

# **Inside This Issue:**

Take Note Announcements	p. 3
And the Winner Is	p. 3
Letter from the Editor	p. 4
Contact Information	p. 4
Bezanson Townsite Centennial	
by Wanda Zenner	p. 5-7
Featured Fonds	
Bezanson family fonds	p. 8-9
Jennie Croken's Memories	p. 10
by Jennie Tomshak Croken	
Explore the History of Huallen and the	
Saskatoon Mtn Radar Base	
By Pat Wearmouth	p. 12-15
100th Anniversary of WWI	
The Buck Brothers	p. 16
Childhood Memories and Gimle School	
by Mary Dever	p. 17
What Archives Do and Why	
by Patricia Greber	p. 20-21
New Friends Society for SPRA	p. 22
Heritage Plaques & Walking Tour	p. 22
Reader Response: Alaska Music Trail	
by Marg Bowes & Kathryn Auger	p. 23
"All the Fast Horses", May 18, 1928	
Submitted by Kathryn Auger	p. 24
Grande Prairie Bldg Identification Contest	p. 24
Beth Sheehan Award for	
Donna Shail & Clayton Greber	p. 25
New at the Archives	p. 26
Member News	p. 26
Membership Application Form	p. 27

# **Take Note**

# New! 100th Anniversary Cemetery Tour!

**Grande Prairie Municipal Cemetery** 7 p.m. June 11 & July 16 Register soon as space is limited, 780-830-5105

# And don't miss

The Storytelling Tours in the Heritage Village at the Grande Prairie Museum, August 2-3 No registration needed.

# And the Winner Is..

The winner of the City of Grande Prairie Building Identification Contest in the March newsletter is:

# Suzanne Dunn

#### With Honourable Mention to:

Marlyss & Walter Paszkowski Bill Turnbull Lorne & Elly **Bruce Millar** Gail Schau

# The booby prize goes to:

Mary Nutting for mis-identifying a building in the original contest. For the answers see page 24.

On the Front Cover: (SPRA 1990.30.071 Bezanson family fonds) Ancel Maynard Bezanson with his camera against a bank of the Smoky River. He was an excellent photographer and writer, one of the first promoters of settlement in the South Peace River Country. You can read more of his story on pages 5-9.

June 1, 2014

Dear Members and Supporters;

What a busy year of anniversaries, with the City of Grande Prairie, the townsite of Bezanson, the Beaverlodge Research Station, and the beginning of World War I all in one year. It gives you pause to think about the frantic busyness there must have been here 100 years ago, with towns being built and farms established. Each week the Grande Prairie paper published the war news, current because of the telegraph, and so many young men responded by going off to war.

There are still lots of things happening with the anniversary celebrations, as you will see throughout the newsletter. The Downtown Association has a walking tour, on which SPRA staff assisted with research, writing and photographs. If you need any "Memory Lane" booklets, they are available here at the Archives.

This issue features the County of Grande Prairie, from Gimle in the west to Bezanson in the east and a little bit of Clairmont in between. If your area has not been featured yet, you could encourage it by writing some stories from your community.

With the postage going up from \$1.34 to \$2.00 per newsletter, it has finally come time to ask if any of our members would rather have the newsletter by email than by post. This was initiated by member Gwen Richards who, as a protest against Canada Post, is asking for as much of her mail as possible to be delivered by email. Good for you, Gwen!

My heels are dug a little more firmly in the past, I'm afraid, and I don't want the actions of Canada Post to determine how we enjoy our small pleasures. If you like the printed copy, please don't feel pressured into asking for the digital copy to save us money.

However you receive the newsletter, I hope you enjoy it and continue to support South Peace Regional Archives. You are much appreciated.

Sincerely, Mary Nutting, Editor

### **TELLING OUR STORIES**

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Our Vision: Preserving and Sharing the Past.
Our Mission: The purpose of South Peace Regional
Archives is to gather, preserve, and share the
historical records of municipalities, organizations,
businesses, families and individuals within the region,
both now and in the future.

# "Townsite" Celebrates Its Centennial

by Wanda Zenner

**Bezanson Townsite** is celebrating 100 years of existence. On August 30, 2014 everyone is welcome to attend an old-fashioned picnic to be held at the "Townsite" located 10 kms southeast from Bezanson.

The "Townsite" was the vision of an adventurer from Nova Scotia, Ancel Maynard Bezanson. In 1904, once it became known that several railway companies were beginning to plan lines for the Peace Country, Maynard traveled the area and published a book depicting his journey. *The Peace River Trail* sold 5,000 copies and is credited by many for the development of the south Peace area prior to the arrival of the railroad.

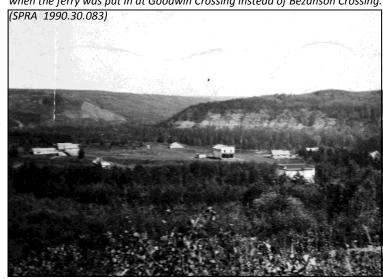
Maynard discovered that the Canadian Northern Railway had a line surveyed through the area just beyond the confluence of the Simonette and Wapiti Rivers with the Smoky River. He staked out an area for his "Townsite" directly on the rail line (NW 17-71-2 W6). Maynard then decided to form a townsite company which he incorporated in 1912. Shortly

thereafter, the first ad for 'lots for sale' at the "Bezanson Townsite" appeared in the Edmonton Journal. As a promoter, A.M. Bezanson easily sought out suitable investors who reveled in his vision for the "Townsite".

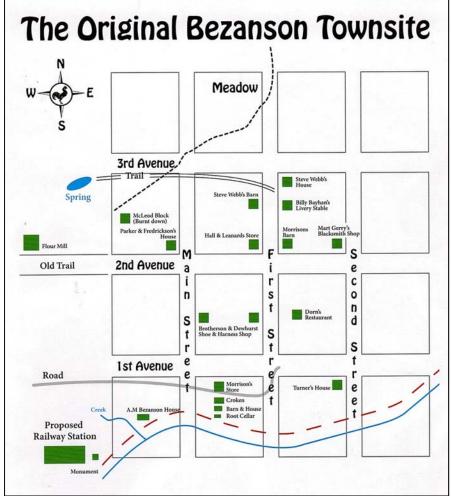
Unfortunately, the provincial government had decided to locate the Edson Trail and the Smoky River Ferry 10 km downstream from the "Townsite" where the Goodwins operated a stopping place. Undaunted and at considerable expense, Bezanson saw to it that a road was built down the hill to a suitable place for a ferry and up the other side; following which, he purchased and installed a steel cable and the ferry at the "Townsite" became operational.

By 1914, the "Townsite" was undergoing a building frenzy. In May 1914, a weekly mail service was established between Grande Prairie and the "Townsite", with Cecile Evans as the un-official postmaster and Sidney Webb as the mail courier. Social life in the Smoky River Valley was centered at the "Townsite", where many dances and other festivities were held. A.M. Bezanson would host many gatherings at his newly built residence especially those that involved future development of the Peace Country. Work bees were a common occurrence. Families would gather on James Brookbanks' homestead to have a picnic and pick an abundance of blueberries. Bezanson provided Reverend Forbes with two lots at the top of the hill near the "Townsite" for a church. Construction of the Presbyterian Church was finished in the fall of 1915 and served the community until around 1920. Once the Bezanson School District #3302 was established. the church was utilized for educational purposes from 1916 to 1919.

Below, the townsite of Bezanson, on a bank above the Smoky and Simonette Rivers, was planned and promoted by A.M. Bezanson, but doomed to decline when the ferry was put in at Goodwin Crossing instead of Bezanson Crossing.



By 1915, the "Bezanson Townsite" had 20 buildings. A.D. Berry and Hall & Leonard had general stores as did Peterson & McDonald. who also ran a boarding facility upstairs in their store. Fred Parker built a jewelry store. Joe Thompson had a stable as did William Bayen, who also had a bunkhouse. S.J. Webb had a barn, twostorey bunkhouse and restaurant. Doran had a bakery and restaurant and also ran a rooming house with Mr. Parker. Mr. Harwood had a hotel. Alex Brotherston had a harness shop and Mart Geary operated a blacksmith shop. The McLeod Block was rented by William Leonard who was the agent for the International Harvester Company. The building burned down in January 1916 and was not insured. The Peace River Milling Company had installed a flour mill: however, it never turned a crank.



While in existence, the Townsite was a very bustling community as almost all of the travel on the trail from east of the Smoky River came through Bezanson, although some winter travel crossed the ice at the old Goodwin Crossing. It was here that the east Smoky settlers would pick up their mail, groceries and other supplies. As well, it was the route followed by settlers who came into the region via the Edson Trail and was a stopping point for the river boats operating on the Smoky and Peace Rivers. With the decision of the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway to swing south from Rycroft and enter Grande Prairie from the north, virtually all hope was lost for the

need of a town. Disappointed that his dream of a Townsite did not materialize, A.M. Bezanson and his family left the area in 1917.

In 1921, the Government made a decision to move the site of the ferry downriver to a location where the crossing was deemed to be more advantageous. Once the ferry was moved downriver, the "Bezanson Townsite" soon disintegrated. Several buildings were either moved or dismantled and rebuilt at different locations. The original Peterson & McDonald Store was dismantled by Kenneth Morrison and rebuilt at Glen Leslie where it served again as a store and post office. Bezanson's house and ice-house were

purchased by Oscar Albinati and moved where it was utilized again as a family residence. Ellis Turner was the last resident to leave the Townsite in August 1923.

However, the name "Bezanson" would not fade away. The present-day "Hamlet of Bezanson" began its existence in 1926 when Pat Rooney decided to relocate his store business and post office to the main, graded road that connected the settlements of Calais and Grande Prairie. He purchased the Presbyterian Church at the "Bezanson Townsite" and used the logs to build his new store.

#### The Bezanson Townsite Today

The "Bezanson Townsite" was designated a Registered Historic Resource by the Province in 1986. In 1988, with many distinguished guests in attendance, the "Old Bezanson Townsite and Park" officially opened. The guests included Jim Bezanson (son of A.M. Bezanson), Percy Bezanson (nephew) and Gertrude Mattison (niece). Also in attendance was Ellis Turner, the last resident to leave the "Townsite", who unveiled a stone monument dedicated to the pioneer women of the Peace Country. Many of the old building sites had been located and identified with markers. The campground has 20 camping stalls and a day-use area that provides spectacular views of the Smoky River. In May 2010, the Townsite subsequently received a designation as a Municipal Historic Resource. Fran Jones, daughter of A.M. Bezanson's oldest son, Frank, along with her two sons, David and Al, visited the Townsite and Hamlet of Bezanson in 2013.

#### **Bezanson Hamlet Today**

Today Bezanson is a thriving community with a population of 155 but provides service to a large rural area. Residents appreciate the rural lifestyle and small-town living with convenient access to the City of Grande Prairie's amenities. The economy is strong, supported by progressive industries such as oil and gas, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and construction. The Smoky River Valley provides unmatched scenery and opportunities for leisure and recreation.

The hamlet not only boasts the Bezanson General Store, Lefty's Café, Bezanson Apartment Complex, and Bezanson Golden Years Centre, but also has Seniors' Cottages that opened in 1989, as well as the Bezanson Community Church and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. The Bezanson School remains one of the focal points of the hamlet. The Bezanson Agricultural Society, formed in 1981, holds a recreational lease on which is situated the Memorial Hall, ball diamonds, curling rink, skating rink and riding corrals. In 2005, the Bezanson Fire Hall, owned by the County but manned by volunteers, was opened. The Fire Hall and the Legion Hut are located on leased land adjacent to the recreational lease.

Although the community has changed over the years, the spirit of the community, a spirit that originated at the "Bezanson Townsite", has not. Rural life is far from easy, but it provides an opportunity for community involvement and spirit not usually found in urban centers. I believe A.M. Bezanson would be proud of the hamlet that bears his name.



# **Featured fonds: Bezanson Family fonds**

1906-[1920]. — 0.3 cm of textual records. — 183 photographs. — 12 postcards.

Biographical Sketch

Ancel Maynard Bezanson, born near Halifax in 1878, began his love affair with the Peace Country in 1906. That year he traveled throughout the Peace with a camera and a notebook, and shortly thereafter published The Peace River Trails to promote the Peace River Country as a place to settle. He was convinced of the agricultural potential of the area, returning for another scouting trip in 1907, and again in 1908 to settle with his bride, Dorothy Robillard. That winter, Dorothy died in childbirth but her child (Frank) survived. In 1910, Bezanson married Dorothy's sister Lois and the couple returned to the Peace Country. The couple lost twin girls and had one more son who survived (Jim).

The Bezanson Ranch was called Teepee Ranch, but Bezanson also

kept herds of cattle at Saskatoon Lake. When the C.N.R. Survey came through Teepee Ranch in 1908, Bezanson began to promote a townsite "along the railway" on a bench above the Smoky River. In 1913, he drove the first car (a Cadillac) over the Edson Trail. Accompanying him was A.J. Davidson, a real estate dealer from Edmonton, who supported Bezanson's vision of a railroad and town.

In 1914 Bezanson published *Looking Ahead in the*Peace Country—Building of a City with a detailed map





of the Bezanson townsite. However, when the railroad finally came in 1916, it went north to Watino and south to Grande Prairie. Bitterly disappointed, Bezanson left the area and finally settled at Pouce Coupe in 1931. His sons, Frank and Jim, also made their homes in British Columbia. Later in life, in 1954, Bezanson published *Sodbusters Invade the Peace* as a chronicle of his experiences.

Scope & Content

The fonds consists of photographs of Bezanson's

initial trip into the Peace Country in 1906, their homestead on the Smoky River from 1908-1913, his 1913 trip over the Edson Trail in a 1912 Cadillac, the creation of the roads into the townsite, the Bezanson townsite, the Beaver Riverboat which hauled supplies and people up the Smoky River to the end of steel at Watino in 1915, and a collection of Peace Country scenes dating from 1910 to 1930.

### **Custodial History**

In 1990, Janet Sarmaga, on behalf of the Bezanson Townsite Committee, deposited the first collection in the Grande Prairie Museum. In 2000 the records were transferred to South Peace Regional Archives.

A later accrual was donated by Mack Prentiss, from Bear Lake. These photographs had been preserved by a cousin in Seattle who ran a rooming house. When an old man there died, she was asked to forward anything of value to his next of kin, and destroy the rest. She found the Bezanson pictures and, since

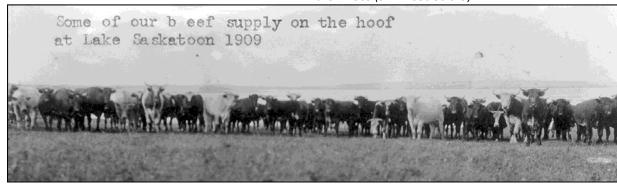
they referred to Grande Prairie, sent them to her cousin Mack Prentiss. They were copied by both the Daily Herald Tribune and the Provincial Archives of Alberta, but the originals were donated to SPRA in 2003.

To learn and see more, go to www.southpeacearchives.org, and choose the "Holdings" tab on the top menu bar, then "Finding Aids" and fonds 155 from the list.





Photographs from the Bezanson Family fonds include (starting at the top of page 8): a party of settlers heading for the Peace Country with covered wagons and sleighs in 1906 (SPRA 0155.02.02), a herd of horses belonging to the Canadian National Railway Survey party corralled at Teepee Ranch in 1908 (SPRA 1990.30.036), a ghostly double exposure of men and horse in front of the village of Lake Saskatoon in 1914 (SPRA 0155.05.21), a First Nations family with teepees and drying racks on the shores of Moberly Lake in 1911 (SPRA 0155.05.07), and Bezanson Cattle on the shore of Saskatoon Lake in 1909 (SPRA 1990.30.049).



# Jennie Croken's Memories

The following story was written by Jennie Croken, who is 98 years old this year. Jennie's father, Joseph Tomshak, raised a clutch of Trumpeter Swans in the late 1940s, which helped draw the attention of the world to this endangered species. Jennie's memories incorporate stories told by her parents and range as far back as 1916.

A few weeks after I was born in 1916, the first train passed close by the homestead shack I was born in [on the farmstead east of Highway 2

where the railway tracks cross the highway north of Clairmont]. When Frank and Tony, my brothers, were old enough, we'd run to see the train, which came by two times a week. Sometimes the engineer would throw out a bag of chocolate bars or candy, which we never had, and made us so happy.

1918 was the start of the Flu Epidemic. My dad, Joe Tomshak, was at a farm sale, when Jack Holtom, the auctioneer, said, "Joe, have you any garlic [for protection against the flu]?" By the grace of God, he had one in his pocket; Jack paid him \$1.00 (like \$30.00 or more today). The fear of the flu was everywhere, but now Jack said, "I'm not afraid, come closer."

This was also the year of the unsolved murders of six men. Dad delivered eggs as usual to the farm of Frank Parzychowsky, whose wife and family were in the States at the time. He saw no one, only the dog barking, so he went back home. Dad said a relative of Mrs. Parzychowsky's, a detective, came to the Tomshak farm and walked around the slough, singing in a beautiful voice. The swans weren't there at that time or he wouldn't have stayed long enough to sing.



Tomshak family at the homestead, ca. 1925 (L-R) Frank, Joe, Tony, Jennie (9 yrs.), Albert & mother Nellie. (SPRA 112.02.30)

J.G. MacGregor's book describes the hamlet of Clairmont in 1925 as having two hotels, livery barn, two stores, butcher shop, rooming house and hotel, pool hall, grain elevators, garage, post office, bank, telephone exchange, also a dray to accept freight. Beth Sheehan also describes the hamlet and its people in "Turn Back the Pages: Clairmont 1908-1992". According to reports, a fire in 1925 destroyed a large part of the hamlet.

After the railway arrived in Grande Prairie, Clairmont did not grow much. It was still needed by the farmers, and the elevators were busy, both fall and winter, so MacDonald Store & Post Office had to have the essentials and the Livery Barn and Hotel were still in business. Grain was hauled in across the lake from as far away as Kleskun Hill.

My first two years were in Clairmont School, which was a long ways to walk. Often I'd see several coyotes not far from the road, but I wasn't afraid because they had lots of rabbits to eat. For the next six years, my brothers and I walked to the top of Mercer Hill, then



This photograph was taken by Gertrude Charters, editor of the Grande Prairie Herald Tribune, who wrote, "Domesticated Trumpeter Swans on the snow with the Tomshak children. This is the second winter these rare beautiful birds have spent on the farm where they were brought as small cygnets in June, 1947." (SPRA 112.02.28)

east to Wellington School. Mr. Alt, our teacher, made a list of subjects for teacher and nurse on the blackboard. French was a must for either. He walked from Grande Prairie every day, didn't miss a day. Nor did I; I liked school. I took piano lessons from Mrs. Allan Mercer, riding Walter Rathwell's pony north along the track. I paid Mrs. Mercer a "Shin-Plaster" (paper 25 cents) for every lesson.

I went to Grande Prairie for Grade XII, the envy of my Clairmont friends, because it was so far away. I boarded with the Rudolph Cepelas, and dad paid in farm products: meat, eggs, butter, etc. On graduation in 1934, I remember getting a new dress from the T. Eaton Catalogue, but don't remember it to be a great "to-do". Results came from Edmonton and in August we could go to Grande Prairie and re-write to raise our marks. I chose to re-write a couple. Dad let me have the car (no driver's license needed, although a radio license was needed if you owned a radio).

On my way home, I stopped for the mail. I said to Mr. MacDonald, "I'm finished with my exams." He said,

"Do you want a job?" I quickly said "Yes". In those days, girls either worked at home, got married, worked for a farmer, or in a hotel in Grande Prairie. (It was the postmaster's girls, Mildred and Joey MacDonald, who had walked me from the farm to school my first day. They spoke no Polish and I no English, but we made out just fine.)

Like Morrison's General Store (Betty Welter's memories in September 2013 issue), MacDonald's also had a stalk of bananas hung up, and a very sharp knife. Cheddar cheese came in 30 lb. rounds from Ontario. In fact, this was often my lunch with a piece of Mrs. Leddy's pie from Hotel Leddy next door. I walked in from the farm every day and, after

helping with milking each morning, had no time to pack a lunch.

MacDonald built onto the store, which catered to a lot of farmers and travellers. We sold chocolate bars, groceries, clothing, etc. from warehouses in Grande Prairie. We kept drugs like aspirin and Zambuck (not available now), and vanilla and lemon extract under the counter. Those were the days of prohibition, bootleggers, and home-made brew. Often we stayed open late to give farmers their mail when they delivered grain, or when the trains were late, especially in the winter.

When I sold cigarettes I'd put 5 cents in a glass. I didn't know why until I read a story in J.P.

MacGregor's book, about a young clerk waiting on this lady in Calgary. An article for 60 cents, the clerk said, and two cents for Abe [taxes]. The lady said "What's your name?" The next day the clerk didn't have a job, for the lady had been Mrs. Aberhardt. Postal stamps were 3 cents, and I filled out many money orders for T. Eaton and Simpson Sears.

# **Explore the History of Huallen and the Saskatoon Mountain Radar Base**

By Pat Wearmouth

The "Explore the History" section of our newsletter focuses on rural communities that were once more than they are today. In an age of urbanization and centralization, it is easy to forget that the history of the South Peace Region is found in these smaller places. Settlers arriving throughout the first half of the last century settled largely in the countryside. They made their living farming the soil or working with other natural resources the region offered. Distance, time, and poor roads were often obstacles to travel so, once arrived, people tended to work and play locally. As transportation improved, services centralized. The small communities began to fade and became distant, but perhaps fond, memories.

In this issue, we explore an area west of Grande Prairie which contains two settlements with very different histories and reasons for existing.

The first is Huallen, a small settlement that was originally an agricultural supply and shipping point on the Northern Alberta Railway (now CNR). Established in 1928, it was named after an early settler in the area, Hugh Allen. Allen farmed, was active in several agricultural organizations, and was elected and served in the Provincial Government.

The second settlement was a Canadian Forces Radar Base, which was situated on top of Saskatoon Mountain. The site contained radar domes and support facilities, as well as housing and service buildings.

The Base, which operated between 1953 and 1988, was part of the Pinetree Line, a series of radar sites that stretched across the middle of Canada. The Pinetree Line was built to counter the threat of Soviet intrusions into North American airspace during the Cold War. This site was also important to the local

economy. Over 100 military personnel and 50 civilians were employed there. About one third of the military staff lived on the base, with the rest residing in surrounding communities.

Along the road between the two settlements stands an old log building that preceded both. This was the Mountain Trail School.

#### Huallen

Driving west from Grande Prairie and Wembley on Highway 43, you will come to Range Road 92. Turn left off the highway and proceed a short distance south until just before the railway crossing where you will see a road going west. This intersection is the southeast corner of Huallen. Turn west and follow the road past the various locations of buildings shown on the map. The buildings or their replacements are now private residences.

Huallen provided supply, shipping, and recreational services to the surrounding rural community. At one time it contained a community hall, a curling rink, hockey rink, baseball diamond, tennis court, and athletic club.

While proceeding to the west, an interesting thing to note is the site where sat the community hall. Look closely at the front of the mobile home which occupies the site now, and note the hardwood floor of the hall which is still in use as a porch floor.

At the end of this short road is the former Huallen store. The store started as a tent in the very early days and operated until 1974. The store not only provided a full range of merchandise, but also served as a bank for cashing grain cheques.

Across the road from the store, on the railway right of way, was a small railway station. To the east of

that on the siding to the south of the mainline stood two elevators, originally owned by Alberta Pacific Grain and the United Grain Growers. A stock yard at the west end of the siding completed the rail service facilities.

#### **Mountain Trail School**

Return to the Highway 43 intersection and continue north on Range Road 92. Two miles from the highway you will come to the intersection with Township Road 720, a road that was part of the Old Edmonton Highway to Fort St. John. On the northwest corner of this junction, you will see the remains of the Mountain Trail School. The school operated from 1921 until 1945, when students began travelling west to Beaverlodge. Like most schools of the era, the building was used for social activites as well as education, and the building continued to serve this fucntion for a bit longer. Once the school closed, the students traveled to Beaverlodge School by a canvascovered box on a 1927 truck. It was supplied with a small wood heater to keep the children warm. The stove-pipe protruding through the canvas caused a fire more than once.

#### Saskatoon Mountain Radar Base

Continue north up Saskatoon Mountain. At the top of the hill you will come to a T-intersection. To your right is a clearing which used to contain the communications building for the Base. Turn left on the pavement and proceed west. The Base, known by various names (Trumpeter, CFB Beaverlodge, Saskatoon Mountain Radar Base, or simply the Base) was down this road.

At 0.6 km, a trail on the right leads to the former Base storage yard and rifle range. At 1.5 km, the road widens and indicates the site of the main guard house for the Base. You will have just passed a road into a new radar dome site which is operated by Transport Canada for current air traffic. At the wide spot, look to the right and note a large grassed area screened by a row of spruce trees. This area contained the housing, power plant, maintenance buildings, and recreational facilities that supported the operation.

At 2.0 km there is a second wide spot (near the current picnic site) where the guard house for the actual radar domes sat. There were three domes in the grassed area to the north and east. They contained detection, height finding, and range finding radar.

The height of land in the northwest corner of the clearing, where the domes were situated, was the site of one of the first forestry lookout towers built in the South Peace region. It was built in 1942, and gave excellent views for the detection of forest and brush fires. The tower was removed when the radar base was constructed, a bit of a loss, as the viewshed was difficult to replace with subsequent fire towers.

Before leaving the Mountain, take in the view from the viewpoint just northwest of the main guard house site. On a clear day, the Rocky Mountains can be seen about 80 km distant.

Saskatoon Mountain is an outlier of Alberta's Rocky Mountain foothills. Rising 150 metres above the surrounding countryside, its geography creates a foothills environment, with a cooler and wetter climate. This in turn leads to plant life representative of the foothills rather than the prairie/parkland below.

The Mountain has been important to humans for a very long time. It was the site of the earliest known human habitation in northern Alberta. Archeological surveys have shown that temporary hunting camps, no doubt to spot game below, existed 9000 years ago.

Arriving European settlers began almost immediately to cut firewood, hunt, and picnic on the Mountain. Perhaps you are here today, continuing the use of this unique topographical feature of the Region.

Resources: <u>Beaverlodge to the Rockies</u>

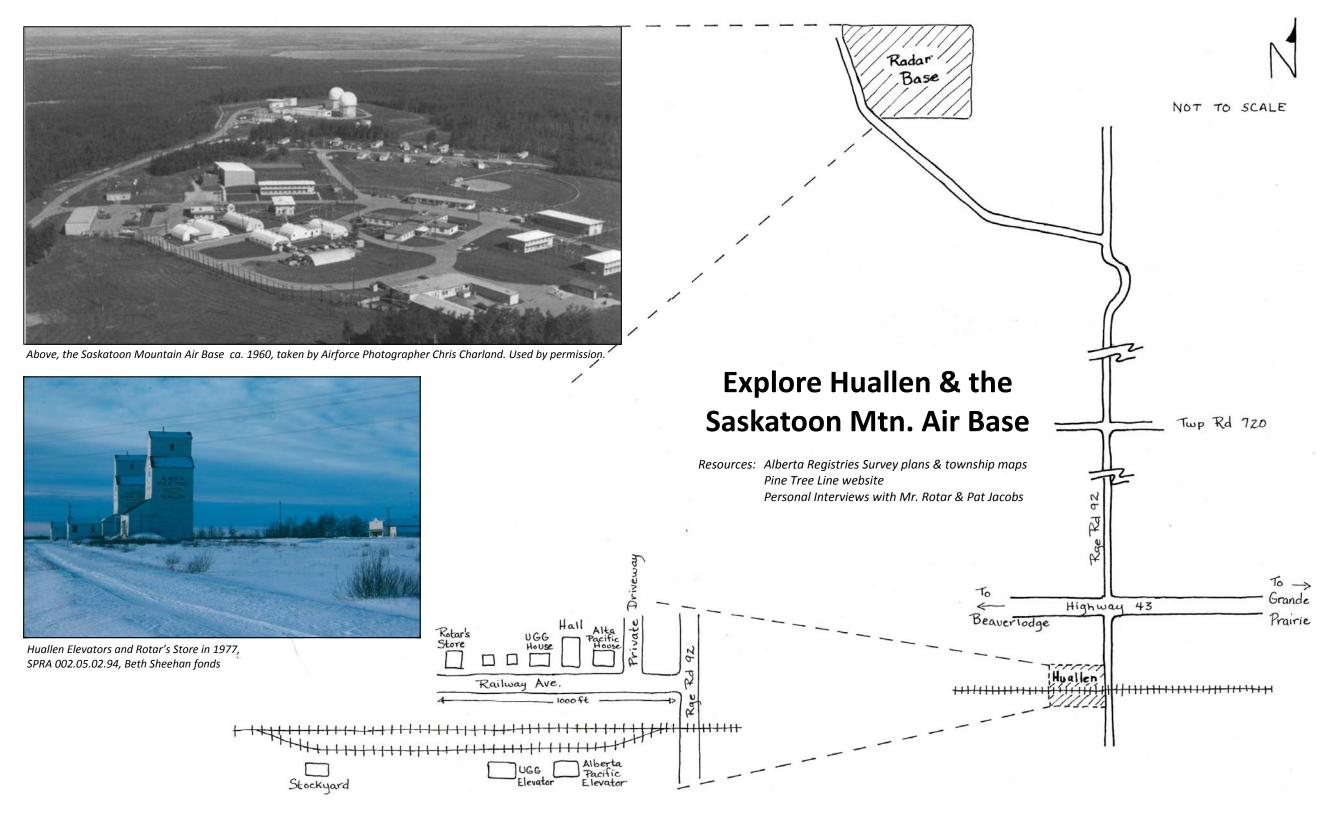
<u>Saskatoon Mountain: A Discovery Guide</u>

By Margo Hervieux

Airforce photographer, Chris Charland

Personal interviews with Mr. Rotar and

Mrs. Pat Jacobs



# 100th Anniversary of World War I: The Buck Brothers

Charles and Arthur Buck, from Hertfordshire, England, emigrated to Canada in 1910, when they were 24 and 22 years of age, respectively. They filed on land in the Lake Saskatoon district, calling their homestead Poplar Grove

When World War I began in 1914, recruitment drives and patriotic speeches convinced many of the young homesteaders to join up. Charles signed up with the British Military, 2nd King Edward Horse, and Arthur enlisted in the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Infantry, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment.

The 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion was soon fighting in France. Arthur died in the

Battle of Passchendaele on November 1, 1917 and is buried in Poperinghe, Belgium. Charles was gassed during the war and although ill, managed to return to Poplar Grove Farm in the summer of 1918, with his English War Bride, a nurse named 'Cis'. He died March 4, 1920 as a result of his war sickness and is buried in the small cemetery behind St. Andrews Anglican Church on the west side of Lake Saskatoon.

Neither Arthur nor Charles had any descendants, but in 2010, a niece from England donated a collection of their photographs to SPRA. They document the Buck brothers homestead activities, their cabin inside and out, and their battalion during the war. These can be seen on www.southpeacearchives.org/charles-and-arthur-buck/.

Photographs, from top to bottom, show: Homestead of Charles and Arthur Buck (298.06); "Interior of my mansion." (298.04); a patriotic picnic (298.28); Postcard inscribed, "26th February, 1915, Woodbridge (Suffolk, England) My dear Edith, Sorry I could not get away today owing to some of our fellows being sick. Cannot get away until next week, will wire. Love Charlie". Charles is believed to be the tall man 3rd from the right in the back row.(298.33)









# Memories of Gimle School by Mary Dever

After we left Beaverlodge we moved to the farm at Albright. Our neighbours were The Gudluagsons, the Eastmans, Mr. Everett Waddell, and the Huerschers.

Our house was at the end of a long dirt road and was situated on the bank of the Beaverlodge River. It was known as the Houde Place. At the time it seemed like a big house to us. There was a large kitchen, living room, storage room and pantry. Upstairs had two large bedrooms and a small one.

At night we went to sleep listening to the coyotes howling, and squirrels running across the roof. I loved those sounds. I slept in a large bed with two sisters, two other sisters slept in a bed beside us. Our brother Joe had the small bed to himself.

Electricity and phone lines were not available in the rural districts then. Coal oil lights and wood stoves were the norm for us and our neighbours.

In 1953, when we started attending Gimle school in grade 6, my brother and I rode horse back. Our horse was named June and we were so proud of her. She was very spirited and the neighbour kids were afraid of her. This made me love her even more. The school was approx. 2 1/2 miles away and was much too far to ride in cold weather. A good part of the winter we walked and also when it was too icy for June. There was a barn at the school for the horses during the school day. The classes were from 9:30-3:30 and there were less then 20 students from grade 1-9.

Our teacher was Mrs. Connie Kerr. She was a local lady and drove to the school with a team of horses. The older boys would put the team in the barn for her when she arrived at school.

The boy who lived closest to the school—Raymond Tschetter—came to the school early to light the wood heater to thaw the building out in winter before the rest of us arrived. In the winter we were usually quite chilled by the time we arrived. Another one of his jobs was to







Above, three versions of Gimle School: Top: the original Gimle School, built west of Albright in 1919 (2008.79.05). Middle: the log school, now with a plaster coating, and Miss Robson's silver cup gym class with Jack Hommy, Johnny Hommy, Dawn Hommy, Phyllis Larsen, Milton Hommy, Gwen Hommy, Dennis Dick, Jack Hersher, Francis Sexton, and Wayne Hommy. (388.01.10). The Bottom photo is of the new Gimle School ca. 1950 (063.02.33.1).

carry the bucket of drinking water from his house to the school for the students each day.

At some point the school board became concerned about the students walking to school because of an outbreak of rabies in the wildlife. The solution recommended was that students carry guns to and from school!

No rabid animals were ever encountered on our travels.

17

### (Cont'd from p. 11)

Mr. MacDonald managed the Clairmont hockey team and also curled. The mail came twice a week, in from Edmonton at noon and back at midnight from Dawson Creek. When the postmaster was away, it was my duty, even at midnight.

Pat Croken's hockey trophy, the P.V. Croken Cup, was above the door with two others, and it was my job to polish it. Little did I know that would be my name. Arnold Christie, superintendent of United Grain Growers, offered Rudy Croken a job on Pat's request, so he came up from PEI, where jobs were hard to get, in 1934. At that time, UGG sold binder twine to be used for bundles. In the evenings Rudy would deliver to the farmers and he'd offer me rides. I don't know what Dad did with so much twine—it was a "Binder Twine Romance".

We married in June 1937 and had a big wedding outside. The caterers, from Clairmont, were the fellows who sold "Low-Heat Stainless Steel Ware". I still have a small pot in use from them. The wedding cake was made by Marvin's Café. We baked more cakes and before the wedding, I helped ice them, then went to Grande Prairie to get my hair done. We also made a trip to Grande Prairie for beer because it was a hot day. Allan Clarke of Peace River dropped a gift from a plane, and in the evening we had Jack Penson's band playing on a flat rack truck in the middle of Clairmont. Because of the 1925 fire, there was lots of room.

Dad gave us a cow, which was a blessing as there was no fridge. When Gene and Betty needed milk, day or night, we would run out and milk the cow into a







From top to bottom: Rudy and Gene Croken with the family cow, sheep and chickens ca 1940 (112.02.31), the Croken home in Clairmont, ca. 1945, (112.02.32), and getting the garden ready for planting, ca. 1950 (112.02.33).

beer bottle, and put on large brown nipple. We had a separator and sold milk to Redwoods and Harts. There was a lot of cream, so we churned butter, and had chickens, so we sold eggs. I still have a chair which I received in payment. We had a big garden, as everyone did in those days. It was Rudy's pride and joy, a relaxing job after the elevator. George Vogt, who owned a butcher shop in Grande Prairie, had a big freezer where we rented a box to store moose meat or whatever as many farmers did. The keys all hung together, everyone trusting that you would only take your own.

We were more or less shut-in for the winter. On summer evenings we would drive to

Grande Prairie, park angle-wise, and visit in cars or cafés, shop, or go to the theatre. We were blessed to have Gertrude Charters as the editor of the Herald Tribune. She was the first elected alderwoman and a great promoter of the Peace Country. She made the plight of the Trumpeter Swan known in Canada, the USA, and England.

Rudy had 20 years with UGG, then his lungs decided to quit because of the dust. His next job was with Lloyd Moore Lumber, and with this connection we were able to build a house on 101 Street and 105 Avenue, across from Sheridan's Well, in 1954. That November there was mud up to your knees. John A. [former Councillor Croken] and Denis carried water from the well for 5 cents a pail. Everyone was building during the post-war boom. We had to have plumbing, water and gas, which had just been turned on in 1953. I had a hard time deciding on a gas or electric stove-gas was cheaper. Everyone had a clothes line and

The 1937 Clairmont hockey team: Allan Clark, Reg Ireland, Dave Turner, Gordon Forbes, Marion Fisher, Lachlan MacDonald (coach), Howard Anderson, Frank Durda, Bud

garden, and no one locked their doors or worried about it.

I was working as a receptionist at the York Hotel for Elmer Logan and helping Joe and Eva Benoit at the Cigar Stand. Because of the boom, there were lots of surveyors staying at the hotel. Over the phone I would take down measurements of depth, etc. though I didn't have a clue what it was all about.

Terry and Joyce Tomshak still live on the homestead in the big white house. Albert, who lived next door, was County Reeve for three terms, and moved to Grande Prairie about 2008. His daughter Donna and Daryl Beeston moved into his house and now Daryl is a County Councillor. Homes are being built around them; Clairmont is extending north.

18 19

# What Archives Do and Why We Do It

by Genealogist Patricia Greber

Subtitled: A Genealogist in the **Archives** 

As a genealogist I am becoming more and more familiar with what the Archives has on hand for me and my own research.

My husband's great grandfather, Aubrey Hawkesworth, was one of the early settlers to the Peace Country and a great person to research at the Archives. Here are some of the things that the archives has that can help any person that is doing family research.

Organizations - Aubrey walked over the Edson Trail in 1913, so qualified for the Oldtimers' designation. This in turn qualifies his descendants to be Oldtimers as well. The Oldtimers have donated their records to the Archives and Aubrey is one of the early members. In the Oldtimers collection there are membership records, stories, guest books and minutes, which can also be researched for further mention of family members.

There are many types of organizations such as church groups and craft clubs that have also

donated their records, Your ancestor could have belonged to any of these. It would be worthwhile to find out what organizations were in existence in your ancestor's community and see if they are included in any of the records.

School - Aubrey settled in the Hythe area and sent his children to Happy Valley and Glass Lake Schools.

# Circle Bank Resident Farewelled on Removal

CIRCLE BANK, May 9 .- The able evening. The program Saturday evening, May 7th, when the many friends of Mrs. bid her farewell and wish her every happiness in her new home in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. There were 40 people present. The evening was spent most enjoyably in playing cards; games and Charades. After a tasty lunch, Mrs. M. B. Mill on behalf of the Circle Bank Community Club, made a presentation of a fine overnight case to Mrs. Hodgson, her daughter Miss Vera Hogson received a gift presented by Miss Iris Shail, who represented the West. Hythe school children. A short program completed a most enjoy-

### FLYING SHOT (5 miles West)

FLYING SHOT, May 6 .- Sure Hythe school. having lovely warm weather here of late, but a rain would be good just now.

The crops are getting well under way, won't be long till they are all in, and the gardens are mer, on the 19th.

Hodgson home was the scene of consisted of community singing a surprise farewell party on A song by the Misses Iris Shail Winnifred Weller and Katio Gass; a fishy recitation by Gertrude Hodgson gathered to Aubrey Hawksworth, and a song by the Misses Helen, Gladys and Jean Wells and Lottie Hawks worth. Afterwards joined hands and sang, "Auld Lang Syne" and "She's a Jolly Good Fellow," in the old time honored way. We regret Mrs Hodgson's leaving us and we all extend our best wishes to her.

Mrs. G. Hodgson and Mrs. A Hawksworth were dinner guests at the M. B. Mill home last Thursday.

Mrs. G. Hodgson visited at the Hawksworth home for a few days last week, also at the E. Armstrong home.

Miss Margaret Southwell is staying at the H. Rowen home, as she is attending the West

Miss Jean McPherson is visiting with her sister, Mrs. D. Bul-

Don't forget the ladies meeting at the home of Mrs. D. Bul-

This article from the May 18, 1928 Herald Tribune, is one of the many articles that can be found on the Hawkesworth family. It is interesting to note how many names are in one short article. Maybe this practice sold lots of papers.

These school records have not been donated to the Archives, but many have. Information found in the school records vary, but can include teachers' names, attendance records and any sickness that may have closed the school for a time.

Sports clubs – There were many sports teams and clubs in the Peace Country and information included can be team lists, photographs, and results from events attended. Here are a few of what the Archives has on hand: Wheat Belt Baseball League fonds 488, Beaver Hockey League fonds 488, and Peace Ladies Curling Assoc. fonds 35.

Newspapers – A great resource that the Archives uses guite a bit is the newspaper. The Grande Prairie Herald 1913-1948 is available online through the Our Future Our Past website http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/newspaper/. Here you can find numerous articles about

events and people in the area. I thought it was too bad that there was not an early paper for the Hythe area but the smaller communities were regularly covered in the Herald.

Local Government – Aubrey was one of the first county councillors and I was hoping to find a record of him in this capacity. Sure enough, the Archives has a photograph of him and other councillors that we did not have.

The Community – Other people in the community may have records of your family. Social events such as dances, picnics. barbeques, sports days, and rodeos. Taking the time to check the collections of other community members who may have donated their records could result in success.

In doing this research I discovered it was 100 years ago this year that Aubrey Hawkesworth homesteaded on SW 28-73-11 W6 in 1914. His homesteading story has not been documented in the records, which has now prompted me to get his story written down. And of course once I have gathered all the information I will be donating a copy to the Archives!

I am very thankful that there is an Archives in Grande Prairie collecting information on the Peace Country for genealogists like me!



Above, Aubrey Hawkesworth (fifth from right standing) as a member of the first County Council in 1951 (SPRA 063.06.02.01), from the County of Grande Prairie fonds; and below Aubrey (on the right) with Jim DeRolls at a well site on June 20, 1969. This photo was taken by Irene Cook and is part of the Donna Shail collection of Hythe history recently donated to SPRA.



20

# New Friends Society for SPRA



A new Friends group has been formed for SPRA! We are very fortunate to have Mr. Charlie Penson as the President of the society; he will be assisted by Kevin O'Toole, Vice President; Karen Burgess, Secretary; and Jeff Nutting, Treasurer.

Charlie says, "I've been encouraged by the number of collections coming in, to know that the history of the south Peace is being preserved. I also recognize that the continued growth means that we will soon be bursting at the seams. This impresses on me the need for a larger facility for the Archives."

For more information about how you can be involved with the Friends of South Peace Regional Archives, please contact Charlie Penson at (780) 539-9029

We hope to have some news from the Friends in each newsletter, so keep an eye on this space.

# Heritage Plaques & Walking Tour

Heritage Plaques, sponsored by the Peace Country Historical Society for Grande Prairie's 100th Anniversary, are now in place as a permanent reminder of our history. As well, there are temporary enlargements of the historical photographs in the windows of about 50 downtown businesses, and a guidebook called "Memory Lane". These guidebooks are available at SPRA and many of the businesses where the photographs are posted. Two examples of the Heritage Plaques, courtesy of Daryl White, PCHS President, can be seen below.





# Reader Response: Remembering the Alaska Music Trail

### Margaret Bowes

My mother, Jeanne O'Brien was active with the Alaska Music Trails from the time it started till it ended. Clem & Muriel Collins and Walter Kujath, principle of the Grande Prairie High School, were also involved. The concerts were in the High School Auditorium, just chairs set up in the gym, but the concerts were excellent. They went on for many years—probably about 20 years—attended by people with season's memberships. They stopped when attendance began to dwindle, and after a time the Peace Country Overture Concert organization was formed.

#### Kathryn Auger

I remember the Alaska Music Trail concerts from the time I was in high school, so would be around 1959 to 1961. At that time the concerts were in the gym of the Grande Prairie High School. I don't remember going to the evening performances, but they used to have a short program in the early afternoon for the students. You paid \$1.00, I think, and it was optional. Mrs. O'Brien was the accompaniest for some of the singers at those afternoon concerts. I remember Kaye Allen doing it at least once that I can think of.

One artist I remember for some reason, was a violinist named Thomas Ralston. I have a vague feeling that his wife performed with him, but I'm not sure about that, also that he was from Edmonton. I looked him up, and he had been with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra from 1958 to 1964, so that memory makes sense. The only other thing I remember was that a lot of people came to the concerts from outside of Grande Prairie. There were quite a few who came from Beaverlodge. That's all I remember!

### Alaska Music Trail Concerts 21st Anniversary Season 1970 - 1971

PRESENTS

EVELYNE & BOB BEERS Folksingers





MONTROSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM 8:30 p.m.

#### Alaska Music Trail Concerts

Tuesday, November 3 — Marilyn Dubow and Idith Zvi

Tuesday, December 8 — Evelyne and Bob Beers

Tuesday, February 9 - Leonidas Lipovetsky

Tuesday, March 16 - Eugene Rousseau

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Your Programme Sponsored By CANADA SAFEWAY LTD. GOLDEN STAR RESTAURANT HOLROYD DRUGS LTD.

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# All the Fast Horses To be Entered at Clairmont June 4

According to information which has reached The Herald the past few days, the owners of the fast side-wheelers and trotters are busily engaged in working out their respective horses during their spare time, preparatory to the Clairmont races, to be held June 4.

The following horses will be entered: Gladdy B, owned by Billy Bayhan; Doctor C, owned by P. Pollock; Rolla Girl, owned by Bob Moore; Manister Fitzsimmons, owned by Bob Nevins; Billy B, owned by George Young; Alf. Fedell, owned by Henry Boyd; Leinel Onward, owned by Hugh Boyd, and a mare owned by Rex Ireland of Wembley.

There is considerable speculation with regard to Ireland's mare, which he imported into the country last winter. At present she is termed among horseman as a "dark horse." No one outside of the owner has any real "dope" on the mare. All the other horses raced in the district last season.

Last season Gladdy B won the money in every race he was entered. Now this famous old racehorse, while still as true as steel, is not quite as young as he once was, and as younger horses are showing up well in their workouts, it is quite possible that Billy Bayhan is going to have his work cut out for him if he is to successfully guide his old warrior to the winning post ahead of the other racers. Then, again, there is the "mystery mare" from Wembley to be considered. It is rumored that she has speed to burn.

A real line will not be gotten on the horses until they hook up at Clairmont on June 4.

# Photo Contest Answers

The answers to the photo contest in the March Newsletter, in order of answer, are as follows:

- 11 IGA Foodliner
- 20 1952 Grande Prairie High School
- 4 NAR Railway Station
- 8 Grande Prairie & District Co-op
- 9 Windsor Ford Ltd.
- 6 Provincial Building
- 19 1929 Grande Prairie High School
- 13 RCMP Barracks/Granco Real Estate
- 3 Old Immigration Hall (an apt in 1968)
- 16 Grande Prairie Court House
- 18 Montrose Junior High School
- 7 ALCB Liquor Store
- 2 Central Park Lodge
- 14 County Administration Office
- 15 Royal Canadian Legion Hall
- 12 Presbyterian Church
- 17 Montrose Elementary School
- 1 County High School Dorm
- 5 Warehouse by the tracks (Marshall Wells?)
- 10 Grande Prairie Public Library

Thanks for participating and my apologies for a couple of confusing elements. I mis-identified number 3 on the photo as the Old Immigration Hall, but the Hall, Suzanne Dunn pointed out, was on the same block as the Grande Prairie Co-op. Also, your photo may have had some scrambled numbers—a few of the newsletters were printed on a different computer which changed the font. Hope you had fun and some good memories anyways.

The article on the left is from the May 18, 1928 Grande Prairie Herald. It was submitted by Kathryn Auger, who does our "This Week in History" blog on our website. I used it because I especially liked the title, which gives an air of excitement to life in Clairmont in 1928.

# Beth Sheehan SPRA Award, 2014



At the SPRA Annual General Meeting on March 16th, the Beth Sheehan SPRA Award went to Donna Shail and Clayton Greber for preserving the history of Hythe.

Donna (Bain) Shail was born in Hythe, and except for 10 months in 1971, has lived her entire life in that community. She volunteered for many

orgnizations in Hythe, including the Hythe Museum and Information Booth.

Because of her interest in her home town, Donna collected and compiled scrapbooks about the history of Hythe. These scrapbooks contain photographs, stories, paper artifacts, and news clippings covering the history of Hythe from the time it was established as a townsite on the NAR railway in 1929 into the 21st Century. She donated these scrapbooks to SPRA through Clayton Greber in 2013. With them came an album of people and buildings in Hythe ca. 1970-2000, and albums of photographs from the Hythe Homecoming in 1978, the Hythe Golden Age Craft Centre in 1981, and Celebrate Hythe in 1989. There were also two scrapbooks of memorial cards that tell us about the people who lived in Hythe.

This is an amazing collection that really tells the story of Hythe. We thank Donna for her dedication to Hythe and its history.

Clayton Greber also has a long history in the Hythe area through the Hawkesworth, Hodgson, Gass and Greber families.

When Clayton's wife, Patricia Greber, began working at the Archives in 2013, he was immediately interested. He took the newsletter to work with him, asked



for more copies, and passed them around the coffee shop.

His next step was to bring in records relating to his families of origin: land records from Lea Fulton Hodgson, a photo album from Sophie Gass, the World War II documents of Tom Gass, a scrapbook created by Edna Greber, school photographs from Hythe School classes, and 47 issues of the Hythe Headliner.

Back on the farm which he still owns, Clayton emptied his grandfather's desk and found records from the Hodgson/Gass Lumber Co., and from the HOP (Hodgson, Oakford and Pearson) Development Co. when they developed One Island Lake in 1955-1966.

Archival records are not the easiest concept to understand and SPRA staff were amazed at how Clayton instinctively knew what was important and how to get it here, where it can be preserved and shared with other researchers. We thank Clayton for talking about Archives to fellow workers, and for bringing records in when he found them.

Before Donna and Clayton became involved with SPRA, we had very little original documentation on Hythe. Thanks to them, we have now have a full history which can be preserved and shared with researchers.

# New at the Archives

#### Thank You Donors!

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.

Harris family fonds; Beaverlodge Advertiser

Jean Gray Smith

J.O. Watson fonds

David Watson

Paul Pivert fonds, Panda Camera accrual

Paulette Hrychiw

Bezanson Community Blooms fonds

Irene Gitzel

Billy Salmond photographs *Ken & Margaret Head* 

Charlie Turner fonds accrual Suzanne Dunn

Aquarian Swim Club fonds Ryan O'Toole

Puskwaskau Homestead records
Norman & Margaret Dyck

Art Craft Studio photos by Rex Harper

Albert & Laraine Rohne

# **South Peace Regional Archives**

is funded by
City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, MD
of Greenview, MD of Spirit River
grants from the Archives Society
and the Province of Alberta
and donations from people like you!

# **New! Newsletter by Email**

Would you enjoy reading this newsletter on your computer rather than having one more item to recycle? The benefit is that you get to read it in colour! If yes, send an email to spra@telus.net and ask to be put on the email subscription list rather than on the oridinary mailing list and save the Archives \$8.00 per year. Multiply that by 100 members and it would be \$800. Hmm...

### The Perfect Introduction

If you hear someone say: My family has a long history in this area, but their house burned down and all the records were lost. So our history is gone.

You can say: There are lots of archival records which show the history of families, such as school records, census records, and the organizations they may have belonged to. Why not phone the archives? They can help you look for your family history in newspaper articles, community stories, photographs, and other archival records.

# 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. You can also give memberships as gifts to friends or family.

## **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.

# South Peace Regional Archives Society Membership Application/Renewal Form

	Date:	
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Interested in being involved as a:	volunteer	board membe
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Full Membership \$20.00/person or \$30.00/couple		
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