormed away at full speed. As the fog lifted back toward the south we discerned dimly some object between us and the shore, and soon found it was an immense iceberg about 15 feet out of the water. The beauty of the



Right: Holmes family at Christchurch Mission, 1908 (SPRA 157.17)

scene as the sun shone over her shoulders. The surface was kept smooth by the action of the sun on the ice. The color was a pale green and the whole thing seemed to sparkle and change color, and to wear an aspect of wonderful grandeur.

After arriving in Montreal and seeing the sights, the family continued by train until reaching Edmonton. The Holmes family stayed in the city and prepared for the more challenging trek northward. Unexpected difficulties appeared once the family set off by stagecoach:

The day before we left Edmonton there was a terrific rain and hail storm. Many windows of stores and houses were broken, and the roads were flooded.

In those days the large four-seated democrat stage left Edmonton twice a week, so we travelled to Athabasca Landing by Buck board and we could only take with us our grub box, roll of bedding and one valise. Our driver was the mail man. The stopping places were clean and comfortable.

We hadn't left Edmonton two hours before we began to realize what mud holes were like. The rain had covered up the regular beaten road with a depth of 15 and 18 inches of water in many places and before we got to the middle of the mud hole our horses began to founder in the water; one of them almost disappearing. Perhaps you know what a sudden stand still you come to when one wheel hits a tree root and the other wheel drops down into a mud hole. You feel as though you were to be shot over the heads of the horses and take a sudden swim. After a number of those experiences, the first day our progress was hindered for one mud hole was so deep that the driver got down and lifted our box of food and bedding to



Above: Hudson Bay Company steamboat, 1905. (SPRA 157.013)

dry land and then I was treated in the same fashion. The load, of course, was much lighter and with difficulty the horses got out of that mud hole. The driver had intended crossing the bridge at the Vermilion River that night and stay at a farm a few miles further. This was quite impossible as the bridge was broken and it was too dark to attempt to ford the stream. [...]

As soon as it was daybreak and we had finished breakfast and rolled up our bedding, we intended to cross the river. However, there was such a strong current with three or four feet of water, the driver didn't appear to relish the experience of fording the river because he wasn't sure of his horses. Mr. Holmes suggested he should take our grub box and bedding first and then return for us. This he consented to do after the persuasion. The horses made the trip wonderfully and when we were crossing, the driver said to me, "Now Mrs. just sit still and put your feet on the seat and hang on tight or else you will be swept off into the current."

If you are interested in reading Jessie's diary in its entirety, please contact the archives.

Dear Jean

Keeping in Touch After Immigration

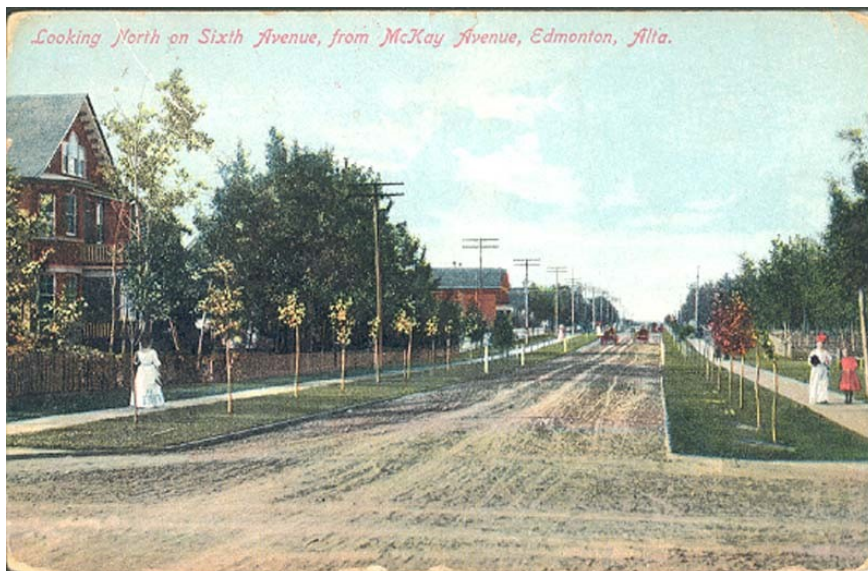
Brothers Jean and Pierre Lozeron immigrated to North America in 1910 and eventually ended up in the South Peace, having left behind three siblings in Switzerland and one sister in the United States. Pierre returned to Switzerland for a visit in 1959, but for decades the family kept in touch primarily through letters and postcards, many of which are now housed at the South Peace Regional Archives.

One especially interesting postcard, shown on the facing page, was sent to Jean and Pierre from their sister Agnes Christen Lozeron in 1917. The image depicts the community of Villiers,



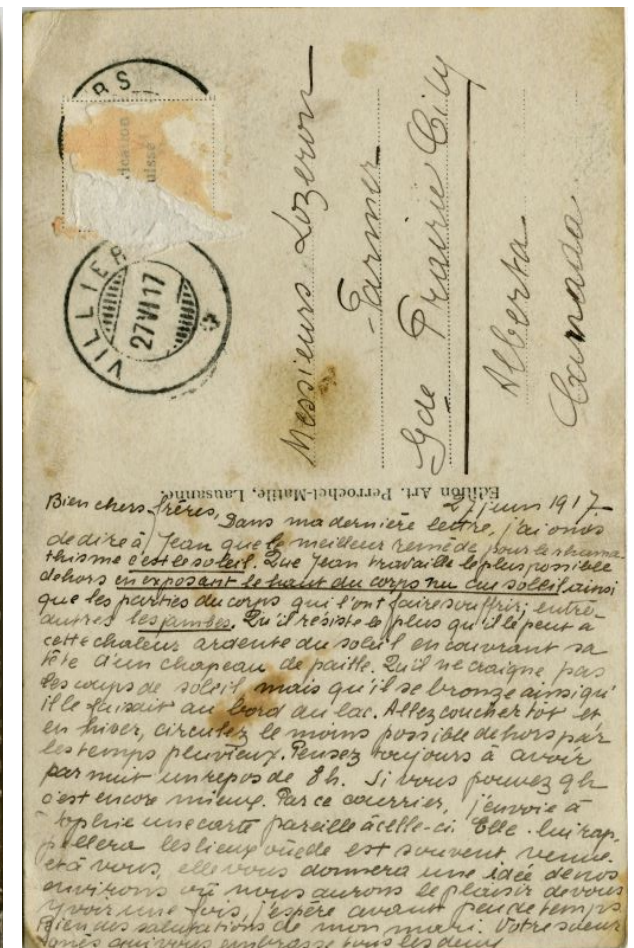
Switzerland. Fourteen locations have been numbered on the photograph, accompanied by a legend. Although archives staff are not able to translate the French text, it is possible that Agnes was identifying significant locations to give her brothers a “tour” of a place she was visiting or living in, but which they might never be able to visit themselves.

Above & left: Both sides of a postcard sent from Walter to Jean Lozeron in Grande Prairie, 1913. Walter writes that he was “glad to hear you arrived on your homestead safe. And had such good weather for it.” (SPRA 006.03.01.01)



Right: Postcard sent from Pierre Lozeron to his brother Jean Lozeron. Jean was living in the community of Laura, Saskatchewan at the time, but eventually joined Pierre in the South Peace. 1912. (SPRA 006.01.01)

Below: Both sides of a postcard sent from Agnes Christen Lozeron in Switzerland to her brothers Pierre and Jean Lozeron in Grande Prairie, 1917. (SPRA 006.04.03)



Treaty & Land

The Foundations of Settlement & Settler Culture

The following article was contributed by Duff Crerar and originally appeared in the September 2019 issue of Telling Our Stories. Duff is an Emeritus Instructor at Northwestern Polytechnic, where he taught History and Native Studies courses. He serves on the SPRA Board of Directors.

Although most of the very first settlers in the Peace Region respected and cooperated with the Indigenous people who had been resident since time immemorial, few who came later had very much interest in the Indigenous political and legal background to settlement and land patents. With securing housing, planting first gardens and crops, and proving up their claim, there was too much work to do. While fur traders depended on the good will and continuing collaboration with original inhabitants and, indeed, with the very ecology of the region as it was, the settler agenda was to develop, or, in their language, “improve” that land with plow, road, and railroad.

In the Peace Country, though, none of this could even begin without the implementation of two centuries of tradition, history, and law. Canadians and the British before them had learned that land surveyors and agents could not simply walk onto the Grande Prairie and begin making lines on the land. Beginning in 1763, the King of England decreed that, in British North America, land would only be secured for settlement by treaty with the Indigenous residents. Their tribes and territories

were to be treated as virtual nations. The principle behind the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was accepted by the Canadian Government at Confederation, though events would prove that Ottawa would take a more cavalier attitude to honouring Indigenous sovereignty than London. What followed, along with the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, was a sequence of numbered treaties across the prairies. Treaties created the reserve system and opened land for surveying. The Canadian Government was in no hurry, however, to send Treaty Commissioners north into the Peace Country. Treaties cost the Dominion money, and added to the burdens of government policing and other services. Ottawa considered the people best left as they were, assuming self-sufficiency was the norm.

Trouble was, thanks to the Klondike gold rush, Indigenous self-sufficiency was already under threat. If the

fur trade from time to time had caused conflict and sometimes devastated local animal populations, the attitude and sometimes lawless behaviour of those pushing through the Peace left Indigenous people feeling threatened. To many of their leaders who found themselves in the paths of such intruders, it was time to ask Ottawa for Treaty, since treaty brought as one of its benefits the provision of the Northwest Mounted Police and some legal protection. As word spread of the agricultural prospects for the Peace—the last undeveloped section of the Canadian Prairies—the interest of settlers and speculators grew. Canadian officials arrived in 1899 and by 1900, they had negotiated what became Treaty 8.

Ottawa heralded the Treaty as a triumph, but locally there were serious complaints and a severe test of Indigenous goodwill. There was no evidence that David Laird, one of the chief authors of the 1876 Indian Act (which reduced treaty signers to the status of wards of Ottawa, without vote or status to own their own property or oppose the instigation of residential schools), ever explained to his audience in 1899 that taking treaty automatically placed them under the limitations of the very Act he was responsible for. Those who personally attended the negotiations also complained that verbal agreements about immunity from taxation and interference in their religious beliefs had not been included in the written treaty, which they had been pressured to ratify. Missionaries were caught between regret at their role in supporting the government’s duplicity, and hope that the Treaty’s final clauses still would clear the way for their ambition to develop strong, devoted, literate Indigenous churches.

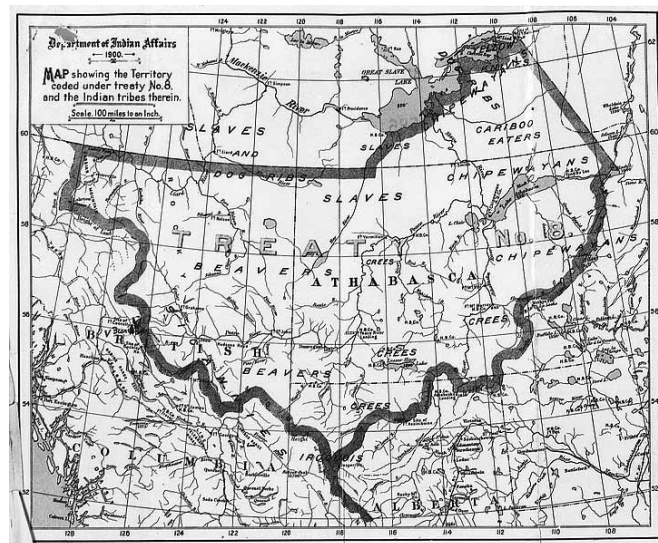
Over the next decade, the results of the Treaty, for better or worse, worked themselves out on the land of the Peace. Surveyors moved across the territory,

noting the locations of traditional roads, trails, settlements, and graveyards. Land offices opened at Peace River and Grande Prairie. Settlers moved in, the most adventurous pushing over the primitive trails to claim or pre-empt land. Some traveled thousands of miles on the new southern railways to hit the trails for cheap and easily developed land, free of the deep dark forests of the previous Eastern pioneering of their ancestors, or drawn from overseas by the need to escape oppression or poverty. To these, the dominant drive of ambition and the quest for independence would be realized when they received the treasured patent: land in their own name. They drove deeply into the region, jostling each other and often those who already had their claims recognized by the surveyors. For the settler, the Treaty and its stipulations quickly became history. For those under its continuing control, however, it was the foundational structure of everyday life.

The following books are available in the Archives Reference Library. Reference materials must be consulted in the Reading Room.

- *Indian Treaties and Surrenders, Volume 1, Treaties 1-138* by the Government of Canada
- *On the North Trail: The Treaty 8 Diary of O.C. Edwards* edited by David Leonard and Beverly Whalen
- *Through the Mackenzie Basin: A Narrative of the Athabasca and Peace River Treaty Expedition of 1899* by Charles Mair
- *Lobstick Volume 1: Treaty 8 Revisited* edited by Duff Crerar and Jaroslav Petryshyn
- *Aboriginal Rights Claims and the Making and Remaking of History* by Arthur J. Ray
- *From Treaties to Reserves* by D.J. Hall

Right: Map of the territory covered by Treaty 8. (Source: Library and Archives Canada)



In Memoriam

Finding My Canadian Family

The following article was contributed by Paul De Groot of Belgium. Mr. De Groot contacted us in his search for information about family members who immigrated to Canada. He shared his research with us and gave us permission to print this translation in Telling Our Stories.



Above: Lilian and Pauline (De Groot Collection)

Coronavirus

There was a famous Dutch soccer player with a memorable expression: “Every disadvantage has its advantage.” The disadvantage was the Corona crisis. Archives and such were difficult to reach, but it was actually thanks to corona that I found my family.

When the corona-crisis hit, social contact was rare and there was free time to nose about. I found a photo [see above] of two young ladies with a message on the back: “to uncle Octaaf [my father] with love from his two nieces, Lilian and Pauline,” stamped 8 AUG 1957.

Two daughters

There was an Uncle Fons, who at the end of the fifties sent New Year’s letters with Canadian dollars included for me and my brothers. These letters came from Grande Prairie, Alberta. I think he also had two daughters. But what was their last name? From my mother I knew that when they visited Belgium, they always stayed at her childhood home, with my grandparents, the Goossens-Van Den Eeckhout family on Hollandstraat in Mere.

Had Uncle Fons emigrated with a sister of my grandmother? After a few months I was allowed to search the archives in Erpe-Mere. My grandmother only had two brothers who were still alive. I suggested a few possible family names to the archivist. Then the archivist, Pieter Verhulst, gave me the golden key: the family details of Alfons Bayens, born in Aaigem on February 2, 1886.

BAEYENS CAROLUS LUDOVICUS I X z.v. Dominicus & Francisca Coppens. * Aaig. 23-03-1845, + Aaig. 22-07-1917, landbouwer te Opaigem - Alfons * Aaig. 21-02-1886 Gehuwd te Haaltert op 25 februari 1926 met Maria Emma Goossens - Joseph * Aaig. 12-05-1888 + Aaig. 09-2-1968 Gehuwd te Ressegem op 6 juni 1916 met Maria Joanna De Vydt - Joannes Baptist * Aaig. 20-09-1889 + Aaig. 15-01-1891 - Raymond * Aaig. 03-03-1891 + Aaig. 10-01-1894 - Maria Joanna Clementina * Aaig. 27-06-1893 + Aaig. 29-09-1971 Gehuwd te Aaigem op 11 juli 1918 met Cyriel Goossens (ex Haaltert). 1) Weduwenaar van Pelagia Schouppe overleden te Aaigem op 13 oktober 1882.	MEGANCK PHILOMENA d.v. Dominicus & Rosalia Bael. * Haaltert 16-02-1852, + Aaigem 12-05-1922.
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Above: Alfons Baeyens family details (De Groot Collection)

Following that I contacted the Red Star Museum in Antwerp. But it seems that all passenger lists had disappeared. Available online, though, were the lists from Ellis Island. I learned that in 1911, Alphonse Bayens, 25 years in age, born in Aygem, Belgium, ar-

GOOSSENS PETRUS X Donatus & Francisca Beerens (+ Ha. 01-09-1877). * Haaltert 27-03-1861, + Ha. Brantegem 22-10-1916. Beroep: landbouwer. Burgerlijk huwelijk te Kerksken op 11 augustus 1886. Alfons * Ha. Brantegem 29-06-1888 + Ke. Berg 28-12-1944 Gehuwd te Ke. op 22-05-1918 met Alice Scheerlinck (* Ke. 16-01-1886, d.v. Franciscus Xaverius en Barbara Bisback). Maria Emma * Ha. Keiberg 22-07-1889 Gehuwd te Ha. op 24-02-1926 met Alphonse Baeyens (* Aaigem 21-02-1886, z.v. Ludovicus en Philomena Meganck). Dominicus Josephus * Ha. Keiberg 07-09-1890 + Ke. Berg 16-06-1934 Gehuwd te Ke. 06-08-1919 met Malvina Wijnant (* Ke. 21-11-1887, d.v. Aloysius en Delphina De Trogh). vrouwelijk kind * Ha. + Ha. Brantegem 31-03-1892, levenloos Franciscus * Ha. Bouckent 01-03-1893 + Ha. Brantegem 16-08-1893 Cyril * Ha. Brantegem 28-04-1894 + Ha. Brantegem 02-11-1894 Cyrille * Ha. Bouckent 10-07-1895 + Aalst 22-01-1941 Gehuwd te Aaigem 11-7-1918 met Maria Joanna Clem. Baeyens (* Aaigem 27-6-1893, d.v. Car. Lud. en Philomena Meganck). Gustaaf * Ha. Brantegem 29-07-1896 vrouwelijk kind * Ha. + Ha. Bouckent 06-02-1898, levenloos Leopold Arsenius Amandus * Ha. Bouckent 26-06-1899 + Ha. Molenstraat 21-10-1941, werkmán Gehuwd te ? op ? met Victorina Melania Van Impe. Jozef Emiel * Ha. Brantegem 22-05-1902 + Ha. Keiberg 30-05-1945, landbouwer Gehuwd te ? op ? met Maria Rachel Schouppe. Omer * Ha. Brantegem 07-06-1907
--

Above: Goossens-Van Melkebeke family details (De Groot Collection)

Right: Portrait taken on the occasion of Gustaaf Goossens’ wedding in August of 1920. Seated is his sister Maria Emma Goossens, who later married Alfons Bayens. The man at right is likely brother Jozef Goossens (De Groot Collection)



rived on the *Lusitania*. On a trip with Local History services Houtem to Red Star I asked for information, but was unsuccessful.

The family information about Alfons states he was married in 1926 to Maria Emma Goossens. This was possibly a sister of Gustaaf Goossens, my grandfather. My grandfather had always told me he came from den Boekent in Kerksken (Haaltert). So I contacted Willy De Loose, president of the Local History service in Haaltert. And indeed, it seemed from the family details that Maria Emma was the sister of Gustaaf and probably also godmother of my mother, Maria Goossens (born September 17, 1921).

From the lists from Ellis Island, it seemed that both Alfons and Marie Bayens reentered New York in 1954

Below: Ellis Island List (De Groot Collection)

12-09-2021 08:36 YEAR OF ARRIVAL 1954 AGE AT ARRIVAL 68 To see more information please login or join . Bayens, Alphonse 1954 Canadian Queen Elizabeth https://heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger-result	The Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island → 1954 → 65 Bayens, Marie Canadian queen, Elizabeth.
---	--

on the *Queen Elizabeth*, and this with certainty after a stay in Mere.

Family members in Grande Prairie (Canada)

I now had the names of the emigrants; now it was time to find the family. In the meantime, I didn’t sit still and I had already mailed the registration office in Grande Prairie. They referred me to the South Peace Regional Archives. I hit the jackpot. Under the spelling Baeyens, Bayens, and Boegens they found lots of data, but no daughters named Lilian and Pauline. I did get the obituaries sent to me from Marie Emma Ames, born Marie Bayens (April 7, 1927 to June 4, 2018), and from Yvonne Louise Blimke, born Yvonne Bayens (September 8, 1929 to June 16, 2020).

Here comes the advantage of the Corona: Yvonne passed away in the middle of the corona crisis. Her funeral was limited to 100 people and this only after registering by phone with the children. With a night phone call to Dale Blimke, contact with the Canadians was made. I got his mailing address after a neighbour,



Left: Marie Bayens. Middle & Right: Yvonne Louise Blimke (nee Bayens) (De Groot Collection)

Eliane Van Leuven, had contacted Dale via Facebook. It is very sad that Dale died in January of 2023 after a cancer relapse. His obituary was given to me by Jim Ames, his cousin and the son of Marie Bayens.

The letter from Jim Ames, the image of a poppy on a Canadian coin, and the poem of a Canadian Army doctor give me the feeling that Canadians still feel connected with their roots and didn't forget about the World Wars.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago,
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.*

Thanks to Ms. Teresa Dyck from the SPRA I received more information about life events (from community history books) of the Bayens family. The book talks about Alfons being the oldest one of three; in fact, he was the oldest of five. Apparently, he forgot two

Right: Family of Robert Ames and Marie Bayens (De Groot Collection)

brothers died very young. On the other hand, I am also very amazed that my generation of Canadian family still has a lot of information on their Flemish roots that I did not know about.

From Dale I received a photo of his grandparents, my Uncle Fons and Aunt Marie, after arriving in Canada in 1926. From Jim I received a photograph showing my great-grandparents Petrus (1861-1916) and Dominica (1861- 1934) with their three oldest children. With the bike is Alfons (1888-1944); next to him Dominicus (1890-1934). This was the grandfather of Marc Goossens, surgeon at the hospital Maria-Middelares at Ghent and previous team doctor of the Belgian national soccer team. At right is Maria Emma (1889-1961). [See these photographs on the opposite page].

About the death of other family members, I again asked the Local History office in Haaltert. Two of them are worth mentioning. Dominicus Goossens, Belgian soldier, was killed at the end of October 1918. I remember the stories from my grandfather about what a daredevil his cousin was. Once he snuck up on a German soldier and returned with his ration. Grandfather had warned him: "the war is almost over so stay calm and hidden." According to the obituary from Canada he was killed on 28 October; according to the Local History Office of Haaltert on the 26. Then



there is still the death of Philemon Van Melkebeke, who perished on the *Titanic*.

Final Thoughts

The nieces of my father, Lilian and Pauline, I still haven't been able to find. They would be 80 or a little older. They are probably grand-nieces to my father, Octaaf De Groot.

At the end of the 19th century lots of young children were stillborn or died very young, possibly because of contagious diseases. From the three families I searched for, the survivors were: Van Den Eeckhout, three of seven born; Bayens, three of five; Goossens, eight of twelve.

A century or more ago, the registration of names and events was not done very carefully. Alfons Baeyens, on his arrival in 1911 in New York, became Alphonse Bayens. For the land he bought, his name was noted as Boegens. For the family Goossens, some children were recorded as having been born in Keiberg, others at Brantegemstraat or Bouckent. Upon inquiring locally, it was pointed out that the homestead was at Boekenstraat.

Uncle Fons and Aunt Marie married in 1926 in Haaltert and they left for Canada the same year. In 1936 they visited Mere for the occasion of the Communion of Cyriel Goossens, brother of my mother. Uncle Fons had heard of the tunnel under the River Schelde in Antwerp and he wanted to see it. The "Waaslandtunnel," nicknamed "Rabbit Pipe," was opened in 1933. What I didn't know: the youngest of the family Goossens, Omer, also immigrated to Canada. Jim Ames sent me a photo of his grave. I don't know how they traveled across the Atlantic. Lately I heard from Jim that he's pretty sure Omer arrived at a harbor in New Brunswick.

Finding the Canadian family happened with the help of: former archivist Pieter Verhuist from Erpe-Mere; President Willy De Loose, Heemkunde Haaltert; via Facebook, Eliane Van Leuven and Debbie De Groot (Mudgee, Australia); Teresa Dyck, SPRA; and finally the Canadian family themselves. Thank you.

Paul De Groot, Sint-Lievens-Houtem.



Above: From left to right, Alfons Goossens, Dominicus Josephus Goossens, Petrus Goossens, Maria Emma Goossens. Seated is Dominica (Van Melkebeke) Goossens. 1907. (De Groot Collection)

Below: Uncle Fons and Aunt Marie in Canada, 1926. (De Groot Collection)



“A Friendly Community”

Chinese Immigrants in Grande Prairie

Chinese immigrants have historically faced additional barriers when coming to Canada. In 1885 the Canadian Government passed the Chinese Immigration Act, which charged each person from China immigrating to Canada with a “head tax.” The price started at \$50, but by 1903 it had risen to \$200.

In 1923 this was replaced by the Chinese Exclusion Act. Under the Act, all Chinese persons in Canada, even those who had been born here, had to register with the government and carry certificates with photo identification at all times. It prevented new Chinese immigrants from coming to Canada, and specifically prohibited spouses and children of existing Chinese immigrants from joining them in Canada. The Chinese Exclusion Act was finally repealed in 1947 (Parks Canada, “Exclusion of Chinese Immigrants”). In this article we will introduce a few of the early Chinese immigrants in Grande Prairie.

The Mark Family

Joe and Bill Mark were brothers who came to Canada when they were very young. They moved to Grande Prairie in 1937, and Bill became the Manager of the Donald Café. During his time in the South Peace, Bill Mark was one of the most prominent businessmen in the community. He was known to be a good friend of then Mayor Percy “PJ” Tooley and acted as an informal advisor on town affairs. This earned him the joking title of “unofficial mayor.”

Right: Joe Mark in front of Joe’s Corner Café, ca. 1948 (SPRA 2003.24.12a

On August 19, 1945 at a community gathering to celebrate the end of the war he gave an address titled “14 Years of War.” It was mentioned first in the *Daily Herald Tribune’s* article on the event, above the mayor and other important speakers. This was a publishing decision that Bill reportedly chided the editor, J.B. Yule, for. He is even given credit for establishing the air service between Edmonton and Grande Prairie. When pioneer aviator Grant McConachie came to Grande Prairie for the first time, he needed to find a place to stay overnight but all of the hotels were full. Hearing this Bill Mark gave McConachie his own room for the night, room 9 at the Murray Hotel. This show of Peace Country hospitality was said to be a vital part in the eventual decision to establish air service here.

Bill Mark also had impacts far beyond Grande Prairie. When he left the city in 1948, he moved to Hong Kong and worked to promote trade between Canada and China. He helped arrange Canadian Pacific Airlines’ opening flights to mainland China, and eventually earned another unofficial title, this time as the “Canadian Ambassador to Hong Kong.” In his 70s, Bill



Above: New Canadian citizens, with their certificates of citizenship, on the stairs at the Grande Prairie courthouse. The photograph was possibly taken for use in the June 26, 1959 edition of the *Herald Tribune*. (SPRA 032.08.08.0240)

Mark came back to visit Grande Prairie and was interviewed by the *Daily Herald Tribune*. He said of his time in Grande Prairie that “It was a friendly community when I first came in 1937 and it still is” (*Daily Herald Tribune*, Sept. 14, 1984).

Joe Mark initially worked alongside his brother at the Donald Café, but Bill encourage him to go into business for himself, so in 1948 he opened Joe’s Corner Café, on Richmond Avenue and 100 Street. He actually purchased the existing Corner Coffee from Mr. and Mrs. C. Storm, and was determined to make it one of the finest places to dine in the Peace Country – which he did (*Daily Herald Tribune*, June 26, 1956).

Joe was also considered a leading member of the community, and was active in Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce. Joe had a large family of eight children that he was able to bring to Canada in 1950. His wife Jean and their children flew on the newly established CP Airlines flight to Vancouver, where Joe had

come to meet them. The reunion of the Mark family was front page news in Grande Prairie.

The Mah Family

Jack Marvin was born Mah Wing Chick, but changed his name to sound more English while trying to embark on a singing career. When Jack moved to Grande Prairie he became the proprietor of the popular Palace Café. He met and married Betty Elizabeth Wiedeman, and they had four children together (“The Bear Creek Flats,” Evelyn Marvin Millman).

In 1935, Jack Marvin was arrested in a truly bizarre police raid. A “local boy” had requested that Jack cook a wild goose that he had shot several days earlier for his dinner party at the Palace Café. Just as Jack was serving the goose the police arrived, confiscated the goose, and charged Jack with “serving guests wild game without a permit.” Jack was fined \$10, and he applied to the province for a permit to serve wild game (*Daily Herald Tribune*, October 10, 1935).

Even though his immediate family was in Canada, after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed he helped his extended family come to Canada. This included his second cousin Sam Mah.

Sam, along with his mother and brother Yuan, arrived in Grande Prairie in 1950 to reunite with Sam’s father who was already living in the Peace Country. Sam attended Grande Prairie High School, and after school he would work in the Palace Café. Jack tasked his daughter Evelyn with helping Sam learn English, so each week they would meet to talk and practice. Sam eventually took over the Palace Café, and renamed it Nu Palace (Interview with Sam Mah, SPRA 2008.040).

These are only a handful of the many Chinese immigrants who helped to build our community here in the South Peace.



Above: SPRA Reading Room under construction at Centre 2000 (2024)

New at the Archives

Unavoidably, when talking about new events at the archives we will be talking about the move. While we continued operations until the end of January, we fully closed in February. Until we reopen at Centre 2000 in May, we will be unable to provide records access or research assistance as the vault is packed up and entirely inaccessible.

As we prepare to reopen, staff will be focused on preparing staff areas like the Processing, Vault, and Conservation spaces as well as public areas like the Lobby and the Reading Room. The vault in particular is a large job as we will be rehousing all archival records and installing new steel rolling shelves to ensure we will have space to preserve historical records well into the future.

While the archives will remain closed until we finish

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City of Grande Prairie
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Government of Canada
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setting up for reopening, there is other ongoing work. Aside from producing the magazine, readers of our blog will notice that we will be continuing blog posts like our new historical recipes series. Keep an eye on our website, Facebook, and Instagram if you would like to see updates about the move.

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