

TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 13

SEPTEMBER 2022

Issue 4

JOIN THE CLUB

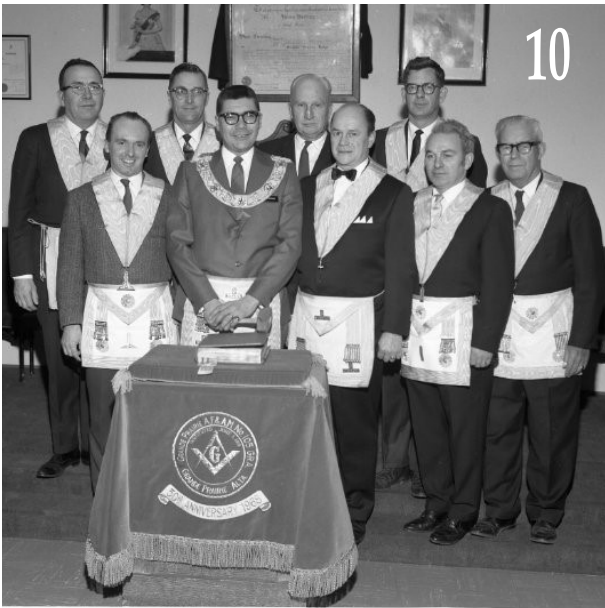
CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SOUTH PEACE



A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH PEACE REGIONAL ARCHIVES

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Cover: *La Glace Just-A-Mere-Ladies Club float entry in the parade, "Serving La Glace". The wagon is loaded with musicians in hayseed costumes. Ca. 1975 (SPRA 481.28)*

Note on Photographs: Photographs featured in *Telling Our Stories* are unedited, apart from minimal cropping. In cases where substantial cropping may impact the context of the photograph, this will be noted in the caption.

A Publication of the South Peace Regional Archives

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.

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Letter from the Editor

We have been hard at work in recent months preparing to move into our new home in Centre 2000. As we plan for the future, we also find ourselves thinking about our organization's past. Community groups, clubs, and organizations are a vital part of rural life, helping to build a sense of community, support, and responding to crises and challenges. It shows how essential clubs and organizations have been in the South Peace. You would be hard pressed to find an issue of *Telling Our Stories*, regardless of the topic covered, that doesn't mention at least one! But we felt that they deserved the spotlight this time, so "Join the Club" and learn about the history of clubs and organizations in this issue of *Telling Our Stories*.

In this issue, see how organizations impacted our landscape in "Building a Community." Learn the essential role clubs took in responding to hardship in "Aiding the Sick and Wounded" from our guest contributor Kaylee Dyck. Learn about the history of the Masons in "Secrets of the Lodge" and go behind the scenes of the South Peace Regional Archives in "Into the Vault." Finally, be sure to have some fun in "Working & Playing Together" and finish with Betty Welter's "Community Organizations."

I would like to thank all of our staff, volunteers, and guest contributors whose efforts made this issue of *Telling Our Stories* possible. I also want to take a moment to recognize that no club is complete without its members. So thank you to all of our readers for joining our club, and I hope you enjoy this issue of *Telling Our Stories*.

Ellyn Vandekerkhove
SPRA Executive Director

Take Note:

Folktales Tours

This Fall we will be partnering again with the Grande Prairie Museum, City of Grande Prairie, and the Senior's Reading Theatre to bring you Folktales Tours. These lantern tours will explore the history and lore of the Peace Country through tales of interwoven fact and fiction.

Friday October 14
Saturday October 15

Check out our website and follow us on Facebook for more details.

Cemetery Tours

Missed our cemetery tours? Take a self-guided one! Both tours from this summer will soon be available on our website at:

<https://southpeacearchives.org/publications/tours/>



Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that the South Peace Regional Archives is located on the ancestral and traditional lands of many Indigenous peoples. This territory is covered by Treaty 8, signed in 1899. The continuing relationship between Indigenous peoples and this land contributes to the rich knowledge and culture of the South Peace region.

We are grateful to serve the people on this land and honor the Calls for Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Welcome Jack

SPRA's New Archivist

We are looking forward to welcoming Jack Lawrence, our new archivist, to the SPRA staff in early September. Jack is moving down from Yellowknife to join our team.

Hello everybody, my name is Jack Lawrence. I grew up in Fort McMurray before moving to Edmonton to attend University and train to become a librarian. After graduating with a Master's in Library and Information Studies I instead began working in archives in different spots across Canada. Shifting gears to the archives nurtured an amateur interest in history into a passion as I learned about how modern archives approach collaborating with communities to preserve and share documentary history.

While I have learned some of how to conduct archival work through my degree, most of my learning about the profession has been through direct interaction with records, researchers, and community members. This includes working at the archives of Acadia University in Nova Scotia, where students and community researchers go to explore the history of the institution, the Annapolis Valley, and the Maritime Baptists. My most recent position was as the archivist for the Tłıchǫ Government in the Northwest Territories, who were interested in building a new archives for all Tłıchǫ citizens to access the documentary evidence of their history and way-of-life.

Working for the South Peace Regional Archives will

actually be my second time in the region. A few years back I was the records management intern for Saddle Hills County and as part of that position in the summer I lived north of Grande Prairie in the community of Spirit River. I am greatly looking forward to returning to the Peace Region to begin working as the new archivist at the South Peace Regional Archives and collaborate with community members, researchers, and everyone at the archives!



Building a Community

Numerous Grande Prairie facilities, some of which are still standing, were built through the efforts of local clubs and organizations. Members worked hard to raise funds for these buildings and sometimes provided volunteer labour to do the construction work themselves.

Golden Age Centre

One building that was constructed

through the efforts of a local club was the Golden Age Centre, which stands on a hillside overlooking Muskegsee Park. The Golden Age Club first met on January 6, 1959, and was open to anyone over the age of sixty. For the first fifteen years of the club's existence, they met in the basement of the Grande Prairie Public Library, then located at the corner of 99th Street and 100th Avenue. They gathered for games, crafts, films,

Below: Several seniors playing and watching chess at the Golden Age Club, ca. 1960 (SPRA 458.04.10)



and other entertainment for three afternoons a week. Eventually, they began to arrange activities for hospitalized individuals as well.

By 1974, they had outgrown their space in the library and were ready for a space of their own to accommodate their expanding membership and range of activities. The Golden Age Club partnered with the Grande Prairie Rotary Club, who assisted by providing both funding and volunteer labour to build a new dedicated facility at 101 Avenue and 103 Street. The building was expanded in 1984, once again through the combined efforts of the Golden Age Club and the Rotary Club. The Centre still offers activities such as cribbage tournaments and quilting bees for Grande Prairie's senior community. More information about the Golden Age Centre is available in SPRA fonds 669.

Elks Lodge

An article in the May 29, 1964 Daily Herald-Tribune printed the

following: "Detailed plans for the \$90,000 Elks Lodge to be built overlooking the city reservoir on 108 Avenue and 106 Street were announced this week by a Grande Prairie Elks Lodge official... The bungalow-type building, designed by Elk members Gordon Moon and Ray Innes, is planned with an eye-appealing low silhouette to blend in with other development around the reservoir." According to a February 6, 1991 Daily Herald-Tribune article commemorating the Elks' fiftieth anniversary in Grande Prairie, club members contributed between four and five thousand hours of volunteer labour to build the hall.



Above: Mayor Jim May, accompanied by members of the Elks and Royal Purple organizations, signs the proclamation for Speech & Hearing Month in May 1975 (SPRA 273.04.20)

The Elks have had a presence in Grande Prairie since 1940, and their partner organization for women, the Royal Purple, received its charter on January 29, 1948. Both organizations raised funds through activities such as rummage sales, bake sales, dinners, bingos, and auctions. Funds were donated to support the Grace Children's Home, Odyssey House, the Cancer Society, and other community services. In recent years, the Royal Purple have used their funds to purchase equipment for rural hospitals. More information about local Elks and Royal Purple organizations can be found in SPRA fonds 273, 333, and 442.

Grande Prairie Swimming Pool

Grande Prairie's first swimming pool opened in June of 1948. The Kinsmen Club of Grande Prairie had been raising funds for the pool since 1946. In addition to their financial support, they also provided volunteer labour. A June 24, 1948 Herald-Tribune article states that "practically every youngster from two to twenty in Grande Prairie stood poised at the edge of the Community Swimming Pool" on the day it opened. In addition, the Kinsmen raised funds for an arena, Bear Creek Park and Swimming Pool, and the Grande Prairie Recreational Complex.

The Kinsmen Club of Grande Prairie received their charter in 1942, and a Kinette Club for Kinsmen's wives was organized in 1957. The Kinsmen supported local initiatives such as minor hockey teams and the fire department. In addition, the Kinettes served Pioneer Lodge residents and raised funds to support cystic fibrosis and tuberculosis research and treatment. More information about local Kinsmen and Kinette groups can be found in SPRA fonds 139, 288, and 593.

Below: Grande Prairie's first swimming pool, on 99 Avenue and 101 Street, was built in 1948 by the Kinsmen Club. Ca. 1950 (SPRA 2005.71.5)



Aiding the Sick & Wounded

The Local Red Cross During the First World War

This guest article was contributed by Archives volunteer Kaylee Dyck.

The Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) is an organization that we are all familiar with, but few of us have any knowledge of how it began.

The Red Cross came into being in Europe in 1863, but it wasn't until a few decades later that it made an appearance in Canada. During the North-West Rebellion in 1885, medics flew homemade flags with red crosses on them to proclaim their neutrality as they tended to wounded soldiers on the battlefield. This is the first known instance of a red cross being used on Canadian soil to identify medical personnel. In 1896, what is considered to be the first Canadian Red Cross was formed, with the rather lengthy title "British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War - Canadian Branch." The organization's formation was timely, as the Empire went to war in South Africa three years later. Donations were collected, and valuable medical supplies and food for wounded soldiers were sent overseas. After the Boer War, the organization nearly ceased to exist, except for the work of some passionate supporters who petitioned the federal government to incorporate them. In 1909, they became an established auxiliary to the government's military medical services in wartime. It was at this time that the name changed to the Canadian Red

Cross Society.

A few more quiet years passed, holding little work for the Red Cross, but when war broke out in 1914, it was a turning point for the CRCS. Financial donations poured in, and auxiliaries popped up across the nation. A front-page announcement in the Grande Prairie Herald on November 7, 1916, declared the formation of Grande Prairie's very own Red Cross auxiliary. The group grew from eight members at the beginning of November to twenty-two a month later. The women did everything from host teas and dances to packing food parcels and sewing bandages. Within the auxiliary's first two months, four large parcels had been sent overseas, likely to London, where the CRCS had a headquarters from which they oversaw the work that took place in Britain and France. Altogether, these parcels included the following:



Right: Medical supply dispensary at a military hospital in Greece during World War I, ca. 1915. (SPRA 2018.004.118)

Right: A page of meeting minutes from the Glen Leslie [Agnes Forbes] Auxiliary, September 26, 1916. The following excerpt is from the minutes: "Moved by Mrs. Colby 2nd by Mrs. Keyes that we send a box of chocolate and a letter to each soldier boy from here. Carried." (SPRA 1996.48.1)

24 suits of pyjamas

6 surgical shirts

12 bed jackets

8 pairs of operation stockings

14 packages of personal property bags

18 packages of many tailed bandages

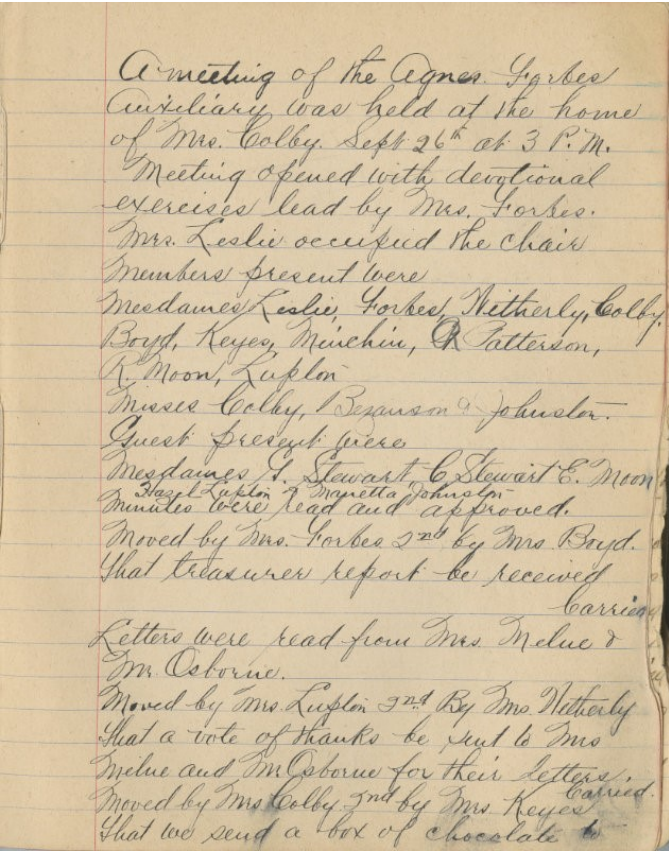
18 packages of bandages

12 service shirts

24 towels

Keep in mind that this was only the first of many shipments sent out from Grande Prairie - a village with a population of less than 1,000. And in addition to the creation of the items mentioned above, money was also raised and donated to the Red Cross for the purchase of desperately-needed medical supplies. In its first year, the Grande Prairie auxiliary raised \$1,154.45. After the war, funds donated to the Red Cross were also used to support the cause of civilian refugees in Europe.

Even in communities where no official Red Cross auxiliary was formed, women still gathered together to support the war effort. The Glen Leslie Auxiliary (later renamed the Agnes Forbes Auxiliary; see SPRA fonds 026) was formed by the ladies of the Glen Leslie church in April of 1916. Their monthly meetings consisted of devotional exercises, readings, and music, as well as work such as quilting, knitting, and cleaning. They poured their energy into serving both the local community and those far from home. At a meeting on September 26, 1916, the ladies carried a motion to



"send a box of chocolates and a letter to each soldier boy from here." How those parcels must have brightened the spirits of the men in the trenches! It was also moved that ten yards of flannelette and a dozen spools of thread be ordered from Eaton's for Red Cross work.

So whether officially affiliated with the Canadian Red Cross Society or not, the women of the South Peace did not shrink back from the opportunity to offer comfort and aid to those overseas. Not only did wives, mothers, daughters, and sweethearts step up to take on the responsibilities of the men who'd gone to fight, but they also banded together and volunteered tirelessly for causes like the Red Cross, with the hope that things would soon change for the better.

Secrets of the Lodge

Freemasonry in the South Peace

This article was contributed by Patrick Macaulay. This summer, Patrick worked as an Archives Assistant (Student) at the South Peace Regional Archives.

Under the cover of nighttime shadows, cloaked men silently shuffle into their temple. One stays outside—he keeps watch to ensure strangers are denied access. Of course, the proceedings of this meeting must be kept absolutely secret. After a series of bizarre, esoteric rituals, the men inside get to the business at hand—world domination.

At least, this is the scene some people imagine when they hear the word “Freemasonry.” For centuries, Masons have been the target of conspiracy theories alleging that they covertly influence politics and culture at the highest levels. Such theories were treated as fact by states such as Francoist Spain and Nazi Germany, where Masons were violently persecuted.

By all appearances, though, the activities of the Peace Country's Freemasons are a little more small-scale. "The whole idea of Masonry is meeting peacefully and getting

Right: An Installation Ceremony of the Grande Prairie Lodge, wherein certain members of the Lodge were appointed as officers, occupying distinct positions within the Masonic hierarchy, 1971 (SPRA 190.02.01.0393.01)



together for fellowship," Grande Prairie Mason Richard Ashby told the Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune. Freemasonry isn't a secret society, claimed Ashby; it's simply "a society with secrets."

The first Masonic lodges of the South Peace were formed in January 1918. In 1917, Masonic settlers in Grande Prairie and Lake Saskatoon discussed forming lodges, and requests were sent to Alberta's Grand Lodge for approval. Both requests were granted. The organization fulfilled a social role in new, small communities like these, providing a way for neighbours to meet each other and an economic role, as local business leaders were often Masons and could use the meetings to make connections.

Right: Sid Ross, a member of the Grande Prairie Lodge, poses in Masonic regalia, 1968 (SPRA 190.02.01.0245.01)

Over the years, the Grande Prairie lodge took on several community-minded initiatives, such as giving cancer patients transportation to the hospital, offering education bursaries, and participating in local parades. Masonic life more often turned inward, though, the club's focus being more so on self-improvement and camaraderie rather than community service.

"Human life is not such a simple affair that man can live it alone," reads a press release for the 75th anniversary of the Grande Prairie and Lake Saskatoon lodges. "All men need assistance; hence Freemasonry seeks to offer mutual aid and support." The release also described Masonry as "quietly aiding in the moral advancement of mankind" and claimed that Freemasonry's "moral philosophy" was its most enduring quality. "It's a way of life, a way of conducting myself," said Ashby. "It's made me a better person, no question."

Still, local Masons have understood their society's mixed reputation and have sought to dispel myths surrounding the practice. One complaint historically levelled against Freemasonry has been that it seeks to replace and undermine Christian belief. Pope Leo XIII identified a "Masonic programme" in Italy which sought to remove the church from civil life and education. The New Catholic Encyclopedia states, "Freemasonry displays all the elements of religion, and as such, it becomes a rival to the religion of the Gospel." Local Freemasons have emphatically denied this accusation. "FREEMASONRY IS NOT; HAS NEVER BEEN; AND NEVER WILL BE; A RELIGION," the 75th-anniversary press release states in capital letters. "On



the contrary," it goes on, "Freemasonry has always been a friend and supporter of religion."

In fact, the "Daughters of Job," a society composed of teenage daughters of Master Masons, was explicitly religious. A program for a gathering of the Grande Prairie chapter (formed in 1960) explained, "The purpose of this order is to band together these girls for character building through moral and spiritual development, by teaching a greater reverence for God and the Holy Scriptures, Loyalty to our Flag and the Country for which it stands, and a deeper respect for parents and adults."

So, perhaps Masons don't really want to destroy the Catholic Church or create a New World Order. Instead, at least in Grande Prairie, their scope of operations seems more oriented towards hosting occasional pancake breakfasts.

Olwen's Own Words:

Club Picnics

In 1933, Olwen Sanger-Davies travelled from East Sussex, England to the Peace Country to visit her younger brother, Morgan. Olwen documented her visit in two personal scrapbooks, containing approximately 500 drawings and paintings. “Olwen’s Own Words” features excerpts and illustrations from these scrapbooks.

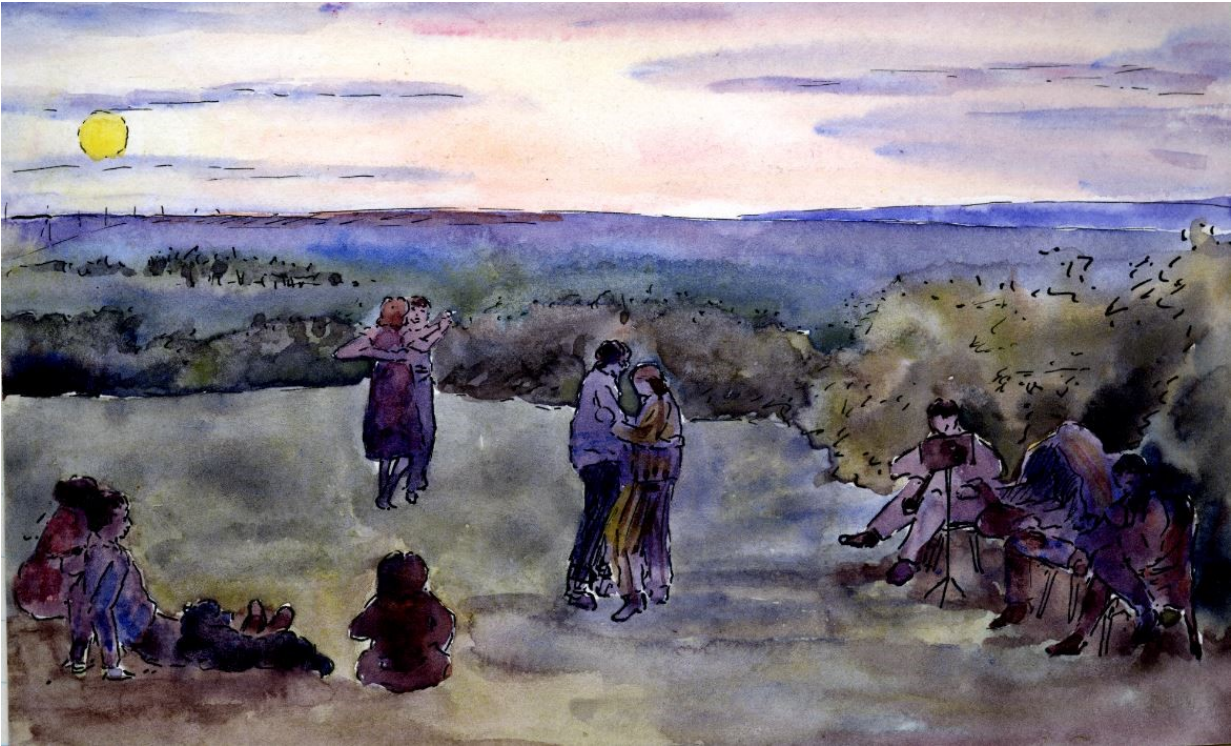
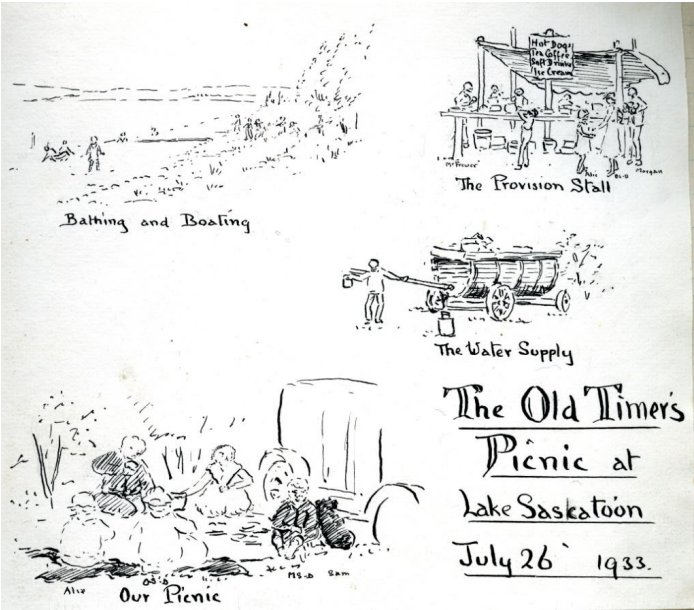
Wednesday, July 26th

The Old Timers’ Picnic at Saskatoon Lake drew most people for miles round; we took Mr. and Mrs. Paul and Alice and met Mr. and Mrs. Frewer there.

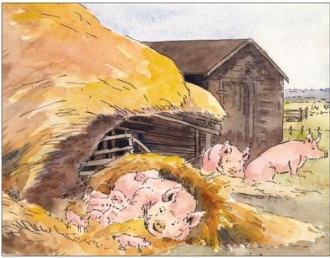
Sports, bathing, games, dancing, and meeting old friends occupied the time. “They used to keep it up for a week,” Tom Paul said. Serjeant Purdy, head of the three local mounted police was on duty; he was a vestryman at the Anglican Church and a S.S. teacher.

Friday, August 4th

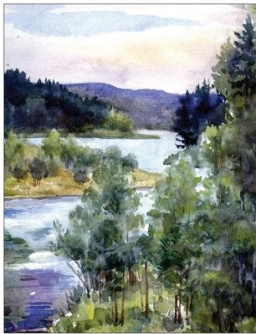
The A.Y.P.A. (Anglican Young People’s Association) came to supper bringing their own provisions; there were plenty of strawberries for them, and it was a lovely night. After bathing in Morgan’s pool they danced on the lawn and then sat round, had community singing, and slew mosquitoes.



Available Now! **\$10.00** Price Includes GST
 Olwen’s Card Collection Curbside pick-up available



This beautiful collection of blank notecards features six of Olwen's watercolour paintings. Each set includes 6 cards (5½ x 4¼ inches) and white envelopes.



Into the Vault

Creating a Regional Archives

This article was contributed by Taci Trudeau. This summer, Taci worked as an Archives Assistant (Student) at the South Peace Regional Archives.

When writing and researching about organizations that shaped our community, it's easy for us to overlook our own development as the South Peace Regional Archives! Therefore, this article will focus on the creation of our organization and how we operate now. In the 1990s, two separate studies identified the need for an archives in the Peace Region. As a result of this study, the Grande Prairie Regional Archives was established in January of 2000 and was the first regional archives to be opened in Alberta. In 2001 the Grande Prairie Archives was renamed the South Peace Regional Archives (SPRA) to more appropriately reflect the larger geographical area the Archives currently represents. In 2007, the Museum and Archives became two separate organizations.

Soon after, the South Peace Regional Archives Society was formed to oversee the Archives, with a board made up of elected members and representatives from our four funding partners: the City of Grande Prairie, the County of Grande Prairie, the MD of Greenview and the MD of Spirit River.

Right: The South Peace Regional Archives' founding executive director, Mary Nutting, holding a reproduction of a handwritten ca. 1950 yearbook from the Phyllis Stewart fonds. Photograph courtesy of Fran Rodgers Photography, 2018.



When the Archives was founded, it was a branch of the museum, and our founder, Mary Nutting, worked on the establishment one day a week. While the other museum collections staff helped her when they could, Mary quickly realized she needed more help and brought on different volunteers to work tirelessly on the Archives alongside her. This meant that not only was Mary simultaneously the Archives' first archivist and executive director, but that the Archives was essentially a volunteer-run organization. Years after the initial establishment, the Archives was able to hire more staff to help with the immense work ahead of them. By 2009, the Archives had hired their first trained archivist. In just a few years, the Archives had grown from the work of a few tireless volunteers into a thriving professional archives recognized throughout the archival community for our work.

Right: Digitizing issues of the 1918 Clairmont Independent. 2015.

Many volunteers played significant roles in establishing the archives, including Isabel Campbell, Beth Sheehan, and David Leonard. All three were local historians who contributed through donations of personal historical collections and expansive knowledge of the South Peace Region. Isabel Campbell spent many years forming her own personal inventory of local newspapers; David Leonard used his knowledge of the Peace region to write the first of several histories of the Peace country, a book titled *Lure of the Peace* written in 1992; and Beth Sheehan, who provided one of the first large donations to the archives thanks to her personal collection and numerous interview transcripts and notes on the region.

Today, our goal is to process and preserve historical records that have been donated to increase the lifespan of such documents and provide guidance to other organizations and the public on preservation tactics. Our organization provides reference services and public access to the records in the Archives' collections through the public reading room and website. Many people and groups seek research assistance from the archives, such as individual researchers, authors, or even organizations such as schools and museums! The Archives also enjoys providing outreach events and services such as our quarterly magazine, guided tours, and archival displays shared throughout the community. The Indigenous History Committee also supports Reconciliation work and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Currently, the South Peace Regional Archives is the



only public access archives serving the peace region. Since our establishment, the Archives has grown significantly and is well recognized throughout the Archival community. Our holdings comprise more than 250 linear metres of records, which includes 70,000 photographs, 350 sound recordings, and 600 maps and blueprints. Due to the scale of the current holdings, the Archives is preparing for the exciting and rapidly approaching move to Centre 2000 in 2023! It is so incredibly moving to think that this organization, once run by one woman, only a single day a week, has become a full-fledged society of like-minded volunteers, staff, and members working tirelessly to preserve and share valuable historical knowledge. With the move soon approaching to a much larger space, the South Peace Regional Archives is transitioning into its next stage of growth, with dedicated spaces for preservation, supporting researchers, and conducting public programming. It has been a beautiful and exciting journey that we at the archives have taken. It is merely the beginning, but we could not have gone as far as we have without our members' and volunteers' support and generosity!

Banding Together

Community organizations in the South Peace engaged in a wide variety of activities, sometimes to play and sometimes to work. These photographs show an assortment of the activities they participated in.



Above: Mrs. L. B. Yule, first Grande Prairie Women's Institute secretary, photographed with two children who underwent corrective surgery in 1925. The surgery was sponsored by the Women's Institute. (SPRA 152.02.02.50)



Top left: Doug and Barry Williamson on a Valleyview or Sturgeon Lake Boy Scouts camping trip in the early 1950s (SPRA 175.104.04)



Top right: I.O.D.E. member, Ann Watson, with Meals on Wheels, 1981 (SPRA 111.04.110)



Above: Kinettes busily setting up a fund raiser flea market, 1971 (SPRA 288.03.44)



Top left: Kinettes stuff envelopes for the T.B. Christmas Seal Campaign. Clockwise L-R Gail O'Connor, Carol Bacon, Gail Frey, Dianne Wold, Carol Edgar, Marilyn Montpetit, Pat Kirton, Betty Fulton. 1976 (SPRA 288.03.74)

Bottom left: The "Honeybees" figure out how to cool their feet and get across water without getting shoes and clothes wet, 1962. (SPRA 435.01.18-3)



Left: Depositing scrap iron for the war effort into a rail car on June 10, 1943 are Kinsmen Bert Bessent, Gordon Orr (standing at back left) and in front Johnny Littleton, ?, ?, Johnny Shields, Frank Rothwell and possibly Bob Davies and Henry Pain. (SPRA 1969.60.975)

Working & Playing Together

Children's Organizations in Grande Prairie

Based on the quantity of records about children's organizations in the archives, it appears that the South Peace's younger population was just as involved in community organizations as their parents. The SPRA holds records from several organizations, including the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) and the 5th Trumpeter Swan Troop Boy Scouts, giving us a glimpse into their activities. However, family records such as the Carlisle family fonds (fonds 399) and the Marion Hill fonds (fonds 341) also include information and photographs documenting children's involvement in club activities.

Canadian Girls in Training

According to a Herald-Tribune article dated May 11, 1995, the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) have had a presence in Grande Prairie since 1924. The organization is associated with the United Church of Canada and offers religious education for girls at weekly meetings, as well as music, games, and drama. CGIT members also participated in special events such as camping trips to Lake Saskatoon and Sturgeon Lake, province- and nationwide conferences, mother-daughter banquets, and a Christmas vespers service.

Former leader Rosemond "Honey" Wilson donated five notebooks of CGIT meeting minutes and a large scrapbook filled with

Right: The "Honeybees" CGIT group stick to the pier in their bathing suits, 1965 (SPRA 435.01.57-01)

photographs, newspaper articles, programmes, and correspondence from Rosemond's time as a leader from 1960 to 1966. Excerpts from the October 14, 1964 minutes tell us more about the girls' activities:

"For the Rally the C.G.I.T. has hired the Civil Defense Bus for only twenty dollars for the trip to Peace River. Rally forms were handed in and all uncompleted forms were to be brought to the secretary by Friday. Lenore and Wendy said they'd ask their mothers to accompany us to the rally."

"For candy sale next week we are to wear slacks and bring dessert for 8 for the potluck supper... Margaret Edgson's and Karen's parents volunteered their cars for candy sale. Mrs. Wilson gave us our area that we are to cover."

"Lenore gave the 'Balloon Relay' for Recreation. Mrs. Wilson asked for old broomsticks or shovel handles for a suggested relay for the rally."



Grande Prairie Boy Scouts

A newspaper article dated December 22, 1993, states that the 1st Grande Prairie Scouts "were first granted their charter over 75 years ago," or around 1918. The Carlisle family fonds includes several photographs of the Scout Camp at the Wapiti River, showing the Scouts' meal preparations, inspections, and hikes during their excursion. Wayne Feil (fonds 681) was also an active Scouts member in the 1950s and donated several of his handbooks and record books.

In 1959, Grande Prairie's five Boy Scout troops banded together to develop a "combined public park and area for Scout activities in the south Bear Creek Valley" (Herald-Tribune, July 10, 1959). The site included areas for public picnics, a field for Scouts projects like bridge and tower building, and a log building for a meeting space. The Scouts provided much of the labour and organized events such as bottle drives and ice stampedes to raise funds for the project.

Right: Brownie Pack #4 (and a couple of boys) doing pruning and hoeing, 1959 (SPRA 032.08.08.0528)



Left: Grande Prairie Boy Scouts. Back Row L-R: George Bentley, Marvin Aiken, David Spittal, Lynn Wilson, Jack McFetridge, Herb Shields. 3rd Row: L-R: Jim C., John Bishop, Ken Leslie, Billy Minchin, Jack Swanston, Roy Harper 2nd Row L-R: Kev. Jones, Ray Mitchell, ?, Bill & Bob Bessent, Gordon Percy, Weldon Oliver Front: L-R: Bobby Knight, Dean Toews, Don Swanston, Sam Lowe, Ivan Ford, Mr. Freebury. Ca. 1939 (SPRA 399.11.02)

Grande Prairie Girl Guides

According to *I Promise... A History of Girl Guides in Alberta*, the guiding movement in Grande Prairie began in 1953. Local newspapers reported on a wide range of Girl Guide activities, such as bake sales, fashion shows, and camping trips. The photograph below, part of the Isabel Campbell fonds (fonds 032), originally featured in the July 24, 1959, Herald-Tribune with the following caption:

"Although Brownies, according to Scottish folklore, are a race of benevolent little people who help families with household tasks... during the night, the Grande Prairie variety are more civic-minded and do their good works in the daytime... They were discovered in the midst of their good deeds for the neighborhood, hard at work clearing off a forest of weeds in a small triangular park on the boulevard."

Community Organizations

A Brief History by Betty Welter

The following article is part of Elizabeth “Betty” Welter’s writing portfolio (Fonds 129.04) and was her submission to the Clem & Muriel Collins Millennium Contest. It was transcribed by SPRA volunteer Suzanne Dunn in August of 2020.

Grande Prairie has always been noted for its volunteering for almost any cause. The hours given by dozens of organizations for fund raising, work bees, and numerous projects is certainly commendable. The Women’s Institute (a branch of the Alberta Women’s Institute and affiliated with Associated Countrywomen of the World) has functioned here continuously since 1924 and done untold community ‘good works’. They started the public library with less than 500 books, mostly second hand, in a small bookcase situated in the old town hall (then south of the present Bank of Montreal). This library was open two nights a week manned by volunteers. As the need grew more books were added and library hours increased. This tiny library was eventually taken over by the town and it continued to grow and was moved several times. In June 1999 all of our current Women’s Institute members were present to help celebrate the 60th anniversary of this library which now houses over 90,000 books and records in a large split level building.

The Women’s Institute also started and manned a small residence in the early 1930s where expectant mothers could live and wait to go to the hospital to deliver their baby. Over 300 women used its facilities during a ten year period. Remember there were no

bridges across the Smokey or Wapiti Rivers at that time and as the ice was coming in or going out transportation was cancelled. A small cage could be pulled across the ferry cable in extreme emergencies to cross the river. This could be a frightening experience for a woman in labour and the residence in Grande Prairie proved very popular especially in the spring and fall.

The Women’s Institute also started the first well baby clinic here manned by volunteer registered nurses. These early clinics provided a much needed service during those years as the only other means mothers had of checking their infant’s weight was in their friendly grocery store using the scoop scale on the counter through the kindness of the store owner.

The Kinsmen and later Kinettes also provided many years of service to our area. The Kinsmen Radio auction was started before the war, proceeds then provided milk for needy children in Britain. Merchants donated items to be auctioned off over our very new CFGP radio station. Our then Mayor Tooley was challenged to sing a song to be matched by any other businessman on main street plus bids and donations, of course. My Mother wrote a poem titled “Our Mayor Takes the Air” about this challenge which was printed in our local paper and created a great deal of interest and fun in our small community. The Kinsmen were also responsible for spearheading the building of the Memorial Arena, later installing the first artificial ice plant, the curling rink, and the first outdoor swimming pool to name a few early projects...

The Elks and Royal Purple, also the Legion and Ladies Auxiliary are all great volunteer organizations who have earned and donated thousands of dollars to our community for dozens of different projects. Another very busy and productive ladies [sic] group were the IODE. They made and raffled dozens of beautiful hand quilted quilts and used the proceeds for different projects. Many church groups provided untold assistance to our area right from 1939 to the present time – apart from their traditional clerical role. They provided facilities for many different community activities such as music festivals, school concerts, music recitals, lectures, travelogues by their members, Scout and Guide groups to name but a few.

The Red Cross is another very active and valuable group in our area. Currently they house a large loan cupboard, in our local office, to meet patient needs – wheel chairs, crutches, beds, commode chairs, walkers and so on. Many volunteers help here as well on many projects. Disaster assistance has always been one of their main activities wherever the need may be. The first ever mobile two day blood donor clinic in our area was held in 1945 with numerous volunteer organizations assisting with registration, traffic flow, rest beds, lunch and wherever needed. These clinics continued two or three times a year until about 1978 when the blood processing was changed in Edmonton and blood was needed more quickly in the lab. Our distance from Edmonton was the problem here. There were no mobile clinics for several years – now we have about four a year since the early 1990s. An interesting and rather unique example of corporate community support in the early years was the use of smaller planes courtesy of Proctor and Gamble and Canfor to help transport crates of blood to the lab in

Right: Members gathered at a banquet to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Grande Prairie Women’s Institute in 1969. (SPRA 152.02.02.32)

Edmonton.

The Musical Festival has functioned here since the early 1930s with the exception of a few war years. I participated in an elocution class for 10 and under in about 1934 – my poem was “Little Brook”. In the intervening years this festival has grown to presently run over two weeks with at least eight adjudicators being hired for dozens of different categories.

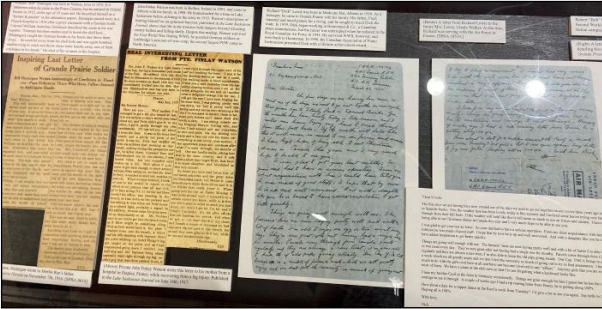
A number of interested citizens met for several years trying to get the United Way started here. Many of us were regular canvassers for numerous fund raising groups. There were appeals almost monthly, for example February was Heart Month, April Cancer, May Red Shield. Because of our persistence and perseverance, a branch of the United Way was started here twenty years ago and seventeen different groups were assisted in 1999 I believe. This still requires a lot of volunteer labor but also saves hours of house to house canvassing.

I have only talked about a few of the many organizations whom could not have existed in this time period without the active and committed participation of many volunteers. Each of these organizations has contributed in their own unique way to the growth of our area and the quality of life of our population.



New at the Archives

An update from Patrick: Over the past couple months, I’ve given a number of tours of the Grande Prairie Cemetery based on the theme “Crime and Punishment in the South Peace,” which has been a lot of fun. If you missed them, you can check out self-guided versions of my and Taci’s tours on the SPRA website! I’ve also been preparing a display for the Grande Prairie Museum showcasing letters sent back to the South Peace from local soldiers in World War I and II. By the time you read this, it’ll be ready—it’s just on your left after entering the museum gallery!



An update from Taci: This summer has been full of learning and new experiences for me at the archives! I have worked at great length on the cemetery tour that I presented throughout the summer, “Wonderful Women of the South Peace.” I had so much fun researching and presenting the tour, and would like to send out a massive thank you to everyone who joined my tours! In the last few months I have had the opportunity to handle a number of interesting maps through my processing project, which I spent many of my days organizing and entering into our database. My project is finished now, and I hope that anyone who wants to learn more about our region can use these maps to gain new knowledge and further their research!

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