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Issue 2

TELLING **OUR** STORIES



IT'S PLAY TIME

TOYS & GAMES IN THE SOUTH PEACE

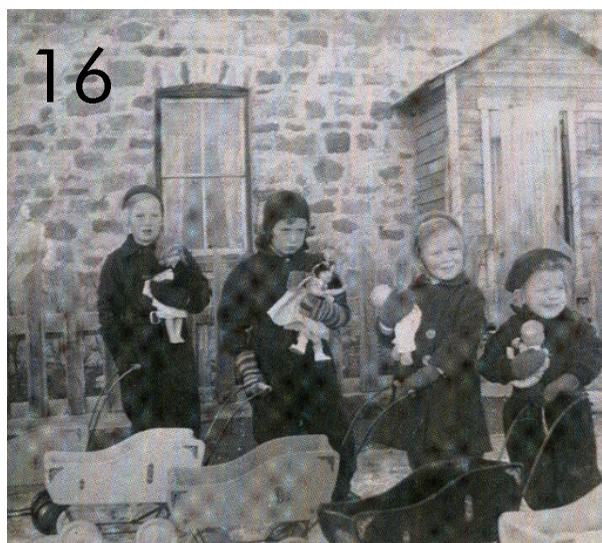
A PUBLICATION OF THE  South Peace
REGIONAL ARCHIVES

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Letter from the Editor
- 4 Take Note
Annual General Meeting & Cemetery Tours
- 5 My Eaton Beauty Doll
A Christmas Surprise for Betty
- 6 "A Ribbon in Her Hair"
Dolls in the South Peace
- 8 Digital Games & Records
This Issue's Archiveology
- 10 Trumpeter Games
Lawn & Card Games
- 12 Playful Art
Depictions of Play



- 14 The Tournaments of Kings
Competitive Cribbage & Chess
- 16 Prairie Playtime
Makeshift Play During the Depression
- 18 It's All Fun & Games
This Issue's Featured Photographs



- 20 A Trip to the Toy Store
Grande Prairie's Playful Business Ventures
- 22 New at the Archives
- 22 Hythe Mayor Meets Hythe Mayor
- 23 Membership Form

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



Cover: D.W. Patterson plays crib with his grandson, Douglas Hall, ca. 1970 (SPRA 152.02.01.20)

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

We have all heard the phrase, “it’s all fun and games.” And that is exactly what this issue is. Toys, games, and play are a crucial part of people’s lives, from childhood into adulthood, so we wanted to explore the topic in the issue. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Telling Our Stories*, and let out your inner child because “It’s Play Time!”

Start by making some toys of your own in “Prairie Playtime,” and learn about the creative ways the Stewart children played during the Great Depression. Or pop by the store to pick up your favourite toy in “A Trip to the Toy Store.” Play dress up with some dolls in “A Ribbon in Her Hair,” and learn about one girl’s beloved doll in “My Eaton Beauty Doll.” After that, head out for some lawn games in “Trumpeter Games,” or get competitive with some board games in “The Tournaments of Kings.” Explore a more modern game in this issue’s Archiveology, “Digital Games & Records. Finally, be sure to watch people of all ages at play in “Playful Art” and this issue’s featured photographs, “It’s All Fun & Games.”

While we might be talking about play, I want to take a moment to thank the staff and volunteers without whose work this issue would not have been possible. I would also like to thank all of you readers for your continued support of the work we do. I hope that you can all have some fun and games in your day, and until then, enjoy this issue of *Telling Our Stories*.

Ellyn Vandekerkhove
SPRA Executive Director

Take Note:

The 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the South Peace Regional Archives is taking place on

Saturday, March 15th at 10:00am

Centre 2000, Lower Level

Full meeting details will be available at
www.SouthPeaceArchives.org/2025AGM

Meeting will include:

2024 Annual Reports

Election of Board Members

Beth Sheehan Award

Special Resolution to Amend By-Laws

Cemetery Tours

This summer will see the return of the Archives’ much loved cemetery tours. Join us as we explore the Grande Prairie Cemetery and learn about the lives of the people who have come before.

Keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for more details as they become available.

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.

My Eaton Beauty Doll

A Christmas Surprise for Betty

The following story was transcribed from Betty Smart Welter’s writing portfolio (SPRA 129.04). The series contains many stories Betty wrote about her childhood and youth, including this tale of a particularly memorable Christmas gift that she cherished for a lifetime.

My fifth Christmas was a very exciting occasion indeed, and how well I remember that one. We lived in a farm house with wood stoves and Dad was always up first to get the fires going and the kettle boiling – then call Mother. My younger sister, Barbara, and I were wide awake on this special day, of course, and were just waiting for the house to be warm enough and Dad to call us. When he did call, we literally flew out of bed and into the front room. A huge Eaton Beauty Doll was my gift that year and she was exquisite indeed. She had lovely long, curly hair, brown eyes that closed when I laid her down and tiny little teeth in her very, very lifelike china head. She was precious indeed and was wearing a pale blue hand knitted dress that Mother had made. The rest of that Christmas, gifts, etc., is a blank – my beautiful doll was it.

While my parents were having their cup of tea, mother exclaimed “I’m so tired, it must be very early”. Indeed it was as Dad had read the clock backwards or something and it wasn’t even 5 a.m. So Mother was vindicated and Dad was teased and felt rather sheepish. We all went back to bed for an hour or so. I took my doll and laid her very carefully beside me. Sleep wasn’t for me then even though it was

pitch dark in the room as I was far too excited. I decided to name my doll Dorothy.

Dorothy was my constant companion for years to come. Mother taught me to sew, knit and crochet and how to design clothes for her. Dorothy had some quaint garments indeed, created by my small fingers from material I could salvage from Mother’s piece bag. At least I was learning at Mother’s knee in our spare moments and I really enjoyed this.

Incidentally, I still have the doll and she is still beautiful. Her arms and legs are jointed and have an elastic going through them. The elastic deteriorated in time, my poor doll came apart and I was very upset. We moved several times, but I always kept all the parts in a box. After I was married and living in Grande Prairie, a very dear friend said she could repair her. My friend Louise was a real crafter and liked working with dolls, especially Eaton Beauties. She was gladly presented with the box of pieces and some new elastic. She phoned me a few days later saying I could pick her up. Louise had done a great job and my doll looked just like new. She had re-done her hair, made her a small pair of nylons from some of hers and the original little white shoes were still in use. She was now wearing a lovely pale blue satin dress, which was lace trimmed as well as were her undies and slip. I certainly appreciated Louise’s work and expertise.

My doll still graces the dresser in my apartment neatly wrapped in clear plastic – she is still beautiful.

“A Ribbon in Her Hair”

Dolls in the South Peace

Looking throughout this issue, it is clear that dolls hold a special place in the history of toys. Several of the records and photographs we found specifically mentioned dolls, and memories of dolls seem to be synonymous with childhood, girlhood in particular.

Dolls have a long history in North America, with Indigenous peoples having made them for thousands of years. The oldest surviving dolls in Canada were made by the Inuit, dating more than 2000 years old. Oral Histories and tradition tell us that many different



Above: Jean Scorgie and Norine Hastings have a tea party for their dolls, ca. 1940. (SPRA 284.01.02)

Indigenous peoples made dolls, but since they were often made of natural material, such as wood, cloth, or fur, they were less likely to survive in warmer climates.

When settlers came, they brought their own traditions of dolls from around the world. Many early settlers and homesteaders came with relatively few possessions and had little disposable income, so dolls were often homemade from readily available materials. Scraps of fabric and materials around the house could be fashioned into a toy for a child, who may have had to travel many miles to meet children outside of their own families. Peggy Mair, for example, recounted how, one particularly cold winter in 1932, she made a set of paper dolls to play with.

Interestingly, Peggy made those paper dolls with pages of the Eaton’s catalogue. The Eaton’s catalogue was one of the main ways commercial dolls were introduced to families in the Peace Country. Their famous Beauty Doll was Eaton’s most popular model, as described in the previous article. Overall, commercial dolls were a luxury for many early settler fam-

Left: Grace Thomson and her foster child Raymond as a toddler, holding a doll. N.d. (SPRA 259.01.17)



ilies. Peggy Mair recounts that, during the Depression, many families had little money to spare on toys and gifts.

Rev. Wright of the Tarbes Church lived near where the Town Centre Mall is now located. Every year for Christmas, he would receive a shipment of toys and clothing from a church in Toronto to distribute to the local community. Mrs. Wright would spend hours sorting out the large packing cases, selecting what would go to each church family. Then Mr. Wright, driven by Tom Rooney in his sled, would travel to all the districts served by the church, and deliver the gifts to the various families. In one of her parcels, Peggy Mair received a commercially made doll, with a place for a ribbon in her hair.

In addition to dolls, of course, came a variety of doll accessories. From wagons, to cribs, to clothes, playing with dolls involved many more aspects. Much like dolls themselves, while the Eaton’s catalogue had pages of doll accessories, many families in the South Peace would make their own. From the buggies made with apple boxes, pictured on page 16, to clothing sewed out of spare fabric, families found creative ways to embellish their dolls.

Some scholars have theorized that the reason dolls hold so much significance in our lives is because they help teach girls skills they can use throughout their lives. Caring for them taught skills in caretaking and mothering, making clothes and blankets taught sewing. Whatever the reason, dolls were often treated like people, especially in comparison to other toys, with girls being encouraged to share a bond with them. There was even a doll hospital that opened in

Right: Mary Jean, David, and Jim posing around the Christmas tree. Mary Jean is holding a doll and Jim is holding Bomber. Christmas 1941. (SPRA 399.01.32)

Edmonton in 1927 by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Birch, which operated until the 1960s, repairing more than 2500 dolls. Throughout the history of the South Peace, dolls have clearly held a special place in the hearts of many people.

Sources:

SPRA 0168: Peggy Mair fonds

Provincial Archives of Alberta Photo #OS175-OS177.

Evelyn Robson Strahlendorf. *Dolls of Canada: A Reference Guide*. University of Toronto Press: 1986.



Digital Games & Records

This Issue's Archiveology

While in past issues of *Telling Our Stories* we have discussed preserving different kinds of physical records, we have not gone into detail about how to preserve digital records. Unlike many kinds of physical records, which when in a stable environment can last for a long time, digital records need constant intervention to remain intact and accessible. Interactive games are particularly challenging digital records to preserve.

Digital games face preservation challenges from a number of angles. Old digital games were often stored on cartridges or discs, which over time can degrade and become unusable. Many also use proprietary hardware and software to remain accessible, requiring the upkeep of old and fragile equipment, or significant and reoccurring emulation work.

This is in stark contrast to physical records and artifacts; if stored in the proper environment, a painting or sculpture can remain viewable for hundreds of years. Unfortunately, digital records and artifacts can become inaccessible, sometimes within ten years of their creation, without the concerted effort of archivists and preservationists (Winget and Murray, pg. 2).

Due to these factors, preservation of digital games can be expensive. As a newer media, its preservation standards are also less formalized. Ensuring a digital game remains accessible often means preserving its code, which can create technical and legal challenges. Many digital games are also shared social spaces; recreating that experience when providing access is technically difficult or impossible when the servers have long since shut down (Dym et al., pg. 2). These are unique issues that archivists and hobbyists alike are still developing standard practices to address.

So what are the current steps archivists can take to preserve digital games and records? Two primary methods are migration and emulation. Migration is where the digital record itself is updated from older, inaccessible formats to current ones. Converting a WordPerfect text file into a Word Document text file makes it easily accessible, but can often alter the record to fit the new format. Changes to a digital record mean an archivist is making decisions about how authentic a record is and is weighing preserving access

Left: Xenia Radchenko (2023). "black crt on brown wooden tv rack", <https://unsplash.com/photos/black-crt-tv-on-brown-wooden-tv-rack-ezEn4jYrVYQ>



Right: Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune, January 3, 1999 (SPRA 510.26.045)

to its physical content versus its meaning (Winget and Murray, pg. 2).

Emulation instead focuses on developing systems that mimic the hardware used to run the original digital record. With one emulator you can provide access to a large number of digital records that ran on that original hardware (Winget and Murray, pg. 2). However, they can be challenging to develop as they need to be built from the ground up or reverse engineered from proprietary hardware and software.

Whether employing migration or emulation, both have legal hurdles that are difficult to overcome. Access to the proprietary source code of a digital game is required for either method, but that code and other records related to the production of a digital game are usually owned by a commercial company. Emulation in particular is discouraged in the industry and can be illegal depending on the context and jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, digital games and records can often be totally inaccessible or lost entirely before their source code ever reaches the public domain. A recent study of accessibility of historical games in the United States market done by the Video Game History Foundation and the Software Preservation Network found that 87% percent of them are unavailable or 'critically endangered.'

To avoid these issues, some digital games archivists have taken a different strategy entirely. The creator of the [LGBTQ Game Archive](#), Adrienne Shaw, built a Wikipedia style website that preserves summaries



This group of computer wizards designed the futuristic computer game "Shattered Steel". Pictured with a frame of their game frozen on a monitor is (rear left to right) Cassidy Scott, James Ohlen, Marcia Olson, Cameron Tofer, (front) Russell Rice, and Dean Andersen.

All fun and games

GP friends love designing software for upstart computer firm

BILL MAH
Herald-Tribune staff Jan 3, 1999

Marcia Olson pilots her armored fighting robot across the craggy terrain, dodging laser blasts from alien invaders.

"It's a dream come true," admits Olson. "It's really good — no, it's great actually."

She and her Composite high school buddies used to design computer games for fun between classes.

"GETTING PAID"
Now, just barely out of their teens, they're getting paid for doing the same in Edmonton by Bioware.

So how did a high school hacker gang turn into a high-tech design team? It all started when Tofer began creating his own computer games in Grade 8.

"They called him 'the Computer' at school," laughs mom Lee Tofer.

He was so talented at programming, he became Composite high school's assistant computer teacher.

Soon Tofer was also the ringleader

Bioware and showed them our stuff," said Tofer.

"We went down to Edmonton to see their set-up there and they hired the whole stack of us."

"WORKING AS A TEAM"
Bioware, the brainchild of three young Edmonton doctors, has a reputation for being unorthodox but there was a method to their

and narrations of classic digital games. Each entry provides a text and visual description of the digital game and the LGBTQ+ representation that the archive is highlighting without providing access to the source material (Dym et al., pg. 2). In this way Shaw sidesteps the legal issues of more traditional preservation.

Sources

Brianna Dym, Ellen Simpson, Olivia Fong, and Ilibi Striegl. (2023), The Internet Is Not Forever: Challenges and Sustainability in Video Game Archiving and Preservation. *Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports*, 1, 1-12.

Winget, M.A. and Murray, C. (2008), Collecting and preserving videogames and their related materials: A review of current practice, game-related archives and research projects. *Proc. Am. Soc. Info. Sci. Tech.*, 45: 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1002/meet.2008.1450450250>

Lewin, Kelsey. (2023), 87% Missing: The Disappearance of Classic Videogames, Videogame History Foundation. <https://gamehistory.org/87percent/>

Trumpeter Games

Lawn & Card Games

This article was contributed by Alyssa House. Alyssa is working at the SPRA as the Junior Archivist.

The Trumpeter Swan Trailer Association records (SPRA fonds 516) provide many examples of adults in the Peace Region enjoying lawn and card games. Originating in 1968, the organization was formed with the purpose of connecting trailer and camping enthusiasts for weekend rallies. These rallies were held at a variety of sites in and beyond the Peace Region including places such as Moberly Lake, Debolt, and Dunvegan.

For provincial rallies, the Trumpeter Swan Trailer Association even traveled as far as Red Deer. The club also held its own rallies where other trailer clubs in the region were invited to join them.

Part of the fun of attending these rallies was the competitions and tournaments that happened over the weekend. Lawn games were popular events at rallies. These included bocce balls, horseshoes, lawn darts, and cornhole. When the weather limited lawn games, the club members turned to indoor games to keep themselves entertained. These games included card games like poker and crib, as well as darts. In the records at the South Peace Regional Archives, the history of the club was recollected by an unknown member. In their own words, they describe the past feats of the players:

Our club was well represented for quite a few years



Above: The trailer club plays Cornhole at Meridian RV Park, June 30, 2002. (SPRA 516.07.78)

and competitive. Roy Garret & Andy Feil were A side winners in Horseshoe one year and the B side another year. Needless to say the hotshot players weren't too happy when [the] G.P Club took their trophy honour, they were serious players. The same went for the Cribbage Champs when Betty Barker & myself walked off with 1 S in Crib. Ellen Gutttau & myself took the darts tourney at Olds.

Winning games and tournaments was clearly important to the club members. Though the group members were fierce competitors in their activities, the Trumpeter Swan Trailer Club didn't take themselves too seriously. This is evident in their humorous song, "Trumpeter Swan Trailer Club Song" which was sung to the tune of "Wabash Cannonball":



Above: Olds Rally card game, 1981. (SPRA 516.07.17)

*We've come to greet you, from way up in the Peace
Where we are happy, and friendships never cease,
Where the days are long in summer, and trailering is fun,
Where the water's sparkling blue, in the midnight sun.*

*Our group name is Trumpeter Swan , and we are here to learn,
How other groups do some things, is our main concern.*

*We'd like to learn just how to park, out there in the trees,
Trying to do it right has brought us to our knees. [...]*

*We've sharpened our horseshoes, and brought them along,
If you bring out your horses we will put them on,*

Right: Two men playing lawn darts at the Legion Park steak fry, September 1989. (SPRA 516.07.41)



*We'll try to heat them up, and get them right bent,
And that's the way we'll win the horseshoe tournament.*

*15-2 15-4, seemed all we could get
Most of us are naked, our clothes lost on the bets
The cards were stacked against us, no matter how we'd cheat,
The cut just wouldn't match up, we weren't too hard to beat.*

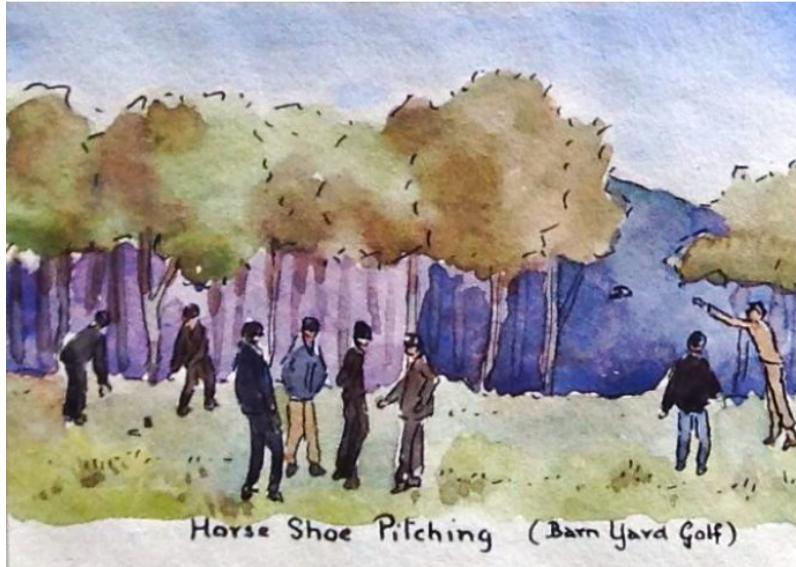
We'd like to thank the Ponoko [sic] club for hosting us this year,

*Thank you for the good food, the pretzels and beer,
We've all enjoyed the good fun and hospitality,
We invite you to come to the Peace for a Grande Trail-ereeeeeee [sic].*

The Trumpeter Swan Trailer Association continued to spend weekends at rallies playing games together from 1968 until 2008 when they disbanded. Today, these lawn and card games are still popular among campers.

Playful Art

Depictions of Play



During her voyage from England to Canada in 1933, Olwen Sanger-Davies passed her time on board painting watercolors of her fellow passengers (or horseshoe players she saw on shore when they reached the Great Lakes, as seen at left). On June 12, a cold, foggy day, she wrote that "We tried to keep warm with deck tennis, deck-golf & running round

Left: Watercolor from the Olwen Sanger-Davies diary, June 1933. (SPRA 556.02)

Below: Women playing tug of war, Beaverlodge, ca. 1920. (SPRA 362.02.12.16)



our bit of the deck." Two days later it was still foggy and she retreated to the third class nursery, where she painted a child on a rocking horse.

The image of women playing tug-of-war shows a different type of art. It was scanned from a hand-tinted glass slide. The Albright fonds includes many of these slides—but very few of them show people at play!



Above: Watercolors from the Olwen Sanger-Davies diary, June 1933. (SPRA 556.02)

Below: Postcard addressed to William Salmond in Cloyne, Ontario in April 1908: "How goes it Bill all right I hope. We are moving west about the 12th of this month so when you answer this letter address your cous. J. [indistinct] Findlater, Sask." (SPRA 1993.1.1.130, fonds 043)



The Tournaments of Kings

Competitive Cribbage & Chess

This article was contributed by Axel Brett. Axel worked at the SPRA as the Archives Assistant in summer 2024, a position funded by Young Canada Works.

While often thought of as just a fun pastime, board games can be a sport in and of themselves. Here in the South Peace, there is a long history of competitive board game clubs. These groups emerged in the early twentieth century, as the last major land rush petered out. While they played many different games, cribbage and chess were by far the most popular.

On March 20, 1936, the Cribbage Party was organized. This team-based tournament had groups from Grande Prairie, La Glace, and Northfield fighting over control of the annual Cribbage Cup. This was one of the earliest cribbage tournaments in the region, and is part of a long chain of events that continue to this day. The Cribbage Party was unique for its time in that teams were mixed-sex. Players were grouped into pairs made of a “gent” and a “lady.” The final winners of the first tournament were Mrs. A.J. Anderson and Mr. A. Bangen from LaGlacé.

Crib tournaments continued to be popular for several decades. In 1956, the St. Andrew’s Anglican Church of Spirit River began organizing tournaments for the local communities. Their first tournament came down to Ben Moellendorf, a local electrician, and George Kosowan, the mayor of Spirit River at the time. In the end, Ben barely took the win from Mayor Kosowan



Above: W.M. Barton, Reg Eyres, Tom Funnell, George Clark, and Ralph Adams playing cribbage at the Golden Age Centre. February 1959. (SPRA 669.01.04)

and was crowned the “Peace Country Crib Champion.” Events like this helped bring rural communities together. They were a place where people could meet new friends and have some fun.

Gaming was particularly popular with seniors, who were often limited in how they could socialize. The Grande Prairie Golden Age Centre really leaned into board games as a way for people to connect with one another. When the seniors’ club first opened in 1959, many of its first members did not know one another. Games nights and other events were crucial in helping people meet one another. This helped the club develop its strong reputation in the Grande Prairie community.

Meanwhile, chess is easy to learn, and was small enough to travel with settlers as they filed for homesteads out west. The game has served as a test of



Above: Frank Rennie and Soren Frederickson playing chess for an audience at the Golden Age Centre, 1959. (SPRA 669.01.01)

knowledge, intuition, and creativity for centuries. Following the First World War, many soldiers brought chess with them to the South Peace. One such example is Dr. Murray Carlisle, a medic and stretcher bearer who took up residence in Grande Prairie after the war. Many of the early proponents of chess in the region were well educated men like Dr. Carlisle. Charles Spencer, one of the first city planners in Grande Prairie, taught chess in his spare time. He even formulated his own strategy, which he published in a series of lecture notes.

The first Grande Prairie Chess Club began sometime in the early 1930s, and was made up of six men from the area well known for their chess ability. On February 7, 1937, they played against a Spirit River Chess Club at the Donald Hotel to

Right: Dr. Murray Carlisle playing chess with Mrs. Pratt, a family friend. 1942. (SPRA 399.01.53)



an audience of dozens. John Callahan, the president of the Northern Alberta Railroad, sponsored the event. As part of this agreement, he ran part of the NAR’s telegraph wire into the lounge of the Donald Hotel, allowing fans in Beaverlodge to tune in. After bringing home the trophy, the Grande Prairie team made the front page of the February 11, 1937 issue of the *Northern Tribune*. At the end of the Great Depression, events such as this helped to take people’s minds off the hardship of day-to-day life.

Articles written about game tournaments in local papers took on the tone of excited sports broadcasts. In the coverage of game tournaments, journalists described players as athletes battling their foe. When covering the first Cribbage Party, the *Northern Tribune* wrote how players “fought with vigor to the very end.”

Many of the most popular games had rules that were easy to learn but challenging to master. They allowed people to express their skill level and led to entertaining games for audiences. Games are often more than just a simple pastime. They are also a way to bring people from all walks of life together, even during hard times.

Prairie Playtime

Makeshift Play During the Depression

Preserved within the vault are different diaries and memoirs written by residents of the South Peace Region. These documents can serve as unique insights into not just historical events but also the lifestyles of the author and their family or community. This can include how people worked or how communities came together, as well as how children played in different time periods.

Included in the Phyllis Stewart fonds (SPRA fonds 059) is a memoir that was written by Phyllis. The first of the three parts is titled “The Memories of a Prairie Child” and relates her childhood in Consort, Alberta from 1931 to 1936 before her family moved to Ferintosh and her eventual journey to the South Peace.

Many subjects of rural Albertan life are covered in her memoir, including family, agriculture, food, and the Great Depression. Of special interest to us, however is how Phyllis describes what recreation and games were like when she was a child.

One aspect that may be

Right: the five daughters from the Lawrence and Norman Bode families with doll buggies made by their fathers from apple boxes. This is ca. Christmas 1939, and they are, left to right: Alva, June, Rheta, Eloise, and Lorraine. (SPRA 479.04.01.06)



surprising for children today is how Phyllis describes watching and working alongside adults on the farm as a major form of play. As Phyllis describes, “Our games and play had no regulations or organization and much of what we used time for was in relation to what parents and hired girls did” (pg. 7). Helping to pick pests from the fields or watching the adults milk cows were common activities for children on the farm. One of her favorite activities, though, was watching her father sharpen plowshares in the blacksmith shop he had built:

Our entertainment was to watch him retrieve the red hot plowshare from the coals using the tongs, place it on the anvil and pound it with a sledge hammer to achieve an acceptable edge. When the last of these operations were complete, into a tub of cold water went the still hot share, hissing and steaming: the reward for our patient watching. We also got to turn



Left: Five Mile Creek School baseball team, 1949. (SPRA 059.02.03.01u)

the means to purchase many toys or go on recreational outings. Many of the toys they did play with were crafted at home, but Phyllis fondly remembers the gifts she and her siblings received from their parents one Christmas:

Christmas was not a particularly lush time for any family. One gift my father made was a cradle from a wooden grape basket, my mother having covered the sleeping portion and canopy with gathered material from her worn pink rayon undies. A doll the only one we girls ever owned, was in it—“Bubbles,” which we’d worn out the Eaton catalogue admiring. From the same source, a little Red Coaster wagon became my brother’s prized possession (pg. 17).

Phyllis also mentions playing with children from the same neighbourhood or school. This included flying kites south of town with other children or visiting the pool hall owned by Geraldine Soderman’s father. She even mentions a friendship developed with the Sueys, where they would walk to school together or hang out at her grandmother’s house or the Suey restaurant (p.19). Overall, Phyllis describes an environment in which for children play was often work, but they also had the opportunity to engage in games outside and independent of adult supervision.

If you are interested in reading Phyllis Stewart’s memoirs, please contact the archives to schedule an appointment.

on an emery wheel for sharpening axes and sickle blades. The sparks flew both directions but weren’t even hot (pg. 8-9).

Some games for children are modelled after activities or labour they may do in adulthood and is seen as a form of learning through play. In her memoir Phyllis similarly connects children watching adults with learning to work: “Watching, not doing was much the same for cow milking, feeding pigs, cleaning barns, harnessing or saddling horses. Little did we know within a decade these would be normal things for us to do while others watched” (pg. 9).

Of the toys that Phyllis describes playing with, many are makeshift or repurposed from objects in her surroundings. In the summertime, she remembers her family pulling out the bathtub onto the veranda to use as a pool, or later wading in the water slough behind the barn (pg. 10). In one recollection, Phyllis mentions the family making use of materials that might otherwise go to waste. “Butchering a pig gave us a unique toy made from the pig’s bladder. It was washed, filled with air and sealed somehow” (pg. 11).

During the Great Depression, the family did not have

It's All Fun & Games

This Issue's Featured Photographs

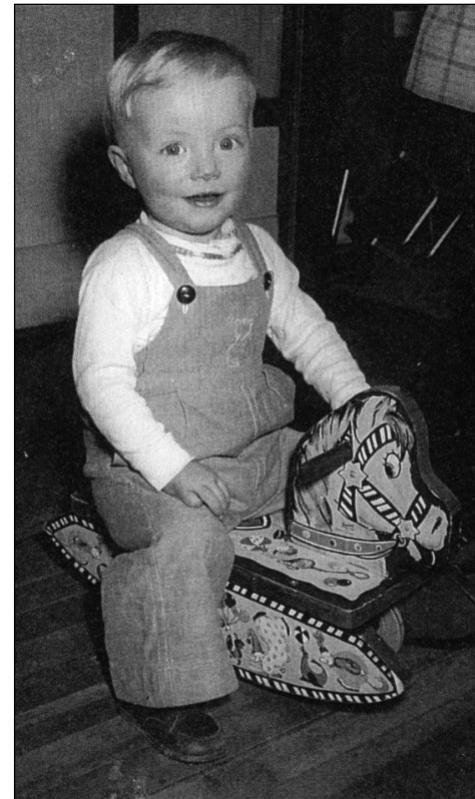
Throughout this issue, we've looked at a range of toys and games, whether handmade or store-bought, for children or adults, played indoors or out. The children here are enjoying toys as simple as a tin can lid on stick, and classics like dolls, rocking horses, and toy trucks. What childhood toys and games bring back the happiest memories for you?



Above: Rick Hodgson plays outside on his tricycle, with a wagon and various other toys around him, ca. 1957. (SPRA 630.08.229)

Left: Henry Hommy's sons Larry, Gordon, and Milton play with "famous stick with tin can lids - pushed them all over the country." n.d. (SPRA 388.01.08)

Below: The Flint children playing with dolls, ca. 1930. (SPRA 002.01.03.010)



Top left: David Gordon Percy plays on a rocking horse, 1953. (SPRA 2009.066.03, fonds 353)

Top right: Four Sheehan children in a toy wagon being pulled by Tom Sheehan, 1930. (SPRA 002.01.06.35)

Middle right: Children playing on playground equipment, donated by the I.O.D.E., at the Grace Children's Home at Dimsdale, 1979. (SPRA 111.04.087)

Right: Mary Jean, David, and Jim posing in the snow. David is holding a toy truck. 1939. (SPRA 399.01.26)



A Trip to the Toy Store

Grande Prairie's Playful Business Ventures

Where do you go to shop for toys and games? Many of us might turn to Amazon and other online retailers, but there are many options in Grande Prairie for shopping in person. Wonderland has a long history in downtown Grande Prairie, having been open in the same building since the late 1980s (SPRA surname file Jo-, *Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune*, June 22, 2018). Mastermind has a selection of toys for all ages, and every holiday season, the Calendar Club opens its location in Prairie Mall. But what other play-related businesses have existed in Grande Prairie over the years?

A *Herald-Tribune* article from November 28, 1946 discusses Joe Putters moving his business, Northwest Electric, to a new location. Joe had been in business in Grande Prairie since 1930, but growing demand—and a growing community—had necessitated “the acquiring of larger and more suitable premises.” The *Herald-Tribune* drew attention to the fact that the toy department was being moved in time for Christmas, while the remainder of the stock would be moved in the new year. Joe clearly knew that toys would be most in demand at that time of year, and was prepared to accommodate his customers.

But it's not just children who hanker after toys, and it's not just shiny new toys that draw attention. Ethel Uhryn targeted a very different clientele. What started out with making dolls' clothes at the farmer's mar-



Above: Window display at Putters Electric, 1933. (SPRA 174.01.05)

ket turned into collecting hundreds of dolls at auctions and flea markets and selling them at Collector's Corner, the antique shop she ran alongside her husband, Jim Smith. Although dolls are unquestionably a popular toy, Ethel recognized that they have a deeper value as well. For her, preserving dolls was “to preserve our own heritage... it's a touch with the past and roots” (SPRA 510.26.045, *Daily Herald-Tribune*, June 18, 1993). Ethel took the preservation element part of her business seriously. Beyond simply collecting and selling dolls, she washed them, mended and made clothes, and Jim took care of any mechanical repairs.

Grande Prairie has been home to several toy makers and game designers as well. A January 28, 1992 article in the *Daily Herald-Tribune* (SPRA 510.04.28) introduced Pauline McCauley, a local puzzle creator. She started the business in her kitchen, creating wooden

puzzles in various shapes including dinosaurs, rabbits, Santa Clauses, and even “money banks, with acrylic covered cutouts built into them to view the coins.” Pauline had started creating the puzzles in fall of 1991 when her father gave her a scroll saw, and she sold 78 during that holiday season at various local craft sales. She admits, though, that “I kind of overdid it at Christmas. I was cutting all day and painting all night.” At the time the article was written, she was hoping to grow her business.

In 1998, the Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce created a local version of Monopoly as a fundraiser (SPRA 510.26.045, *Daily Herald-Tribune*, December 15, 1998). Local businesses were able to purchase spaces on the board, so it served as a creative marketing opportunity as well as a fundraiser. According to the article, Turcon Construction replaced Park Place and the Jail square became Weyerhaeuser. The Chamber ordered 1500 copies to be sold in local stores like Wonderland, Shoppers Drug Mart in Patterson Village, and Norwood Esso, and half of those had been sold by the time the article was written. A charity tournament featuring Grande Prairie-opoly was also being planned.

There were also businesses that focused on providing clientele with a playful experience rather than merchandise. On December 14, 1987, *Grande Prairie This Week* (SPRA 510.04.27) announced the opening of TE-KI Indoor Mini Golf. At the time they had 18 holes, but they planned to expand to 37 and refresh them continually to ensure a new and interesting experience for repeat customers. To keep children from becoming discouraged, they alternated challenging holes with

easier ones. They aimed to be a fun place for entire families to visit, with not only the mini golf course but also a playground for smaller children, a pinball game, and foosball and pool tables. They also planned to add a racetrack for remote control cars eventually.

In June of 1995, Lori and Dean Johnston opened Frazer's, home to a family-friendly arcade and midway-style games (SPRA 510.04.28, *Daily Herald-Tribune*, September 26, 1995). Having moved from Calgary, a larger city with more activities available, they felt that Grande Prairie needed more entertainment options for families. They acknowledged in the interview that even in the entertainment sector, running a business is “not all fun and games,” and getting their business off the ground had taken a lot of hard work and long hours.

Do any of you own a copy of the Chamber of Commerce's Grande Prairie-opoly, remember golfing at TE-KI, or have memories of any of the other businesses mentioned here? We'd love to hear from you!

Below: Mini golf party for Crystal Park School staff that took place in 1984. (SPRA 664.01.07.29)



New at the Archives

During the middle of winter, there is usually a slowdown of visits and donations. The temporary closure due to flooding also contributed to fewer donations.

After opening back up in early January, the archives received a transfer from the Peace River Museum, Archives, and Mackenzie Centre. This transfer is a mix of pamphlets and other documents, many related to Wanham's plowing contests.



Above: Pamphlets, 1974-1978 (2025.001)

A number of new accruals and fonds have been processed and added to the vault. This includes additions to existing fonds like the John A. Crerar Family (0663), The Emmaus Lutheran Church (0266), Canor School District 3955 (0071), The City of Grande Prairie (0455, 0459, 0460), as well as the Municipal District of Grande Prairie No. 739 (0061).

New created fonds include West Central Preschool Society (0714), Big Horn and Meadowville Schools Reunion (0715), Florence Roy (0716), Joseph Leathem (0717), Hythe Historical Collection (0718), and The Leonard Gurel Collection on Grande Cache (0719). All of these new fonds and accruals are available for research in our reading room.

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

City of Grande Prairie

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Hythe Mayor Meets Hythe Mayor



Above: Hythe mayors shake hands 1991. (SPRA 0718.06.01)

A surprising recent find at the archives is this photograph of the then mayor of Hythe Mel Dick shaking hands with the mayor of Hythe in Kent, England. As it turns out, in the 1980s the two communities sent many letters back and forth, culminating in Dick's 1991 trip to England to meet in person.

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