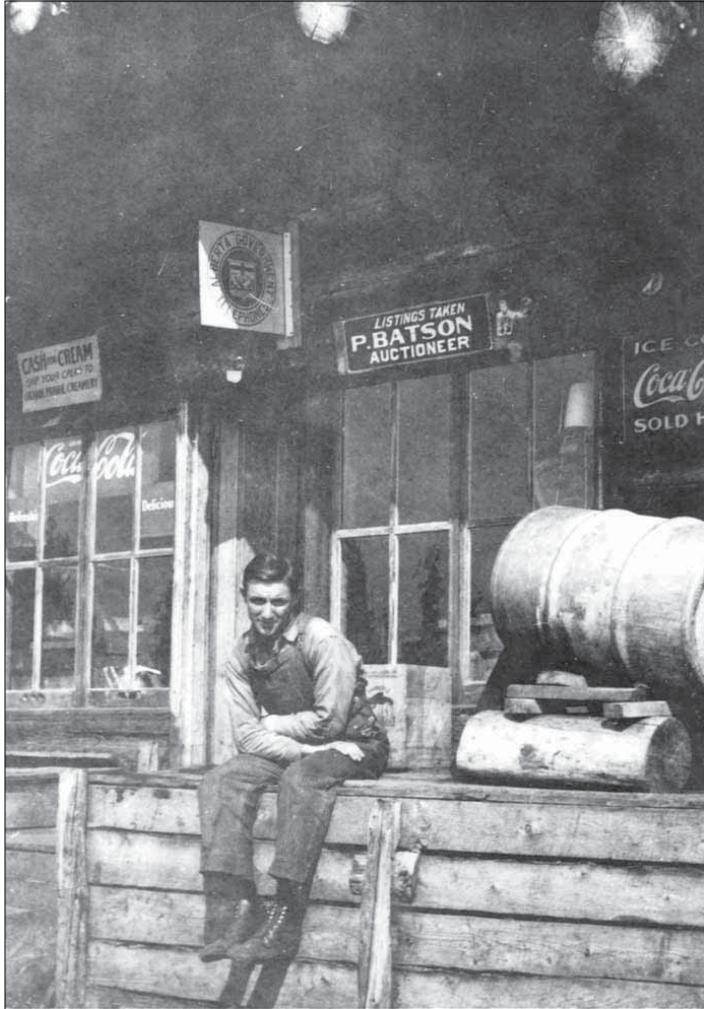


TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 4, Issue 2, March 1, 2013 Produced by

South Peace
REGIONAL ARCHIVES



Can anyone identify this photograph (SPRA 024.01.09.51) of a country store in the Peace Country? See article on Country Stores, page 3, and more "can you identify this photograph" puzzles throughout.

You are Invited
to
**"Connections of the
War of 1812 to the
Peace River Country"**
by
Dr. Daryl White
at our
**Annual General Meeting
& Members Event**
on Saturday, March 16.

Agenda

- 9:30 a.m. Doors Open, Silent Auction of Historical Books & Donated Items Begins
- 10:00 Annual General Meeting
- 10:45 Volunteer Recognition & Beth Sheehan Award
- 11:00 Dr. Daryl White
- 11:45 Tours of the Archives
- 12:00 Lunch (\$5 donation)
- 1:00 Silent Auction Ends

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TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY
South Peace Regional Archives Society

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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.

March 1, 2013

Dear Members & Supporters;

March once again, with all the busyness it brings.: grant reports, financial year end, government reports and our Annual General Meeting. We hope that many associate members come and listen to one of our own board members, Dr. Daryl White, talk about the connections of the War of 1812 to this district. The AGM is an event designed for all our members, with a silent auction of historical books and tours of the archives for those interested. Come and enjoy the soup and sandwich lunch, and a visit with like-minded people. We promise not to draft you unwillingly onto the SPRA Society Board!

This spring brings some sadness as we have to say good-bye to Karen Burgess, who has been a committed member of staff here since 2001. We have included the position advertisement in this newsletter just in case you are, or know of anyone who might be, interested in working at SPRA.

The theme of this newsletter is the County of Grande Prairie with a minor theme of the Country General Store. The tour of the Bezanson area talks about six of these in that area alone.

Our featured fonds in this newsletter is the Beth Sheehan fonds. This was one of the extensive collections which provided the impetus for the creation of SPRA, and is probably the most used material in our Reading Room. Since it also has a large photograph component, it became our featured photograph collection as well.

The two stories we used were submitted by Evelyn Marvin Millman and Betty Welter. Evelyn’s story is not from the County, but given in response to an earlier newsletter. We like to include these in a timely manner.

There is lots of other news for members and our regular columns. As always, if you have more information on any of these subjects, let us know.

Sincerely,
Mary Nutting, Executive Director
South Peace Regional Archives

The Country General Store

The Country General Store, often incorporating the post office, was once a common sight in the south Peace, and the centre of each farming community. In earlier days, country stores were simply set up in the home of any homesteader who wanted to take the trouble to stock enough goods for everyone in the neighbourhood.

I was reminded of this when Lorena Snydmiller and her brother, Jack McLaughlin, came into the archives In August 2012. They wanted to leave a record of the McLaughlin-Connell Store which was established in 1922 in the homestead house of their father, Nelson (Mac) McLaughlin, on the NE15-72-3-W6 in the Bezanson area.

Mac’s partner was Jack Connell who also homesteaded in the area. He and Mac started a store in the main floor of Mac’s home, a log building about 12 x 15 ft., and slept in the attic above. The store venture was abandoned in 1925 when Jack left to work for Barley’s Blacksmith Shop in Grande Prairie.

Although they had often heard about the store, no records had survived. The only item Lorena and Jack remembered being discussed were the Mens’ Leather Gloves, always in stock, at \$2.50 a pair.

A quick review of our website shows photographs of country stores at Flying Shot Lake, Pipestone Creek, Valhalla, Hythe, Rio Grande, Bezanson, Wanham, Sturgeon Lake, Valleyview, Little Smoky, Belloy, Sexsmith, Lymburn, Brainard, Goodwin, Grovedale, Lake Saskatoon, Teepee Creek, Clairmont, Beaverlodge, Silverwood, Webster, LaGlace, Wembley, DeBolt, and Buffalo Lakes.

But a look at our collections, shows the actual records--financial, supply lists, and correspondence--of only one store, the Eaglesham Co-op. There are occasional counter slips in personal collections, but we would love to have more evidence of country stores to tell the history of our rural communities.

Featured Fonds: Beth Sheehan fonds

Beth Sheehan fonds. -- 1886-2000. -- 433.5 cm of textual records. -- 1,623 photographs. -- [1500] negatives. -- 11 postcards. -- 12 maps. -- 12 sound recordings.

Biographical Sketch

Frances Elizabeth (Beth) Flint was born on her father's homestead in the Lower Beaverlodge District on January 1, 1920. She had two older sisters, Pauline and Madelon. Her father, Victor Carman Flint, and his brother, George Vincent Flint, ages 18 and 22, were born and raised in Ontario, and came west with the "Bull Outfit" in 1909, followed in 1910 by their parents, Paul and Jane Elizabeth (Kells) Flint. Beth's mother, Frances Melissa Sills first came to the area in 1911, returned to Ontario, but came back to the Lower Beaverlodge District in February, 1915 as Victor's bride.

Beth received her elementary schooling in the one-room Lower Beaverlodge School, the second school in the south Peace area. She attended high school at Beaverlodge. While attending high school, Beth was introduced to Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) by her teacher. Her interest continued when she went to Toronto, where she formed a group in the church she attended, and later in Clairmont. She was also a leader at two summer CGIT camps held at Lake Saskatoon and instructed handicrafts at CGIT rallies in Beaverlodge and Grande Prairie.

From High School, Beth went on to Alberta College in Edmonton for a secretarial course. From 1939-1942 she worked in offices in Toronto and Muskoka Lakes, returning to the Peace Country for Christmas 1942. After 10 months working in a Sexsmith office, on October 20, 1943, she married Everett Axel Sheehan, who farmed with his father on the south side of Clairmont lake. He and Beth bought Elmer Kline's homestead in the same area and started farming on their own.

Involvement in the communities of the south



Photograph of Beth and Everett Sheehan taken by photographer Randy van der Veen on October 8, 1999. It is an outside portrait on the deck of their farm home with grain fields in the background. SPRA 002.01.03.192

Peace has been extensive over Beth's lifetime, and her research, writing and photographic skills are a consistent thread throughout. She is well-known as Clairmont's historian and the author of Turn Back the Pages, a history of Clairmont from 1908-1992, but she has been a major contributor to other publications as well. With her sister, Madelon Flint Truax, she co-authored People of the Pass a book on the construction of the Monkman Pass Highway - the highway that was never completed. Her editing and photography skills helped produce Grande Prairie by J.G. MacGregor. She also contributed to Beaverlodge to the Rockies and Pioneers of the Peace. She is a life member of the Grande Prairie & District Oldtimers Association.

Beth was an early champion for the conservation of the Trumpeter Swan from the 1940s when she saw a pair nesting on Clairmont Lake. She became a life-long member and later a board member of the International Trumpeter Swan Society. During her tenure on the board, the Society held two of their conferences in Grande Prairie. Beth also compiled two brochures on the local Trumpeter Swans for public distribution, under the sponsorship of the

Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce and Musko-seepi Park.

A charter member and a life member of the Grande Prairie Agricultural Society, formed in 1950, Beth has served as the secretary-treasurer, and at various times as convener of Plants and Flowers, Fine Arts, Photography, and Handicrafts, as well as a long-time board member. Beth's photographs of the county fair and parade span the years from 1954 to the present. Her collection of historical information on the local fairs dates back to 1910, when the first fair in Grande Prairie was held in the vicinity of 101 Street and 101 Avenue. The information becomes more comprehensive with the formation of the Agricultural Society.

The first Home and School Association at Harry Balfour School was organized by Mrs. Sheehan. She also established the first Regional Home and School Association in the south Peace and was the regional director for several years, finally serving as editor of the "Alberta Home & School News" from 1964-1965.

Beth Flint Sheehan was the first office secretary for St. Paul's United Church in Grande Prairie, and editor of their newsletter, "St. Paul's Calls," from 1958 to 1961, also two editions of "... And We Come After", the history of the McQueen Presbyterian Church, whose congregation later formed St. Paul's United Church and Forbes Presbyterian Church. These books were published in 1961 and 1986 respectively.

For six years, Beth was involved with the Alberta Historic Sites Board, which dealt mainly with Place Names in Alberta. In 1984 she compiled a brochure for the first North American Hot Air Balloon Championships held at Grande Prairie, and proudly recalls the three hot air balloon rides she had.

In 2005, Beth Sheehan received the Alberta Centennial Award. Beth is a source of historical information for many who are interested in the history of the Peace Country.

Scope and Content

The fonds consists of the following series:

002.01 Personal and family papers and photographs, including diaries written by Beth over an extensive period beginning in 1939 and into the 2000s; and publications from "The Christian Association" the group associated with the Bull Outfit.

002.02 Records from Ox Shoe Farm, Beth & Everett's farm in the Clairmont District.

002.03 Organizational files showing Beth's involvement with Trumpeter Swan preservation, the Home and School Association, the Grande Prairie Agricultural Society, the Grande Prairie Book Club, and the Grande Prairie Hot Air Balloon Events Association.

002.04 Files relating to her work as author and historian. These include the history of Clairmont and District, the Monkman Pass, Grande Prairie's 25th Anniversary, Pioneers of the Peace, and the Peace River itself, complete with the diary of a trip down the Peace in 1955. There is also a reference system of news clippings on the people and events in the Grande Prairie area from [ca. 1970-2000].

002.05 Beth's photograph collection, consisting of those she collected from earlier history, and her own photographic work, which documents the changing face of the south Peace and details her personal activities. The collection also includes a set showing every street and public building in Grande Prairie in 1983, taken for the 25th Anniversary of the City.

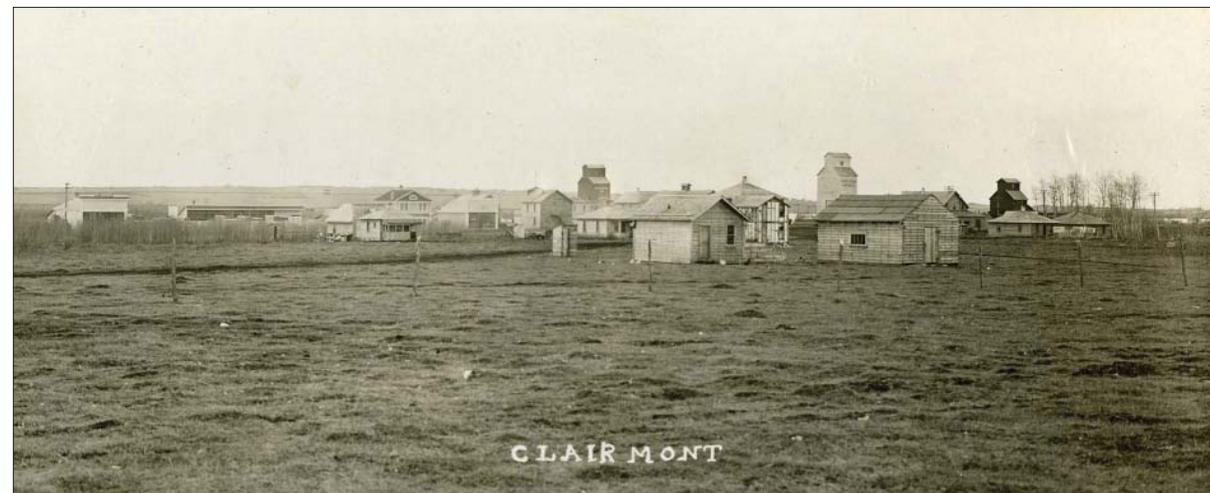
Notes: There is restricted access to personal diaries for all but direct descendents until 2018.

A complete description of all of the material in Mrs. Sheehan's collection, including individual descriptions of the photographs, can be found on our website: www.southpeacearchives.org by choosing "Holdings" from the menu on the homepage, then "Finding Aids" and finally "Fonds 002 Beth Sheehan fonds." It is also available for research in the Reading Room at the Archives.



The History of Clairmont in Photographs

collected and preserved
by Beth Sheehan



Above, Clairmont, Alberta ca. 1917, when there was only three elevators. From left, the buildings are identified as the Community Hall, Cady & Evans Lumber Yard, Evans' big house with the dormer window, Hardware Store with the big window. The Barn behind was owned by Evans, and the tall house was George White's. This photograph was given to Beth Sheehan by the Spencer family on whose farm Clairmont was built. (SPRA 002.04.03.002)



Photos on this page show a 1940 Chevrolet, believed to be John Sheehan's, on Highway No. 2 from Mercer Hill looking south towards Clairmont and Grande Prairie. (SPRA 002.04.03.013) Two early stores in Clairmont were I.E. Gaudin's Departmental Store, above, established in 1915 (SPRA 002.04.03.001b), and the A. Patrick Store, left, owned by Arthur & Golda Patrick. Their daughter, Lillian Moore, sits on the bench in front of the store. Note the hitching rail for the horses. This store burned in January 1920. (SPRA 002.04.03.008).

Above, Clairmont School children in 1928. This photo was given to Beth by teacher Anne (Lawson) McDonald. (SPRA 002.04.03.017)



Right, the Krimmer Menno-nite congregation at their Clairmont church in 1925. This church was built on Mr. Peter's farm west of Clairmont. (SPRA 002.04.03.11)

The Bear Creek Flats

by Evelyn Marvin Millman

In September my new husband, Frank Kobie, and I spent a wonderful 3 days in Grande Prairie where I was born and raised from 1934 to 1954.

Although I have returned “home” several times during the intervening years I was quite amazed at the growth that has occurred in the last few years. We visited all the old stamping grounds of my youth to show my new husband. I really tried to determine exactly where they were, but it was difficult. Our old farm south of the Armouries was now highly residential. Even the raspberry patches where we could spend a whole day picking raspberries were difficult to pinpoint. Main Street is entirely changed and Dad’s restaurant, the Palace Café, was now something else.

My dad was Jack Marvin. His Chinese name was Mah Wing Chick, which he anglicized when he was in Winnipeg about to embark on a singing career with his beautiful baritone voice. It would have been impossible in those times to try to do so with a Chinese name and face.

That was then and this is now. Change is expected and usually desired in a growing city and I am impressed with the results. The beautiful flowers on the lamp posts were particularly impressive. Grande Prairie is to be congratulated for the way the City has expanded, beautified, cleaned up and grown to accommodate the new industries that the oil and gas and forestry have spawned.

We visited the Bear Creek Flats Park and tried to find some shred or remnant there that would remind me of times gone by where we spent a great deal of our youth. There was nothing except a tree or part of a caragana hedge at the foot of the small hill which my siblings and I thought was the biggest hill in the world.

We also visited with Margaret Bowes who gave us some samples of the “Telling Our Stories” is-



The photographs on these two pages were submitted by Evelyn Marvin with her letter and show the Marvin children and their friends in the Bear Creek Flats and on the footbridge.

sues from the last 3 quarters. I appreciate the way Margaret has kept in contact with those of us who came from Grande Prairie in an earlier era. We also visited with Paul Galway who went through school with me and whose father - we called him Judge Galway – was a good golfing and singing buddy of my father’s. They lived near our farm on the bank of the Bear Creek. My mother, with me tagging along, would often have tea with Paul’s mother.

We have many happy memories of the Balisky family and their farm north and west of Grande Prairie where they hosted a Boxing Day skating party on their nearby creek to over a hundred or more people every year. To top off the wonderful times we had, there was the turkey dinner with all the trimmings to all their guests and the hymn sings afterwards. So it was nice to visit Dan Balisky and his wife to catch up on all those mutual friends we knew.

I shouldn’t miss Sam Mah, a distant cousin of mine, who knows all about my Dad and his village in China. When Sam came to Canada he worked in Dad’s restaurant for a while. I have attended all his children’s weddings. In about 1948 Dad brought home four Chinese lads that had recently immigrated to Canada when their families were finally reunited after the Canadian government relaxed the immigration laws governing Chinese immigration. Dad instructed each of us four Marvin children to converse with these boys and do our best to teach



them English each week. I was given Sam, who was my age. He was eager to learn and did well with the help of the high school teachers of the day, especially Harold MacNeil, the Social Studies teacher in the Grande Prairie High School.

However, I am beginning to digress here. There are several things from the “Telling Our Stories” issues that have caught my eye. The one that I am most interested in at the moment is the September issue “What do you remember about the Bear Creek Flats”. My maternal grandmother, Mary Wiedeman, lived at the foot of the hill there, between the Ireland and the Toews homes, between about 1933 and 1951. Her home was a very simple unpainted wood structure that at first housed her family of 13 children when her husband, William Wiedeman, died suddenly of the flu and a stroke leaving his widow and young family to fare for themselves on their Lymburn homestead. Their homestead was in the early stages of being broken for farmland but life was hard for a widow at the height of the Great Depression so Grandma moved her entire clan to Grande Prairie where the older children could get jobs to help augment the meager family coffers and the younger ones could at least attend school, especially Jake who was quite crippled from a polio attack when he was six years old. The only home that they could find and might be able to afford was in the Bear Creek Flats next to



Bear Creek, where there was an interesting mixture of European and native settlers.

My mother took all four of us Marvin children, (Jack, Eva, Bill and myself) to Grandma’s at least once or twice a week. Our home was on the north-east corner of 100 Street and 102 Avenue where the Remax building now stands. We would literally run down the board sidewalks on 101 Avenue with the storm channels underneath, and over the foot bridge west of the Bottling Plant and down the big hill and into Grandma’s living room. The foot bridge, which swayed and rocked from side to side as we ran, was over a small ravine filled with poison ivy. We would look over the side perilously to see if the three billy goats gruff or the goblins were hiding among the poison ivy.

We went to Grandma’s for Christmas every year. You can imagine that four young children would have a lot of energy to wear off that “pick up sticks” or “monopoly” or “snakes and ladders” wouldn’t alleviate so Grandma would send us out to slide down the hill for an hour or so before dinner much to our delight. With sheets of cardboard and a toboggan in hand we would slide down the big hill right through Grandma’s front gate, practically into the living room. As we got older and our tobogganing skills developed, (cont’d on page 16)

Explore the History of Bezanson

by Mary Nutting

It may be still winter, but spring will soon be here, the perfect time for a tour of the Bezanson area. We'll start our tour on Secondary Highway 670 east from Grande Prairie at Range Road 34.

Heading east, we see Stark's Lake to the north, just before Secondary Highway 670 turns north. The old Bezanson Hall was on the SE corner of this intersection. The first May 24th picnic was held in 1914 on Brookbanks Flats (where the best blueberries were to be found) along the Smoky River. In 1916 it was moved to the first Bezanson townsite, and in 1923 to this site when the Bezanson Hall was built. The last annual picnic was held in 1949, the year the hall burned down.

A mile south of this corner was Jack McKenzie's Store, on Moon's Corner, where Elizabeth Moon settled in 1913 with 11 of her 12 children. Her brother Peter McPhee was a railroad contractor who had been told that a townsite would be built here on level ground along the Canadian Northern Railway survey. By 1914, they knew that the railway would take a northern route, but they liked the area so well that they stayed.

We will continue east on Twp Rd 720 to Range Road 30, where, according to the land books, an Anglican Church was planned for the north-west corner of the intersection in 1915. I can find no evidence that this happened. A south turn here will take you down to the old townsite, established in 1910 by A.M. Bezanson, where the railway survey crossed the river and the ferry operated for a time. It was from here that "The Beaver" riverboat plied a trade to the Little Smoky River and the closest railway in 1915.

The townsite included the Bezanson Presbyterian Church, also used as a school, a post office, several stores, two livery barns, a harness shop, blacksmith shop, a hotel, a café and eight to ten houses. Nearby was the ferry landing and the Ames & Ford sawmill. The village dissolved ca. 1920, after it became clear no railway was coming.

Because it is winter, we will turn north to Highway 43 and then east down the hill. The flats that you see ahead on the north side of the road were part of Bill Moody's homestead. From 1920-1949, he or his son Reg piloted the ferry, so this was also known as Moody's Crossing. It was also a good site for a sawmill: first, the Cook and Boyd sawmill in 1914, then the Ford & Ames Lumber Mill in the winter of 1919-1920, when Ernie Ford along with Charlie, Roy, Fred and George Ames set up a sawmill and cut up all the lumber for their farms in the Bezanson area.

Where the bridge now crosses the river is about where the original Aboriginal trail from the Athabasca River forded the Big Smoky. This is where the first ferry was built for the Edson Trail in 1911. It was then called Goodwin Crossing because the Goodwin Brothers had a stopping place on the east side of the river, about 300 meters from the bank. In 1919 the ferry was moved to Bezanson, but around 1921, it was moved back and a new tower built for the cable. The first bridge was opened here in 1949 with great fanfare.

Continuing up the hill, you will see a turning lane for a gravel road down to the Smoky River. Take a u-turn and head back towards Grande Prairie. Below you is the east bank of the river, where in 1911 you would have seen the Goodwin Brothers Stopping Place, and later ca. 1940 the Ferry Inn, run by the George Ames family, then the Way Inn run by the Bulford family in the 1940s and 50s. On the west bank of the river was Gaboury's Store & Restaurant.

Once up the hill, take the first turn north and double back to RR 30. Heading north takes you through the area where the Edson Trail came over the banks—identified then as "Dead Bull Hill"—

and up to Twp Rd 724. A dead-end road continues to Burns Canyon, named after James Burns who served in the Scottish regiment during WW I and settled here in 1919. He left on a visit to Scotland and was never heard from again.

We will turn west on TR724. On the NE corner of the intersection with RR 31 was Peter Smashnuk's Basket Workshop from about 1925-1970. He had learned the craft in the Ukraine and continued his hobby here, making them from red willow and later from coloured telephone and electrical wires.

On the next corner was Lindsay School, which opened in September 1921 with 30 students. This was where the community met for dances, box socials, dramatic performances and sports meets. The site included a teacherage, and by 1933 was a two-room school with 80 students. In 1950, the school was moved into Bezanson as part of the amalgamated district. A mile south of the Lindsay School was Jack McLaughlin's Store.

A turn north here will take you to where the Smoky River Post Office once stood a mile north. In 1920, Pat Rooney filed on this quarter. By 1923 he had a store and the Smoky River post office in his home. In 1926, he built a larger store at the new Bezanson townsite, and this post office was taken over by Edith Field, the wife of C.W. Field, a well-known photographer. It closed in 1927. East of the store, across the road, the community built a proper ball field out of scrub land. It took them three years to remove the bushes in the low place, level a hill to use as fill and create level ground.

Head west on TR 725 and turn south when you hit SH 733, back to Bezanson. Where you cross the divided highway, Lindsay High School once stood until it was moved into the hamlet in 1948. Turn east into the hamlet, which once included Connell's Blacksmith Shop and Ames' (or Ford's) Gas Station. There are still some substantial buildings here.

On 98th Street are two large churches. Bezanson Community Church has its roots in the original 1915 church at the old townsite, which became United in 1926 and in the 1990s a Community

Church. The other church is Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, which was established ca. 1914. An earlier version of this church is at the Kleskun Hills Museum.

At the other end of the hamlet is the Bezanson Store and post office and Lefty's Restaurant. The first store on this site was P.G. Rooney's in 1926. It was purchased by the Bezanson Co-op Society in 1946, then by Julia and Harold Ford in 1954. In the 1930s and 40s, the Co-op included a grain cleaner. Bezanson Post Office was established in 1915 on the old Bezanson townsite, then moved to the Hunter homestead in 1924, and to this site in 1926, where it has operated ever since.

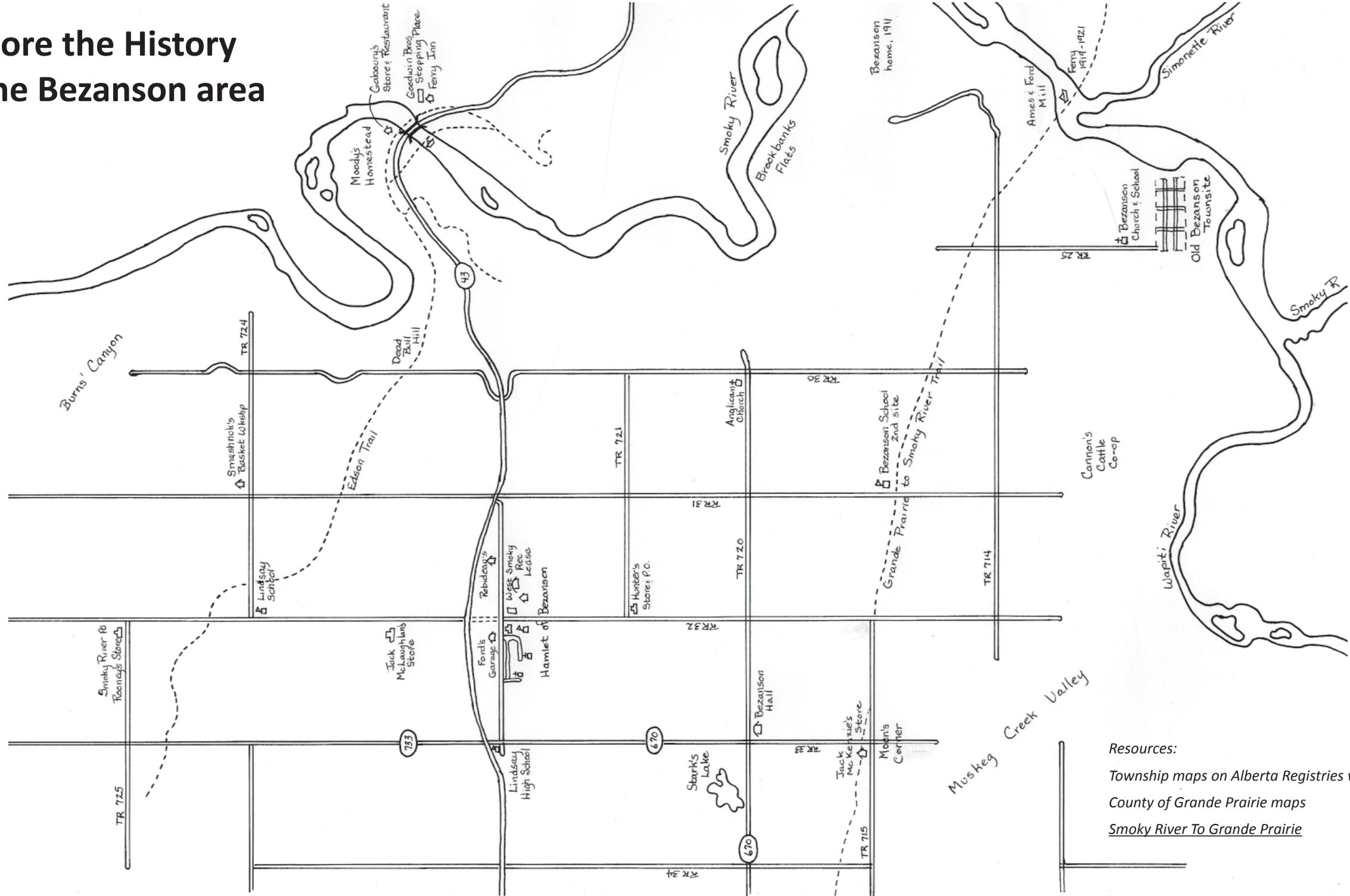
South of the store is Bezanson School. In 1948, Lindsay High School was moved to the hamlet, followed by the Lindsay Junior School in 1950. With consolidation of the surrounding districts in 1955, the school was re-named Bezanson. A new four-roomed school built in 1957. Beside it stood a modern teacherage funded by the County and built by the families of the district to attract teachers to their school.

Across from the store east is the curling rink on the original West Smoky Legion Recreation Lease. The Legion received their charter in 1949, and their Legion Hut, built in 1952, still occupies pride of place at the entrance drive to the Bezanson Hall, built in 1949 after the original one burned down. The Bezanson stampede was held here from 1947-1962.

As you leave the hamlet, the Ed Robideau home was to the north of the road. It was the unofficial stopping place between DeBolt and Grande Prairie, when the road was long and tiring. Now it is just a quick 20 minutes for you to head back west to Grande Prairie.

*Resources: [Smoky River to Grande Prairie](#)
[Dominion Lands Register](#)
[Alberta Registries Township maps](#)*

Explore the History of the Bezanson area



Resources:
 Township maps on Alberta Registries website
 County of Grande Prairie maps
Smoky River To Grande Prairie

One More Mystery Photo

from the Archives

The photograph below (SPRA 2000.07.01) was donated with several other Gilmour family items, but the names on the back do not correspond to the Gilmour family. A note on the back identifies them as "standing: Frank, Charlie, Arthur and Lena. Sitting: Father, Jack and Fanny (mother). Annie is not in the picture." Does this sound like a family you know?



(cont'd from p 9) and if the snow was good and we were lucky, we could slide all the way to the main road (100 Avenue). There was a slight dip up to that road through the Flats so it didn't really pose a danger of sliding into the few cars or horses that might be passing that way in those days.

Bear Creek Flats was a wondrous place for kids to explore in the summer. My Aunt Nieta, who was about a year older than me, and I would spend hours sitting on the hill looking for wild onions, the first buttercups and crocuses. My younger uncles

dug a small cave on the side of the hill which probably housed all the things that a secret cave would contain for young fellows. It was well reinforced inside and locked on the outside like a trap door into a dugout cellar that many had at that time. Nieta and I and sometimes my younger siblings would wander all the nooks and crannies in the Flats, sometimes walking across the railway bridge, or swinging on the neighborhood Toews' two seater wooden swing, or wandering the meadows along the creek all the way to the big dam.

I sometimes stayed overnight at Grandma's. Some evenings there were raucous parties that rather scared the dickens out of me when we were trying to sleep, but Grandma took them in her stride. I think if she had gotten unwanted visitors in the wee hours of the morning she could scare them away with her no-nonsense firmness.

Grandma had two gardens, one on the south side of her house and another sunken garden on the north side where she grew vegetables for their meals and for winter canning and some flowers. Her poppies seemed to seed themselves throughout the garden and when they faded and the pods were ripe we loved to salt the seeds into our palms and into our mouths with no fear of their narcotic value at that time.

In 1951 Grandma moved to Edmonton to seek better circumstances for her remaining two children, Jake and Nieta. Although Grande Prairie had been good to her and her family, I think she was glad to leave the simple and humble little house with its memories, both good and bad. I notice from the map of the Flats enclosed in the September issue that prompted this letter, that her house is not indicated at the foot of the hill directly north of the Ireland's home and I can only surmise that at some time it was torn down when the land for the park was acquired for later reconstruction to make the beautiful park that the Bear Creek Flats has become. Entering the downtown from Richmond Hill in the west, one cannot help but feel the warm welcome that the sign and park evoke for newcomers to the City. I think it is one of the best entrances to a city that I have seen lately and should be duplicated in some way on the north entrance.

Kathryn's Picks

by Kathryn Auger

These two articles are from the September 13, 1921 pages of the old Grande Prairie Herald. It can be found on-line at www.ourfutureourpast.ca by following the links to Early Newspapers, Grande Prairie.

RESIDENTS TAKE NOTICE

Residents of Grande Prairie are warned to bank their homes with dirt before freeze up as there has been a strict order from the Provincial Department of Public Health, that no manure in any form is to be used for banking this coming season. Any one found with his home banked with manure will be liable to arrest and a fine and the Department of Health require that this act be strictly enforced by all urban municipalities.

OIL NEWS HARD TO OBTAIN

Everybody is wondering these past few days what is doing at the Pouce Coupe oil well and nobody seems to know just what is going on. Everyone coming from the well tells us the same story. That they were unable to get any information from the well crew as to what is happening. We are at a loss to understand why the Imperial Oil Company are so very reticent about giving out information with regard to their operations at Pouce Coupe, while at Fort Norman, they spread information broad cast. Why is it so necessary that they assume this mysterious attitude at Pouce Coupe. We often wonder if the old adage "no news is good news" would not apply to the Pouce Coupe well.

Our Chairs

by Betty Welter

The Depression, hard times, "Dirty Thirties" or whatever were about at their worst in 1934 as I recall. There was little market or price for farm commodities anywhere. How Mother and Dad kept their spirits up and continued on with daily chores while looking after we three children and hoping for a better day tomorrow, I'll never know.

I'll never forget one special event. In our living room we had two old large stuffed chairs commonly referred to as the biggest and smallest chairs. The wonderful world of make believe turned these two big chairs into fantastic adventures for us. We could move them -- side by side they were neighbouring houses and moved together with an old blanket or two they became trains, stores, school rooms -- you name it.

Mom was an excellent seamstress and had recovered these chairs several times over the years. Dad was very handy with his trusty hammer to do the nailing or tacking and fixing the springs when necessary.

One very cold and miserable January day, Mom and Dad decided to see how they could repair these old chairs once more. There was no money for new material this time around so Mother sorted through her dwindling piece bag and found some bits to cover the arms. Dad came up with an alfalfa seed sack to help with the seats. Soon the chairs were upside down on the floor and Dad was retying the springs with some binder twine and hay wire. They truly looked like real wrecks and I wondered how they would ever be usable again.

Mother was busy fitting and stitching and literally making her bits and pieces stretch to cover worn spots, or worse still, real holes in the cushions. This was long before upholstery foam or padding of

any sort was available in the stores. A sort of straw-like stuff called excelsior was used commercially and it broke up, was stiff and prickly and horrible, as I remember. Furthermore we had none of it except what Dad had salvaged from the chair. Soon a substitute was found--horsehair.

We farmed with horses and kept several all the time. They had to be curried and groomed and a special metal, coarse, curry comb was used to untangle their tails and manes. These loose long wiry strands of hair were kept in a gunny sack hung in the harness stall in the barn. Dad brought this bag in and proceeded to pad the arms, seats, and cushions of our big chairs. By this time Mother had sewn arm pieces and cushion covers, so very soon our chairs were right side up once more, complete with their new patches and stuffing. We kids had to try them out of course and decided they were much better and quite comfortable. Mom and Dad were well satisfied with the job and stood back to admire their work.

A few days later a stranger on horseback rode into the yard. He was met by Buster, our dog, and Dad from the corral. Dad came into the house in rather a hurry and left the fellow out in the yard. We thought this was most unusual as everyone was always invited into the house. Buster was growling and didn't seem to approve of this stranger being in the yard at all. Dad came indoors and stated quite emphatically that the stranger was a traveling Jew buying horsehair. These travelers were fairly common and this was how they were known.

Guess what! The chairs were quickly turned



upside down again, the horse hair padding ripped out as fast as possible, put in a potato sack and delivered outside to the horseback rider. He paid Dad for the hair and off he went, probably to the next neighbour. I can still see those chairs upside down once more, looking such wrecks, to this day. No wonder the traveler had not been invited indoors.

Dad came in with the bit of cash in his hand and gave it to Mother. I have no idea what he was paid but cash was so precious and extremely valuable then. Mother and Dad looked at one another and burst out laughing at these poor chair carcasses. Dad was such an optimist and said, "Never mind, we will find something else to fix them up again right away."

Now it was chore time once more, so out Dad went to the barn. I can remember Mother sweeping up the bits and tidying up the mess while tears were dripping down her cheeks--this I couldn't quite understand and it worried me no end. I have no recollection of how these chairs were repaired again either nor what eventually happened to them.

Once I was a little older I realized that these desperately hard times were almost unbearable for Mother and this chair episode was close to a breaking point for her. She never complained and worked so hard although she didn't have the best of health and very few luxuries. I can never remember Mother saying she had to get away for a break--besides where would she go with no funds. Just like our old chairs which were once again repaired and ready for a new day, Mother truly belonged to the old school of 'smiling, making do, and getting on with it'.

Below was another mystery photo taken by Harry Tuffill from Buffalo Lakes. There was no description with it, and I was at a loss as to the subject. Was it an outdoors drama production of Robin Hood? When I showed it to Betty Welter, she knew immediately what it was--a group of hobos around the campfire during the Great Depression. "We often saw them riding the trains looking for work during harvest time," she remembered.

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What Archives Do

by Leslie Pearson, M.A.S

Author's Note: It's been a while since I wrote an article for this newsletter! The focus on stories in the December issue gave me a break and you time to think up questions to ask for the next issue. Unfortunately, there haven't been any submitted. So instead of hearing about a topic that interests at least one of you, you'll have to suffer through one that might not interest any of you!

When I was in archives school, a key principle that was emphasized repeatedly was expressed in a French phrase, "Respect des fonds." Besides being really fun to say (you should definitely try it yourself and attempt the French accent!), it has an important meaning. "Respect des fonds" means that records in an archives are not divided up by topic or date or other method but instead kept in units according to who their creator was. It is a different manner of organizing things than a library, for instance, which tends to group things by topic, regardless of author or other considerations.

As an example, let's consider the records of the fictional Fred Smith from Beaverlodge. He brought in three photographs of the school he attended, two home movies of his family, a letter from the Bank of Montreal, his baptismal certificate, and his personal journal in several volumes covering the years 1950 to 1990. Can you see the practical difficulties of dividing this material up? If we follow a topical organizational system, the photographs could be filed under Education and the letter under Financial, but what about the journals and home movies which would more than likely cover a range of topics? If we follow a chronological organizational system, similar obstacles appear. Should we interfile Fred's papers with Joe's from Eaglesham based on date? And what about those journals that cover such a large time span? It is obviously ridiculous to suggest that they be dismantled and filed by date. Beyond the practical difficulties, dividing up

the records of Fred Smith would completely destroy the overall picture of who he was and what he was interested and involved in.

The totality of the records created, used, or accumulated naturally in the course of a person's life and activities is called their "fonds". This is what an archives is interested in collecting from individuals and families (and organizations and governments too). We want it all! An archives views records not as separate pieces of paper or photographs, but as a complete unit. The more comprehensive the records are, the fuller a picture we are presented with. Please understand, however, that this does not mean that everything needs to be kept. The Archives still goes through an appraisal process to weed out unnecessary, transitory, ephemeral, and duplicate records that do not contribute to that picture or over-complicate, thus obscuring, it.

"Respect des fonds" also has implications for donors. When looking at your records and considering donating them to an archives, look for one archives where they fit best. Never split your fonds between several institutions. As an example, let's consider the fictional case of Fred Smith again. He was born in Vancouver, went to law school in Edmonton, and eventually set up a practice in Beaverlodge, where he raised his family. He has since retired to Grande Prairie and winters in California. Fred needs to pick one archives to send all of his records to. He should not decide to send the records of his early life to the City of Vancouver, his legal papers to the Legal Archives Society of Alberta, family records to South Peace Regional Archives, and travel photographs to a Californian archives. Fred should look at where the majority of the records fit best and contact that archives. All of the records tell his complete story, which would be lost if his records are disbursed to several archives across the continent. Some might argue that if strict geographical boundaries are not adhered to, researchers won't know where to go to find the records. However, with the advent of the internet and archival networks, this is much less of a concern. Researchers from or interested in all those places will still be able to find and access the

relevant records.

"Respect des fonds" has another implication for donors. I have mentioned a few times that the totality of the records gives the fullest picture of a person's life. What this means is that while the archives might accept a few photographs of a particular school or event to fill a gap in our collection, we would much rather have your entire fonds. The information contained in those photographs will have so much more meaning when they are kept connected to the rest of your records. Some of you may be aware of one of the Archives' latest initiatives. We are working on a project to document the City of Grande Prairie's downtown in preparation for the 100th Anniversary of incorporation in 2014 and we've sent out an appeal for photographs and records of Grande Prairie businesses. In all likelihood, we will be able to gather many different images of the downtown core, donated by many different individuals. The problem is that many of them will never even think about contributing more than just their photographs of downtown. It is difficult to make an appeal like this. We are doing it for a specific reason and looking for a specific kind of content, but we really hope people will bring in more than just a couple of photographs.

"Respect des fonds" is not just another archives phrase completely unused by and baffling to anyone outside the profession. It presents the idea that the records of a person or family (or organization or government) are more valuable and contain more information when considered as a unit than the individual records are or contain when considered one by

We Need Your Help!



Did you know that the City of Grande Prairie is celebrating 100 years of incorporation in 2014?

In preparation, **South Peace Regional Archives** is seeking **photographs of downtown buildings** and **records of businesses**, past and present, which have operated in the City.

If you have any questions or material to contribute, please **contact** Mary Nutting at **780-830-5105** or **spra@telus.net**.

The material gathered will be used for **displays** and **projects** during 2014 and serve as a permanent archival record of the history of business in this city.

South Peace
REGIONAL ARCHIVES

Image: SPRA 2003.71.04, Bill's Café on 100 Street and 100 Avenue, ca. 1945. Cropped from original size.

one. So the next time you visit an archives (and we hope you will soon), remember this phrase and its implications for you, as a donor or a researcher. And if you really want to impress us, drop it into the conversation!



Family History Day

Thanks to our good partners, the Grande Prairie & District Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society, and to twenty (!) volunteers from both the Archives and the Genies, our Family History Day was a great event.

For the 45 people who came, we offered three workshops, which were attended by between 12 and 20 people, and had 7 researchers helping people with genealogy from world databases, and with finding articles about their families in newspapers and local history books.

Volunteers also manned 9 tables of displays with samples of how to preserve, publish, or display family history as well as information about the two societies.

More volunteers served coffee and home-baked cookies from the kitchen. All in all it was a lovely day to talk about preserving our family stories. Thank you SPRAS volunteers:

Irene Nicolson
Beth Sande
Gail Prette
Kathryn Auger
Cathy Scott
Fran Moore

and to the many more members who attended.

Job Opportunity

South Peace Regional Archives is sad to announce that Karen Burgess has resigned her position as of April 30th after 12 years of service to the Archives. We are looking for a

Permanent Part-Time Archives Technician

To assist with processing collections and encouraging the preservation of archival records in the south Peace. The successful applicant must have a strong interest in the history of the Peace River Country, and some experience with research techniques and archival sources. S/he will have relevant post-secondary education and a willingness to train in archival theory, good computer skills, strong organizational and communication skills, and be able to work independently. Please submit resumes by email to spra@telus.net; by mail to Box 687, Grande Prairie, T8V 3A8; or in person at the Archives on or before March 19, 2013.

Visit www.southpeacearchives.org
for more information.

Interested in Archival Records from Spirit River? We Are Looking for a Volunteer

who would be interested in transcribing Spirit River tax records from the old tax ledgers into a database--can be done by hand or by computer. 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!

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.

1962 Time Capsule documents
City of Grande Prairie

Kieyho Park Project & Lassiter Project Memories
Greg Donaldson

Grande Prairie Guild of Artists fonds
Guild Members

Donald Gordon Morrison papers
George & Joan Yates

Photographs of Grande Prairie & area
Ronald Galagon

Harold Clarke photographs
Brian & Linda Smith

Grande Prairie Garage Photographs
Dave Watson

Unique Craft Gallery Photographs
Karen Burgess

Grande Prairie Cleaners Photographs
Mike Stojan

Cemetery Records
County of Grande Prairie

Canadian Propane & Hockey Photographs
Wayne Leslie

New on Our Website

The Isabel Campbell names database at the Grande Prairie Public Library is one of our most-used genealogy resources. Miss Campbell indexed the Grande Prairie newspapers from 1913 to 1961. Our latest web-offering allows you to access this database on-line! See "Names Index on the home page www.southpeacearchives.org.

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.

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, at-
 tend 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

Member Support for SPRA

The Perfect Introduction

If you hear someone say:
*"Our organization has file boxes (cabinets,
 rooms) filled with documents that go back to the
 1920s (40s, 60s, 80s) and no-one ever looks at
 them (or can find what they need). We probably
 need to haul the whole load to the dump."*

Tell them:
*"Why not call the Archives? Lots of organizations
 archive their records there."*

South Peace Regional Archives
 is funded by
 City of Grande Prairie
 County of Grande Prairie
 Municipal District of Greenview
 Municipal District of Spirit River
 grants from
 the Archives Society of Alberta
 and donations from individuals.

Thank you to all members
 who donated in 2012.
 We received \$1,510 in donations which
 qualifies us for an additional \$1,510
 from the Community Spirit Grant,
 for a grand total of \$3,020.

*This Issue of Telling Our Stories
 is sponsored by
 Mr. Mathew Wozniak*