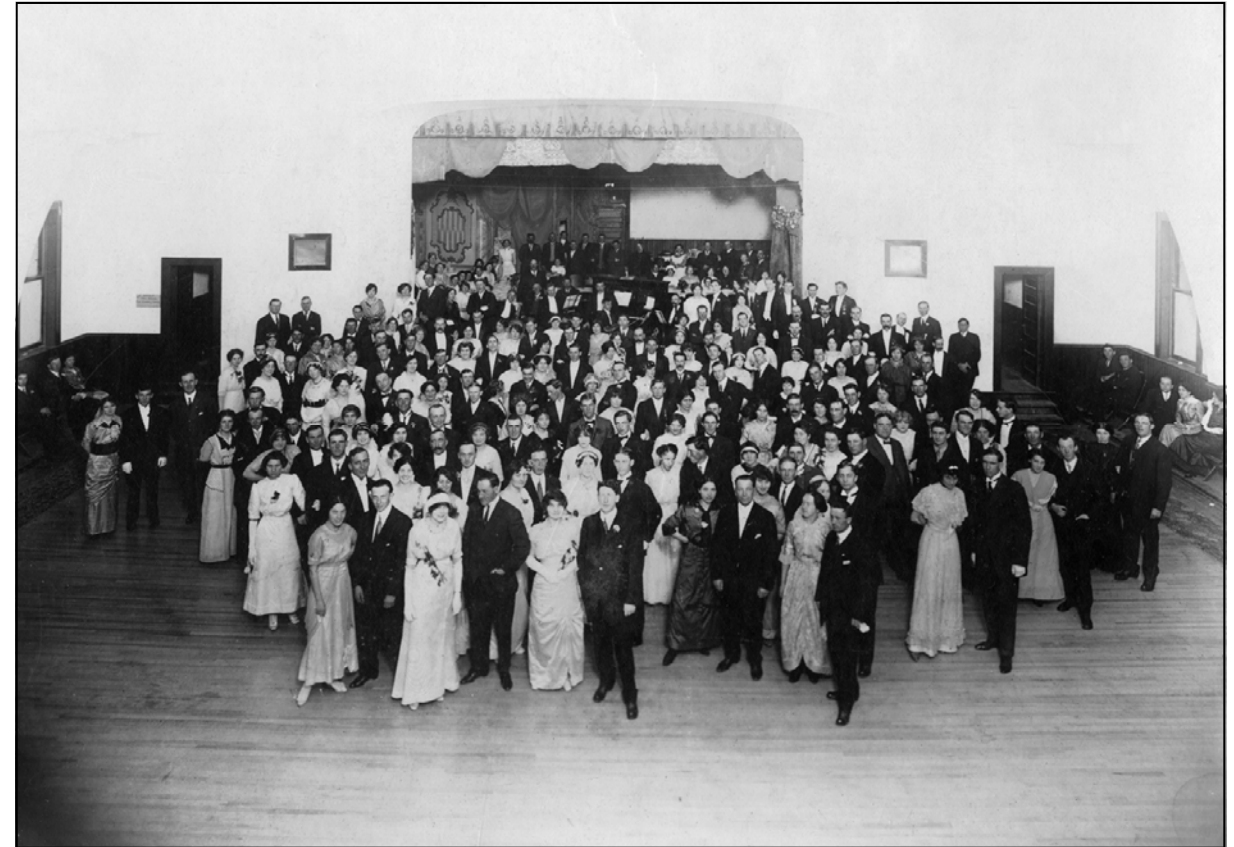


# TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 5, Issue 1, December 1, 2013

Produced by

South Peace  
REGIONAL ARCHIVES



*Another mystery photograph for the front page! This photograph is from the Grande Prairie Museum Collection and is one of the photographs featured in our new “What We Wore” display on fashion. The problem is, we don’t know the essential who, what, when, where, or why! Let us know if you do. Our best information/guess is that the photograph was taken at a 1930s dance at Jitney Hall, located approximately where the Park Hotel now stands. SPRA 1969.39.724a.*



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TELLING OUR STORIES

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The purpose of the SPRA Society is to promote and encourage the appreciation and study of the history of the south Peace River Country by acquiring, preserving and making accessible to the public, records in any format which reflect the history of this area.

December 1, 2013

Dear Members & Supporters;

Surprise! I must have done okay last time, because Mary has asked me to edit another newsletter.

The theme of this newsletter is fashion and clothing, following the Archives Society of Alberta theme for Archives Week 2013. Fashion was also the theme of the Film and Story Tea on October 6. Thank you to all the storytellers who participated. Their stories are featured throughout the newsletter, along with display photographs on the theme of fashion, and images of the film clips shown between the stories at the event.

The afternoon was a great success with about 80 people in attendance and lots of laughter and fun reminiscing. Special thanks goes to MC Karen Burgess, SPRA Board representative Irene Nicolson, volunteers Kathryn Auger and Margaret Bowes, and bakers Phyllis Stewart, Freda Tarrant, and Marie Mencke.

Also on the topic of fashion, we had a Fashion Fun Photo Contest going on our FaceBook page. Check page 24 for more details. And sprinkled throughout the newsletter are vintage fashion advertisements discovered and assembled by Kathryn Auger.

And since Christmas is coming, we’ve included a couple of Betty Welter’s stories. We miss Betty, but her memories are as delightful as ever!

Sincerely, Leslie Gordon,  
Guest Editor



Left, Karen Burgess and Mary Nutting dispose of the bodies, evidence of a successful afternoon.



Above, attendees at the film and story tea. You might not know it, but one of these participants is also a film star! Below left, Irene Nicolson gave the welcome from the Board. Below right, a happy volunteer (this could be you!), Kathryn Auger, helping out in the kitchen.



Some people surprised us by bringing (Arlene McDonald, left) or wearing (Mary Dever, right) other fashionable outfits!



# Pioneer Print Dress

by Gail Schau

Who doesn't love a mystery? I have been asked to look at this dress from a dressmaker's point of view and tell you what I've noticed - is it really old or is it a fake? This dress serves as a cautionary tale to anyone wishing to donate anything to an archive, museum or to a family member. Take the time to include all of the information that you know about the item, so that the receiver will know it too.

This dress is from the museum's collection and no provenance was given—all we know is what the tag says—1910 pioneer work dress. I'll go down the list in point form for you, so you can decide if it's really old or not.

- colour—it's a servicable colour that would not show the dirt
- size—it's on the small side so could be vintage as people were smaller then
- style—it's a nondescript style, but then it is a work dress!
- materials—most probably cotton, but we would need to do a burn test on some of the threads to be sure (and that would just tell us if it were natural fibre or not)



Gail Schau and Karen Burgess examine the pioneer print dress at the Film and Story Tea.

- buttons are mother of pearl and they don't match which could mean that the seamstress was recycling from her own button box, or most probably some were wrecked going through the wringer washer as mother of pearl can be quite brittle

- buttonholes are hand worked—but I think it had more to do with the skill of the sewer rather than the absence of a buttonhole attachment as they were available for treadle machines.

- hooks are vintage (even to me!)

Now on to the mystery. The top part of the dress has been sewn with great skill—it has enclosed French seams (no raw edges), but the skirt is

different—the hem is machine sewn (so it probably belonged to an adult who has finished growing), the seams are finished with what I think is an early example of pinking shears. The top and bottom were finished and then sewn together by someone with less skill.

*Editor's Note: Gail encouraged attendees to examine the dress for themselves and answer the following questions:*

*Were the top and bottom made by the same person?  
Were they made at the same time?  
Was it made In 1910?*

Below, sort of like that song "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus", except these two aren't under the mistletoe, but in the Eaglesham Co-op! Santa comes from Wozniak family film and the first set of film clips, "In Costume".



Right, Kells Sheehan dressed as a cowboy during Christmas celebrations at the home of his parents, Beth and Everett Sheehan, around 1955. SPRA 002.01.03.103.



Newspaper advertisement for the Selkirk Trading Co., which appeared in the July 29, 1913 Grande Prairie Herald.

As a reminder, Grande Prairie's papers from 1913 to 1949 are available online at "Our Future, Our Past"

<http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/newspapr/place.asp?place=Grande+Prairie&Submit2=Look+up>

Have fun exploring!



# 1920s Flapper Dress

by Doreen MacDonell

*Editor’s Note: Doreen started her speech with a short description of flappers from Wikipedia.*

“Flappers were a ‘new breed’ of young Western women in the 1920s who wore short skirts, bobbed their hair, listened to jazz, and flaunted their disdain for what was then considered acceptable behavior. Flappers were seen as brash for wearing excessive makeup, drinking, treating sex in a casual manner, smoking, driving automobiles, and otherwise flouting social and sexual norms. Flappers had their origins in the liberal period of the Roaring Twenties, the social, political turbulence and increased transatlantic cultural exchange that followed the end of World War I, as well as the export of American jazz culture to Europe.”

This dress is a perfect example of the “flapper era” styles which covered the period from about the 1920’s to the mid 30’s. Note the skirt just below the knees, the sleeveless top, the flat-chested boyish look and the dropped waist. At the same time, corsets were discarded and the hair bobbed, all contributing to the liberation of women and the emergence of a new style of feminists who claimed that a full life called for marriage and children while proclaiming their right to be their own individuals.

The dress belonged to my Aunt Cleo McKinnon who at the time lived with me and my family in Hanna. I can remember watching Cleo putting on the dress and make-up for an exciting evening of dancing. Some of you will remember when Cleo worked here at the Herald Tribune mid-50’s to the mid-60’s.

Cleo and her young friends fully embraced the

“flapper era” including driving, smoking and many nights spent partying. The Charleston was the most popular dance followed by the Bunny Hop and the Black Bottom. The musical *Chicago* was a perfect example of the “flapper era”. A full account of the period can be found by googling “flapper era.”



Cleo’s flapper dress, from the Grande Prairie Museum’s collection.



Were either of these two young women flappers? Left, Edna Taylor standing in front of Taylor’s Delicatessen in Grande Prairie around 1928. SPRA 2003.05.27. Below left, Ethel M. A. Turner, the teacher at Somme School in the Glen Leslie area, standing beside a pond around 1921. SPRA 2011.44.13.



Right, a fashion suggestion from the September 26, 1921 issue of the Grande Prairie Herald. Styles have certainly changed from the days of the Pioneer print dress!

**Black-Canton Crepe Dress for Afternoon**

**By Marie Belmont.**

Black is still in high favor with the fashionable woman who realizes what an effective background it proves for her beauty. Frequently she wears such frocks unrelieved by a single touch of color. (On this model, however, which is fashioned from black Canton crepe white wool embroidery is introduced. This makes an effective decoration about the neckline and short sleeves. A band of black satin is chosen for the deep hem, which shows a more elaborate use of the white wool. Two narrow belts encircle the waistline and accentuate the long-waisted effect of the dress.



# The Story of Mother's Wedding Dress

By Karen Burgess

First how my mother and father came to be married in the first place.

My father was born in Denmark and immigrated to the US and then Canada where he joined his two brothers and came to the Peace country to homestead in 1926.

My mother was born in Dorchester, Ontario and came west as an infant with her parents and five siblings in 1902. They settled on a farm in the Camrose area. When the Depression came, grandfather could not pay his debts so lost the farm to the bank. The children were more or less independent but my grandparents, aged 70 and 65 had no place to go so finally decided to follow one of their sons who had homesteaded in the Dixonville area and take out a homestead of their own. This brought their daughters, my mother and her older sister (now both trained teachers) to the same area both for jobs and to stay with their parents. The homesteads of my mother's folks and those of the Danish Sorenson brothers turned out to be only a few miles apart but that didn't mean they immediately got to know each other. Remember there were no real roads and no vehicles. Mother and father may have gotten to view each other at the store and at a dance but when Dad decided he was going to court Mother, he knew the proper way was to write letters. He had learned to speak English fairly well by this time but writing was a different thing. But with dictionary in hand, and spurred on by the fact that his younger brother had already won the hand of the older sister, he began his

campaign to prove himself worthy of my mother. This took some time and the letters are very interesting as they both ventured to get a bit more personal. After a year and a half, mother said "yes" to his proposal. So how did they plan a wedding in those days? Well there was really very little planning in those days. They would have to ask the closest minister and get a ride to Berwyn for the ceremony. Brother and sister would stand up for them surely. But where would she get a wedding dress? It turned out that Eaton's at that time had a service called the "Personal Shopper" and for \$10 you could send your request - your measurements, your description of a dress, the fabric and the price you could afford—to the Personal Shopper and she would pick out the dress for you and send it. And that is what she did and this is the dress they picked for her and she was married in it in the summer of 1935.



Left, another wedding, in another style. Jean Cochrane's wedding to Gordon Forbes, August 14, 1940. The group is gathered in the Cochrane home near Grande Prairie. SPRA 268.02.08.

Sports provide opportunities for endless changes of clothing as each one has its own requirements. Below, water skiing with the Marcy Family. Below left, downhill skiing wear, including toques with pom-poms, from the James family film. Below right, fishing attire, which would be incomplete without red hats, checked shirts, and rubber boots, from the James family film and part of the "Sportswear" section of film clips.



Left, the volunteer Grande Prairie Fire Department, in the days before snappy uniforms and personal protective equipment. From the Wood Family film collection and part of the second section of film clips, "At Work".





# A War Bride's Clothing

by Violet Dryer

*Editor's Note: This story was read by Violet's daughter Anne Shumard at the Film and Story Tea.*

1946—the year most of the European War Brides sailed to Canada.

Arnold and I were married in August 1945 after the war was over. I was still in the Air Force, so had no clothing coupons. My mother donated some of hers to buy a coat, dress and shoes. She also used seven of her own coupons to buy Arnold some oxford shoes. There was no way she was going to let him go up the aisle in army boots!



Above left, Arnold and Violet Dryer on their wedding day, August 23, 1946. SPRA 2013.61.02. Above right, Violet wearing her tweed "going away" suit in December 1945 at Manley Bridge. SPRA 2013.61.03.

Women didn't wear slacks (pants) then unless they worked as mechanics, drivers or on the buses, etc. I wore my first pair on the Aquatania, sailing to Canada.

We were met in Edmonton as we left the train by a girl from the Red Cross and she took us shopping. I



remember buying a pair of shoes at Eatons for seven dollars. The train for Grande Prairie left at 5 pm July 3rd. My sister-in-law, Pat, and her baby, Robert, were on the train as well.

We were very nervous that night, washing our hair in hard water and getting our best clothes ready to meet our husbands and in-laws. Arnold, his brother, Bob and their parents were waiting on the platform. I had only seen Arnold in uniform, so I didn't recognize him in his striped demobilization suit and hat at first. The time was twelve noon of July 4th. The temperature was 90 degrees F.

Baby Robert was left with his grandparents as Pat, Bob, Arnold and I had a tour of the town, quite small then and we British girls were very obvious in our tweed suits. We went in the Palace Café and I remember seeing a sign on the wall "Banana Split—25 cents". Pat and I were stopped on the street by J.B. Yule, editor of the Herald-Tribune and this news item appeared in the weekly newspaper:

"Thursday's train, July 4th, brought three English War Brides to Grande Prairie. They were Mrs. Arnold Dryer from Farnham, Surrey and Mrs. Robert Dryer of London, who was accompanied by her little son, Robert. Arnold lives in the Bear Lake district and Robert will live for the time being at Grande Prairie. They are brothers.

The brides who came across the Atlantic on different ships, landing at Halifax, stood the journey well. Mrs. Arnold Dryer, in speaking of the trip across Canada, observed that this country is huge, while Mrs. Robert Dryer added that there are certainly many



Above, Arnold and Violet Dryer look over their future farm in 1946. Violet is wearing the skirt of her suit. SPRA 2013.61.05.



miles of it. Both the new arrivals seemed glad that the long trip was over. They stated that they had come prepared to like this country.

Another war bride to arrive at Grande Prairie on Thursday, July 4th was Mrs. Arthur Huitt of Hastings, Sussex. At present she and her husband are staying with the former's mother at Grande Prairie. Mrs. Huitt stated that she likes the Peace River sunshine, adding that coming to Canada is all a new experience to her."

## Interested in War Brides?

In 2006 SPRA did interviews with seventeen war brides who came to the South Peace during and after World War II, in which they tell of their experiences in Europe during the War, the long trip to Canada, and their determination to adjust to a new country and establish homes and families.

You can come to the Archives to listen to the interviews or pick up a copy of the resulting publication "War Brides in the South Peace."

See <http://southpeacearchives.org/holdings-2/finding-aids/war-brides-collection/> for information on the women featured.



Above, the Dryer family in 1953. Violet is wearing her wedding dress again, slightly remodeled. SPRA 2013.61.07.



# Hats! Hats! Hats!

by Alice Lorenz

HATS! My story about hats has to start with my mother.

My mother always wore a hat—to church and into town to do the shopping. One of my mother's hats became quite famous or perhaps I should say, infamous! After my parents retired to town, and I use the word 'retired' quite loosely in my mother's case as she took in borders, mostly male teachers. The female teachers took too long in the bathroom and complained of gaining weight because of all the good farm cooking. The hat in question, a flat and wide, brown felt hat, had by this time been relegated to the attic. The male teachers fought over the hat each year as Halloween approached.

I finished high school and took a secretarial course in Edmonton. In this secretarial course we were instructed on how to apply for a job and what to wear to any interviews, which included a hat and gloves. Can you imagine a young woman these days wearing a hat and gloves to a job interview? My first job was in my home town and I was hired (without hat and gloves) by my best friend's father to become the bank stenographer.

After eight or nine months on this job, I decided there were bigger fish to fry and headed off to Edmonton. First, I had to buy a hat as I had never owned one, not counting the many knitted toques my mother had made for me. In either The Bay or Eatons, I bought quite a ghastly little tan coloured hat. Tan was never my colour. My first interview was with a Real Estate firm—I didn't get the job and I've always blamed the hat for that. I was more successful in my second interview—without the hat.

The next hat in my life was for my 'going away' outfit for my wedding. I don't know why, but I ended up with a beige hat, much the same shape as my mother's famous brown felt. I am however, happy

to report that the marriage was more successful than the hat and we were married for 52 years.

My first two hats had disappeared by the time we moved to Grande Prairie and I started to attend church and needed a hat. I wasn't working by this time and money was short so when a 'Millinery Course' was advertised in the fall of 1964, I applied and spent a year learning how to make hats.

First, I begged a hat box from Brown Brothers Men's Wear which I covered with wallpaper. This was necessary to carry our supplies and hats to class. Then I purchased a 'hat block' - Well, I couldn't very well stick pins into a hat in progress while it was on my head.

We started with soft hats and suddenly I was back in math class. We were NEVER given a pattern for a hat. We had to go back to fractions, geometry and math formulas to make our own patterns. By lesson three, the real work began and we purchased 'buckram', millinery wire and Petersham ribbon. It was really interesting and we learned to make some amazing shapes out of the buckram which we covered with lovely fabric, often scraps from our dressmaking projects. Later we tackled straws and felts.

At the end of the Spring session, our instructor (whose name I have forgotten) moved away. Before she left, she persuaded me that I should continue teaching this course. I don't remember how many women attended my classes, but they were a lively,



fun bunch. They named themselves 'The Mad Hatters' and sometimes gave me the feeling that they knew more than I did.

One of my fondest memories is of the class on felts. They all found 'old' felt hats which they scrubbed and cleaned, then dampened sufficiently to be able to stretch them over their head blocks. Most of the women planned to decorate their felt hats with feathers which we were able to purchase in all colours and ready-made shapes.

Two of the more creative members brought their own feathers. One rescued the feathers from her husband's partridge hunt. She cleaned them and decided to disinfect them and perhaps kill any bird lice by baking them in her oven. Apparently the aroma in the kitchen was overwhelming! The other lady's budgie bird had just died, so she skinned it and managed to make a bright badge of feathers for her hat. She was definitely resourceful!

That was the last class I taught because suddenly everyone was back-combing their hair and hats did not fit over pouffy hair without squashing THE hairdo. Now it was the hairdo, not the hat, that mattered.

We have rarely worn hats in recent years—except perhaps to attend one of Jenny Tetreau's teas. However, a few years ago someone in my church decided that all women should wear a hat for Easter Sunday. What a dilemma! A few still had hats, others made hats out of 'WHATEVER'.

I had family over Easter Dinner last year and showed them the hat I wore to church that morning—the pouffy navy one over there on my head block—and they were appalled! 'Mother, you didn't wear that in public!' That's the last of all the hats I made that I still have. I'm rather fond of it!

Now, let me show you the hats I'm wearing now. Gardening hat! Traveling hat! Favorite hat!



Above, a little girl, dressed for winter in a bright pink snow-suit and matching touque. The image is taken from the Wozniak family film and was part of the "Clothing Children" section of film clips.

Below, a women's group from Christ Church Anglican, Grande Prairie, gathered in 1923. The group includes Mrs. Gold, Mrs. McFee, Mrs. Clifford, Mr. Walter Roberts' sister, Mrs. Lance Smith, Mrs. Foy, Mrs. Cam Browne, Mrs. James, Mrs. Spicer, Mrs. Looney and her daughter, and Dora (Spicer) Bentley. As you can see, all are wearing hats! SPRA 1969.53.9.





# Hot Pants and Mini Skirts

by Jan Shields



I remember hot pants and so do many of my friends. My friend Sharon recalls her mom being relieved that hot pants were taking the place of mini skirts because she thought there was less chance of Sharon showing her undies when she went up and down stairs or when she sat on a low seat. We both remember hot pants being worn to



weddings and other dress-up dos. Even schools that had forbidden mini skirts allowed hot pants. Wikipedia states that South Western flight attendants also wore hot pants as their official uniform for awhile.

My best memory of wearing hot pants is going to a

*Right, hot pants under a mini dress, accented with beads and a belt. From the Grande Prairie Museum collection, donated by Barbara Bragg.*

morning coffee party not long after my first son was born. I felt so 'cool' in my brown and white large-pattern mini dress and shorts, especially since I'd lost my baby weight and was back to looking my best — or at least so I thought.

Fashion historians give Mary Quant, the initial designer of the mini skirt, credit for introducing hot pants to the fashion world and they suggest that the invention of polyester, which allowed for the wearing of tighter clothes because it stretched with our movement, made it possible.

Hot pants are often thought of as a symbol of changing times and the social movements brought on by the 70's. Some believed it even contributed to the sexual revolution, or at least allowing women from all walks of life to wear more revealing clothing without being seen as socially inappropriate.

There was, however, a dark side to this fashion innovation. Some historians believe that the onset of hot pants in 1970 was a contributing factor to body image issues for women. This particular garment looked good on certain female figures — skinny ones. According to Wikipedia, despite the fact that affluent and middle-class women already had a long history of 'watching their figures,' the late 60s and early 70s saw women "dieting" in new ways, suggesting that the widespread use of the verb "to diet" and the phrase "on a diet" can be traced back to this era and the stylish mini skirt and hot pants.

Regardless of hindsight, however, I remember loving hot pants partly for their daring departure from previous fashion and partly because of their comfort. Mary Quant was right: you could run to catch a bus or dance with ease wearing your hot pants.



Above, a young couple riding a Royal Enfield motorbike around 1950. SPRA 2011.44.34.



Left, Karen Burgess and Leslie Gordon show a mini skirt belonging to Doreen Lakusta.



Left, attendees in less daring knee-length dresses at a wedding in 1960, from the Wozniak family film and part of the "Formal Occasions" section of film clips.

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1046—Men's and youth's shirt; attached or separate collar; and turn cuffs. Sizes 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inches breast. Size 36 breast requires 3 1/4 yards of 32-inch or 36-inch material. Price 20 cents.

1139—Men's and youths' union-suit; high or low neck, with or without set-in sleeve. Sizes 34, 38, 42 and 46 inches breast. Size 34 is for 32 or 34, size 38 for 36 or 38, size 42 for 40 or 42, and size 46 for 44 or 46. Size 38 breast requires 3 1/4 yards of 32-inch or 36-inch material. Price 20 cents.

1157—Men's and youth's nightshirt, with or without yoke and fullness at back. Sizes 36, 40, 44 and 48 inches breast. Size 36 is for 34 or 36, size 40 for 38 or 40, size 44 for 42 or 44, and size 48 for 46 or 48. Size 40 breast requires 3 3/4 yards of 36-inch, or 4 1/4 yards of 40-inch material. Price 20 cents.

Many styles of smart appeal may be found in our Fashion Book. Our designers originate their patterns in the heart of the style centres, and their creations are those of tested popularity, brought within the means of the average woman. Price of the book 10 cents the copy. Each copy includes one coupon good for five cents in the purchase of any pattern.



# 1974 Nursing Uniform

by Linda Pearson



By the time I was issued this uniform from the University of Alberta Hospital School of Nursing in March 1974, the school uniform had undergone several changes: from the bib and apron, to a monographed uniform, to the solid pink cotton/polyester blend.

Nursing and nursing uniforms had always been steeped in great tradition and this type of coloured uniform was a big

change, although we always had to wear our collar pins and have that top button done up!

When we got our uniforms they were knee length, but it was 1974! Everyone took their uniform and promptly shortened it!

Inside the back of the uniform is a laundry label. My number was S-407. At the end of the day we just threw our uniform in the laundry bags in Res and they went off to the hospital laundry to be washed. Every day clean uniforms were delivered to the Res and we just had to pick ours up.

When our caps needed to be cleaned, we just dropped them off at laundry and picked up a new one. They came starched and ironed flat, so you can imagine the challenge to fold them the first time! In fact, we had a class on how to fold your cap.

Since we lived in the Residence, across the street, it was still very common for students to wear the traditional cape. They are made of a wool/melton fabric with a heavy lining. Most schools of nursing had capes that were blue or navy with a red lining, but of course the University of Alberta used Green and Gold.

At graduation, we were able to leave our pink uniforms behind, move to the esteemed world of Registered Nurses, and wear white!

Shortly after I graduated it became common for nurses to wear pastel coloured uniforms.

For myself, I left the hospital world of nursing and went to work for the Victorian Order of Nurses where we wore a navy blue uniform and then on to Occupational Health (P & G/Weyerhaeuser, 25 years), where my mainstay is denim jeans.

As you can see, nursing attire has changed significantly in the past 40 years!



*Jean Cameron contributed two fashions from the fortrel era, her husband Alec's plaid wool suit (right) and outfit including palazzo pants and wooden clogs, which she originally wore to a graduation and modelled (left) at the Tea.*

# Fabulous Fortrel

by Sharon Kuykendal

Sewing was and is one of my passions. Looking back, probably one of the most memorable fabrics was fortrel: the fabric that held its shape, didn't wrinkle, draped nicely and looked great without being ironed.

A neighbor expressed how difficult it was to buy a dress that fit her, she was buxom and so the skirt part of the dress was too large. I could solve her problem!

We chose the fabric (fortrel) and pattern. The following day she arrived at my house—I started sewing and she started cooking. At the end of the day I was thrilled to have wonderful baking and she went home

with a dress—that fit! The fortrel worked marvelously—stretching over her larger top, she was delighted. Over the years we continued our sewing and baking relationship.

Another memory—the IODE (Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire) had a used clothing store. The women working there were very creative, thus solving the problem of having too many fortrel dresses to sell or give away. They started cutting the fortrel garments into

*Right, various other materials and fabrics are in use here, but no fortrel. Lorraine Hommy models a sunhat exquisitely paired with oversized boots and gloves, around 1950. SPRA 388.01.01.*



squares, then sewing them into quilts. The constructed quilts were given to burned out families or to anyone in need of a quilt. The IODE ladies served our community faithfully for many years.

The last fortrel memory—my Dad was a tall, large man. He was unable to purchase ready-made, casual shirts. Isabel Day owned and operated a Fabric Store on main street. Isabel carried quality fabrics which included beautiful fortrel fabric from England. It was just the right kind of fabric needed to sew great shirts for my Dad. He enjoyed wearing them and they lasted, seemingly forever. And that's my story!





# Club 54 Dance Club

by Ella Simpson

Thank you for asking me to give this little “look back”. I’ve had to think away back I might say—when half the time I can’t remember what I did yesterday.

Club 54, as the name suggests, was started in 1954 by Alicia and Art Balfour. He was manager of CFGP. It was an alternative to square dancing, which was very popular in the early ‘50s. There were to be 54 couples; just a nice crowd of people who liked to dance ball. I didn’t join until ‘55 as we were still square dancing and our son was born in ‘54.

I said Dance Club and that it was. Everyone was up on the floor, doing what they all loved, dancing. There were no ballrooms or even planned dances at this time. The only formal I can remember was the Nurses’ Ball, which was held at “D” Company.

The other nice reason for such a Club was we girls (I use the term loosely) could get “dressed up”. And we did! Formals were worn, of course we all enjoyed that. I think the gentlemen enjoyed seeing their ladies in their long dresses too! Short dresses were worn too—midcalf, not mid thigh. Either one was special, your best. This, of course, meant you had to buy a new one every month or so! Sling back or springalator shoes were worn. The heels were high; not like now, but pretty feminine. The gentlemen wore suits, dress shirts and ties. No jeans here and no rubber soled shoes.

There are a couple of dresses I remember (I couldn’t model them, I think the sizing is different now). One was a black sheer, with a modest top, spaghetti straps, and layers of sheer on the skirt. Another was black (very popular, as now), of taffeta. It had little, puffy sleeves with a skirt of strips of taffeta, with the bottom turned under, which made it look like small hoop. I saw some a few years ago—they thought they were new!



I’ll share a couple of stories. One night one lady (I have permission to say this), Eileen Sweetnam, forgot her shoes. Someone got the bright idea

to take a collection for her so she could wear shoes. She did buy a pair and wear them the next month!

Another night Arnold Murray got a call. He went out to his car and it was gone. He thought it was a prank—not so. Someone had stolen it. The police were called. His car was a wreck and he had to buy a new one.

The first Club 54 was held in the basement of the York Hotel. Then it moved over to the new Park Hotel and then to the lower floor of the Golden Star. That was the best location.

Various bands played over the years, but the one I like to remember was with Gottfried Sprecher, Wayne Rodacker, Rudy Ross, and a fellow who was the manager of McLeods. I can’t remember his name.

The membership when we joined was just \$10. With rising costs, etc., it kept going up. The membership changed in ages and numbers. The fees were increased and a few more “Rules” added.

Finally in October 1990, The Last Dance was held. The remaining funds were given to United Way. It was an era of great socializing and activity—everyone looked forward to our Club ‘54. A few of those involved included Lou and Joe Albinetti, Pat and Bob Campbell, Muriel and Clem Collins, Terry and Ed Haberman, Marion and Lynn Holroyd, Anita and Herb

Janzen, Betty and Stan McArthur, Ruth and Bill McCubbin, June and Arnold Murray, Irene and Don Ness, Erma and Ernie Radbourne, May and Joe Storcer, Olive and Gill Utas, and Bill and Ella Simpson.

SPRA holds the archives of Club 54! You can view the finding aid for this collection on our website at <http://southpeacearchives.org/holdings-2/finding-aids/club-54-fonds/>. The records include meeting minutes, annual membership lists, attendance records, a financial ledger, and correspondence and circular communications detailing where the dances would be held, conveners, bands playing, menus, and other details.



Above, four bathing beauties, including the queen with her crown, pose for a photo after a 1950s beauty competition. This film is from the Eaglesham Board of Trade fonds and was featured in the “Beauty Pageants” section.



Left, a teenaged girl models formal wear of the time at the 1989 Eaglesham Agricultural Society Fashion Show, from the Eaglesham and District Drama Club videos and included in the “Formal Occasions” section of film clips.

Left, are these men ready for a dance? Nope. They are in the stands at the 1948 Sexsmith Frontier Carnival. Back row: Clyde Opus, Alan Redwood, Carl Waters, Andy Innis, Cliff Williams, and Joe Wiecker. Middle row: William Obniawka, William Housman, ? McGowan, Eddie Cochran, and Knute Scarberg. Front row: Doug Currie, Eric Rycroft, Walter Wilson, Joe Pondick, Martin Hovdebo, Charlie Stojan, and Ivan Novelsky. SPRA 1969.39.727.





# Descendants of A. M. Bezanson Visit

by Wanda Zenner

Imagine my surprise to open an email from an unknown address to find out that it was Frances Jones, Maynard Bezanson's granddaughter, not only thanking me for ensuring her grandmother's name, Dorothy Bezanson, was recorded on the memorial plaque at the Grande Prairie Cemetery but also to let me know that she was planning a trip to Bezanson and would like to meet with me. She had read the article in the Daily Herald Tribune on-line and it sparked her interest even further to visit the area. I did have to ask what prompted her to make the journey to which she replied that it had always been on her "bucket list". Her sons, Al and David had wanted to take her on a holiday and could not believe that of all the places they offered as choices, that it was Bezanson, Alberta that she wished to see. So in mid September they headed off from Campbell River, BC.

September 15, 2013 dawned warm and sunny – a perfect backdrop for a tour of the countryside. We headed down to the Bezanson Townsite and stopped at the top of the hill to show them where the original trail met the main road. From that point, 80



acres had been surveyed into lots when Bezanson Townsite Limited was incorporated. We continued down the hill while pointing out the area where the Presbyterian Church, which also served as the school, and the Flour Mill had been located.



Above, A. M. Bezanson's home in 1914. Photograph courtesy of the Grande Prairie Public Library. Below left, David, Al and Fran Jones. Photo by Wanda Zenner.

From there we continued on foot to where the home of A.M. Bezanson had stood and we stopped for a photo shoot. As I have been researching the Bezanson area, I had brought along several photos of the area; one of which was Maynard's home in 1914. We continued on to view the cairn that was dedicated to Dorothy and Lois (Maynard's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife and sister to Dorothy) and all the pioneer women of the area. I pointed out that the flat directly below was going to be a mill site – one that Maynard wrote in his book, *Sodbusters Invade The Peace*, "as the best he had ever seen". Also pointed out the area where the railway was surveyed to cross. From there we continued on to the camping area where the cabin is situated and showed them where the location of 'Doran Res-

taurant' along with 'Hall and Leonard's Store' which had also housed the post office and in the distance a spot where Billy Bayhan had his livery stable. Thank goodness the cellars are still visible. From there we circled the camping area, stopping to see where Fred Parker had his jewelry store and the 'McLeod Block' that had burnt down, followed by a quick stop where the Townsite's water source, a spring, had been located.

After leaving the Townsite we continued east to a spot on the Smoky River bank which commanded a spectacular view of the river valley where the Simonette River flows into the Smoky. Directly below is where Maynard had set up the Bezanson Ferry and the rocks on the east side of the river were clearly visible where the anchors had been located that secured the cable. From there we continued down the road, bench after bench in an effort to reach the homestead of Maynard (NW27-71-2 W6) where Fran's father, Francis (Frank) Bezanson was born in 1908 and also where her grandmother, Dorothy Bezanson passed away shortly after giving birth. Unfortunately we did not get as close to the site as I would have liked, however we were on the flat and Fran certainly did have a sense of what the area was like where her father was born and lived



Left, Frank, A. M. and Lois Bezanson around 1910. SPRA 1990.30.055.

until 1914 when Maynard moved the family into the newly constructed house at the Townsite.

Next stop – the hamlet of Bezanson and what better place to visit and enjoy

good food than at Lefty's Café. More stops for photos – school, store, and of course the new hamlet sign. This was another opportunity to provide the family with the history of how the hamlet came to be at its current location along with how the Presbyterian Church at the Townsite ended being part of the Bezanson Store owned by Pat Rooney, built almost exactly where the current store is located.

From there we headed to Grande Prairie to stop at the Cemetery so that Fran and her sons could view the memorial that had been erected to commemorate all those who had been buried in the Mission Cemetery. It certainly was a somber moment for the family as they viewed Dorothy Bezanson's name on the plaque. I'm sure there were many conflicting thoughts going through their minds at that time - the tragedy of Dorothy's death but also wonder of the birth of Frank Bezanson.



Above, Fran (Bezanson) Jones viewing Dorothy Bezanson's name on the Mission Cemetery memorial at the Grande Prairie Cemetery. Photo by Wanda Zenner.

It was a wonderful visit and an utmost pleasure to meet the granddaughter and great grandsons of A.M. Bezanson. I believe the family left with a new sense of what their grandfather and great grandfather had envisioned when he established a Townsite on the banks of the Smoky River.



# My Eaton Beauty Doll & The Day the Train Stopped at Our House

by Betty Welter

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.

The Christmas season of 1930 was very exciting and almost unbelievable as I remember. As was stated previously, we were real homesteaders living beside the railroad tracks. Our new farm was progressing, more land cleared and broken plus more crops and garden planted every year. Times were very hard, farm produce was of very little value if one could find any markets at all. I realized, in later years, just how worried Mom and Dad must have been trying to make payments on the land and feed us. My sister and I were far more interested in our annual Christmas concert—and Christmas period. After all, a 9 year old doesn’t really understand too much about payments and finances in general for a homestead.

The railroad track made a curve around the north end of Flying Shot Lake, then traveled up quite an incline as it proceeded west past our log house. Even the passenger train never traveled very fast on the curved grade and the old engine really chugged along huffing and puffing. There was also a cross road which required several blasts on the train whistle. We kids always waved to the engineer and fireman, then scooted down to retrieve Dad’s papers that were tossed out on special delivery days.

One day shortly before Christmas we could hear the train coming and it was giving out the shortest, oddest little whistle bursts as it proceeded up the incline towards our house—it was slowing down. We ran outside wondering what the problem was and gave our usual wave. Lo and behold, the train stopped and the engineer opened the engine door. He came down the steps with a big Christmas package which he put on the snow bank beside the track. We were speechless, and I can see that dear man in his striped overalls and engineers’ cap coming down those steps to

this day. He gave us a big wave and climbed back in the cab, then the train proceeded on its way. We raced down over the snowdrifts to retrieve the package, after all it had to be meant for us! We carried our unexpected box very carefully to the house.

Excited or what! True, it was a day or two before Christmas but Mother let us open it there and then—I think she was just as excited and inquisitive as we were. There was a cute little card on the top which read “For the two little girls who always smile and wave to us—Merry Christmas to all”. There were two lovely dolls in this box, one blonde dressed in mauve, and the other had dark hair dressed in yellow; they were beautiful indeed and we adored them. The parcels also contained other smaller gifts plus candy, nuts, and some magazines for our parents.

Now the big question was how to thank these very kind gentlemen. We had no names or addresses and Mother was very particular about us children writing thank-you letters—and promptly too! On Dad’s next trip to town he went down to the train station and managed to obtain the engineer’s name, a Mr. Brain. We hoped this was the correct engineer as shifts changed then as well as now. We decided to assemble a box of “goodies” for the train crew and take it to the station after Christmas. Mother was a wonderful cook and the box contained some of her scrumptious fruit cake, shortbread, mince tarts, etc. Barbara and I each wrote or printed a thank-you letter to Mr. Brain letting him know which doll we had claimed as our own. I might add that the name Mr. Brain really posed questions for us, it was so different from any of our neighbours’ names. Dad and I went in to town with the horses and cutter on the day that Mr. Brain was scheduled to be the engineer. We visited the train station with our box of treats. I was so excited being right beside that steaming, hissing, growling engine as it came to a squealing stop. I can remember holding Dad’s hand ever so tightly as well as our parcel. The man in the baggage car said we could go up



Above, the Grande Prairie Train Station in winter, ca. 1930. SPRA 1997.13.07.

to the engine and speak to our Mr. Brain—yes he was the engineer today. I can see him still, he was a really big man, very jolly, and looked old to a 9 year old. He wore glasses and of course was dressed in his striped overalls and peaked cap. He showed Dad and I inside the engine, and then we met the fireman but I can’t remember his name now. Mr. Brain and his wife lived in Edmonton and had no children he told us. He had watched our little homestead progress over the three years and so enjoyed our friendly wave. Our visit was brief as the express and passengers unloaded and reloaded—it was time to continue on. Mr. Brain thanked us so much for our thoughtfulness and promised to share the parcel contents with the train crew and Mrs. Brain. We again waved as the train disappeared down the track.

Dad and I finished our errands and shopping down town and returned home with a very happy, satisfied feeling. We always waved to any of the train men until we moved to another homestead south of Flying Shot Lake and away from the railway tracks the following year. We continued to wave to any train crew when we were close to the track but never actually met Mr. Brain again. He had certainly created some very happy and unexpected moments for our family, and just before Christmas too.



# FaceBook Fashion Fun Contest

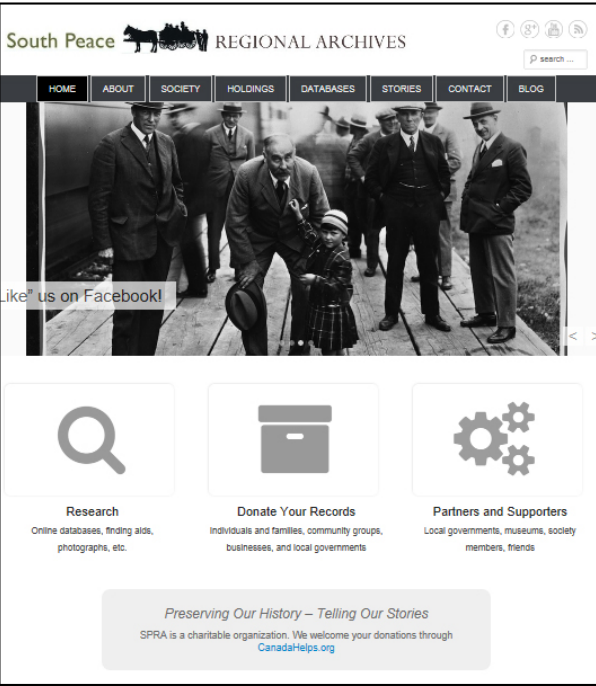


From September 11 to October 11, our FaceBook page was the site to be seen on as people submitted photographs of themselves (or others!) wearing fashions from various eras for our Fashion Fun contest. The winner, Bev Baker, was awarded a fabulous basket of prizes donated by Sole Addiction, Forbes and Friends, Great Northern Casino, Mary Kay, and Simone Bowes. Thanks to all who participated!

Speaking of FaceBook, you should check out all of our social media options, part of this summer's website upgrade. We are on FaceBook, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/South-Peace-Regional-Archives/485746744769840>, Twitter <https://twitter.com/sprarchives>, Google+ <https://plus.google.com/111936460857207143423/posts?hl=en&partnerid=gplp0>, and YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/sprarchives>.

# More to Explore on Our Website

The new website we announced in the September issue is up and running now at our old address, [www.southpeacearchives.org](http://www.southpeacearchives.org). There is new content to be explored, including databases for Sports in Newspaper Articles and Businesses in Newspaper Articles, new virtual exhibits, and self-guided Cemetery Walking Tour brochures for the City of Grande Prairie, Lake Saskatoon, St. Andrew's Anglican, Mountainside, Scenic Heights, and Sunset Ranch cemeteries. We also have expanded sections with information for researchers, genealogists, teachers, donors, partners, and supporters. Check it out for yourself and feel free to contact us with questions, comments, or suggestions.



# Kathryn's Picks

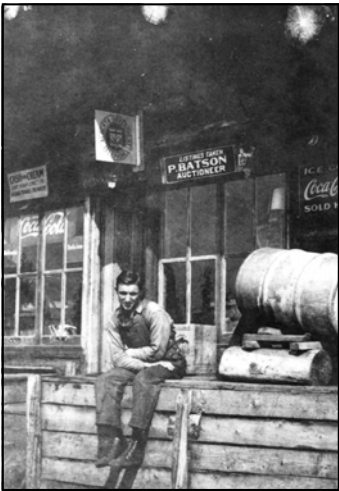
by Kathryn Auger

Kathryn's Picks are featured throughout this issue. Just two more... Right, a particularly lovely advertisement from the September 27, 1935 Grande Prairie Herald. Below, what outfit is complete without shoes? This Bird's advertisement is from the May 28, 1942 Herald Tribune.





# Mysteries Solved!



We are pleased to announce that the mystery photos from the March and September issues are a mystery no longer.

A copy of the March photo (SPRA 024.01.09.51, left) also appears in the Isabel Campbell photograph collection, recently donated by the Grande Prairie Public Library. On this version the young man is identified as Morris Shapiro sitting outside a store in old Hythe.



And thanks to a couple of our readers and our FaceBook followers, the photograph on the right (SPRA 2000.73.172) has been identified as the 1951-52 Beaverlodge grade 6 class taught by Mrs. Halstead. Back row (left to right): Stanley Clarke, Sidney Baid, Ted Pool, Ron Lunam, Clifford Werk, Doo Wong, Sam Sato, Ernest Burgess, Raymond D'Auost, and Soon Wong. Middle Row (left to right): Roger Jewitt, Don Sylvester, Murray Brown, Bruce Miller, Alberta Brower, Rhoda Willard, Sheila Wallace, Louis Holtz, Harold Cox, Brian Harcourt, and Dennis Cook. Front Row (left to right): Elaine Hodson, Margaret Lowe, Evelyn Connell, Lisa Perry, Gail Adams, Mrs. Halstead, Shirley Bisbing, Janet Smashnuk, Sharon Cook, Margaret Whiteman, and Carol Oszust.

## Volunteer Opportunities

SPRA has acquired oral histories from 40-some individuals in the Rycroft area. We are looking for a volunteer to research their biographies, listen to the oral histories, and make notes on the contents of the tapes.

SPRA is seeking a volunteer to transcribe Spirit River tax records from the old tax ledgers into a database. The volunteer needs to have good eyesight because the oldest records are quite faint. Some experience reading old hand-writing and familiarity with Spirit River families would be an asset. Our goal is to have this project done by 2016, when the MD of Spirit River celebrates 100 years!

If you are interested, please call 780-830-5105 or email [spra@telus.net](mailto:spra@telus.net).

## New at the Archives

The collections at SPRA have all been donated by individuals, organizations, and municipal governments. You are our only resource for the preservation of the history of the south Peace. Here are a few of our recent donations

O. H. "Rutabaga" Johnson diary  
*Marion Field*

Nora Shields fonds  
*Jan Shields*

Peace Country Bison Association  
*Adele Boucher and Fran Moore*

Stewart Family fonds  
*Mary Dever*

Hythe Headliner Newspapers  
*Edna Greber*

Hodson Family fonds  
*Clayton and Patricia Greber*

Olaf Vekved fonds  
*Judy Hopkins*

Beth Sheehan fonds accrual  
*Kells Sheehan*

Grande Prairie Music Festival fonds accrual  
*Margaret Bowes*

Monkman Pass Highway Association fonds accrual  
*Peter Martin*

Sexsmith and District Museum and small fonds  
*Sexsmith and District Museum Society*

Isabel Campbell Reference and Photograph Collection  
*Grande Prairie Public Library*

Betty Welter fonds accrual  
*Betty Welter estate*

Grande Prairie Composite High School Yearbooks  
*Karen Burgess*

Sargent Family photographs  
*Sean Sargent*

## All We Want for Christmas is an Audio Cassette Player!

SPRA is seeking the donation of a reliable audio cassette (tape) player. We have a large collection of cassette tapes here, but they would be more accessible to researchers if we had a tape player. If you have one that works, but no longer need, please contact the Archives.

## Problems With Alberta On Record?

The provincial archival databases have recently changed. Check out the new version at [www.albertaonrecord.ca/south-peace-regional-archives](http://www.albertaonrecord.ca/south-peace-regional-archives) . If you can't find what you need, please don't hesitate to ask Archives staff for help.

## Submissions to this Newsletter

SPRA Society encourages submissions in the form of stories, poems, memories, letters and photographs. Do you have a story, or does someone you know have a story about the past in the south Peace? Submit it to us by mail or e-mail or call us at 780-830-5105.

## Are You Enjoying This Newsletter?

Would you like to receive it mailed to your home four times a year? It's free when you are a member of the South Peace Regional Archives Society. See the Membership Form on the back of the newsletter. It also makes a unique Christmas present for family and friends.

## Benefits of Membership

- Be actively involved in preserving the history of this area.
- Have a voice in keeping archival collections in the Peace River Country.
- Become more aware of the issues and types of collections in archives.
- Receive a quarterly newsletter and notice of meetings & events.



South Peace Regional Archives Society Membership/Renewal Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Interested in being involved as a  
\_\_\_\_\_ volunteer  
\_\_\_\_\_ board member

There are two types of membership:

Full membership--get involved in the society, attend meetings, vote on issues and run for office.

Associate membership--receive communications (like this newsletter) to stay informed about issues and happenings at the Archives.

This membership is \_\_\_\_\_ new \_\_\_\_\_ renewal

Full Membership  
\$20.00/person or \$30.00/couple \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Member  
\$15.00/person \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to donate to the  
South Peace Regional Archives \_\_\_\_\_

Total Membership and Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay by cash or cheque to  
South Peace Regional Archives Society  
Box 687, Grande Prairie, AB. T8V 3A8  
Phone: 780-830-5105  
Fax: 780-831-7371  
E-mail: [spra@telus.net](mailto:spra@telus.net)

Member Support and Upcoming Events

**The Perfect Introduction**

If you hear someone say:

*"I have a bunch of old papers and stuff in the desk out at the farm. They're probably worthless and kind of dirty. Not likely anyone wants them."*



Tell them:

*"Not at all! You should really contact the Archives. They always tell me not to hesitate, just bring it in!"*

**2014 Family History Day**

Join the Grande Prairie Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society and South Peace Regional Archives on Monday, February 17th, 2014 from 12:30 to 4:30 pm at the Grande Prairie Golden Age Centre (10222-101 Ave) for workshops, research assistance, displays, and trade-show booths.

Free admission.



South Peace Regional Archives

is funded by

City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, MD of Greenview, MD of Spirit River

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Current projects include:

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