

Volume 16

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Issue 4

TELLING **OUR** STORIES



SHOW TIME

MUSIC, DANCE, & THEATRE

A PUBLICATION OF THE



South Peace
REGIONAL ARCHIVES

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Letter from the Editor
- 4 Take Note
Call for Volunteers
- 5 Welcome Luke
SPRA's New Archivist
- 6 Take Two
This Issue's Archiveology
- 8 The Show Goes On
The History of Grande Prairie Live Theatre
Guest Contribution by Wayne Ayling
- 10 Harmonizing the World
Barbershop Quartet Style with the Sweet Adelines



- 12 Sing & Celebrate
The Sweet Adelines Scrapbook
- 14 The Fiddler's Legacy
Guest Contribution by Duff Crerar
- 15 Fiddlin' Friends
Grande Prairie's Fiddlers' Jamboree
- 16 Patron of the Arts
Mae Trelle's Music & Drama Scrapbook



- 18 Shall We Dance?
Grande Prairie's Earliest Dance Schools
- 19 In Memory: David Leonard
- 20 Show Business
This Issue's Featured Photographs
- 22 New at the Archives
- 22 The Digital Switch
- 23 Membership Form

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Cover: Outdoor performance of The Adventures of Robin Hood by Jim Nelson, played out on Grande Prairie Regional College grounds and near-by reservoir. 1983. (SPRA 002.05.04.149)



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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.

Letter from the Editor

“The show must go on” has come to mean a commitment to perseverance. Regardless of circumstances, performances of various types can be a form of self expression, and a way to connect a community. From singing around a campfire to theatre programming, live performing arts are a central part of our community experience. This is why we wanted to highlight them in this issue of *Telling Our Stories*, “Show Time: Music, Dance, and Theatre.”

In this issue you can tread the boards with the Grande Prairie Live Theatre in “The Show Goes On” and take in a show with Mae Trelle in “Patron of the Arts.” Explore the history of one instrument in “The Fiddler’s Legacy,” and how that legacy continued into the Fiddlers’ Jamboree in “Fiddlin’ Friends.” Raise your voice with the Sweet Adelines in “Harmonizing the World” and “Sing and Celebrate.” Dust off your dancing shoes and take a lesson in “Shall We Dance?” Finally, learn about how various arts can be preserved in this issue’s Archiveology, “Take Two,” which examines the unique challenges of audiovisual materials in the Archives.

As with any good show, behind the finished product of this magazine is the dedicated work of many other people making it possible. I would like to thank our crew of staff and volunteers who have worked to make this issue possible, and a special thank you to our guest contributors, Duff Crerar and Wayne Ayling. Now it is time to raise the curtain and I hope you enjoy “Show Time: Music, Dance, and Theatre”!

Ellyn Vandekerkhove
SPRA Executive Director

Take Note:

Call for Volunteers

The Archives is launching a new volunteer program, where volunteers can develop skills and take on more complex projects through a tiered project system. Volunteers can work in different areas of the Archives including:

- **Research:** explore historic questions for SPRA projects or external researchers
- **Writing:** share history through various platforms
- **Processing:** develop behind the scenes archival skills and assist with record preservation

If you are interested in developing your skills and working hands on in history, reach out to us!

<https://www.southpeacearchives.org/volunteer-at-the-archives/>

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.

Welcome Luke

SPRA’s New Archivist

The staff and board of the South Peace Regional Archives are excited to welcome Luke Harasen, our new archivist, to the team. Luke will be joining us at the beginning of September.

Hello everyone, my name is Luke Harasen. I am originally from Regina, Saskatchewan, and I am very excited to be a part of the SPRA!

I recently completed the University of Toronto’s Master of Information program in the Archives and Records Management concentration. Having built my theoretical understanding of archival studies, I am eager to put what I have learned to use at the SPRA. I have always been interested in exploring and preserving history, so becoming an archivist and acting as a custodian of cultural history is a bit of a dream come true. I previously worked in collections management at the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame and Museum where I got to learn more about my home province while also ensuring that others would be able to do the same. I hope to continue working in that direction by discovering the SPRA’s records for myself and sharing the region’s rich history.

Although I have visited Alberta numerous times, this will be the first time I have been to Grande Prairie. I enjoy the outdoors, so I like the idea of living somewhere where camping, hiking, and fishing are so close at hand. Seeing all that is available in the area around Grande Prairie, I can hardly wait to explore what the South Peace River region has to offer.

I am also interested in anything related to music, so I look forward to seeing Grande Prairie’s music community. I have developed a personal interest in collecting and preserving music media in my own time as well, so I guess that is just one way my hobbies may connect with my profession!

I am both professionally and personally excited about coming to Grande Prairie, so I eagerly look forward to meeting many of you and becoming a part of the community.



Take Two

This Issue's Archiveology

Audiovisual records provide a direct window into history, seeing and hearing what people would have experienced in the past. They are an essential part of our documentary heritage, whether you have an old family videotape or an oral history recording. However, as valuable as they are, audiovisual records are particularly challenging to preserve and share.

Audiovisual formats can roughly be divided into two categories: analog and digital. Analog records use a physical carrier to store their information. For example, a VHS video can be held on a carrier like magnetic tape or audio information might be stored in the grooves of a vinyl record. These carriers of an analog record require special handling and storage to prevent the stored information from deteriorating.

Obviously mishandling can damage analog records,

but improper storage can also be a significant risk. Irregular temperature and humidity, pests and moulds, and even UV light are all risk factors. Chemical decomposition is also a risk as chemicals can continue to react as analog records age, potentially producing acid in what is commonly called “vinegar syndrome” and even becoming volatile and spontaneously combusting in the case of silver nitrate film.

Storing analog records in a climate-controlled area can help slow decomposition and chemical reactions, but deterioration cannot be reversed. For this reason, some formats only have a short shelf life. For example, many experts predict that most magnetic media, such as VHS tapes, will be inaccessible by the 2030s if not copied or migrated to another carrier.

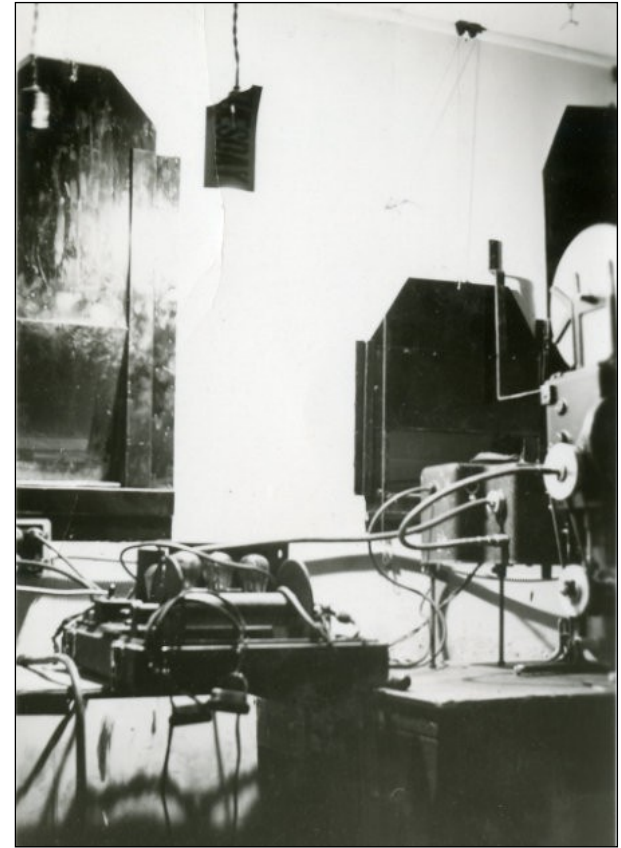
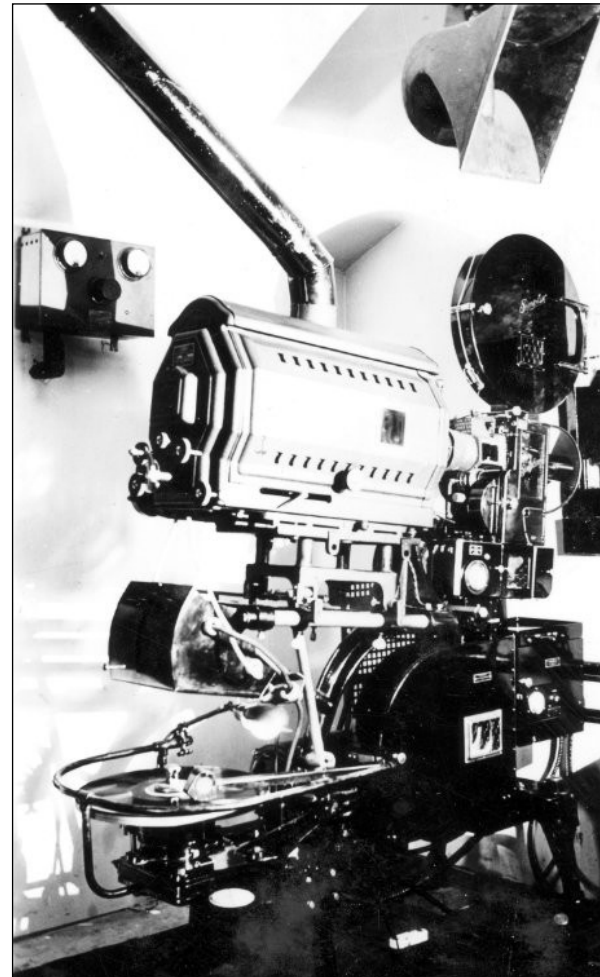
Another major challenge with analog records is that each carrier requires a compatible playback device to be viewed, such as a film projector or a VHS player. Here at the SPRA we have a variety of projectors and players to ensure that we can access different types of media in our collection.

For analog audiovisual records to remain accessible long-term, it is often necessary to convert them to digital files. This allows them to be saved even if the original carrier deteriorates, and to be viewed on a variety of digital players. Preserving digital files comes with its own challenges, however. Digital records can come with or without a physical carrier. A digital file might be stored on a carrier like a CD-ROM

Left: Broadcasting equipment in the new CFGP studio built at 10008-103 Ave. 1964. (SPRA 005.02.03.04)

or a computer hard drive. These types of physical carriers for digital records are also at risk of decomposition and damage, especially from light, and require specialized care. The files themselves can still deteriorate or become corrupted, even if the carrier appears fine. To combat this, we often back up digital files to ensure that if one carrier or version is damaged, we have another copy available.

Compatibility can be a problem for digital files as well, as there are many different file types, each of which may need to be accessed through different software. For this reason, digital files must be regularly upgrad-



Above: The sound amplifier from the Grand Theatre. Ca. 1928. (SPRA 2003.005.18, fonds 145)

Left: The movie projector at the Grand/Capitol Theatre was a 5.24 arc projector. It used intense light arced across 2 carbon electrodes and was constantly monitored by a projectionist. A chimney was required on top of arc projectors because of heat generated by the device. Ca. 1928. (SPRA 2003.005.17, fonds 145)

ed to new formats to remain viable.

Audiovisual records provide unique opportunities to witness moments in history, but also unique challenges. Keeping them accessible, whether they are analog or digital, requires constant care and diligent long-term planning.

Jack Lawrence & Ellyn Vandekerkhove

The Show Goes On

The History of Grande Prairie Live Theatre

This article was contributed by Wayne Ayling, former General Manager of Grande Prairie Live Theatre.

Wayne began volunteering at GPLT in 1980, and retired earlier this year after working as GPLT's General Manager for a total of 18 years.

Grande Prairie Live Theatre has been contributing to the quality of life in our region since 1963. Throughout our history, more than 4400 actors, singers, dancers, directors, producers, stage managers, set designers, costume designers, seamstresses, makeup artists, and many behind-the-scenes volunteer contributors have entertained over 340,000 people.

We have done more than create our own events. GPLT provides our home theatre and manages the KMSC Law Performing Arts Theatre venues for schools, other community groups, businesses, and individuals to create their own events. We loan over 1000 costumes, props, and sets to others. We provide our event expertise to anyone who asks.

Our theatre roots date back to 1932, with the formation of "The Good Companion Players." Grande Prairie was a cultural hotspot in 1932 with a 50-voice male choir and a symphony orchestra. In 1935 the Little Theatre Group Orchestra was formed. Theatre and music groups fell apart during the Second World War. During those years, St. Joseph's Dramatic Society and the United Church Players put on a few shows. In 1958, the Grande Prairie Players were formed.

In 1962, the Grande Prairie Players and the Operatic Society joined forces, and they officially became the Grande Prairie Little Theatre Society on January 16,

1963. As a response to changing times, Grande Prairie Little Theatre became Grande Prairie Live Theatre in 2001.

We have created and performed a wide selection of plays over many different genres—357 productions over 62 years. Thirty-nine of these were Canadian plays. Seventeen were original world premieres by local and national playwrights.

Plus, we have hosted over 110 professional music concerts! And festivals! We incubated the prestigious Reel Shorts Film Festival for its first 10 years! We also incubated the festival for youth – the Grande Prairie Children's Festival.

Annually, we host the Alberta Drama Festival Association's (ADFA) Regional One Act Adult Play Festival. We hosted seven of the ADFA's Provincial Finals Play Festivals, and have also hosted many Regional High School One Act Play Festivals.

As our region has grown, GPLT has grown and diversified how we contribute to our community and region. We have grown from two plays a year with 35 volunteers in 1963 to creating and hosting 127 events in 2024. Sixty-three of these were our plays and concerts. Sixty-four events were created by others. The combined audiences for all events reached over 17,800 (last season, 15,400). Our volunteer base has increased to nearly 300 every year.

Add in rehearsals, school classes, school meetings, and other non-theatre bookings, GPLT managed and provided technical expertise for over 620 bookings of

space this year (last season, 560).

We believe in providing live theatre educational opportunities for youth and adults. We produce a play featuring mostly youth actors every year. Our summer Rising Star Drama Camps for youth between 7 and 17 have been running for over 30 years with current attendance over 93%. Many of the youth attending these summer camps have gone on to perform in GPLT's plays for adults, serve as GPLT Board members, and take post-secondary professional training in live theatre. We also host workshops for all ages on many live theatre topics including acting for the stage and screen, directing, stage management, stage combat, playwriting, makeup, and scenic/set design.

We provide other services to the community as well. We help the fundraising activities of other community groups. This season GPLT donated vouchers for play or musical tickets to 55 fundraising events (last season, 46). We also printed the tickets for another three community events.

In 1985 we renovated the long-abandoned Atlas Tire building into our home theatre. As the needs for our productions and community events grew, we have made seven significant renovations to our home. We thank all three levels of government, many businesses, and hundreds of volunteers for making these improvements a reality.

In 2018, the Grande Prairie and District Catholic School District entrusted GPLT with the management of

Right: Bert Tieman in a South Peace Operatic Society (later Grande Prairie Live Theatre) production of The Student Prince. 1961. (SPRA 1985.02.102.100, fonds 039)

their new KMSC Law Performing Arts Theatre attached to the St. John Paul II Catholic School. We are thankful for their entrusting us with the operation and improvements of this "Open to the Community" theatre.

According to the Alberta government website, in 2024, Grande Prairie had 3081 businesses. Of these, only 19 had more than 200 employees. GPLT has consistently had more than 200 volunteers. A volunteer is a worker who is not paid for their efforts. As a not-for-profit business, is it very likely that we are the largest not-for-profit business in Grande Prairie. Compared to the for-profit sector, we would rank in the top 20 businesses in our city.

GPLT is proud of our accomplishments. We are thankful for the support of thousands of volunteers, hundreds of businesses, and all orders of government.

GPLT has been recognized for our many years of enhancing life in this region. In 2016, the Grande Prairie and District Chamber of Commerce named GPLT this region's Not-For-Profit Business of the Year. This honour was followed in 2017 by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce when they gave GPLT the Provincial Not-For-Profit Business of the Year Award.



Harmonizing the World

Barbershop Quartet Style with the Sweet Adelines

After learning about the plans for a Grande Prairie men's barbershop quartet in 1976, Jean Duffy, a local woman, decided to gauge interest in a female version of the group. Jean moved to Grande Prairie from Edmonton, where she was a member of a Sweet Adelines chapter. Sweet Adelines International is an organization that promotes the training and singing of barbershop quartet music for women. While trying to draw community interest in starting a chapter, Jean wrote in the *Herald Tribune*, "If you can carry a tune and love music you have all the qualifications you need." The group sought out members to fill the four sections: tenor, lead, baritone, and bass. By 1978, thirty women aged eighteen to sixty joined the group.

Becoming a Sweet Adelines chapter was not an easy feat. For many community groups, participation was

the only requirement to become a chartered group. However, for the Sweet Adelines, this was not the case. To become a fully chartered chapter of the Sweet Adelines instead of just a prospective chapter, the group had to prove itself. This meant that the group would have to reach a minimum of twenty members, and they would also have to perform in singing competitions, proving their ability to sing in a barbershop style. The group also had to prove that they could fundraise for competitions, costumes, and instructors.

Despite forming in 1976 as a prospective chapter, the Grande Prairie Sweet Adelines did not receive their charter until 1980. After several years of weekly practices, singing competitions, and fundraising, the women secured full status in the organization. A letter

from the Chinook Winds Chapter in Calgary congratulated the group on their achievement:

Your big day is here! You've passed all the steps to try "Harmonizing the World" Sweet Adeline style.

#1 Got you thinking how this organization is run.

Left: Drawing from the 1983-1984 history book of the Grande Prairie Chapter of the Sweet Adelines, 1983. (SPRA 038.02.03, page 5)



#2 Had you organizing your own your own future chapter.

#3 Gave you Bylaws, Rules and Regulations.

#4 The final step of answering all you had learned.

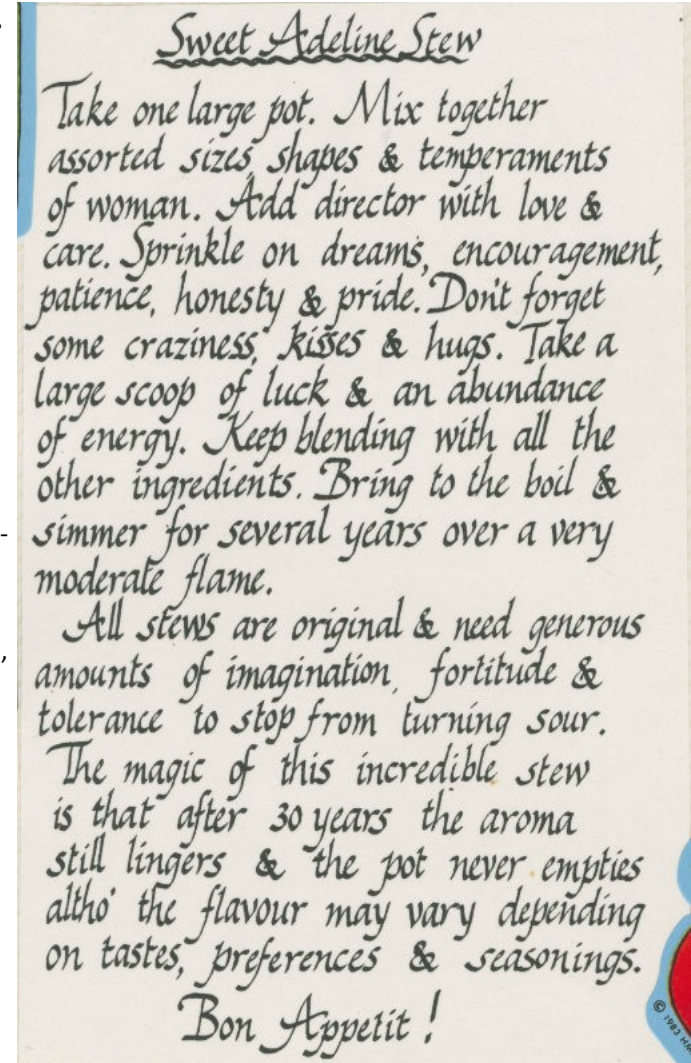
Now you have passed all the final procedures with an International Officer saying, "A job well done."

The group received congratulations from other Sweet Adelines chapters, both near and far.

After receiving their charter, the Grande Prairie Chapter of the Sweet Adelines continued to practice, perform, and compete. Some members from Grande Prairie even went off to compete in international competitions. For example, in 1987, several members attended the Sweet Adelines Annual Convention in Hawaii. Trips, equipment, instructors, and costumes were all paid for by fundraising efforts. Fundraising events included steak dinners, bingo nights, flea markets, and a range of other events.

The Grande Prairie Chapter of the Sweet Adelines was heavily involved in the community. They frequently provided free entertainment to the community, from singing at the hospital or the seniors home, to singing at events like the Stompede and the Sons of Norway Convention. They even hosted their own concerts. Beyond singing, they participated in many community events. For example, in 1987, the group won third place in Grande Prairie's Christmas Parade.

Though the Grande Prairie Chapter of the Sweet Adelines dissolved in 1995, Sweet Adelines International is still active today. Along with photographs and executive records, the Grande Prairie Chapter of the



Above: Recipe for "Adeline Stew" from the 1987-1988 history book of the Grande Prairie Chapter of the Sweet Adelines, 1988. (SPRA 038 1999.55.1, page 59.)

Sweet Adelines also left several history books that detail the events the group participated in. Images from these scrapbooks and other photographs from the Grande Prairie Chapter of the Sweet Adelines are featured in this issue's centerfold.

Alyssa House

Sing & Celebrate

The Sweet Adelines Scrapbook

Grande Prairie's Sweet Adelines were not just talented singers, but also talented artists. This is evident from the history books created by the group. The decorated scrapbook-style history books documented the activities of the group, including photographs, newspaper clippings, and letters from fellow chapters. The following images are from the 1987-1988 history book. The creator of the history book was the historian for the chapter, Clarice Paul.

All of the women in the group were gifted personalized cards and poems from members Joyce Boyce and Perky McCullough. Clarice included copies of all the

cards and poems in the last pages of the history book. An example of one of these cards is featured below.

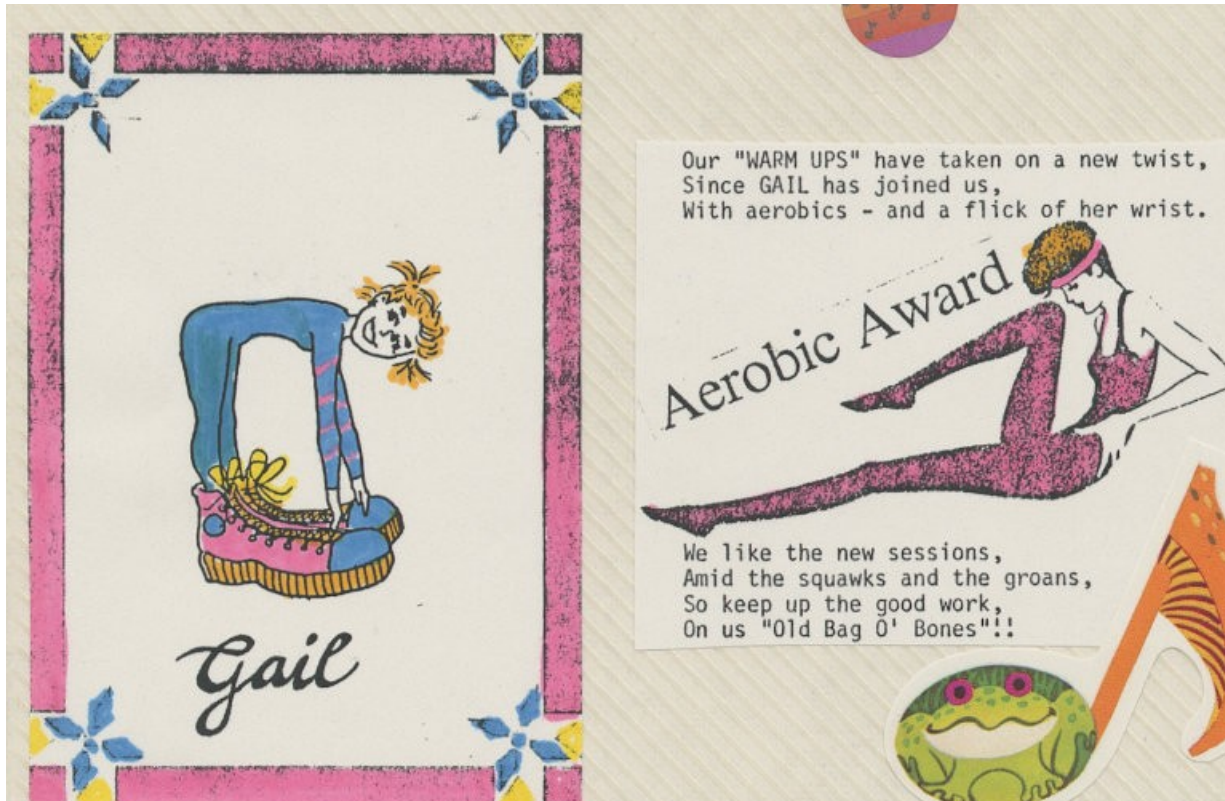
Alyssa House

Below: Image of personalized cards, 1988. (SPRA 1999.55.1 p. 80, cropped)

Facing page, top left: New Year's page, 1987. (SPRA 1999.55.1 p. 49)

Facing page, top right: Hawaii convention page, 1987. (SPRA 1999.55.1 p. 19)

Facing page, bottom: Photograph from the Region 26 Convention in Calgary, 1988. (SPRA 038.03.5, cropped)



The Fiddler's Legacy

They were perfectionists, entertainers, singers, and tap dancers. They were sentimental, charismatic, and rarely turned down a drink or an evening of good cheer. They were both link to homeland and made present life more bearable after the day's labours, a long portage, a brutal march, or long dark winters in the posts. They brought music and colour to life, celebrated weddings and chivaris, alarmed priests and ministers, and worried more than one father of a marriageable daughter. They were valued, coveted by factors and businessmen, and scorned by *some* of the respectable. They carried their little instrument by sea, ship, canoe, and Red River cart. They gave our country much of its earliest music. They were the fiddlers.

The fiddle or folk violin was the product of early modern Italy and France. King Charles of France in 1560 officially adopted it at court and started a violin school. The common people loved the music, and soon it could be heard on the streets of France, on the decks and docks. Champlain, always careful to keep his men cheerful, brought the fiddler and his small, portable instrument to New France. A century later it was in all the towns and many of the homes along the St. Lawrence, and a century after that, in the 1800s, he could be heard along the fur trade routes plied by voyageur and country born. The Metis took to it and created a unique school of tunes and dance which is known and admired around the world.

The fiddler was made to lead the dance. Scots step-danced to the small pipe, but the fiddle arose right along with it, and was better to take on the long river-

routes. Acadians and French-Canadians loved quick notes for fast-dancing and the *Gigue*. It was the instrument of the voyageur, the fur trade worker, and a fur fort factor was wise to keep one around. The Scottish and Irish brought their tunes and steps, and sometimes shared their tunes and tricks – for a good fiddler always had his characteristic ornamentations and there were always singers who could join in. Metis added percussive notes and often tapped their feet, which, adorned by a glass or two, made a fur fort celebration lively, perhaps a bit wild and punctuated by the whoop or cheer.

During the earliest days there was no music school, or sheets of notation. The tunes were learned by heart, handed down from father or master to son, and daughters, too. The clear beat they set out made foot-tapping and dancing inevitable, both the lively jigs and sweeping reels. Metis fiddlers became famous for “crooked tunes”. Before the guitar, the fiddler and the drum created the background music of the West and the “plain folk” who did the work. The family, the fiddler, and the priest made the work worthwhile, though they did not always see eye to eye!

Fiddlers made weddings cheerful and memorable, and made partings bearable. At the end of an evening the last tune was often a sweet and slow “farewell” for the last dance. Over the decades those who held on to the tunes passed them on, with their stories and to their children. Someone out there was always waiting to learn them. Today their descendants with tunes old and new keep us still tapping our feet.

Duff Crerar, Ph.D., President of the SPRA Society

Fiddlin' Friends

Grande Prairie's Fiddlers' Jamboree

On February 6, 1988, Grande Prairie's Pioneer Museum hosted the first annual Fiddlers' Jamboree. During the long winter months, the jamboree offered not only welcome entertainment, but also provided the Museum with “much needed revenue during the winter months when our attendance is low and utilities high,” according to a letter written on January 23, 1991 by Fred Mason, Chairman of the Fiddlers' Jamboree (SPRA 001.04.02).

The first jamboree was held in the Museum's community room and attracted eleven fiddlers and a total audience of 113 people. The following year, the audience more than doubled and in a meeting following the event, it was recommended that the jamboree move to a larger venue. In either 1990 or 1991, the jamboree moved to the Golden Age Centre, and in 1993, Doreen MacDonell, president of the Pioneer

Museum, wrote to Herb Wyness at Grande Prairie Regional College to ask whether they could use the college auditorium the following year. In just a few years, they'd gone from an audience of 113 to having space for 300 and still having to turn people away at the door. A list of fiddlers from around the same time shows that people were coming from as far away as Athabasca in the east and Charlie Lake, BC in the west, and from many communities in between, including Wanham, Woking, and Beaverlodge. The thirty-fourth annual jamboree was held in 2023—a long legacy of fiddling in the South Peace.

Are you interested in viewing a sample of the Fiddlers' Jamboree? A video of the 12th Annual Fiddlers' Jamboree is available on our blog: <https://www.southpeacearchives.org/blog/movie-monday-12th-annual-fiddlers-jamboree/>

Below: A group of fiddlers perform at the Fiddlers' Jamboree in the GPRC theater. Ca. 2000. (SPRA 001.08.06.04.02.03.56)

Teresa Dyck

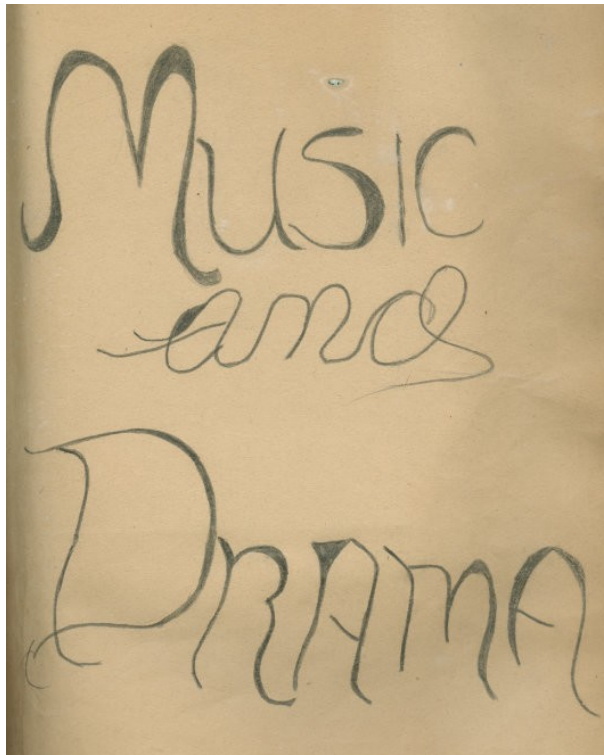


Patron of the Arts

Mae Trelle's Music & Drama Scrapbook

Unlike her husband Kay, who grew up on a home-
stead in Lake Saskatoon, Mae Trelle didn't live in the
Peace Region until after her retirement. Sarah Mae
Morton grew up and spent much of her life in the
bustling city of Vancouver, a stark contrast to Kay's
rural childhood. Being in a populated urban area al-
lowed Mae to become a frequent spectator of live
performances. Though Mae passed away in 2019, her
theatre scrapbook gives a glimpse into the perform-
ing arts interests of a young girl.

Mae was roughly 12 when she began the scrapbook
and worked on it into her early teens. She document-



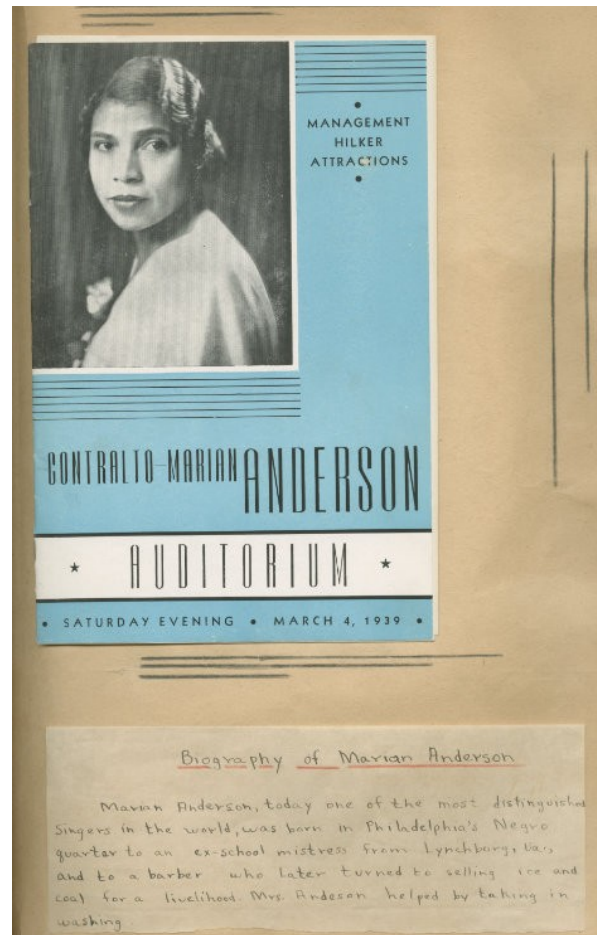
Above: Page from Mae's scrapbook featuring an auto-
graphed program from the Brazilian soprano, Bidu Sayao,
1939. (SPRA 0438.01.01)

Left: First page of Mae's "Music and Drama" scrapbook,
ca. 1937. (SPRA 0438.01.01)

ed the live performances she attended between 1937
and 1940. The scrapbook features over twenty pro-
grams from live performances. Examples include The
San Francisco Opera Ballet and The Vancouver Sym-
phony Society, as well as artists such as Marian An-
derson and Gladys Swarthout. Several of the pro-
grams that she kept in the scrapbook were auto-
graphed by the performers.

On the first page of the scrapbook after the title, Mae
kept a program for Marian Anderson. Unlike the oth-

Below: The first program added to the scrapbook, featuring
Marian Anderson. The biography continues below the pro-
gram and on the next pages. 1939. (SPRA 0438.01.01)



er programs she kept, Mae wrote a biography for
Marian. She explains:

*Signs of her phenomenal voice were in evidence al-
most in her infancy. When she was six, she sang a
duet with another little girl at a concert in the Union
Baptist Church. At eight she was announced as the
"baby—contralto" and earned her first fee: fifty
cents . . . The young maid Marian of yesterday is to-
day the matured woman an artist. Marian Anderson,
regal with the quiet dignity that comes with a deep
understanding of and devotion to the inner conflicts
that beset man.*

Marian Anderson was likely one of Mae's favourite
musicians as a teenager since she is the only artist
recorded in the scrapbook with a handwritten biog-
raphy to accompany it. Additionally, later in the
scrapbook Mae includes newspaper clippings on news
about Marian's success.

In addition to live theatre and music, Mae was also a
connoisseur of films. In her late twenties, Mae took a
road trip through Europe with her friend Hannelore.
On April 16, 1955, Mae writes in their shared diary,
"Saw an advertisement for 'Carmen Jones' and decid-
ed that it was just the right beginning for Hannelores
[sic] introduction to Sweden." Mae was likely familiar
with the famous opera *Carmen*, composed by
Georges Bizet, or the Broadway musical *Carmen
Jones*, both of which the movie *Carmen Jones* (1954)
was based on. Mae continues, "She had no idea what
to expect and was stunned as I knew she would be.
The colour and staging were exceptional and added
much to Bizet's music." Mae was clearly well educat-
ed in opera and theatre, likely stemming from her
exposure to the world of the performing arts at a
young age.

Alyssa House

Shall We Dance?

Grande Prairie's Earliest Dance Schools

"An artistic triumph"—those were the words used to describe Miss Valerie Ellwood's School of Dance's performance, "Ballet of the Seasons," in the May 9, 1940 *Herald-Tribune*. It was their third annual performance and, according to the journalist covering the event, the pupils had advanced "from the better known folk dances to the more difficult interpretative classical and ballet types of dancing" in that time. Miss Ellwood conducted her dance school in McQueen Presbyterian Church, with performances held in the Capitol Theatre. She taught aspiring dancers of all ages; fifty students aged two through twenty performed in "Ballet of the Seasons." Miss Ellwood left Grande Prairie in 1942 to be married to her fiancé in Montreal.

In a May 1, 1959 article in the *Herald-Tribune*, Evy McBryan reminisced about the popularity of Miss Ellwood's school, encouraging Grande Prairie residents to help establish a new dancing school. Miss Edythe Heavener of Edmonton's Heavener School of Dance, Alberta's oldest established dance school, had expressed willingness to start a school in Grande Prairie if she could be assured of two hundred students. At the time the article was written, fifty students had expressed interest.

Although this school was never established, in November of 1959, English dancer Janet Joy arrived in Grande Prairie with her husband Richard to open the Joy Dance Studio. Janet hoped to teach classes for all ages in ballet, ballroom dancing, tap dancing, a "ladies' class to develop figures through rhythm in movement," and even a class for young boys to train "through rhythm for better coordination as hockey and football players" (*Herald-Tribune*, November 13, 1959).

The following Christmas, Joy Dance Studio gave its first public performance, enjoyed by capacity crowds for two evenings. One hundred dancers "from moppets to matrons" (*Herald-Tribune*, December 20, 1960) took to the stage. On the programme were can-can dancers, a Spanish peasant dance, and various numbers composed



Above: A woman, possibly Janet Joy, and child dressed as ballerinas for a Joy Dance Studio Concert. 1960. (SPRA 0032.08.08.0486)

by Tchaikovsky, including a waltz from *Swan Lake*. According to the journalist, the concert was a "showcase for Janet Joy's talent in recognizing and developing in work-a-day folk the techniques, the grace, the spirit of rhythmic dancing."

Teresa Dyck

In Memory: David Leonard

The SPRA staff, board, and volunteers were saddened to hear about the passing of David Leonard, local historian and archivist, on July 3, 2025. David was born in Fairview and grew up in Sexsmith before leaving the area to attend school. After receiving his doctorate in History from the University of Sheffield in 1975, he went on to work as an Archivist for the City of Edmonton, the Northwest Territories, and the Province of Alberta. He also taught archives and records management at the University of Alberta, and served as the Project Historian for Northern Alberta for the Government of Alberta.

What he was best known for in the South Peace, however, was his work to share the history of our region with the public through workshops, talks, and his books. When he retired in 2013, he told the Grande Prairie Daily Herald Tribune that he was retiring from his official government role only, but that his interest and work in the Peace Country would be ongoing.

David was a longtime supporter of the South Peace Regional Archives. When the question of building a regional archives was first being discussed in 1998, David wrote a letter to express his support for the project, and stated that "the former Provincial Archivist would be willing to lend his assistance," before signing the letter "David Leonard, Former Provincial Archivist" to be absolutely clear who he meant. He served as Archives Advisor on our Board of Directors for many years, was always

willing to lend a hand, or even just an ear, about any problem we were having.

While he will be personally missed, his work to preserve the heritage of our region and our province will continue to impact our community. Through his tireless work, the stories of homesteaders in particular are better understood and recognized. Perhaps this is most demonstrated by the Peace Country Land Settlement Database, where David ensured all available homestead records for the Alberta Peace River District were recorded and searchable. This massive undertaking was finally completed earlier this year.

Our thoughts are with David's family and friends, and we are grateful for all of the memories we have of him.

Below: David Leonard at his office desk at the Provincial Archives, Edmonton. 1992. (SPRA 342.01.19)



Show Business

This Issue's Featured Photographs

Nearly everyone enjoys watching a performance of some kind, whether it be live theatre, a music festival, a ballet, or an orchestra. South Peace residents have always been active participants in the performing arts, with even smaller communities starting dramatic societies or choirs. Here is a glimpse at show business in our region's history.



1: Four boys holding toy guitars pose on the front steps of a brick house. The caption on the back of the photograph reads, "These are Glenn's four oldest boys - Michael, Patrick, David, & John. This was taken about three years ago before Steven and the new babe appeared. Don't you think they are cute?" n.d. (SPRA 0032.05.04.257)

2: Jack Law and Norris Bomber sword fighting during a performance of Shakespeare's "Macbeth" at Alberta College in 1943. (SPRA 2004.42.37, fonds 162)

3: Edna and Beth Heller wearing dance costumes created by Marion. 1941. (SPRA 341.03.114)

4: A group of women from Trinity Lutheran Church act in a play. The photograph was possibly taken for use in the May 17, 1957 edition of the Herald Tribune. 1957. (SPRA 032.08.08.0247)

5: The Grande Prairie Band with their instruments, in front of a large Union Jack flag, likely at a fair. Ca. 1917. (SPRA 032.08.08.0471)

6: Tex Moron (left) and Jens Dalen (right) performing on CFGP Grande Prairie Radio in the early 1950s. (SPRA 005.08.06.01)

7: A woman sings at a performance held for military personnel in Korea. Ca. 1953. (SPRA 165.04.091)



New at the Archives



At the beginning of the summer, we installed the first exhibit in our new exhibit space. “Meet the Trelles” will introduce you to the fascinating lives, adventures, and careers of Kay and Mae Trelle. This exhibit was created by former junior archivist Alyssa House and funded in part by Young Canada Works.

We also recently had a new scanner installed in our processing room. While we will continue using our high-quality Epson scanners for photographs, which make up most of our digitization projects, this new scanner will make it easier to digitize large items such as maps, or bulky items such as books.



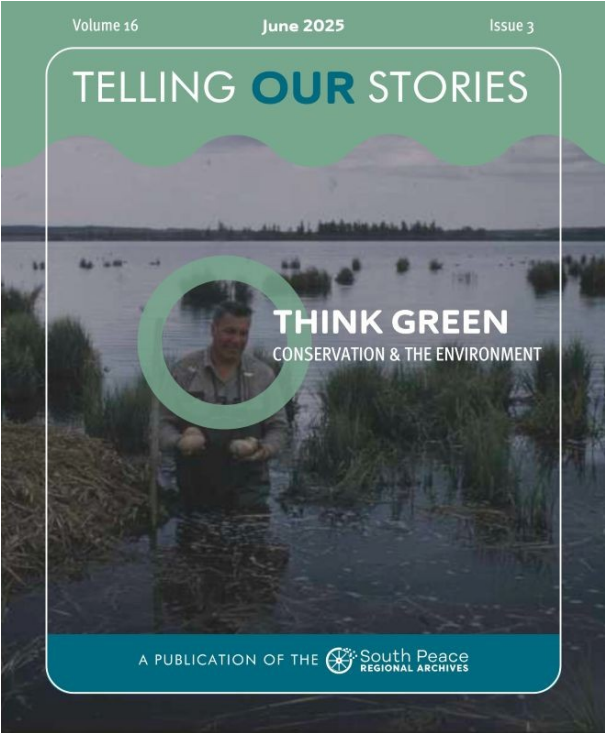
The Digital Switch

With rising postal and printing costs, the Board of the South Peace Regional Archives has decided to switch to digital delivery.

What does this mean for you?

Starting with the March 2026 issue of *Telling Our Stories*, all existing subscriptions will default to digital delivery. Not only does this mean you will receive your copy of *Telling Our Stories* sooner, you will also see all photographs in their original colors (whether that be full color, sepia, or black and white), rather than just the cover and centerfold. Effective immediately, all new memberships will default to a digital subscription.

If you would still like to receive a paper delivery, you can opt in by checking the check box at the bottom of the membership form on the following page.



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Scan the QR code at left to go directly to our online store and purchase your membership by credit card, or visit the following link:

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