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Issue 4

TELLING **OUR** STORIES

CREAM OF THE CROP

AGRICULTURE IN THE SOUTH PEACE

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: Lawn and Superintendent's residence from silo.
Beaverlodge valley in distance. September 7, 1927.
Photographed by W. D. Albright. (SPRA 362.02.09.24)*

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.



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Letter from the Editor

It is almost impossible to discuss the last 125 years of South Peace history without also discussing agriculture. As one of the primary industries of our region, it ties into all areas of life. That is why we wanted to take a look at the history of agriculture in this issue of *Telling Our Stories*.

First lay the groundwork for agriculture in this region with “Cows & Plows: Agriculture & Treaty 8.” Learn how different crops contributed to the creation of paper in this issue’s Archiveology. See how agricultural skills were grown in this region in “Reaping Knowledge” and “Substation Shots.” Walk in the fields and explore the experience of people who worked in agriculture in “Seasonal Labour,” “the Lasser Project,” and “Fashions in Farming.” Finally, bring in the harvest with “Prairie Skyscrapers,” “Early Fairs,” and “Make Hay While the Sun Shines.”

Much like early agriculture, this issue would not have been possible without the work of our entire community of staff and volunteers. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this magazine, especially the Genealogical Society of Alberta, Grande Prairie and District Branch for sponsoring this issue. Finally I would like to thank all of you, and I hope you enjoy “Cream of the Crop: Agriculture in the South Peace.”

Ellyn Vandekerkhove
SPRA Executive Director

Take Note:

Folktales

This fall we will be partnering again with the Grande Prairie Museum, the City of Grande Prairie, and the Senior’s Reading Theatre to bring you Folktales Tours. These tours will explore the history and lore of the Peace Country through tales of interwoven fact and fiction.

Friday, October 18

Saturday, October 19

Check out our website and follow us on Facebook for more details.

Volunteer!

Folktales would not be complete without our actors and readers. So join us, get in costume, and step back into history in our Folktales tours. Roles for all comfort levels are available, so reach out to learn more!

info@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.

Cows & Plows

Agriculture & Treaty 8

The Indigenous peoples of the South Peace have historically had their own forms of conservation and land management which were distinct from European versions of agriculture, but which sustained them and this land for thousands of years.

In the summer of 1899 negotiations began on Treaty 8. Of primary importance to Indigenous bands was maintaining their traditional subsistence of hunting and fishing. The commissioners assured them that they “would be as free to fish and hunt after the treaty as they would be if they never entered into it” (Report of Commissioners). It is important to note, however, that the final written Treaty stated that they had the “right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered as heretofore described, [...] excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes.”

There was still a clear push for a shift towards agriculture written into Treaty 8. Indigenous peoples were granted set land amounts, and bands that selected a reserve and cultivated the soil would receive certain agricultural benefits that included, amongst other things: two hoes, one spade, one scythe, and two hay forks per family, one plough for every three families, and one cow per family. This seems to have been seen as a low risk promise from the commissioners because the assistance would only be provided when Indigenous groups began farming and ranching which they did not seem inclined to do.

Regardless of this, the so-called “Agricultural Benefits” have been a heavily contested portion of Treaty 8. The farming assistance and education promised was extremely limited, or often just didn’t materialize. Many of the bands that attempted farming failed due to lack of assistance. As Indigenous bands chose not to cultivate their reserve land, or were unable to, there was pressure to give up reserve land to settlers who “might put it to better use” (Madill). Following World War I, part of Duncan’s Band reserve and all of the Beaver Band of Dunvegan reserve were surrendered and used as soldier settlement grants, along with IR 172 near Fort St. John following World War II.

The impacts of the Agricultural Benefits continue to be debated into present day. As a result of a decades long legal battle, in 2016 the Government of Canada approved a “Treaty 8 Agricultural Benefits Framework” to address these claims. By 2023, 27 Treaty 8 First Nations had settled under this framework, but for others the debate continues.

Sources:

Dennis F.K. Madill. “Treaty Research Report Treaty Eight (1899).”

Robin Ridington & Jillian Ridington in collaboration with Elders of the Dane-Zaa First Nations. Where Happiness Dwells: A History of the Dane-Zaa First Nations.

Charles Mair. Through the Mackenzie Basin: An Account of the Signing of Treaty No. 8 and the Scrip Commission 1899.

“Report of Commissioners for Treaty No. 8” Sessional Paper No. 14.

1985.02.207—Treaty No. 8 and Adhesions, Reports, etc. SPRA Fonds 0039—Bert & Miriam Tieman

Paper & Crops

This Issue's Archiveology

While the increasing use of digital technologies has reduced the importance of paper records, it is undeniable that paper is still a big part of daily life. With its prominent use, though, it is easy to forget the history of its development and how its production ties into industries like agriculture and lumber.

Prior to the development of paper, there were a number of other widely used physical mediums. The most closely related is papyrus, which was made by cutting strips from the pith of a papyrus plant and arranging them in perpendicular layers before pounding with a mallet to make a connected sheet.

While popular in Ancient Egypt and across the Mediterranean, the papyrus plant could only be cultivated in a small area which limited its adoption more widely. It was also extremely labour intensive to make

papyrus with a uniform surface, and over time the strips could separate from frequent handling.

Parchment was another common writing medium prior to the popularization of

paper. To make a sheet of parchment you start with a pelt that has been cleaned in a de-hairing solution, then stretch it in a frame until it has dried into the proper shape and thickness. A special knife was often used during stretching to remove any remaining hair and ensure a uniform surface.

While parchment was often made from the skin of a sheep or goat, vellum was made from calfskin to create a finer product. Due to the expense of raising animals to produce parchment and vellum, some sheets would be scraped or washed to remove existing writing and make them available for reuse. The use of parchment was contemporaneous with papyrus and clay tablets, but around the 4th century AD, parchment had overtaken them in popularity.

By the 15th century AD, paper had largely replaced the use of parchment in Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa, but its development dates much further back. The most common history of paper points to the Chinese court official Cai Lun, who had developed a paper made out of mulberry bark, hemp, and cloth fibers around 105 AD. However, earlier examples of paper records have been found. For example, in 2006 a paper map fragment dating to around 179-141 BC was found in Gansu Province.

As mentioned above, for much of its history paper was made with cloth and plant fibers. These 'rag papers' were made of the fibers of cotton, flax, hemp, barks, and old textiles mixed with water to create a pulp. The pulp was then placed into a mold and pressed to remove the water and adhere the fibers

together into a uniform surface.

Paper had a few advantages over parchment and papyrus. In particular, its recipe could be adapted to regional crops and resources expanding its scale and range of production. While papyrus was dependent on a specific plant and raising animals for parchment was resource intensive, paper could use the byproducts of local agriculture and clothing industries.

As papermaking spread across East Asia, India, and the Islamic World between the 3rd and 8th centuries AD, multiple regional recipes were developed and paper began replacing parchment and papyrus. By the 12th century AD, papermaking had expanded further into Europe.

Separate to its spread from China, paper was independently developed in Mesoamerica. Commonly known as amate, this form of paper was in use by different peoples since at least 300 AD and was made from bark. The bark was harvested and soaked in water, sometimes with lime or ashes, to soften it before the fibers are beaten on a wooden board into a flat, uniform mass, which was then dried. Prior to its ban during Spanish colonization, amate was used extensively in ritual offerings, as religious clothing, in tribute payments, and as a medium to write codices. Even during colonization, the production and use of amate survived in isolated communities and by the late 20th century it had grown into one of the largest handicrafts across modern day Mexico.

While amate used wood products from its inception, it was 19th century innovations that led to the wood pulp based paper that most people use today. Two independent inventors, Charles Fenerty and Friedrich Gottlob Keller, experimented with designing machines to pulp wood and extract its fibers for papermaking between the 1830s-1840s. These wood pulping machines, combined with earlier steam pow-

ered paper presses, eventually led to transition to wood pulp based paper by the end of the 19th century.

This transition had two major impacts. The first was a shift from using agricultural and textile byproducts to relying on the lumber industry and tree farms to meet supply needs. The second major impact is referred to as the 'slow fire' in library and information science. The production of wood pulp papers introduces acidic compounds into the final product, which inevitably damages the record over time.

While acid-free wood pulp paper recipes were developed in the later 20th century, its expense means acidic paper is still used for mass produced products like newspapers and paperback books. Since the majority of paper records in the SPRA's vault date to the late 19th and the 20th century, arresting the deterioration of acidic paper remains one of our primary preservation concerns.

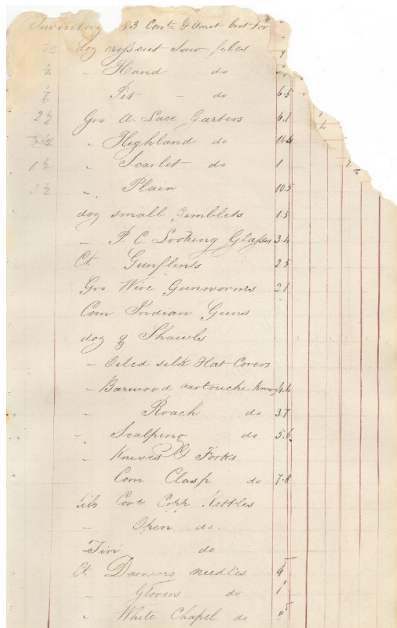
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Wendorf, Marcia. "The Long and Complex History of Paper". 2019, <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/the-long-and-complex-history-of-paper>. Accessed 20 July 2024.

"New Evidence suggests longer paper making history in China". World Archeological Congress. August 2006. Archived from the original on 2016-01-13, https://web.archive.org/web/20160113214622/http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-08/08/content_4937457.htm. Accessed 20 July 2024.

Britt, Kenneth W. "Papermaking". Encyclopedia Britannica, 10 Jan. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/papermaking>. Accessed 20 July 2024.

Rosaura Citlalli López Binnquíst. 2003, *The endurance of Mexican amate paper: Exploring additional dimensions to the sustainable development concept*. University of Twente, Enschede, Netherlands.



Left: Fur Trade Ledger: Inventory, 1834-1840 (SPRA 134.1)

The Lassiter Project

An Unsuccessful Venture

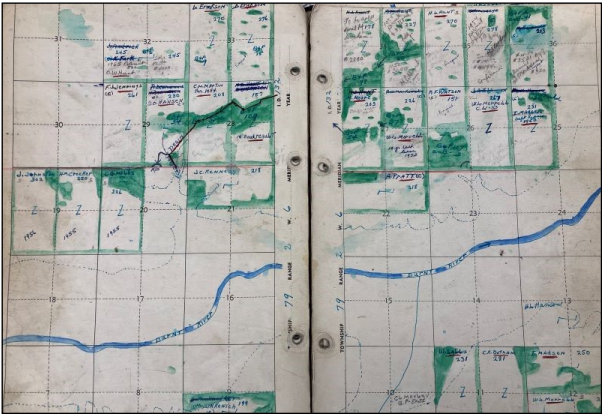
On August 25, 1946, the Government of Alberta signed an agreement with O.B. Lassiter, a large scale farmer from southern Alberta, to clear 120,000 acres in the Wanham area. In payment Lassiter would receive 30% of the crops grown for seven years and keep 20,000 acres for himself. The province would receive 3.33% of the crop annually in lieu of taxes. The cleared acres would then be made available to veterans in half section parcels. If at the end of the seven years the land was fully cropped, the veteran would receive the title. The veteran could also still apply for a cash grant of \$2,320.00 under the Veterans' Land Act.

This was the written agreement. There was also a verbal agreement made with the Provincial Government regarding the funding of the project. Lassiter would provide \$100,000.00 of his own funds, and the Treasury Branch would give him a loan for \$500,000.00. Lassiter quickly went to work, first having to construct an 11-mile road to the land he would be clearing. He purchased 13 D8 cats from the American Government War Surplus, and outfitted them with breaking disks and brush cutters. Soon he had about 20 people on the payroll working to clear land. By the end of the summer of 1947, it was announced that 35 parcels of land would be ready for occupation in spring. A lottery was held and 35 names were drawn to receive the land.

There were some problems with the project, however. Starting the project was extremely expensive, so by October 1947 funds were starting to run low. On

November 7, Lassiter was given notice to repay the full \$500,000.00 loan by November 12 or the Government would foreclose, seizing all his machinery and his contract as collateral. While the Government and Lassiter were able to work out new terms in 1947, the Government would ultimately seize Lassiter's equipment in compensation for that same loan in January of 1953.

Unfortunately, the land itself also suffered and even established farms struggled with crop failures. Some blamed Lassiter himself, as when clearing the land, Lassiter had used huge plows that turned furrows 8 – 10 inches deep. This would have buried the fertile top soil, and brought up the clay sub-soil that is common in this region. One farmer sent his soil to be tested and was told that it was entirely "glacial clay, not suited for farming." In 1958, after a near complete crop failure, the Government of Alberta helped many veterans to move to new areas, and the cleared land became a grazing zone. At that time, there were approximately 184 veterans living in the bounds of the Lassiter project.



Right: Map, SPRA fonds 587



Fashions in Farming

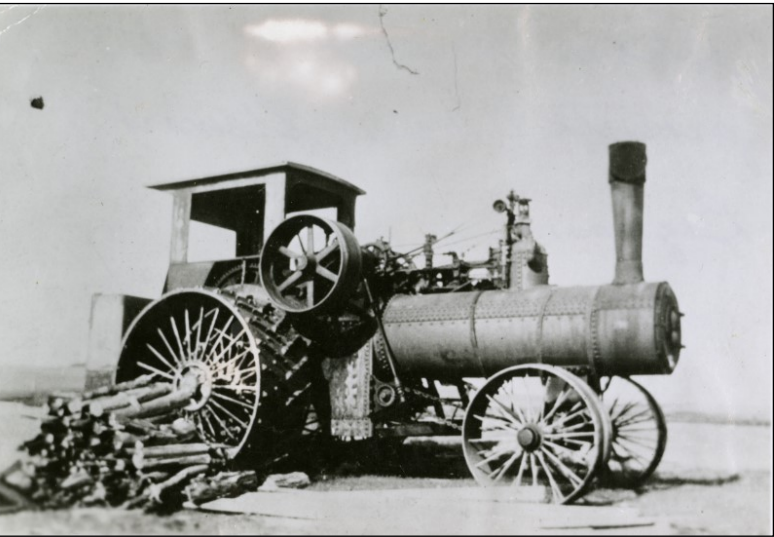
Revisiting *This Week in History*

Volunteer Kathryn Auger shared this post about farming trends in her popular *This Week in History* blog series in November of 2016. With machines and technology playing such an important role in modern farming, it's hard to imagine tractors being controversial.

The Teepee Creek news correspondent looked around the neighbourhood and began to wonder if there was something to be said for power farming. The writer appears to have been one who favoured farming with horses, but was beginning to have some doubts. The references to the Wheat Pool seem to hint at dissatisfaction with the organization. Since its founding in 1923, the Pool had had its ups and downs and not all the member farmers agreed with some of its policies and practices.

Left: Grande Prairie Herald, November 1, 1929

Below: Mr. Stewart's steam tractor, used for threshing by local farmers, was located near Bezanson. 1917. (SPRA 1991.03.049, fonds 049)



Early Fairs

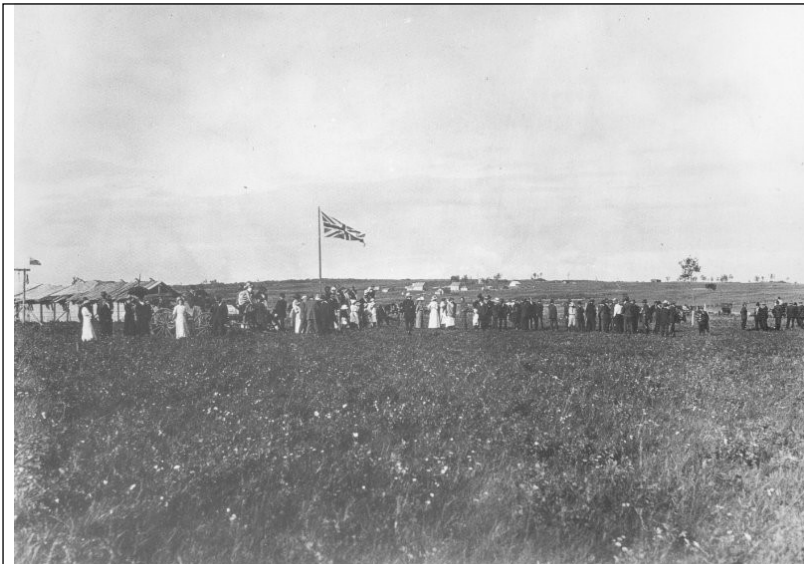
The 1916 Frontier Exhibition & Agricultural Fair

This article was contributed by Alyssa House. Alyssa is working at the SPRA as the Junior Archivist for the rest of the year, a position funded by Young Canada Works.

In the early 1900s, agriculture was expanding in the Peace Region. Communities were growing as more settlers arrived to homestead. Local agricultural societies blossomed in the pre-war years, popping up in several communities. These agricultural societies were responsible for annual fairs that became prominent events in the area.

Some of our oldest records of agricultural fairs in the Peace Region come from the Grande Prairie County Agricultural Society. The 1916 Seventh Annual Fron-

Below: Locals gathered at the Grande Prairie Agricultural Fair. 1913. (SPRA 0024.01.05.05)



tier Exhibition and Agricultural Fair prize list gives insight into the event. The fair occurred on July 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 5th, coinciding with Dominion Day.

The exhibition was the main event of the 1916 Frontier Exhibition and Agricultural Fair. The exhibitions were split into divisions. Exhibitors paid a small fee to enter.

The first division was “Horses” and included fourteen classes of both registered and unregistered horses. First-place stallions in the registered classes had the highest prize of fifteen dollars.

The second division in the exhibition was “Cattle.” This division included both dairy and beef cows with eleven classes. The highest prize for first place in this division was eight dollars and was awarded to classes that included bulls aged three years and older.

Division three was “Sheep” and included three classes. The fourth division was “Swine,” with five classes. Division five was for poultry and consisted of one class. It included sections such as “Pair of turkeys, any purebred variety” and “One dozen eggs, most marketable white.”

Division six was “Grains and Grasses.” It included class one, “Threshed Grains and Grasses,” and class two, “Grains and Grasses in Sheaf.” Roots and vegetables made up a single class of Division 7. The top prize was

five dollars for potatoes.

The eighth division in the exhibition was the “Children’s Dept.” This division had two classes, the first for children under 14 and the second for children over 14. Sections in this division included “Map of Grande Prairie,” and “Pressed Wild Flowers.”

Division nine was “Domestic Manufactures.” This included the classes: “Dairy Products,” “Fruits and Preserves,” “Home Products,” and “Ladies’ Work.” The top prize for this division was ten dollars for a “Collection of Photographs illustrative of the country.” This division also included special prizes such as large quantities of flour or cured meats.

The final division for this exhibition was titled “Native Work” which featured a variety of Indigenous items. This division included sections such as lynx paw robes, tanned moose hide, and pemmican. The highest valued sections were for a leather coat and a collection of Indigenous work, with a first-place prize of five dollars. Other sections included beaded moccasins, smoked fish, and rabbit robes, all with a first-place prize of three dollars.

In this early fair, many activities were available to anyone attending, not just exhibitors. A band supplied live entertainment for all attendees which was usually accompanied by dancing. The festivities kicked off with a baseball tournament at 9:00AM sharp. The tournament continued each day of the event and the winning team won the prize of fifty dollars. A tug-of-war and football tournament followed a similar structure each evening. Other events

included children’s sports. Several animal events were included, such as “Ladies’ Horse Racing,” “Bucking Mule,” and “Ox Race, bareback.” Foot races were also a common event. Some of these included, “Men’s Leap Frog Race,” “Egg and Spoon Race,” and “Men’s Three-legged Race.”

The prize list for the 1916 Frontier Exhibition and Agricultural Fair shows that the event had a spot for everyone to participate. In a section of the prize list there is information about rules of the event:

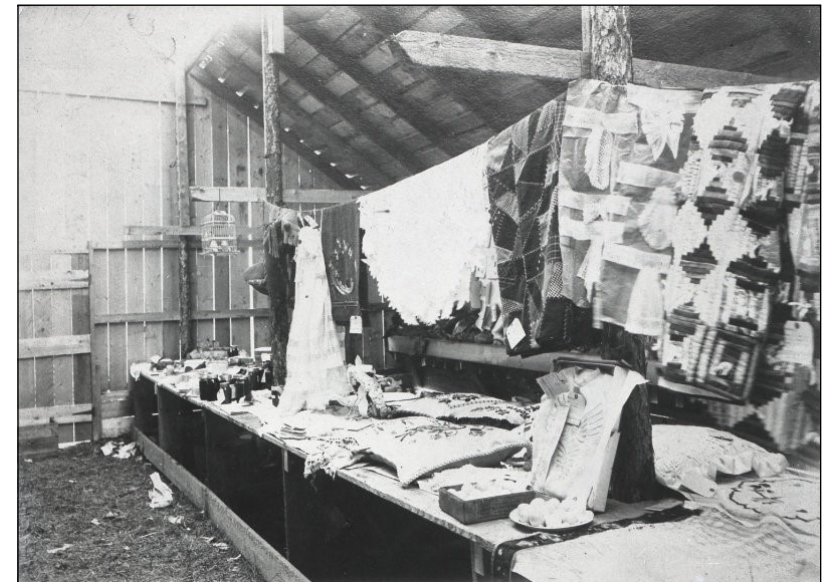
All settlers and visitors are requested to unite and make the Exhibition a success.

Join the Society and assist in a useful, profitable, and pleasant work...

Don’t grouch. If the Exhibition is not a success it is partly your fault.

Though the event was largely based around various competitions, it served as a way for the community to come together and share their accomplishments.

Below: Displays in the 1913 Grande Prairie Agricultural Fair. 1916. (SPRA 0024.01.05.04)



Substation Shots

Slides from the Beaverlodge Experimental Substation

These hand tinted glass slides come from the W.D. Albright fonds. These images were used to document the research at the Beaverlodge Experimental Substation where Albright was the superintendent.

During the summers, Albright traveled to communities around Alberta and British Columbia lecturing on a wide range of topics, including dairying, soil types, erosion, the vitamin needs of cattle and stock,



Above: A photo of Grande Prairie from Richmond Hill. 1932. (SPRA 362.02.13.089)

Left: View of the garden at the Beaverlodge Experimental Substation. 1927. (SPRA 0362.02.09.23)

Right (opposite page): A root harrow pulled by a team of horses. 1928. (SPRA 0362.02.06.22)



and how to stook grain to reduce the likelihood of spoiling. These lectures were often accompanied by a lantern slide presentation, including images such as these.

Hand tinted images were an early version of colour photography. Instead of the film developing with colour, colour was manually added to the black and white image. These images were all originally in black and white but were coloured by hand to add detail.

Above left: A man and a pair of horses cut "Reward" wheat. (SPRA 362.02.04.37)

Above right: Seeding rod – row plots. 1928. (SPRA 0362.02.04.41)



Reaping Knowledge

An Education in Agriculture

Having grown up in a rural community where agriculture was a way of life for most of my relatives and neighbors, it appeared to me that farming was something you grew up knowing how to do. My cousins learned by working with their parents, who had learned on the farm with my grandparents, and so on. However, agriculture is as much a science as engineering or chemistry and there is always more to learn and research. South Peace residents have a history of embracing opportunities to increase their own knowledge, and have contributed to agricultural research as well.

Many young people from the South Peace region attended the Vermilion School of Agriculture, now Lakeland College. Early on, tuition was free, although students were responsible for finding their own accommodation—even when this meant living in a hay-loft (see grainswest.com/2018/10/an-agricultural-college-is-born/). According to the Ann Macklin fonds (fonds 177), school fair winners were rewarded with ten-day courses at the Vermilion School of Agriculture, giving more South Peace youth the opportunity to expand their agricultural knowledge. Some individuals who studied or worked at

Right: School Fair winners throughout Alberta were treated to a short course for ten days at Vermilion School of Agriculture. Ca. 1933 (SPRA 177.79)

the Vermilion School of Agriculture include Morgan Sanger-Davies (fonds 556), Raymond Foster (fonds 449), Robert Heller (fonds 194), and Betty Welter (fonds 129).

Not everyone had the opportunity to leave the South Peace to further their agricultural education. Fortunately, there were educational opportunities closer to home as well. The November 18, 1937 issue of the *Northern Tribune* advertised a short course of agricultural training for youth from Grande Prairie and the surrounding rural communities. The program was sponsored by the Municipal Districts of Grande Prairie and Bear Lake, as well as other organizations including the Board of Trade and the Agricultural Society. These sponsorships made it possible to offer free tuition and minimal accommodation costs for students who would need to travel into Grande Prairie to participate.

A letter dated February 3, 1947 in the Two Rivers



Left: Beaverlodge Experimental Building, Superintendent's residence, and cattle sheds. September, 1926. (SPRA 362.02.09.17) (see SPRA 510.01.25) advertise a variety of professional development opportunities for local farmers, stating that "farming is a business as well as a way of life" (Grande Prairie Herald Tribune, January 7, 1957).

School District fonds (fonds 346) addressed to the Department of Agriculture requested that the provincial government consider building a new school of agriculture in the Grande Prairie area. The government had already promised that two new schools would be built somewhere in the province and members of the Two Rivers school board felt the South Peace should be considered as a possible location:

"The very apparent benefits derived by those who have attended Olds or Vermilion have convinced the vast majority of the people of this part of the country that all intending to become farmers or manage a home should have the excellent training provided by Alberta schools of Agriculture. We feel that the establishment of such a school in the North Country will be of the utmost benefit."

The school board received responses from the provincial Superintendent of Schools of Agriculture and MLA Ira McLaughlin, assuring them that their request would be considered. Unfortunately, the new school was not built in Beaverlodge as they had hoped. A school of agriculture opened in Fairview in 1951, however, which still brought educational opportunities nearer than they had been previously.

Educational opportunities were offered for long-time farmers as well. Newspaper clippings from the 1950s

Courses could last anywhere from two days to five weeks, and offered farmers the opportunity to learn about topics ranging from farm accounting and crop planning, to plumbing and welding, all skills that would equip them to run their farms more effectively.

In terms of the South Peace's contributions to agricultural research, perhaps the best-known example is the Beaverlodge Research Station. The Beaverlodge Dominion Experimental Substation, as it was called at the time, was established in 1917. In 1919, W.D. Albright assumed the role of superintendent and continued to work at the substation until 1945, when his declining health forced him to retire. Summarizing his career in 1946, Albright wrote that "Four or five thousand photographs have been taken and 1,000 lantern slides made... Twelve years' records have been kept of 409 lectures delivered in 100 halls and schoolhouses all over the Peace and Athabasca watersheds and beyond." The lantern slides (fonds 362.02) shed some light on numerous areas of research at the substation, including beekeeping, seed inoculation, crop rotation, and fertilization methods. The substation also developed crops that were uniquely suited to the prairie climate and soil, such as Subarctic Plenty and Beaverlodge Slicer tomatoes, and Boreal Creeping Red Fescue.

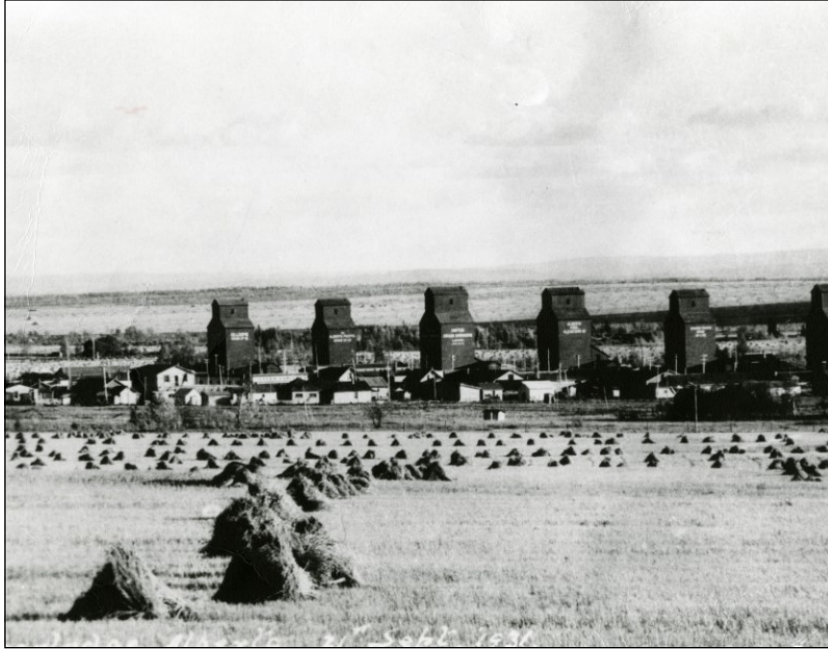
Prairie Skyscrapers

Grain Elevators in the South Peace

When talking about Western Canada, there are few sights more iconic than the grain elevator. These imposing structures served as economic hubs and community centers, and there are still some surviving today.

Grain elevators arose directly from the expansion of the railroad, and its increased role in transporting grain. Before the railroad, grain was generally transported only locally, and in smaller amounts. The use of railway cars opened the opportunity to transport large amounts of grain across Canada, and to even export it internationally. Initially, however, train cars would have to be loaded by hand. Not only was this back breaking labour, it was also inefficient. It might take a farmer multiple days to unload his grain, multiple days where he was not able to do his farm work. And that is in the ideal situation where a railway car was available when he arrived, and no one else was trying to unload at the same time.

The elevator had to solve two problems. First, it had to allow farmers to unload their grain quickly and with minimal labour. Second, it had to allow grain to be stored at the railway so that it could be quickly loaded into train cars when the cars became available. After several slight variations, the iconic grain



Above: New town of Beaverlodge, with six grain elevators ranged along the railway track, 1931. (SPRA 2001.01.166)

elevator was developed and the design had become standardized by the early 20th century.

Upon arriving, the farmer would drive his wagon, or later his grain truck, into the base of the elevator on a ramp. The grain would then be dumped out and fall through a grate into a storage bin below the vehicle. The vehicle was weighed when it entered and when it left the building, and the difference of weight was used to calculate the amount of grain deposited and the amount of the farmer's payment. A conveyor belt, usually with small buckets or scoops, was then used to lift the grain to the top of the elevator, and deposit it into storage bins. Then when a train arrived the

elevator would release the grain down a chute into the car, using gravity to do most of the work.

Within the South Peace, the rise of elevators was directly tied to the development of railway lines. In 1916 the railway arrived in Grande Prairie, and in February of the same year it was announced that two grain elevators would be built in the community. More were built in Clairmont and Sexsmith in 1917, and they quickly spread throughout the South Peace.

While some elevators are still standing in their original locations, others have been moved or destroyed. In the 1930s a Midland & Pacific Elevator in Grande Prairie was dismantled in just 15 days and the material was shipped by rail to Hines Creek where the elevator was reconstructed. Others were moved intact, such as on March 16, 1980 when a 300-ton United Grain Growers elevator was moved out of downtown Grande Prairie to its new site on the City's northern outskirts. The 110,000-bushel structure was 25.5 metres high, and took 6 hours to make its journey on a pair of heavy trucks. It was escorted through downtown by a contingent of police, Alberta Power crews, and city public works employees who not only had to warn away traffic but also dismantle lights and sever power lines that blocked the passage. There were several moments where spectators feared the structure might topple, particularly when the load had to jump the meridian at 108 Ave and Clairmont Road, and then weave between the lights.

Other elevators have been destroyed, either by accident or to enable new development. In 2005, the 1917 elevator in Clairmont was destroyed to make room for a 57-house development. This was a contentious issue within the community with

several community groups attempting to block the destruction.

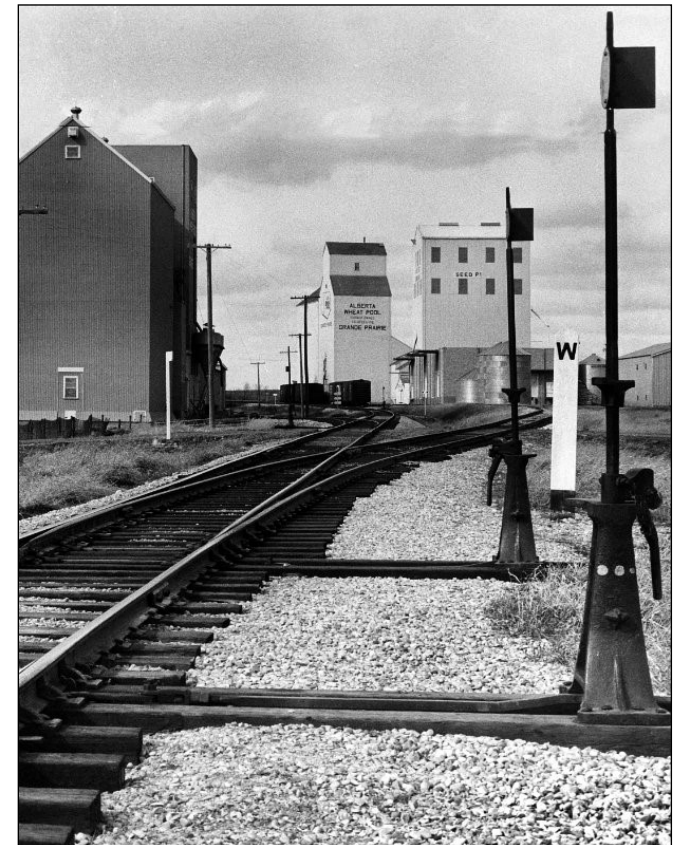
Some of the ones that remain have now been designated heritage resources, such as the Alberta Wheat Pool grain elevator in Sexsmith. This will hopefully mean a few of these elevators will continue to loom over our communities for years to come.

Sources:

Brock V. Silbersides. Prairie Sentinel: The Story of the Canadian Grain Elevator.

SPRA Reference File 510.01.04 - Elevators

Below: Railroad tracks and elevators in downtown Grande Prairie, including Alberta Wheat Pool and a seed plant, 1975. (SPRA 0192.05.05.14a)



Make Hay While the Sun Shines

This Issue's Featured Photographs

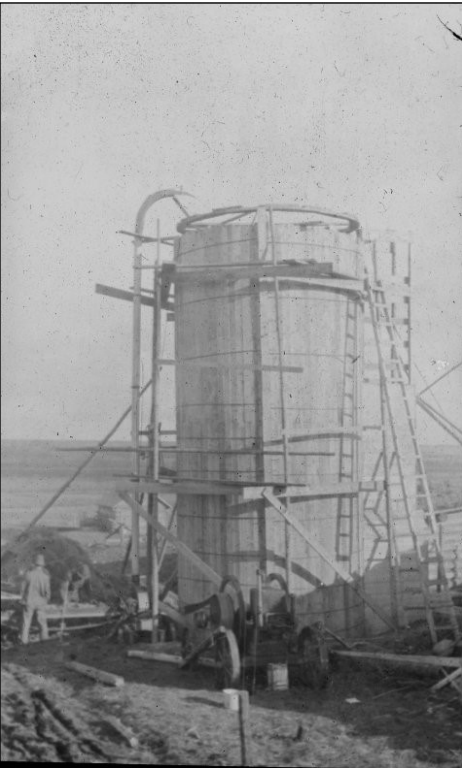
Agriculture remains an important part of life for many families in the South Peace. These images from the past 120 years show that farming can truly be a family business—men, women, and children all participated in harvesting the crops that sustained them. Though based on the photograph below, farming wasn't *all* work!



Above: A.M. Bezanson cutting the first oat crop on the Bezanson Ranch in 1909. (SPRA 155.02.08)

Right: Erecting and filling the first silo in the Peace River region. Beaverlodge Experimental Sub-station, 1920. (SPRA 362.02.02.01)

Below: This photograph depicts two left hands waving in a field of wheat. The arms are only visible above the elbow. N.d. (SPRA 676.03.03.02.002)



Top left: Nels Carlson, Howard Gummer, Ed Gummer, Mr. Grover (teacher at Chatham) and Jean Gummer taking a break in a field of stooked grain, ca. 1926 (SPRA 1994.14.08, fonds 124)

Top right: Arnold Christianson with his disking outfit, a steel wheeled tractor and disk, 1928. (SPRA 483.01.29-09)

Below: A woman harvester carrying a bundle of oats in the centre of a field of stooked oats, 1928. (SPRA 107.33)



Below: Miriam Tieman with bundles of grain on the farm at Buffalo Lakes, 1930. (SPRA 1994.17.04, fonds 039)



Seasonal Labour

Reminiscing with Kester Lillico

When looking back to the early 20th century in the South Peace region, many remember homesteaders growing crops and raising livestock. Less remembered though are all the different jobs that developed around agriculture, such as the seasonal labour that was essential in growth and success of communities.

For some, seasonal labour was side work done to help support the family farm. For others, it may have served as temporary employment before gaining a permanent job in or outside of the region. There were even some who were able to make a lifelong career through different kinds of seasonal labour. Unfortunately, less records were created about seasonal labour which makes it more difficult to research.

Thankfully memories have been preserved in community history books. In Chepe Sepi (pg. 76-79) Kester Lillico reminisces about his family's farm in the Spirit River area, along with all the different seasonal jobs they did in the community.

Our family arrived in the Spirit River area in the fall of 1918 coming from Cypress River, Manitoba. Dad had brought our four horses - Queen, Darky, Lil, and Nell. Also loaded in the box car were an Emerson gang plow, a walking plow, four sections of diamond harrows, a McCormick single disc, 18 run drill, a wagon, a buggy with round steel tires, and a set of Emerson sleighs. With these assets he planned to begin farming in this frontier land. [...]

In 1927 Babcock brought his thresher and steam engine from Saskatchewan by train. Dad and several

farmers promised him that he could do their threshing. The outfit was set in our yard and ready to go but we woke up next morning with a foot of wet snow. There we sat for three weeks. Finally the snow melted and dried up. He did get the job done eventually.

The next year Dad purchased a Stanley-Jones thresher and engine from Mike Deley and George Rosko. Elmer drove a team with a rack. Ford and I had a team and rack. We were fourteen and thirteen years of age so together we made one man. Dad ran the machine. It was quite a job to set the outfit. A team of horses pulled the separator to a level place with the blower facing away from the wind. Then we hitched the team to the wagon with the "one-lunger" engine on it. Back and forth we maneuvered until the pulleys were lined up properly. If they weren't directly opposite, the belt wouldn't stay on. One day a strong wind blew the belt so that it caught between the flywheel and pulley. It pulled the engine right up to the machine before we got it stopped. Six feet of the endless belt was damaged so we cut it out and riveted the ends together. We had to make it do for it would take weeks to get a new belt if we could have afforded one [...]

For several years the folks in Happy Valley would bring their bundles to our place to get their threshing done. Several farmers would help each other hauling bundles, sacking the grain, and hauling the straw back home. As their farms grew bigger we took our machine to their places to thresh. I remember threshing at Ernie Cox's, Fred Boomgaarden's, Simon Gerber's,

Bob Peacock's Sr., Allan and Albert Harbottle's, and to a farmer called "Dad Wiseman" (nickname). I never knew his real name. [...]

During the summer we would do road work for the municipality to pay our taxes. Cecil Neill's team of big black Percherons would pull a one furrow walking plough to plow the ground. My four-horse outfit would pull a fresno to move the dirt to the road bed. It was black top soil so the roads were muddy and rutted during rainy spells. Stan Mitchell who worked for John Thomas drove a four-horse outfit pulling a road drag. This smoothed the top of the road. Where the road went through a low place logs were placed across with dirt piled on top. Often in the spring the run off washed the dirt away so we hauled loads of manure to cover the logs. This section of the road was called corduroy. It was very bumpy to cross as you bounced from log to log - such were the roads in the early days!

In the fall I would do custom hauling of grain with my brother-in-law, Alex Laing. We used a Chev one ton and shoveled the grain by hand. At that time we could shovel the whole load on without stopping. We hauled to elevators at Spirit River and Sexsmith.

Another job Alex undertook was hauling rock for the railroad bridge at Watino. He had made an ingenious device which could lift rocks weighing several hundred pounds. We'd load them onto the bed of a 28 Chev truck. Alex got paid one dollar a yard. He paid Shorty Graves and I 15 cents a load for helping. We also got our board and room.

In the wintertime it was no less hectic as I hauled wood for sale. No matter how cold I headed for the bush six miles away. I felled the trees and limbed them. Then I loaded

the logs on five-foot bunks to a height of four feet. This load would bring \$3.00 in Spirit River. I sold loads to Charley Wing at the hotel, Tommy Atkinson at the pool hall, Ed Holmberg, Mrs. Winchell, Mrs. Oake, and many others. Joe Foote had a sawing outfit so he would saw the logs into blocks.

Another winter job was cutting ice for the summer's supply of drinking water. Neighbours usually got together to put up ice. Huge blocks were cut on dug-outs. Jim and Jack Porterfield and I were hauling the blocks out when I fell into the water. They fished me out and by the time I got to the house my clothes were frozen stiff. Such were the escapades! Ice blocks were packed in sawdust and kept in an ice house. It would last all summer before it melted. In the winter snow was melted for use in the house. [...]

The farmer had to be jack of all trades. He learned that the early bird was usually better off. He had to second guess what the weather would be. To make ends meet he sought other jobs off the farm. It was a lot of hard work but you were your own boss. Such was the case in the early days!

Below: Threshing crew at work [1940] (SPRA 0394.027)



New at the Archives

Since our last update in the June issue of *Telling Our Stories*, we have been settling into our new location at Centre 2000. The new space affords more visibility and the opportunity to host groups of researchers in the new reading room, and our expanded processing space means multiple staff members can work with records simultaneously. Moving to Centre 2000 has made it easier for us to preserve and provide access to the documentary history of the South Peace.

Since reopening, the archives has received 14 new archival donations. Recently processed fonds include the following:

Fonds 712 is about the Fetal Alcohol Support Society, an organization whose stated mission was to “advocate for persons and families affected by FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) across the life span.” The organization provided educational materials, produced regular newsletters, linked clients with resources, and collaborated with partners until their closure in 2016.

Fonds 713 consists of records created by Bernard Hamm, a taxidermist and naturalist who is best known for his work to save local trumpeter swans. Also included in the collection is a set of beautiful colour slides.

Axel Brett recently finished his four-month role with us as part of the Young Canada Works program. During his time at the archives Axel completed a number of projects, including processing new accruals for Fonds 273, Grande Prairie Royal Purple #107, and a related display exhibit focusing on the work of lodge member Sharon Annis. The newly processed records are available for research and the display will soon be viewable at the Grande Prairie Museum.

Thank You for Contributing to our Building Fund

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A special thanks to the following funding organizations for their support of this project:

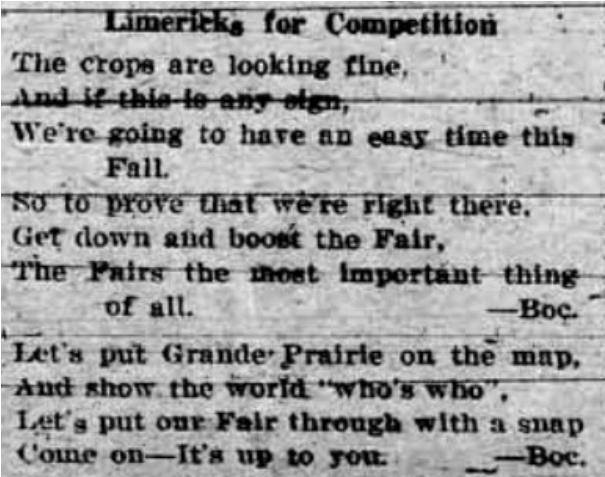
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Limericks for Competition

Agricultural fairs were a prominent feature on the South Peace social calendar (for more information, see the article on page 10). The September 20, 1921 *Grande Prairie Herald* featured these two poems celebrating the upcoming agricultural fair on the front page. The column urges as many people as possible to exhibit, since the deputy minister of agriculture was expected to make an appearance.

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