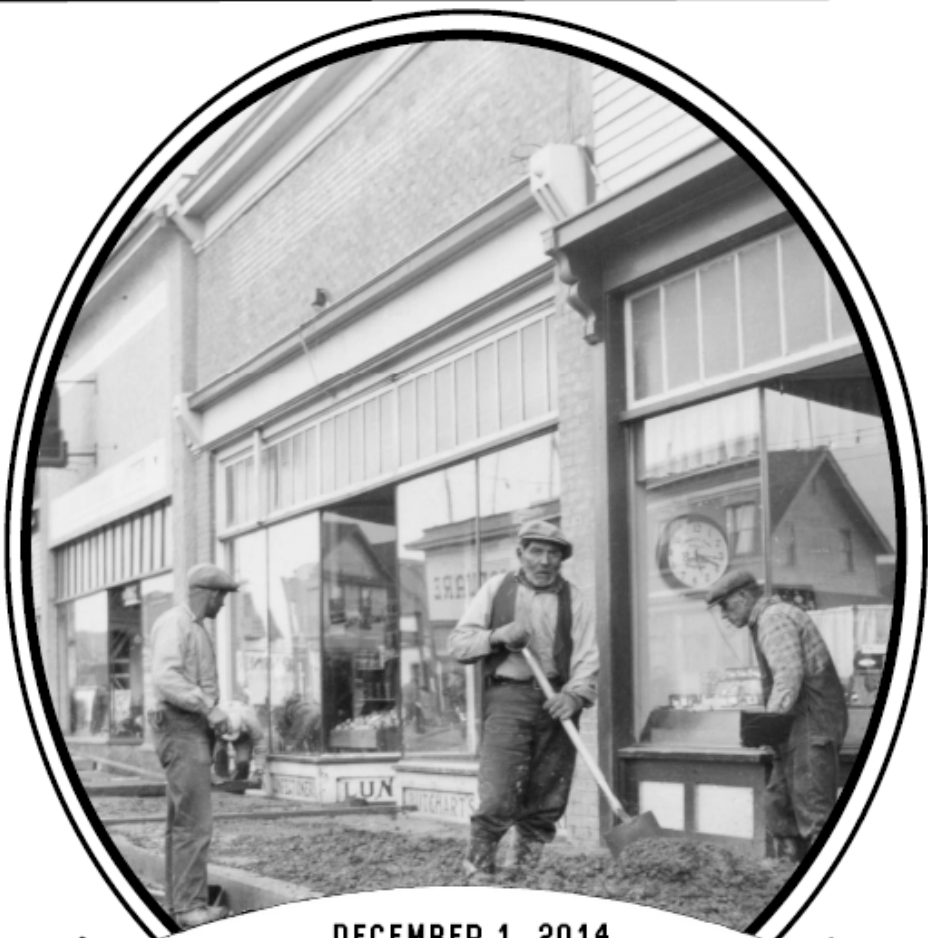


TELLING OUR STORIES

LOCAL HISTORY

ARCHIVE NEWS



PRODUCED BY

SOUTH PEACE REGIONAL ARCHIVES

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On the Front Cover: Men work spreading cement for a sidewalk along the south side of Richmond Ave. between 100 and 101 Streets, 1948. Nearby businesses include the Fleming Hardware, Butchart’s Drug Store, and Watcher’s Jewellry (SPRA 2007.42.05).

Take Note

Family History Day

Saturday, February 14, 2015

At the Montrose Cultural Centre (Library)
9839-103 Avenue, Grande Prairie

Featuring workshops, research help,
trade show, and displays.

Watch our websites for more details!

Hosted by:
Grande Prairie and District Branch of the Alberta
Genealogical Society
Grande Prairie Public Library
South Peace Regional Archives

Admission is Free



Above, Arnold and Vi Dryer's 1944 wedding in the village of Wrecklesham, England was attended by close family and neighbours from the village (SPRA 259.02.03).

December 1, 2014

Dear Members and Supporters;

Mary has let me loose in the newsletter again!

The primary theme of this issue of the newsletter is our annual Film and Story Tea, which was held October 5. A fun afternoon once again, although the event was not as well-attended as in previous years. Perhaps the theme, “The Other Side of Politics and Government,” frightened people off. The film, *Grande Prairie, A Way of Life* was enjoyed by all and, thankfully, our vintage 16mm projector cooperated. Some of the stories in this issue were those presented at the event and many of the photographs are part of our new display in the Museum’s Community Room.

The last newsletter contained quite a bit about the proposed new archives building. We have received news that our vision for the re-created Montrose School has not been accepted in its current form. Our needs haven’t changed, however, so other possible options are being investigated. The Friends of the South Peace Regional Archives Society hosted our first fundraiser on October 25. It was a delightful evening and we hope it will become an annual event.

In other news, we are sadly bidding farewell to Patricia Greber. She has been with us since May 2013 and we will miss her friendly face and social media skills. Teresa Dyck has been hired as our new Administrative Assistant to take over some of Patricia’s duties and part of Mary’s administrative load. See page 24 for more about what she brings to the Archives.

In January 2015, the Archives will be celebrating its 15th anniversary! We are not planning any special festivities, but if someone brought us a cake, we wouldn’t be upset. Thanks to all our supporters over the years. We wouldn’t be here without you.

Have a very merry Christmas! All the best in 2015.

Sincerely, Leslie Gordon, Guest Editor

TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY
South Peace Regional Archives Society

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Daryl White, Director
Eleanor Dalen Whitling, Director

MAILING ADDRESS

South Peace Regional Archives
Box 687, Grande Prairie, AB
T8V 3A8

Telephone: 780-830-5105
E-mail: spra@telus.net
www.southpeacearchives.org

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.

“The Other Side of Politics and Government”
2014 Film and Story Tea

The 2014 Film and Story Tea was held on Sunday, October 5, 2014, at the beginning of the provincial “Archives Week.” This year’s theme was “The Other Side of Politics and Government”, in part to celebrate Grande Prairie’s 100th Anniversary of incorporation.



The event was emceed by Karen Burgess and attendees were welcomed by SPRA Past President, Irene Nicolson.



The stories all related in some way to politics and government (or quasi-government) services.



Dwight Logan spoke on his experiences with Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO). Marge Elliot and Kathryn Auger told of a special delivery made by the post office (see page 8). Helen Rice submitted a story about City Council off the rails (see page 10). Gordon Mackey described the trials of a volunteer firefighter in Teepee Creek (see page 11). Gord McMahon wrote of a slippery subject requiring bylaw enforcement (see page 14).

For the film portion of the afternoon we showed *Grande Prairie, A Way of Life*, made in 1981 for the City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, and Procter and Gamble by Deep Cove Motion Pictures and directed by Ken Jubenvill, who generously granted copyright permission for the film to be shown

at this event. The film was shown on 16mm film and gave a nice snapshot of Grande Prairie and area life at the time. Some audience members were even able to pick out people they knew!



Mary Nutting provided concluding remarks about the Archives and projects.



After the speakers and film, attendees had time to sample the refreshments prepared by volunteers Gail Prette, Cathy Scott, and Kathryn Auger.



Our newest photograph display, also on politics and government services, was available for browsing throughout.

The event was sponsored by the City of Grande Prairie’s 100th Anniversary Committee.



“Raising the Archives” Fall Supper

On October 25, 2014 the Friends of the South Peace Regional Archives Society hosted their first annual “Raising the Archives” Fall Supper as a fundraiser for a new Archives facility. They achieved their goal of having fun with history and raised about \$12,000 in the process.



Above, a view of the bustling hall.

The event was attended by about 150 people. Attendees enjoyed a lovely evening at the Elks Hall with a delicious meal by Ann’s Catering.

Many people got into the spirit of the thing and came dressed in period costume of one kind or another.



Above, stylish flappers Charlotte Penson and Cindy Toews. Left, suffragettes Joanna Moen, Marg Dyck, and Cathy Scott campaign for votes for women.



Above, the Fall Supper’s theme image showing harvesting at the Trelle farm in 1933 (SPRA 193.02.05.36).

Some even assumed the character of an actual historic person from South Peace past.

Snapshot Photo was on hand, with additional historical props, to take portraits.

Displays of local historical photographs, on the walls and large screen, welcomed attendees into the hall.

The archival theme was carried on throughout, including a trivia competition to get in line for dinner.

Right, Karen Burgess announced the trivia game while, below, Councillor Kevin O’Toole identified the winners.



Jerome Tochor and his band, “Vintage,” provided music and led the group in such old favourites as “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary”, “Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag”, and “You Are My Sunshine”.

Below, “Vintage” performing after dinner.



A highlight of the evening was the presentation of a short play called “Editors at War” featuring the 1914 rivalry between Grande Prairie’s two newspapers, the Grande Prairie Herald and the Frontier Signal, and their editors. Mary Nutting was the Narrator with Kathryn Auger and Gail Schau on Lighting.

The beautiful and unique silent auction items and doorprizes included works by local artists, artisans, and authors and contributions from businesses, municipalities, and elected representatives.



Above, interested bidders admire the silent auction items on display in the foyer.



Please consider joining us next year. The proposed date is October 3, 2015, if you like to mark your calendar well in advance!

Left, Friends President Charlie Penson, very pleased at the evening’s success.

Scenes from the play, top to bottom: Ed Crerar (Norm Dyck) pays a visit to Grande Prairie Herald editor W. C. Pratt (Bob Patterson).



Politician W. A. Rae (Charlie Penson) urges the editor of the Frontier-Signal, G. R. Wilson (Jim Geary) to “get tough” on his political opponent.

Irish (Myles Edgar) shares some gossip while barber Walter Medlock (Gavin Penson) gives Rev. Forbes (Jeff Nutting) a shave.



Herald and Signal newsboys (Tron and Max Probst) mix it up while promoting their respective papers.



Mrs. Bagnall (Leslie Gordon) gives Wilson a piece of her mind on the issue of prohibition.

Thank you to Patricia Greber and Mary Dever for providing the photographs of the event.



Working at the Post Office

By Kathryn Auger and Marge Elliot

Marge Elliot told the story of a Christmas around 1989 when the postal workers were answering letters from Santa Claus. One of the letters really touched them. The writer was an 11 year old girl, who was living in a difficult situation, and in her letter she poured her heart out. The postal workers contacted a social worker they knew and told her about the letter. The social worker knew about the family and said it was every bit as bad as the letter indicated. In the letter the girl had said she really wanted a guitar, so she could sing songs and make people happy. At the Post Office the hat was passed and money collected to buy the guitar and gifts for a younger brother and sister. They also put in the parcel information on Alateen. On Christmas Eve, Brian Boyd, one of the letter carriers, got dressed up in his Santa suit, and took along Brian Roth dressed as his elf. They drove a big red postal van to the girl's house and delivered the presents.

Feeling pretty good about what they had done, the posties thought this was the end of the story. Little did they know that nearly 25 years later, a string of events would link them again to the writer of the Santa Claus letter. Apparently Customer Service



received a moving letter from a woman telling the story of receiving presents on Christmas Eve after writing to Santa. She told how that one thing when she was 11 had helped her through many difficult years. Customer Service contacted the office in Grande Prairie and asked if anyone knew anything about this. The secretary called Marge at the Gateway Post Office, thinking if anyone knew about it, Marge would because she had been there so long. Sure enough Marge did know, because she had been one of the posties involved.



Postal Services. Above, two men unload the mail plane at Bear Lake in 1920. The first post office in the South Peace was at the Spirit River Settlement, founded in 1905, and numerous others were established as more areas became settled (SPRA 024.01.09.45, photo cropped). Left, Grande Prairie was also involved in mail delivery to other places. This unique photograph shows the first air mail flight between Edmonton and Whitehorse refuelling on Bear Lake July 5, 1937. It was an unscheduled stop, but about 100 people came out to watch as Mayor Percy Tooley hand-pumped the gas into Grant McConachie's float plane (SPRA 1998.8.5).



The following is the letter received. It has been edited to remove identifying details.

In 1989 or so I wrote a letter to Santa on a very lonely night when I was just 11. I remember feeling hopeless, tired and sad as I wrote it. I think it was 2 or 3 in the morning when I finally dropped it in the mailbox, feeling like I had just gotten things off my heavily burdened mind. I never expected Santa to write back AND get what I asked for AND refer me to Alateen.

The day my packages were delivered was a bittersweet experience I never forgot. It made me feel wonder towards those who answered my letter, amazement because someone had cared, and truthfully scared because my Mom found out what I did. But that didn't matter. Someone had cared.

Thank you to everyone involved in our story. Thank you for the guitar, the Mickey Mouse telephone for my little sister, and the musical rattle for my baby brother. Thank you for being someone I could trust, for in the letter I had asked anyone who reads it, please don't call Child Welfare. It must have been a very difficult decision but you were trusted. We'd come to know Child Welfare soon enough as it was.

Life back then was tumultuous at best, then it got harder. We all came to [the] point where we found other homes, my siblings with their Dad and me with many foster parents. I became emancipated when I was about 16 and have been on my own since. [Now] I am a full-time student returning to school for another diploma, or two if things go right next semester. My little sister is also in college. My little brother came back to me too, and he has been working for a few years making it on his own. We three are proud of ourselves, when we think about where we started. I just thought there might be a soul or two out there wondering whatever became of the writer of a letter to Santa Claus, who thought nobody could ever read all those letters.

Once again, thank you, all of you. Even in sharing my story you have helped, because it came back to me and touched my heart 25 years later.



Recreation. Above, the Grande Prairie Community Swimming Pool, ca. 1950. The pool was built in 1947-48 as a project of the Kinsmen Club and cost about \$20,000, not counting the volunteer labour. The pool was located on the southwest corner of 101 Street and 99 Avenue, near the water tower and Canadian Utilities plant (SPRA 2003.24.17, photo cropped). Below, the Grande Prairie Leisure Centre pool in September 1980. The 1948 Community Swimming Pool was replaced by the outdoor Bear Creek Pool in 1962. This was to be the only pool in Grande Prairie until the Leisure Centre was opened in 1975. The Leisure Centre pool operated until December 2011 when the Eastlink Centre (Multiplex) was completed (SPRA 190.02.01.0810.15).



Council Off the Rails

By Helen Rice

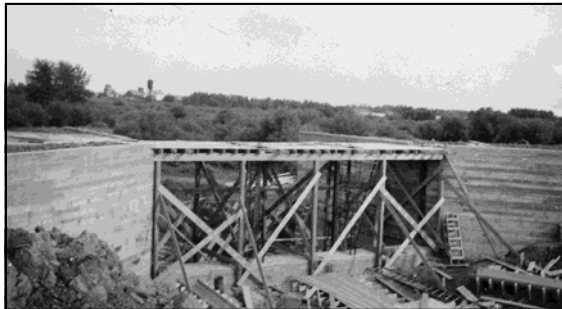
I was the chair of the City of Grande Prairie 50th Anniversary of becoming a city.

We planned a program in Muskoseepi Park. The program kick off began with a parade of 50 Hometown Heroes who had been selected as significant to the development of the City. The community was asked to lend 1950's vehicles for the parade and the response was overwhelming.

The line-up took place at Harry Balfour School and the parade began, led by the RCMP, then the Marching band, the Member of Parliament and the MLAs, and an old fashioned black and white police car.

Next came the 50 vehicles with the Hometown Heroes, followed by council in the mini train.

As I was the master of ceremonies I wasn't in the train, but instead announced the arrival.



Water. In its earliest days, Grande Prairie's water came from Bear Creek, but as the water quality was poor, a village well was drilled in 1914. The well was redrilled in 1916 and a used water tower, purchased from the City of Edmonton, installed in 1917. The Bear Creek Dam, below, was constructed in 1946 as a new solution to the water problem by Turner and Sons Construction (SPRA 2011.44.26). Above, a number of spectators stand on the bridge overlooking the spillway of the dam on Bear Creek, 1947. (SPRA 2003.24.13, photo cropped). However, by the 1960s the Reservoir was becoming unequal to the task of providing water for a growing City and a new water plant was constructed by the Wapiti River.

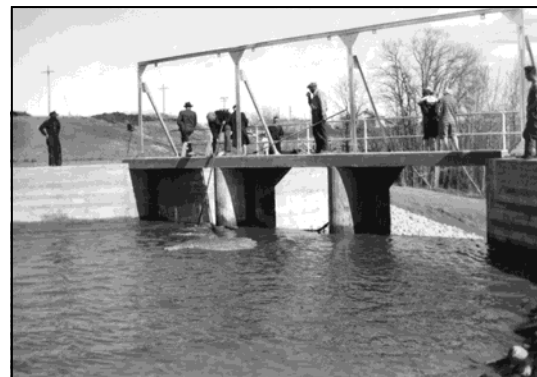
Helen is Grande Prairie's longest serving Councillor. She was the only woman on the 1977-1980 Council (left), which also included Paul Pivert, Wally Stokes, Dennis Bryan, Hugh Impey, Mayor Al Romanchuk, and Oscar Blais.



The parade turned off 102 street and started down the hill into Muskoseepi Park.

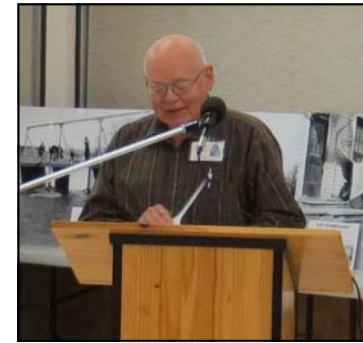
The last to turn in was the mini train. As it began its descent, the brakes failed and the train, containing all of council (except me) went careening down the hill. It swerved around the Hometown Heroes passing them quickly, then passed the police car, the MLA's and the MP. Council began shouting at the Marching Band and RCMP to get out of the way. The train sped to the bottom of the hill, and across the parking lot before, finally, coming to a stop.

The crowd thought it was all part of the event, but most of that council still hasn't forgiven me.



So Where's the Fire?

By Gordon Mackey



I became a volunteer firefighter at Teepee Creek for 16 years, but before I get into my story, a little history of that Fire Department.

In the late 1980s or early 1990s, the

County of Grande Prairie #1 provided Teepee Creek with an old red International single-axle tank truck with an engine-powered pump on the back of it, and a new one-bay fire-hall. In return, residents of the area volunteered as firefighters. For a few years, this worked reasonably well, but the weakness, as I see it, was the phone-fan-out the residents liked to use. One person received a message from the County, and that person phoned 2 others. Those 2 others each phoned 2 more, and so on. The problem was that not everybody was near their phone when needed, and this was before the cell-phone era, so not every firefighter got notified in time.

Response time was erratic, so the County brought in the use of pagers. This, for some reason I don't understand, irritated many firefighters, but they grudgingly accepted the pagers. Most of them then left the pager in the house when they went out, or left their pager on their truck's dashboard overnight.

Obvious problems.

Many firefighters just quit attending, and the County threatened to remove the truck and fire-hall. That's when I moved back to the Teepee Creek area and became involved, because I saw the need for a fire-fighting service there. I didn't have a pager, didn't have any training, but I had gone to the fire-hall for a

meeting, and best of all, I only lived half a mile from the fire-hall. That's where my story begins.

November 9, 1996. My phone rang. It was Gilbert Pealo phoning from the Valleyview area. His pager had gone off, and would I take his place as firefighter. He said I was to respond to a fire at the Alberta Wheat Pool Elevator in Grande Prairie. They needed a back-up water supply. I agreed to go.

Outside, a heavy snowfall. Everything was white-out white. Knowing elevator fires could take days to put out, I dressed in my warmest clothes and drove to the fire-hall, hoping other firefighters would arrive.

I didn't know how to activate the siren on the fire-hall's roof. I climbed up on the truck and looked into the water tank. Yes ... it was full. A chalk message on the chalkboard said to call Del Schleiter if the truck was called out. No phone at the fire-hall. I ran across the road to the local store to use their phone. Del's wife said Del was not involved with the fire department any longer. Rick Moors, not a firefighter, offered to come help me. Ran back to the firehall. The clock, of course, was still ticking.

Rick & I found a jerry-can and fueled the pump's engine at the back of the truck. Each of us tried to get into fire-fighting uniforms hanging on hooks. Rick was a big man, and nothing fit him at all. I managed to get a pair of pants pulled up, but no way would the fly zip up ... about 5 inches gap there. But with suspenders, they stayed up, even with the fly open. On with a tight-fitting coat and into the truck. Without fire-fighting gear to wear, Rick couldn't come. No other firefighters arrived. Rick opened the overhead door for me, and for the first time, I drove the fire-truck out and onto the highway. Still in front of the store, I shifted into 2nd gear and the truck stalled. I then smelled hot brakes, so I released the

parking brake, and resumed the trip. My warm ears said people in the store were laughing at my poor driving skills.

I rolled down the road, starting to feel comfortable with the truck, then noticed the fuel gauge read empty. I knew the truck had 2 fuel tanks, so I looked for, and found, the switch. The gauge then showed full. One tank was full. Good.

The snow made visibility terrible, and I had the headlights on, but should I switch on the red rotating light on top? I decided yes. Where was the switch? I couldn't really pay attention to the dashboard because the road was icy, snow was blowing across it in white-out conditions. I spotted a little toggle-switch low on the left beside some label-maker tape that read "RACK LIGHTS". We only had a red "cherry" on top, but other emergency vehicles had a rack of lights up top, so on it went. The radio's microphone was dangling on its coiled cord, bouncing on the floor of the truck, passenger-side, and out of reach. I'd never used the radio anyway, so I just carried on driving.

When I reached Highway 2, north of Sexsmith, I stopped to check the red rotating light. It was not on. I looked back at the toggle switch ... the label read "BACK LIGHTS", not RACK lights. I switched off the back lights and looked for another switch, and I found an unmarked one under the glove compartment door, turned it on and yes! The red rotating light was working. I quickly checked for basic instructions on how to use the radio. Nothing. I tried a couple of things with the radio, but didn't make



contact with anybody. Give up, Gordon. You have a fire waiting for you!

Onto Highway 2 and heading south towards Grande Prairie, I tried to see if there was a fire in Sexsmith as I drove past, because I found it hard to imagine why Teepee Creek would be called into Grande Prairie. Too much falling and blowing snow to see the elevators in Sexsmith, but I continued on to Grande Prairie.

Okay, there's something you should know about this old fire-truck. Its MAXIMUM speed was 50 miles per hour. That's 80 km/hr., its red-line engine speed. My speed down the highway was more like 60 km/hr. and trailing behind me, I was building up lots of vehicles, not legally allowed to pass an emergency vehicle with its red lights on. In sympathy, I reached over and shut off the red light. Cars and trucks quickly passed me, making visibility for me even worse.



Fire Fighting. Left, it is a joyous occasion when Improvement District No. 19 (now Birch Hills County) acquires new fire fighting equipment, ca. 1980 (SPRA 018.03.69, photo cropped). Above, Grande Prairie's Volunteer Fire Department, ca. 1950. Back Row: Bill Murray, Gordon Bratland, Stan Griffiths, and Roy Borstad. Middle Row: Pete Eager, Max Henning, Peter Diemert, Alfred Van Schaick, Frank Edmundson, Augus Shelkey, Bill Blais, Gordon Zigler, and Fred Dobbyn. Front Row: Herb Gitzel, Walter Mach, Billy Woods, and Helmet Mach. Although Grande Prairie has now transitioned to a full-time, paid fire department, most of the fire fighters in other areas of the South Peace are still volunteers (SPRA 2007.42.21).

In Grande Prairie, I approached the intersection by Windsor Ford cautiously, for the ice underneath fresh snow made braking hazardous, and the center median was not visible in the snow. I switched on both my left-turn signal and the red light on top while I sat at the red traffic signal. When it turned green for me, the oncoming traffic didn't move, so they were waiting for me to make the turn. I made the turn and headed east towards the Alberta Wheat Pool elevator. A police car fell in behind me.

I turned into the Pool's yard. Nothing happening. No fire, no vehicle tracks, no vehicles. I got out and went back to the police car. Did he know anything about a fire at this elevator? Negative. I explained my situation, and he suggested perhaps the fire was back in Sexsmith. I agreed with him, jumped back into the fire-truck, turned off the red light, turned around near the elevator and drove back to Sexsmith. Thankfully, the police car didn't follow me.

Sexsmith. At the elevators, same as in Grande Prairie. No fire. No vehicle tracks. Snow piled up by the doors, so nobody had been there for hours. Now what?

I drove to the Sexsmith fire-hall. No people or tracks and snow against their doors also. Now what?

I parked and walked across the road to the Hardware Store, and asked to use their phone to phone the County Fire Service number listed in their phone directory. Whoops, the number was no longer in service. Phone 831 something. Borrowed a paper and pencil, re-phoned the County to get the new number. Got it, and phoned it. I asked the man who answered where the fire was. He didn't know of any fire in the County, so he put me on hold and phoned the Grande Prairie Fire Department. When he came back on the line, he said yes, there was a fire in a grain dryer at the Pool's new concrete Terminal site, way north of their old elevators. I had never thought about that new location. The man continued with a bit of both amazement and disdain in his voice, saying that I was no longer needed at the fire, but they had asked for assistance before 9:00 that morning, and it was nearing noon by this time. I could tell he was

wondering where the hell I'd been all that time.

Back at Teepee Creek, I swept snow off the truck and backed it into the fire-hall. I suspected that fire-trucks were supposed to be fueled up and ready to go, but I didn't know where I was to fill it up, or who would pay for the gas, etc., so I didn't do anything but go home. At home, my wife said Tony Huether had phoned a couple of times. He had gone to Grande Prairie to meet up with me, but I never arrived. I called him back, and he asked where I'd been.

So where had I been? I'd been out getting a small dose of experience and a big dose of embarrassment. I fully expected somebody to contact the Guinness Record people and nominate me as "The firefighter never to find the fire after driving 3 hours trying to find it".



Snow removal. Above, a snow removal machine built by Steel Industries for the City of Grande Prairie in 1944 clears snow on 101 Avenue. Snow removal is an ongoing problem and popular complaint for residents of our northern region (SPRA 2007.38.22). Left, a September snowstorm in 1937 blankets the dirt streets and board sidewalks of Richmond Avenue (SPRA 032.08.07.006).

Snake in the Grass

By Sergeant Gord McMahon, Peace Office, Grande Prairie Enforcement Services

I don't know why it is, but the best bylaw stories always involve critters. Here's one from the early '90's.

We get calls to pick up found snakes from time to time and because I was the lone "snake charmer" in the department, I was always sent to deal with snake complaints. The usual calls related to small pet snakes that escaped their enclosures, so my official snake catching kit consisted of an IGA plastic grocery bag and a pair of gloves.

A call came in from a lady who advised that she had seen a snake in the parking lot of her apartment building. When I arrived, the lady advised that she last saw the snake slithering north. I explained that I would do my best to find it but snakes can be real sneaky and difficult to follow. She replied, "Why don't you just follow the tracks? It headed towards the lawn."

Not wanting to point out the obvious, I agreed to check the lawn for snake tracks. Much to my surprise, in the long grass was what looked like the depression left from a fully charged fire hose. I followed the 10" wide track for about 50 yards where the tracks ended.

I realized my snake catching kit would be woefully inadequate, as before me was a 12' boa sunning itself.



One of Alberta's native snakes, possibly a rattlesnake. Much smaller and less exotic than Gord McMahon's boa (192.05.02.0177).

I returned to my patrol vehicle and tried to elicit help from some of the crowd that had gathered to watch. Surprisingly, I could not find a single person that would volunteer to assist me. I even tried to invoke a fictional

bylaw that gave me authority to demand assistance to a bylaw officer in need. This was a tough crowd and not even the threat of jail would sway them.

In the patrol car, I found a large black garbage bag and returned to the snake with the crowd of gawkers keeping a safe distance behind me. As I was about to grab the snake by the head, I heard someone say, "Are you sure that snake isn't poisonous?" Good point. I never thought about that! Even though I am the department's go-to-guy for snakes, I really only can identify the common garter snake which this monster certainly wasn't.

As there was no one else to deal with Kaa, as quick as a bunny, I grabbed the head of the docile snake who took immediate exception to this sun tanning interruption by thrashing violently. I now had the conundrum of how to get a spastic snake into a plastic garbage bag. It must have looked like Mr. Boa was winning the battle because a man finally came forward and held the bag open so I could deposit the snake into it.

I then lugged the snake (at least 50 lbs) back to the patrol car where it accompanied me in the front seat to the SPCA, who found a happy home for the snake in the grass.



Jennie Croken's Memories

Part II

If you read our June 2014 issue, you'll recall the story written by Jennie (Tomshak) Croken. The following story is the second installment.

Before moving from Clairmont to Grande Prairie in 1954, with my experience of nearly four years in the Clairmont Post Office, I asked Post Master Bond [at Grande Prairie] if I could be hired. He told me that, as yet, married women were not accepted. Near Christmas 1955, however, he phoned and said yes, I could be hired, but only as a temporary clerk, at \$250.00 per month. I accepted.

In the 1950s, mail came in by truck to the south door. Parcels also came by truck, 1st class off the train, and locally the Herald Tribune (which sold for 10 cents a copy). We worked every day of the week, in shifts. On Sunday, if I was on duty, I was allowed two hours to go to church—this was Labour Law.



Sanitation - Garbage, Water, Sewer. Above, the first compressor garbage truck in Grande Prairie, 1954, owned by Mr. G. M. Toutant. He is shown here with Town Councillor Bert Tieman and Mayor Bob Millar. Grande Prairie's first garbageman was Eugene Cashman, hired as "Scavenger and Sanitary Inspector" in March 1917 (SPRA 1969.59.026, photo cropped). Left, Miles Marcy's Trucking company hauls a load of corrugated metal culverts in 1958 (SPRA 198.01.15).

A bin, installed in the north side of the building, was for mail to be dropped in after hours and Sundays. Some Sundays I found odd things in the mail drop, including, one day, a chicken. I asked the Chinese cook from the café in the Bus Depot across the street for help. He caught it and was happy.

Christmas was unbelievable. Parcels were stacked high in the middle of the room. There were piles of letters, registered mail and parcel cards to be sorted into boxes. Mail for those people without boxes, for 1st class and papers, etc. went to General Delivery in front.

At the post office, we didn't just receive parcels. Once there was a burial urn, another time a box of bees—some escaped and got into the men's bathroom. Clerk Grant Haiste had a surprise. One day, I took in a paper parcel over the counter for Edmonton, not knowing they were \$20.00 counterfeit bills. Traced back, it was discovered that I was the clerk at that time, who accepted it.

Another time, as we were putting letters through the cancelling machine, some powder was spotted. We reported it to Post Master Edgson, and he in turn reported it to the RCMP. For the next two days, one of them hid in the Post Master's office, facing General Delivery. We were told to face the office when giving out letters, and to be slow. This I sometimes forgot to do; even so, the police were out after him. When he was caught, he told police it [the drugs] was for a friend.

At one time, letters were being delivered with \$25.00 cheques from the Provincial Government. Most of these were thrown (as junk mail) into the garbage bin in the lobby. Then someone caught on that it was for real—what a scramble to the waste paper basket. I cashed mine, bought a high stool and still have it.

A few years later our wickets were busy with customers wanting to buy our 25 cent coins. The old silver ones were now valuable as the new ones were silver alloy, with another metal added.

In 1956, I wrote an exam at the Legion, an application for promotion as Postal Officer 2 or Postal Clerk 2, and to be on permanent staff. I passed and was now qualified to be on rotation, even as Post Master if needed.

The City was growing fast—oil, lumber, etc.—and more room was needed. Carpenters came and began knocking out walls, re-constructing the inside. The federal offices moved into their own buildings, and Janitor Haiste, whose family lived upstairs, also had to leave. All of this happened because Grande Prairie was becoming a City in 1958. On the great day, as cold as it was, supervisor Jim Turner and I went to the door as the letter [copy of the City charter] was handed in. Our stay was short, it was very cold.

In April 1959 I took maternity leave (without pay) and Edward “Mike” was born August 4, 1959. When the baby was six months old, I was told, “Come back to work or resign,” so in January 1960 I came back. I had no other choice, as I had a sick husband and there was very little social assistance. A man from an office in Edmonton came up. He laid out a budget—10% for food, 10% for clothes, etc. and if I had a trip to Edmonton, they’d say, “Where did you get the money?” He said, “My advice is go back to work.”

To get a live-in babysitter wasn’t easy. Through a friend I was able to get Mona Norman from Buffalo Lakes. She stayed until Ed went to kindergarten at Avondale School. His teacher there was a classmate of mine in Grade XII at the Grande Prairie High School, Grace Stewart.

Back at work in January 1960, the Canada Post Carriers were now sorting alongside of us. We didn’t dare make a mistake - as they were within hearing distance, we soon would be put straight. Then the Carriers were moved upstairs, a conveyer was set up, and we would put the Carriers’ mail up the conveyer in trays. However, they still had to come downstairs to the front to get registered letters, postage due

stamps, and letters to be re-addressed, etc. Taxis would take the mail carriers to their routes.

In April 1961 my husband passed away. Shortly after that I had exams—a Postage Guide exam as well as the Case exam. I had to know all of the post offices in each town that the train stopped at on all lines in Alberta and British Columbia. An examiner from Edmonton came up. He had been on these routes at one time. I did O.K., so the Post Master was happy, as was the examiner. Not until I finished did I realize that he had worked with both Pat and Rudy Croken [Jennie’s husband] in 1916 on the railway out of Rycroft.

The Postal Union was formed in 1968. It was needed at that time, however, in not too many years it was out of hand. Postal Codes came in the 1970s, so we had to learn those, and in 1972, Thunder Bird Air Services started. All mail was put on 1st class air service to Edmonton as it was the Distribution Centre. Parcels and paper still went out on the trucks. We had to fill postal meters with the time and day, didn’t dare make a mistake, as the Post Master had to report the time of letters here for arrival in Toronto and England and it was a matter of a few days.

Rural Route boxes were set up in the country. We sorted mail for those separately. They’d come in, do their own sort to take out to their Routes. Proctor & Gamble Pulp Mill mail we sorted into a bag and Dave Hartman picked it up and delivered that.

In the early 70s, I remember mail put in a bag for the Silver-coloured Air Stream Caravan groups that were coming through from the USA to Alaska. Roger Field remembered them here already about 1956, when they came in groups and parked where the Swanavon



Jennie sorting mail in her Ukrainian dress (SPRA 112.02.42).

School is now. After the Rotary Campsite was opened, they would stop there to rest for a few days and get their mail here. They were entertained by our City.

Some carriers left when the Proctor and Gamble Mill came in because there was higher pay at the mill. They were being replaced by lady carriers—Post Master Edgson happy about that. The first lady carrier was Linda

Muir. The City was growing rapidly and when there were 19 walks, a couple of trucks were brought in, about 1974 or 75.

My son, Ed, while in High School, came early in the morning to dump bags. After graduation, when he was 17 years old, he came in as a carrier. When the two trucks were purchased, he and Brian Boyd took drivers tests, as did the other carriers. Even I did, with no intention of driving one. Ed drove one of these.

When Ed would be going downstairs for registers, etc., he’d say, “Wonder what mom has for me.” One day one of the carriers said, “Is she really your mom?” After that they all called me Mom.



Above, Jennie’s last day at the post office, 1980 (SPRA 112.02.43).

entertainment, music, etc. My son Ed attended and did a presentation.



Above, Ed Croken and an unidentified woman with a mail van (SPRA 112.02.41).

In 1980 I retired, as 65 was the retirement age. The following year the post office became a Crown Corporation. Inside staff and Post Master Ron Hemmingway had a great party for me. Another day, the

Carriers and their wives had another party—we had fun,

Right, farewell party, 1980 (SPRA 112.02.45).



I enjoyed my work and on my last day I said: “I’ll travel to all the countries I’ve sorted mail to.” I believe I did.



Above, a reflection on the advances made in the hundred years before the 1910s, published in the March 25, 1913 Grande Prairie Herald. Another one hundred years on and some of these changes have become foreign once again.

Arrival - or Building the Corduroy Road - The Odyssey from Southampton to Grande Prairie

The following account was submitted by Margaret Bowes. The foreword was written by the Mathesons' daughter Ann.

It was 1955 and the Mathesons—Torquhil, Heather, and four children, from 8 months to 8 years old, were emigrating from Yorkshire, England to Grande Prairie, Alberta. Torquhil had gone ahead in January, to be greeted by 40 below weather. So he had been living and working in Alberta for 4 months.

Southampton docks, May 1955—Granny Matheson introduced herself to many other passengers (to the great chagrin and embarrassment of her 8 year old grand-daughter). Granny was concerned that her daughter-in-law, Heather, would need a lot of help and support with the four children and some 44 pieces of luggage during the steamship voyage! All four grandparents were at the Southampton docks—Granny and Grandpa Webber, and Granny and Grandpa Matheson. The send-off was complete with streamers thrown from the deck of the boat and many arms waving farewell to loved ones heading across the Atlantic Ocean for a new life in Canada.

After six days on the *SS Homeric*, including dressing up for dinner every night, they arrived in Quebec City. The strongest memory of that entrance to Canada is the image of cliffs and grey stone buildings in the old city. Then a train ride from Quebec City to Edmonton. Whew, finally in Alberta—Dad met the train, and they were all together as a family again. But little did they know there was more adventure in store.

Following is a transcription of the 10 page letter Torquhil wrote to his parents about the rest of the trip. Seems more like a pioneer story, although it was many decades after pioneer days.

P.O. Box 249,
Grande Prairie

16 June '55

My Dear Mummy & Daddy,

You must by now be wondering just when some of your expatriate children &/or grandchildren are going to write to you. Ann started a letter to you some days ago—in reply to your letter, Dad. It wasn't the first. G. [Grandpa] Webber got across the line first by a short lead. She hasn't finished yet, I regret to say, so here I am trying to fill the breach.

I left here on Saturday the 20th for Edmonton. The trip took me 14 hours—there were some very bad stretches of road along Lesser Slave Lake. I took a bacterial swab to the University Hospital and plated it at about midnight & then got to bed in a hotel room near the station for 5 hours sleep.

The family's train arrived on time at 5:45 a.m. Sunday & it was grand to see them all again. All except Geoffrey looked just as I remembered them & all looked very well and not jaded. [Geoffrey was the baby, 4 months old when Torquhil last saw him, and now 8 months old.] We went back to the hotel room & they bathed.

My plans were to go straight off as soon as we had had breakfast, but the registered luggage (11 pieces, weighing 1000 lbs.) was not all on that train, and since Heather had sent the excess C.O.D. and it was only registered in Edmonton, the luggage office would not release it (what had come already).

We then went out to the McCartens & had lunch and washed the car. It was a glorious day, and Edmonton—a beautiful city—looked her best for us. On the afternoon train the pieces containing the bedding & crockery, etc. had arrived, but not the biggest piece of all, which the railway had "tagged"

for the C.O.D. charges. Apparently they select the most valuable looking piece (usually the biggest) & tag it with the C.O.D. charges, refusing to release any until the charges have been paid.

The last and biggest piece arrived on Monday morning—we had spent the night with the four children with the McCartens & Heather & I at the Airlines Hotel at the airport. We did some shopping & left for the North at about 2 p.m. We had supper at Athabasca, passing through a torrential rainstorm just before reaching the town. It was still raining when we left Athabasca & I knew then that we must expect some tricky driving further on if it had been raining as hard further West.

After supper—about 6 p.m.—we proceeded West and the "rough breaks" (places where the gravel overlay has given way & the underlying earth has been deeply rutted by heavy trucks) proved easier to negotiate when softened by the rain than they had been when hard & dry on Saturday. My hopes for the really bad bit further West were (falsely) buoyed. We stayed the night at a very nice new hotel I had noted on the way south, at Canyon Creek, right on the shore of Lesser Slave Lake.

Next morning we went on. We had a considerable part of the luggage in the trunk (boot)—(which really is enormous on our Plymouth), but only the pram on the luggage rack I had borrowed from John Nelson. We got about 10 miles West of Faust—about half way along Lesser Slave Lake—when we met a car coming east with its luggage

strewn around it. I stopped to see if he needed help, but he said "We just had our luggage rack come off. It's broken & we have jettisoned it & are repacking the luggage we had on it." As we drew away I said to Heather, "That makes me feel I want to stop & check that ours is secure." Three hundred yards further on, in a very rough break, our rack, with pram securely attached, slid gently into view in the upper half of the windshield. It did virtually no damage as it careened off the hood (bonnet) onto the road—only a couple of minor "1st degree" scratches—and it and its hood were undamaged. [*the pram was a large black English pram with big wheels and a big hood—never before seen in Canada and now travelling on top of a car with a very English family of 6 on this mud road in Northern Alberta.]*

We decided that was a good place to stop and have our picnic lunch, which we did (it was still raining).



Transportation - Roads. Above, men and horses engaged in building Highway #34 east of the four-mile corner in Grande Prairie pose for photograph, ca. 1930. Road building could be a family affair if Mother was employed as a cook (see the women and children in front?). Highway 34 was later renamed Highway 43. Until the 1950s, the road went only as far as Valleyview, but in 1955, the Valleyview-Whitcourt Cutoff was opened, greatly shortening travel time from the South Peace to Edmonton (SPRA 268.02.06, photo cropped). Left, roads also need to be maintained. In this 1917 photograph, eight horses pull a grader down Richmond Avenue, Grande Prairie. This was the first piece of road equipment purchased by the village's public works department (SPRA 2001.01.059).



After getting the rack in place again (I got completely soaked in the process), we carried on until about 20 miles further on (we had noted the virtually absent traffic start) we got onto a long line of stationary trucks & cars. We sat for a while & heard that it was no use passing the line (the road appeared clear) because there was a bigger block further on. We didn't know that we were part of the biggest "traffic snarl-up" in the history of this highway—one that is already a part of history, with repercussions in parliament.

After about 10 minutes, while we were wondering how long it would be before we moved on, a few cars ahead of us in the line pulled out, reversed, and went back. We guessed what they were up to & quickly joined them to get one of the few remaining hotel rooms at Faust. It was still very wet & the kids had only the open sandals they had traveled across Canada in. I tried to get them to go for a barefoot walk in the mud, but they decided that was much too cold & clammy. They were needing the exercise by this time and were quite a handful in the small hotel. They all slept sideways on a collapsible double bed known as a "Winnipeg Couch". Geoffrey was very comfy on the floor & we had a (?) game in the room.

By Wednesday afternoon we had spent quite a lot of money—the room was only \$4.00 but every time the family went into the restaurant for a meal it cost us \$5-\$6 & I was wishing we had used the train or plane. What was planned as the cheapest way of getting the family from Edmonton was turning out to be more expensive than chartering a private plane!

The sun was out by now & the mud was warm but the kids still wouldn't go barefoot till I took my shoes off & rolled my trousers up & showed the way. Then they loved it, so we went for a walk to the lake & to a nearby sawmill. At the lake I bought 3 ½ whitefish for about 70 cents, and when we came back Heather went out and bought a frying pan. We had collected some dry wood on the way home with the fish & we went a few miles down the road for the best meal we had had yet—fried fish hot from the pan. The kids loved it. The fish, by the way, was ready cleaned & gutted when weighed—so that was quite a lot of fish.

We decided that night to have a go at it, although the roadway was still officially closed & from all accounts still in very poor shape. We had an idea that some of the heavy transport might try too, so got up at 5 a.m. & managed to get away by 7 a.m. In fact, that wasn't early enough, and about 30 miles further on we came on one of the trucks that had been with us at Faust. The driver had left at 4 a.m. & he was sitting—very much an outcast—in his cab, blocking the fairway. The other half of the highway was churned up like a battlefield and quite impassable.

These trucks up here are about four times the size of the lorries at home & carry, I am told, about 10 times the weight. They are responsible for most of the damage to the road, & they also make it very hard for the cars because when the road is bad, but not impassable, they make deep ruts. If you get into one of these ruts at slow speed you are stuck on the crest between with your wheels hanging free. You either have to go gingerly over the rough breaks in the "crest"—or if they have already been used by a few other cars & therefore are a bit chiseled & greasy, decide rapidly between either stopping and going out with a shovel to fill in the ruts or else increasing speed & taking it as fast as you can so that you will slither through.

After a short time a few more cars came up behind us. One that came up about ½ hour behind us reported that a few miles back (where a river had been half-way over the road), the water was now over the road & only just passable—and still rising rapidly. There was now no going back.

Just then a road grader came up. This is a vehicle which makes the roads in summer by scraping the earth up towards the centre & keeps them open in winter by clearing the snow. It has 8 wheels & can rock them from side to side to get out if it gets stuck in the mud. It started to clear the mountains of mud from the clear side of the road but the surface was so bad that the relatively hard top cracked, revealing the liquid mud below—about the consistency of the cream on the top of a bottle of milk.

[The grader] went off to the West again to try a more likely looking spot & we all started to collect timber to

fill in the ruts & layer crossways to make what is called a "corduroy" road. Before we had finished it came back—presumably having found that it couldn't do much good at the next bad patch to the West—and had another go. This time it got stuck, right beside the truck, & despite our work with shovel & wood, couldn't budge.

It is almost unheard of for a grader to get stuck. They can usually dig down to firmer ground, rocking their wheels & manipulating their blade, which can turn in any direction & also move up or down so that it can be used to jack the rest of the machine up once it gets to solid ground.

The driver got down from his cab high on the vehicle & investigated the trough his driving wheels were in, to find that they were on a hard bottom of ice—he had dug right down to frost level. I don't know whether it was perma-frost—in the higher latitudes the ground never thaws out, even in summer, but I had never heard of that here.

Anyway, this apparently meant that he would have to wait until a tractor came to pull him out, so we all looked around for another way to get on—we knew we couldn't go back because of the water over the highway.

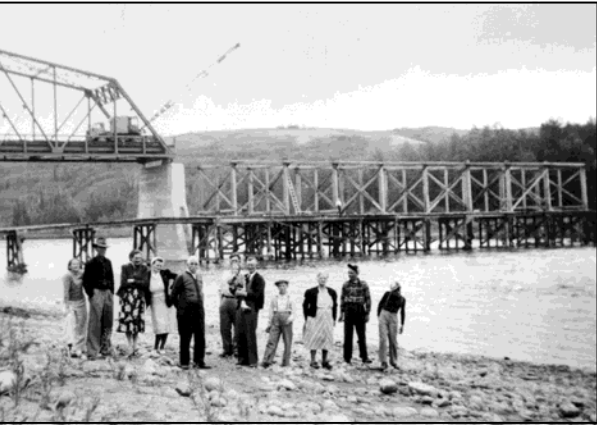
A few venturesome souls (probably not owning the cars they were driving in) tried some fields on the North side of the highway. There was a long stretch of swamp & by getting up to about 40 mph on a hard stretch before it (they had pulled out the intervening



fence poles) they all managed to get about 4/5 the way through it. The last bit they were manhandled through, one being pulled by a couple of horses. Meanwhile the rest of us found hard ground to the South, but there was a wide ditch to be bridged before we could get onto the road again West of the block. There was some cut lumber to hand so we built a bridge & got away after about 2 hours work.

About 5 miles on we came to the hard core of the obstruction—heavy trucks that had been stuck for 3 days. The drivers were pretty fed up at seeing the private cars go through & some of them were pulled out to block the highway and were determined to stay there until they were towed through. They get paid \$40 for the trip from Edmonton to the Peace & have to pay their own expenses en route—there are no restrictions on working hours for lorry drivers in this country & the speed limit for trucks is 50 mph, but of course they exceed it whenever they can.

We decided to have a meal & cooked the rest of the



Transportation - River Crossings. Above, the opening of the Smoky River Bridge on August 17, 1949 was an important event for the whole area with a parade, ribbon-cutting, and speeches attended by about 12,000 people. Construction of the bridge also attracted interest as this photograph of spectators near the partially completed bridge shows (SPRA 170.02, photo cropped). Left, before the Bridge was built, transportation across the river was accomplished by means of a ferry in summer and ice road or cable basket in winter. The ferry on the Smoky River had been in operation since 1911. This photo was taken in 1949. The last remaining ferry in the South Peace is the Shaftesbury Ferry on the Peace River, departing from near Tangent (SPRA 002.05.02.02).

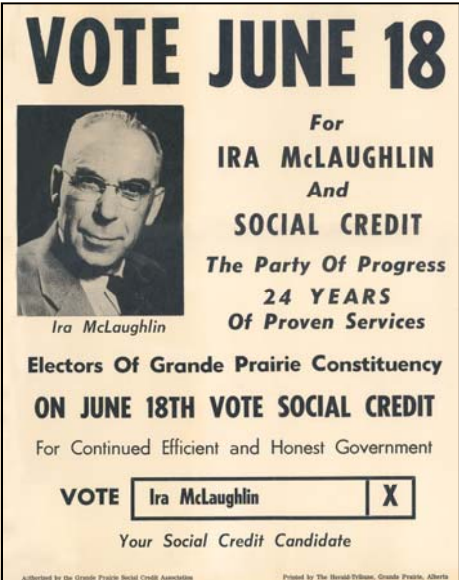
fish. It was quite a nice day & it was only a three mile walk to Enilda—the next town (or village), so we weren’t unduly worried. I had earlier tried to talk them into letting us through but just when we were getting onto friendly terms a French Canadian came up too & made some disparaging remarks about the truck drivers, which made them so angry I gave up & went to cook the meal.

After the meal, Heather walked by with the baby & this apparently shamed them into letting us through, in fact they all came & gave me a shove when I got stuck in a particularly bad patch just past the head of the column. By the time we got to the worst patch of all it had been worked down to be almost passable. The fourth car ahead of me was the last one to be towed through by a tractor. After that we all managed to get through on our own. This was a good thing, for to be towed through an impassable stretch of road by a tractor plays havoc with your car. After that it was plain sailing and a nice run in home. We got there at about 9 p.m. that Thursday and stayed the night with the Nelsons.

The kids are now at school, well adapted & making friends & eating like horses. More of this in my next—it is after midnight & my ½ day is ended.

Much love from us all,

Torquhil



Kathryn’s Picks

By Kathryn Auger



From the Frontier Signal of November 26, 1914:

The masquerade ball given last Friday evening, was all that could be wished for in the way of success. The large Liberal Club Hall was taxed to the utmost, but all had a most enjoyable time. Twenty four layer cakes, beside bushels of sandwiches, contributed no small part in making the ball a decided success, not to mention the loving cup that cheers without inebriating. The Ellis Brothers supplied excellent music and the mix up of the varied and artistic costumes, as they tripped the light fantastic was both pleasing and



Politics. Above, Harry Adair, who lost an election bet, prepares to push William Innes down Grande Prairie’s main street in a wheelbarrow during the Sports Day parade, July 2, 1917. Adair was an Independent candidate in the 1917 provincial election. He garnered 463 votes but lost to both the Liberal (1994 votes) and Conservative candidates (712 votes). Grande Prairie politics was a wild place to be in the early days. During the 1913 campaign, W. F. Bredin at a schoolhouse meeting yelled at his opponent, W. A. Rae, “Throw the skunk out!” and proceeded to do just that, forcing Rae out of the building (SPRA 2009.95.02, photo cropped). Left, campaign poster for Ira McLaughlin, Social Credit candidate for the 1959 provincial election. McLaughlin held the Grande Prairie seat from 1944 to 1971 (SPRA 2006.094).



Above, men constructing a road base to pave Richmond Avenue, 1948. The photograph shows the corner of 102 Street and 100 Avenue, looking east (SPRA 2007.42.02).

amusing. Following is a list of costumes and the prize winners. Messrs McAuley, Anderton and Crerar awarded the prizes. The committee in charge have been requested to give another masquerade in the near future so everyone can watch out for the date.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Mrs. Pratt, red cross nurse. | Mr. Nelson, clown. |
| “ Hunskor, red cross nurse. | “ Caldwell, mounted police. |
| “ Owens, queen of hearts. | “ W. Salmond, girl. |
| “ Caldwell, English gypsy girl. | Mr. E. Salmond, clown. |
| “ Squires, old woman. | “ Hunskor, clown. |
| “ McDonald, school girl. | “ Duncan, girl. |
| “ Mashburn, snowflake. | “ Tooley, cook. |
| “ Boulanger, Japanese kimona. | “ C. Patterson, clown. |
| “ Clarke, fancy kimona. | “ Dunlap, woman. |
| Miss Carveth, dau’ter of the east. | “ McLean, evening dress. |
| “ Patterson, sunflower. | “ Suilley, (just masked) |
| “ Dunlap, queen of hearts. | “ Balmer, fisherman. |
| “ Tissington, clown. | “ Owens, sport. |
| “ Fitzpatrick, bride. | “ J. Crerar, bride groom. |
| “ Crerar, grandma. | “ Fitzpatrick, step dancer. |
| “ Harris, Mexican girl. | “ W. Taft, clown. |
| “ Graham, maid. | “ Burns, hobo. |
| “ Tromley, flower girl. | “ Harris, Knights of Pythias. |

The prizes were awarded to Miss Carveth, as the best dressed lady; Mr. Harris as the best dressed gentleman; and Mr. Burns, as the hobo.



From the Grande Prairie Herald of May 31, 1945:

During the past two weeks at a special and regular meetings of the Town Council, the following important steps were taken in regard to town improvements for the coming year.

An engineer has been brought in and has made all arrangements, and taken all levels, etc., for the building of a storm sewer to start at the corner of Bird’s Store and run South one block, thence West to Bear Creek. This will be connected at various points to carry the water from the Main Street.

Contracts will be called for as soon as plans and specifications are ready for the asphalt surfacing of the three main blocks from the United Church to CFGP, also of asphalt side walks, with concrete gutter and curb, over the same distance.

From CFGP to the depot it is intended to build a heavy gravel road, and the same along the Wholesale Street. Further than this, it is intended to gravel all intersecting streets for two blocks back from the Main Street, this is being done to give cars, etc., a chance to shake off some of the mud they usually carry with them.

From expert advice given the council, they understand that it will not be possible to start on this work until the end of July, as the subsoil must have time to dry as much as possible.

The water situtation, at the present time is not good, and residents are asked to conserve on water as much as possible.

While the engineer was in town, he took levels, etc., for the new dam on Bear Creek, and it is hoped to have this project completed this fall, so that next spring’s run off can be held.

The council is also considering the installation of a new lighting system on the main street which will increase the amount of light by about 300 per cent.

With these improvements this year, Grande Prairie will be making big strides toward becoming a really modern town.

Goodbye and Hello



As of early November 2014, Patricia Greber is no longer working for the Archives. We have appreciated her work over the last year and a half and have high hopes that she will continue to be involved in the heritage community of the area. In fact, she's promised to return as a volunteer, as her time allows.

The Archives has hired Teresa Dyck as our newest staff member in Patricia's place.

My name is Teresa Dyck and I am the new administrative assistant at the South Peace Regional Archives. I am excited to have been offered this opportunity – the administrative side of my position here at SPRA is familiar territory, but I'm new to the field of archives and am looking forward to expanding my skills and knowledge in a different direction.

I am a lifelong resident of the Peace Country. My childhood and youth were spent in the farming community of La Crete, where both my parents were born and raised as well, and for the last ten years I've lived in Grande Prairie.

While archival work may be new to me, a passion for history is not. I was always the odd student who loved learning historical names, dates, and events (and read ahead in social studies textbooks in my free time). The projects I worked on during long winter evenings reflected this interest as well – one year I researched the descendants of Queen Victoria and

created a family tree including every name I could find, another year I designed and created an early Victorian era ensemble, and just last winter I learned the art of restoring antique books.

I recently spent a year living and working in a country house (now functioning as a conference center) in the north of England, and one responsibility I especially enjoyed was giving tours to the many visitors and sharing with them the estate's history. Now I have an opportunity to become more involved in the history of my own hometown and the surrounding region, and I couldn't be happier.

We are very pleased to welcome Teresa to SPRA and we hope many of you will drop by and introduce yourselves over the coming months.



Teaching in Northern Alberta Communities

By Campbell A. Ross

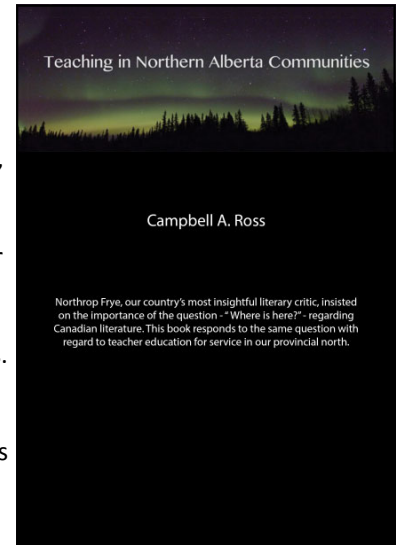
Campbell and Judy Ross were both very involved in the Grande Prairie historical scene before they moved to Edmonton a few years ago. Campbell has recently contacted us to announce that his book "Teaching in Northern Alberta Communities" is now finished and available for purchase.

Northrop Frye, our country's most insightful literary critic, insisted on the importance of the the question - "Where is here?" - regarding Canadian literature. This book responds to the same question with regard to teacher education for service in our provincial north.

In 1965 the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism declared that Canada was sleepwalking through the most serious crisis in French-English relations in its history. Today our country seems to be sleepwalking through the greatest challenge facing Canadian education in the new millennium - the crisis of northern schooling, especially our northern

Indigenous schooling. If we fail to respond, not only our northern children, but our whole country will pay a very high price for the future that is demographically rushing toward us. This account of the past and present conditions of schooling in one part of our 'forgotten north' provides an orientation aid for recruitment to meet that challenge.

School in northern Alberta has always been different from the rest of the province. Isolation and distance have always been more marked. Its winter experience is more prolonged and severe. It is the region of longest extended contact between its Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants, having been the Eldorado of the fur-trade from the late 17th to the 19th centuries. Its dark northern woods have made it possible for some meaningful version of an Indigenous system of production, in turn supporting traditional culture, to survive even into the 21st century. For many Metis, this was where the long retreat northwestwards from the Red River ended after a century. And here was the Last Great West, the last agricultural frontier in all of North America, the delayed frontier of the Euro-Canadian homesteaders, who worked to recreate a replica of the dominant ecumene to the south midst the constraints of the north.



Land and Homesteading. Above, prospective settlers lined up outside the Grande Prairie Dominion Lands Office at its opening, July 15, 1911 (SPRA 2001.1.19). Left, men camped outside the Dominion Lands Office at Grande Prairie, waiting to file on homestead land, ca. 1925. By this time, the Land Office was housed in the large, new Dominion Government building, which also served as the Government Telegraph Office and Post Office (SPRA 2002.54.40, photo cropped).

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.

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by Grace Wideman

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 in the Archives Library

A Sense of the Peace : Peace Country History and How Museums Tell Our Stories

Revised Edition by Roberta Hursey and the Spirit of the Peace Museums

**Available in the Grande
Prairie Museum Book Store
for \$20.00**



The Perfect Introduction

If you hear someone say: *My family has lived here for 40 years (100 years, forever) and I want to find out more about their lives here and before they came.*

You can tell them: *Why not attend the Family History Day the Archives is co-hosting with the Genealogical Society and the Library? I'm sure they'll be able to get you started and point you in the right direction to get the answers to your questions. You might even win a doorprize! It's on February 14 at the Grande Prairie Public Library.*

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 or Friends of South Peace Regional Archives. 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: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Interested in being involved as a: _____ volunteer _____ board member

There are two types of membership:

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

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

This membership is _____ new _____ renewal

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

Associate Member
\$15.00/person _____

I wish to donate to the
South Peace Regional Archives _____

Total Membership and Donation _____

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

THANK YOU FOR
SUPPORTING



PLEASE VISIT US AT

WWW.SOUTHPEACEARCHIVES.ORG

