

TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 1, Issue 1, December 1, 2009

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The story of Valleyview and District is told in a pictorial display at the Valleyview Public Library. Above, in a photograph from that display, "Norm Ramstad and Beth Brown outside of Margo's Cafe ca. 1950."

See "Journey to the Millennium", p. 16

Would you like to receive this newsletter four times a year?

It's free when you are a member of the South Peace Regional Archives Society. See the Membership Form on the back of the newsletter.

Renew Your Membership in SPRA

Current members, don't forget to renew your membership for 2010. We need you to be our voice in your community. All members will receive this newsletter four times per year. Membership rates and form on back.

Who Do You Think You Are?

Along with the Grande Prairie Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society, SPRA is offering assistance in genealogical research on Family Day, Monday, February 15th, in the Community Room at the GP Museum. Come explore your roots.

December 1, 2009

Dear Members & Supporters;

This is the first issue of "Telling Our Stories", a quarterly newsletter published by South Peace Regional Archives.

Our goal in creating this publication is to encourage the sharing of the interesting stories in the history of the south Peace. We want to share articles that have already been submitted to the Archives, such as Mathew Wozniak's story about how Eaglesham got its golf course; and articles submitted to the Archives when we are working on a specific collection, such as Janet Ophus' story, "Remembering the Spencer Block."

We hope you too will share your stories or articles/letters/memories in response to what you see in the pages of this newsletter. Erin Moure's poem and photograph is an example. Erin and her brother Bill visited the Archives last summer. Although she now lives in Montreal, Erin's memories about her grandmother's house still connect her to Grande Prairie.

One of my own on-going projects is collecting and drawing maps of the disappearing communities in the south Peace. While the histories of these communities are well-documented in our Community History Books, often there are no maps showing where the various buildings were located. Using maps from Alberta Registries and the history books, I am trying to create maps of each area. In this edition I have included the map for the Burnt River Valley between Rycroft and Sexsmith. Please share your knowledge of the areas we feature if we have made errors.

Another goal for this newsletter is to showcase the work we do and the collections that we have at the archives. Hence the articles about Charles Spencer and the photographs from the "Journey to the Millenium" collection.

We sincerely hope that south Peace residents will make this their newsletter. We look forward to your submissions.

Sincerely,
Mary Nutting, Archivist
South Peace Regional Archives

TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY

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South Peace Regional Archives has a mandate to receive and store inactive records in any format which have enduring value to the south Peace River Country of Alberta.

Finding the Elusive Charles Spencer

When Archives staff began to process the Charles Spencer collection, the first task was to write a biographical sketch. There was plenty of information regarding his life in Canada; in fact, as Bill Scott of the Daily Herald Tribune noted, he could be labelled a Renaissance Man. He was the architect of many of our early public buildings, served on numerous civic boards, loved good books and classical music, and bequeathed his estate to benefit our public library.

But about his life before he came to Canada, there was very little information. He appeared to be educated and wealthy; and he had emigrated from Northamptonshire, where the Spencer family has a large estate, and where Princess Diana Spencer is buried. Could he possibly be connected to that Spencer family? Who was this man?

From Mr. Spencer's own papers we knew he had owned a building company in Southampton. Genealogist Bill Lappenbush was able to trace Charles back to 1871, but there were several inconsistencies. Judy Bradley, president of the Grande Prairie Genealogical Society, sent the request on to Angela White in Dorset, England who specializes in Spencer family genealogy. It wasn't long before we had the story, with a surprising twist—Charles Spencer wasn't correctly Charles Spencer at all!

Charles Spencer SHATFORD was born on April 4, 1867 at Highgate, Kendal, Westmorland. His mother was Sarah SPENCER and his father was Charles SHATFORD. He had an older sister named Elizabeth. By 1871 they had moved to Liverpool, where the youngest child, Sarah Louise was born. This was not a wealthy family—they were sharing a home with two other families. It was here that Charles' mother contracted tuberculosis. She died in Irchester, Northamptonshire in 1873, when Charles was only 6 years old. One year later, four year old Sarah Louise also died.

It was about this time that the family moved south, perhaps because the air there was less pol-

luted by industry. "From now on", Angela White writes, "the names of SPENCER and SHATFORD become interchangeable.... The reason remains a bit of a mystery. Perhaps it was a way of honouring and remembering Sarah, the wife and mother who died aged just 35 years."

The 1881 census shows the family as SPENCERS. Charles is living with his father and sister in South Stoneham, Hampshire, and, at 13 years of age, is a "scholar"—he is still in school. He becomes a house builder and by the late 1890s, is employing others. By the time he reached Grande Prairie in 1910, he had gathered enough experience to work as an architect and had amassed enough wealth to become a partner in the Argonaut Company.

The connection between SHATFORD and SPENCER was at first just a theory. "The document that confirmed [Angela's] suspicions was the will of Charles' father, Charles SHATFORD: 'This is the will and testament of me Charles Shatford otherwise Charles Shatford Spencer otherwise Charles Spencer...' 'I devise and bequeath all my estate and effects both real and personal of whatsoever nature and whatsoever situate unto and equally between my son Charles Shatford otherwise Charles Spencer and my said daughter Elizabeth Ann Glasspool...'

No, Charles Spencer was not one of "the" Spencers of Northamptonshire. Neither was he born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was motherless by the time he was six, and although his father appeared to have been educated and hard-working, they were not a wealthy family. It was through his own efforts that Charles Spencer became what he was—the Renaissance Man of Grande Prairie.

Thanks to the GP Genealogists, we found the real Charles Spencer. If you are interested in finding your own family roots, you can visit the "Genies" at the library on Wednesday evenings, or come to our Family Day event "Who Do You Think You Are?" on February 15th, at the Grande Prairie Museum.

The Charles Spencer fonds

Charles Spencer fonds. -- 1896-[1950]. -- 1 m of textual records; and 5 photographs

Biographical Sketch

Charles Spencer was born Charles Spencer Shatford in Kendal, Westmorland, England in 1869. His parents were Sarah Spencer and Charles Shatford.

The 1901 census shows Charles in Southampton, where he boarded on Pear Tree Green and worked as a "builder and joiner". Four years later, at the age of 37, he emigrated to Canada. His first residence was in Moose Jaw, where he filed on a homestead, but by 1909 he was living in Edmonton. There he became a partner in the Argonaut Company, and after they established the townsite of Grande Prairie City in 1910, he became a permanent resident here.

The Argonaut Co. Ltd., composed of a group of Edmonton businessmen, was established in 1909 at the encouragement of W.A. Rae. In 1908, Rae had made a trip to the grande prairie with his wife and son, and was impressed with the agricultural and commercial potential of the area. He sold the idea of developing a townsite on Bear Creek. The group opened their headquarters on Jasper Avenue in Edmonton, and in 1909 purchased 80 acres of land along the CNR Railway Survey. They named the townsite "Grande Prairie City" and soon a banner proclaiming the new townsite draped their office on Jasper Avenue.

As a partner in the Argonauts, Mr. Spencer was one of Grande Prairie's first real estate agents. He bought and sold land, and rented out a series of "cottages" as well as an office block. He also formed a partnership with Neil Campbell, another Argonaut, and once again was in the building trade. Spencer & Campbell secured many of the early bids: the fire hall in 1915 (never built); the first small school (1915); Montrose School in 1917 which he designed and supervised for no pay; in 1919 the new Spencer Block, a complex of offices and suites; and in 1920, the Grande Prairie Hotel. When the building business slowed during the 30's, he traveled around the south Peace building stockyards and loading platforms for the Grande Prairie Cooperative Livestock Association.

It was out of the Spencer Block that Mr. Spencer operated "Prairie City Agency" which sold all lines of fire insurance. In 1936, Miss Ann Philips Roberts, a new graduate of the Grande Prairie Business College, was in charge. An earlier business was the Grande Prairie Electric Light Co. which he encouraged the ratepayers of the town to establish in 1917. They formed a company and sold shares, providing electrical service to the town until Canadian Utilities took over the franchise in 1929.

Besides being a partner in the Argonaut Company and a builder, Charles pursued a number of other interests. As early as 1917, he opened a lending library in the Donald Hotel, cooperating with the Extension Department at the University of Alberta to provide the best possible reading material. Although this library was not in operation long, Spencer continued to promote the need for a public library and was instrumental in forming the first Library Board. He also continued to build his own collection, which was reputed to be one of the most complete in the north. In 1952 he donated his own private collection of 2500 books to the library. They were personally catalogued by the Supervisor of Public Libraries for all of Alberta, who stated that some of the books were of a quality that universities would be proud to have. Another of his interests was music, and in 1938 he offered a shield for the Brass Band Competition at the Music Festival.

The list of public offices he held included organizer of the Board of Trade, member of the Hospital Board, chairman and/or Secretary-Treasurer of the Grande Prairie School District 2357 in 1916, Justice of the Peace in 1920, and Commissioner of the Juvenile Court in 1930. In 1934, when he was re-elected to Town Council, he had already served several terms. It was in this capacity that he preserved the Town files which are part of the Charles Spencer fonds, in effect starting one of the first Archival collections.

Not content to stay and do what he could inside the Peace Country, Charles also made trips outside to promote an outlet to the Peace in Vancouver and Seattle. He also spent some months in England visiting family, but he always returned to the Peace Country. "It does a man good to get away for a while, for the reason that one is then more satisfied with the Peace River..." he commented in 1937.

Mr. Spencer remained in the Peace Country until he died on February 18, 1952, at the Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital after a lengthy illness. As a mark of respect, all stores in the town closed for his funeral. He was buried in the Grande Prairie Cemetery.

The Spencer Block was purchased by the Army and Navy Department Store out of Edmonton, and the building razed. In 1955, a modern new store, Macleods was built on the site. It still exists there today.

Scope and content

The fonds consists of various textual records related to Charles Spencer's personal, business and commercial interests. The contents of the fonds deal primarily with his life and interests after moving to Grande Prairie in 1910, although the material dates from 1886 to 1941. Records include correspondence, notebooks, daily journals, receipts, contracts and agreements, sales and account books, share certificates, photographs and postcards, and the blueprints of the first Montrose School.

Custodial history

The records were donated to the Grande Prairie Public Library with Mr. Spencer's book collection in 1952. In 2008, GPPL passed them on to South Peace Regional Archives.



1934 Town Council with Mayor P.J. Tooley second from left in front row, and Alderman Charles Spencer second from left in back row.

Remembering the “SPENCER BLOCK”

by Janet Bellamy Ophus

In September 1945 I was 15 years of age, and moved to Grande Prairie to complete my schooling grade 9-12. Most country schools did not teach past grade 8. It was during this time I made life-long friends of Lorraine and Joyce Partlow. Joyce has been gone for several years, but Lorraine Partlow Church and I still reminisce about our years residing in the Spencer Block.

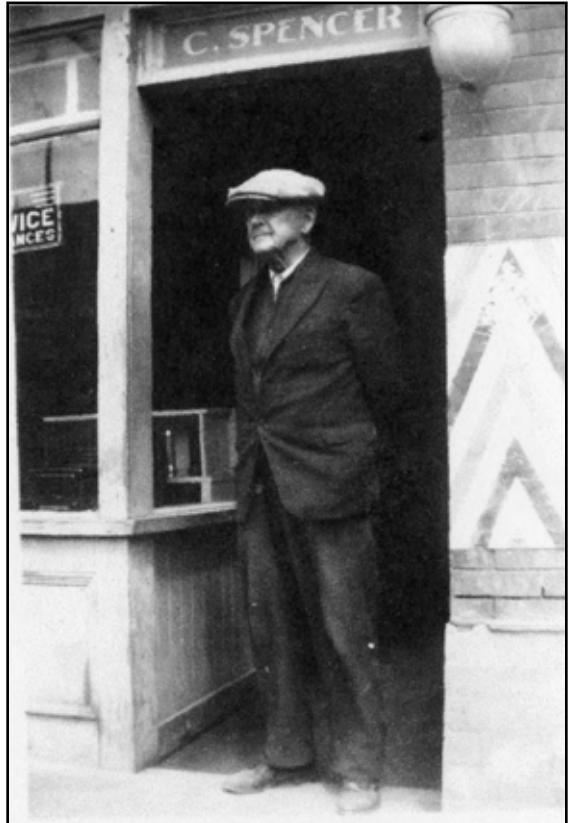
The ‘block’ was located approximately where Midwest Downtown sits today. It was a very plain sort of split level building. My mother would describe it as comparable to the catacombs of Rome. If memory serves correctly, there were 10-12 suites.

It was affordable. My one room was \$10 a month, and the Partlow’s \$25. They had 2 rooms and a cook stove. Wood burning. With an oven. My dad supplied me with a flat topped small heater type stove. Also wood burning. A metal stove pipe. Oh, boy! When we look back on it now, what a fire hazard with every suite burning wood. No forced air here, and no heat in the halls.

Speaking of have nots, the only running water was when we took our bucket and ran down the hall to the only bathroom, toilet only. There was a shelf on which to set the bucket to fill it with water from the tap, for personal use in our rooms. The hallway outside my room was fairly long and was lit by a 7W bulb. Occasionally I’d replace it with a 40W, only to find the 7W back in its place at day’s end.

I’m not being critical of Mr. Spencer. This is just the way it was. Our farm homes did not have town conveniences either, so we knew how to cope.

Upon exploring we discovered a shower stall downstairs. Great! It was opposite Mr. Spencer’s office and one had to pass by the telephone on the wall to get to it. We tried the shower. Yikes! Ice cold water. Rarely did one of us get a phone call, but if we did our esteemed landlord would kindly and patiently climb the stairs to let us know.



Above, Charles Spencer, standing in the doorway of the Spencer block, a complex on 100th Avenue with offices on the main floor and apartments above.

Photo courtesy of Janet Ophus

Opposite page, the Spencer Block just west of the Imperial Bank near Grande Prairie’s main intersection. After Charles Spencer died in 1952, it was sold to the Army & Navy Stores and a new Macleods Store was built on the site.

Photo from the Rodacker family

It has been fun to relay stories of life in the Spencer Block to our families. In spite of, what today would be a hardship, we look back fondly on our first home away from home. Being hardy farm girls we adapted well. Weekends were mostly spent at



home, depending on the weather. At this time our dads would split a supply of wood for the week, while the moms replenished our food supply. We didn't keep many perishables--no fridge. Milk was delivered to the door a few times a week. We set the milk bottle outside our door with a dime inside or a token on the top.

The wood was thrown into a locker in the back yard of the building, complete with a padlock, or not. From there we had to carry arm loads of wood up the stairs to fill the woodbox in our rooms. Morning and night we lit a fire to keep warm, to heat water, and to cook our meals. In today's world, this sounds incredible even to the writer.

Except at night, we rarely locked our doors. Only a skeleton key anyway. Other students resided there, but mostly working people. I was lucky to have my sister, Jean, living downstairs. I remember a senior lady at the end of the hall who kept a wary eye on us 'kids' through her keyhole. When passing her door we were extra quiet.

I realize now, as teenagers, we were not entirely appreciative of who Charles Spencer was. When we paid our rent we were in awe of all the books lining the walls of his office, so we knew for sure he was a reader. He was a very quiet man who shuffled down the halls making sure all was in order. Doing the math, he was 77 years old when we first met him. Lorraine recalls him knocking on their door to give her and Joyce tickets to see Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy at the Capitol Theatre.

He liked us. We liked him. He never scolded us for laughing too loudly or scurrying too fast and noisily down the squeaky stairs. We greeted each other in passing, him quietly with a sly smile. We respected him.

Today, in our senior years, we enjoy good memories of our Spencer Block experience. There's certainly nothing like it today.

Explore the History of the Burnt River Valley *(map overleaf)*

Editor's Note: When I checked out this route in the fall of 2009, all four bridges on the Westmark Road were being replaced. The roads were quite slick after a good rain. This tour is best done when the roads are dry, especially if you are traveling in a small car.

Nestled in the valley of the Burnt River, north of the Saddle Hills, are the old rural communities of Westmark and Northmark, and the one remaining hamlet of Woking. These areas were mainly settled in the late 1920s and early 1930s by groups from the Ukraine and Germany, and individuals from other areas of Canada and the United States.

To begin your tour, turn west from Highway No. 2 North on the Saddle Hills Road, just before the highway dips down to the Burnt River Bridge. This is "The Old Highway", which roughly followed "The Long Trail" which brought settlers to the south Peace before the Edson Trail was built in 1911. In the 1930s, this road was improved, mostly as Depression relief work. It served as the main highway until the new Highway 2 North was constructed in 1959.

As you reach the first bend, straight ahead and over the river, until the 1950s you would have seen the water tank at the Mile 10 Pumping Station on the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway. When the rail was built in 1916, regular pumping stations were needed to provide the water for the steam engines. Continue to follow the Old Highway south until you reach a paved roadway, SH 677. On the north-east corner of this intersection, the remains of Saddle Mountain School can still be seen. Just east of it was the Otto Stopping Place in 1917. This was operated by Henry and Mary Otto who, in their late 50s, left the comforts of an established farm and most of their children in the U.S. to join their son Lee, the first homesteader in the area.

Turning west, the first historical building you come to is the small Holy Trinity Russian Greek Orthodox

Church, the center of worship for settlers of Ukrainian origin and the Greek Orthodox religion. Many of them had arrived in the late 20s and early 30s. Until this church was built in 1951, services were held infrequently in homes and served by visiting ministers. Because of this, there would sometimes be mass baptisms of children in the same service. This church was built by donations and volunteer labour.

On to Woking. In 1916, there was only a mile-post here and an abandoned boxcar that served as a railway station. In the early 1920s stockyards and a loading chute for cattle from the White Mountain Ranch Company, Platzer Brother and the Otto family was the first consistent use of this siding. The railway continues south from here into the Saddle Hills. 1 1/2 miles south was the Frank Donald Tie Camp, where railway ties were made. In the days when all heating was by wood and coal, cordwood for the large Donald Hotel Chain was sent from here to Grande Prairie by rail. At Mile 17, 4 miles south, the Buffalo Lakes Lumber Camp siding was established in 1921. It was in the many sawmills and lumber camps of the Saddle Hills and Burnt River Valley that the settlers found winter work that enabled them to continue farming.

The first building in Woking was Masse's Store, at the north end of the railway siding grounds. The east-west road (now SH 677) was laid out in 1932, at the same time the "old Highway" was built. That year, Bill Hague moved the store to the main road. Eventually the hamlet contained a small railway station, two grain elevators, a forest ranger station, post office, the Woking Hall, a Catholic Church, Woking Consolidated School, a number of stores (including the Woking Department Store), blacksmith, garage, restaurants, butcher shop (including a slaughter house and locker plant), UFA Station and bulk fuel plant, poolroom, the Woking Hotel, and houses for a population of more than 150. According to the 1960

paper, *Peace River Story*, "In 1954, the little town bustled with construction workers who built the district gas pipeline from wells near Rycroft. Woking served as the base for many of the men and much of the equipment." You can still see some of these buildings, but Woking is now just a ghost of what it once was. Look for the Centennial Cairn on the corner of 50th Street and 51st Avenue to get an idea of the effort residents put in to this hamlet.

After Woking, continue west on SH 677 to the T-section with SH 731. On the north side of the road is the Chinook Valley Golf Course. Turning south; within ½ mile you will see a brass marker for the Chinook Valley School, 1929-1949, which was the centre for concerts and dances for the surrounding community. After it closed in 1949, it became the Burnt River Legion Hall. It was moved to Woking in 1953.

Continue along the road as it curves west and becomes Westmark Road. Four intersections down, a trail leads north through the woods to the Burnt River and the cemetery. Don't take this one—a better road is on the other side. Just west of the trail you will see a small cabin in the trees. This was the teacherage from Westmark School, moved to this farm by Hans and Ursula Pankow Delfs, one of Westmark's teachers, after the school closed. Two miles further west, the Westmark School (1938-1955) is still on its original site, which once included a barn, teacherage, ice house, outhouses, and baseball diamonds. Now only the baseball diamonds are still in use, their new condition suggesting this is still an important sport in the Burnt River Valley. Across from the school is Westmark Hall, an unusual building with a round roof and false front. It was built in 1950 and is still in use in 2009.

Another mile west, the main road curves south towards Hilltop Lake and the Buffalo Lakes-LaGlance farming district. Look for Twp Rd 762 heading west from the middle of the curve and continue west for two more miles. Turning north on Rge Rd 80, the road dips sharply down over the origins of the Burnt River and on to the Northmark Road, Twp Rd 764. Heading east on this road will give you some of the best views of the beautiful Burnt River Valley and

the Saddle Hills.

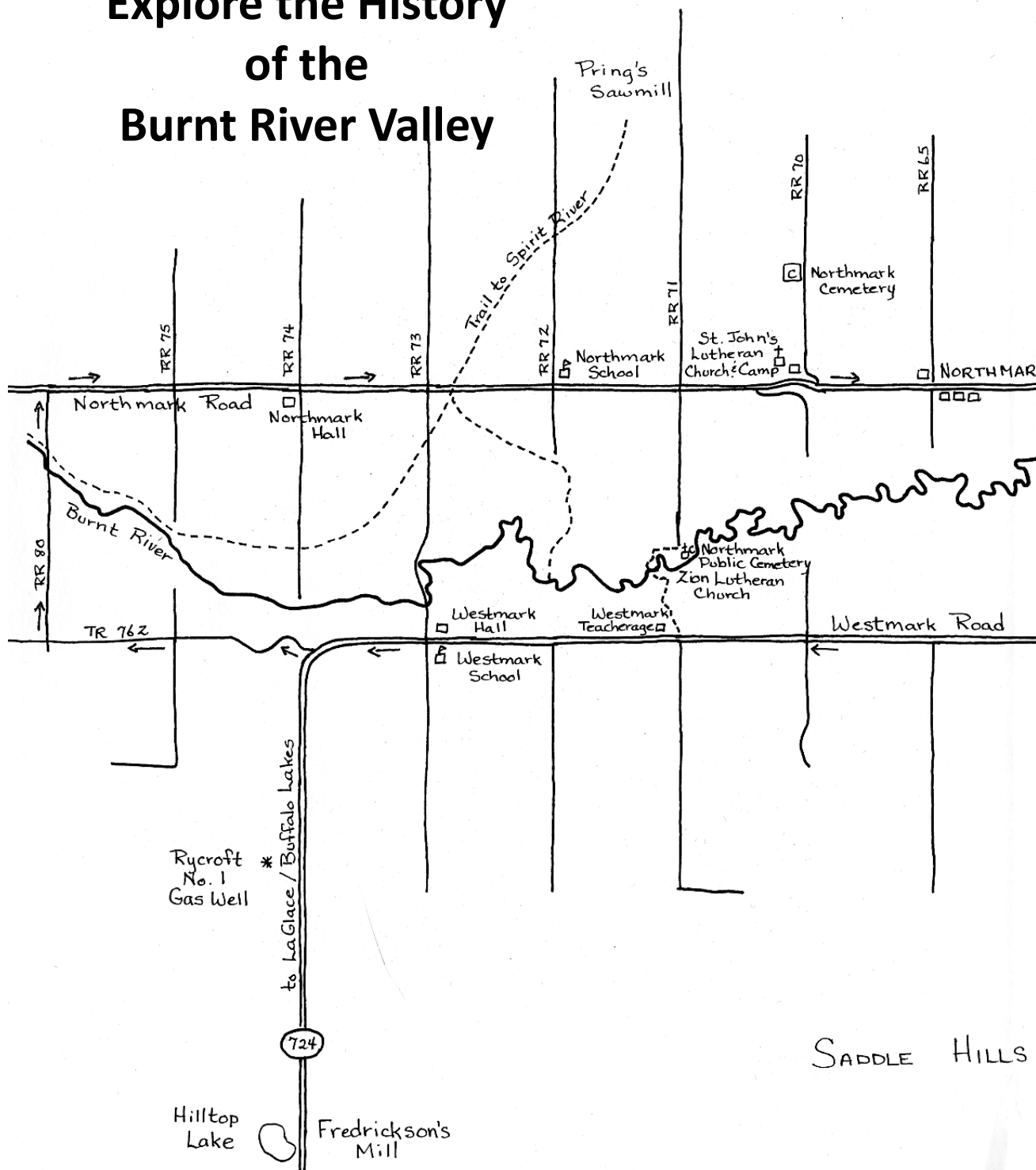
Strung out along Northmark Road is the old rural community of Northmark, beginning with the Hall (also known as the West Burnt Hall) on the south-west corner of the intersection with Rge Rd 74, then the school two miles further on. Northmark School was established in 1930, and a log school house built in 1932. A new stucco school replaced the old log school in 1950, but closed in 1956 when the students were bussed into Woking.

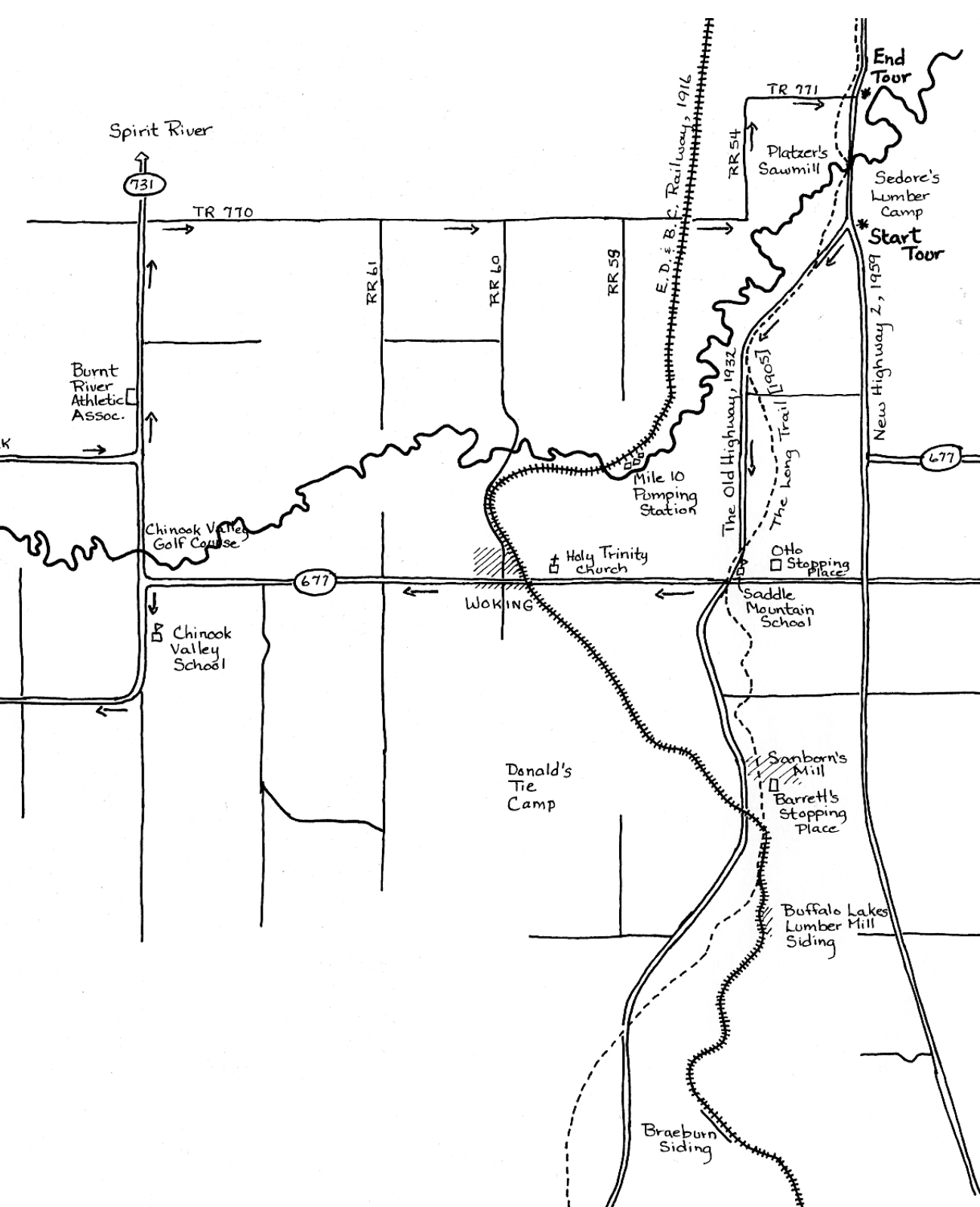
Another mile east is the turn-off to the Northmark Public cemetery, which is well worth a side trip. Tucked into the evergreens on the banks of the Burnt River, this cemetery was opened in 1929 when one of the settlers drowned while trying to cross the Burnt River. The cemetery was made on the bank of the river just above where the body was recovered. A small log church, Zion Lutheran, was built on site but removed in 1946. One of the most unusual monuments is the bronze-topped grave of a small boy, engraved with a letter from his parents.

Back on Twp Rd 764, turn in to Rge Rd 70 for a view of the lovely St. John's Lutheran Church. Church bells here could be heard at 6:00 p.m. every Saturday, keeping the old German custom of "ringing in the Sabbath." One more mile further east brings you to a string of abandoned buildings: the old hamlet of Northmark which had a Post Office, General Store and Garage with Imperial Oil and Massey Harris dealerships.

After Northmark, turn north on SH 731. One-half mile north, on the west side of the road, was the site of the Burnt River Athletic Association and the Burnt River Memorial Hall, consisting of an old H-hut from Ft. St. John. Continue on to Twp Rd 770 and turn east. The last part of our tour of the Burnt River Valley is over a little-used road between two aisles of trees, with farmland visible on each side. Turn north on Rge Rd 54, then east on TR 771, and you are back on Highway 2 North, just on the other side of the Burnt River and one mile north of your original foray into the Burnt River Valley. I hope you enjoyed discovering the history of the Burnt River Valley.

Explore the History of the Burnt River Valley





Grande Prairie: So Far From Poland

by Erin Moure

Gone to my grandmother's house in the gully,
white light of summer shocked the air into bright being,
all I remember is green
& my grandmother standing out in the shade of huge cabbages,
open as mouths,
manure packed smelly around the roots,
gurgle of wet creek behind.
I followed wild rows of the yard to find her,
she talked the guttural words I did not know & lifted my small bones
over the cabbages, against
her wide apron of flowers.

From her arms I could see the gully, & my brothers arriving,
running along in their shorts & toy pistols,
the ground solid & green everywhere, hot-smelling,
the air steaming
white
What she would tell me, & I couldn't answer, just shied away
stupid & went back to the toy pistols,
the shouts of my brothers,
running faster than the heat in the garden
to keep cool,
as she stood & watched us, worried about creek-banks
& the mad growing cabbages,
locked forever in her language that she brought so far from Poland,
stockpiled like a garden, where she stayed
& did not grow out of.

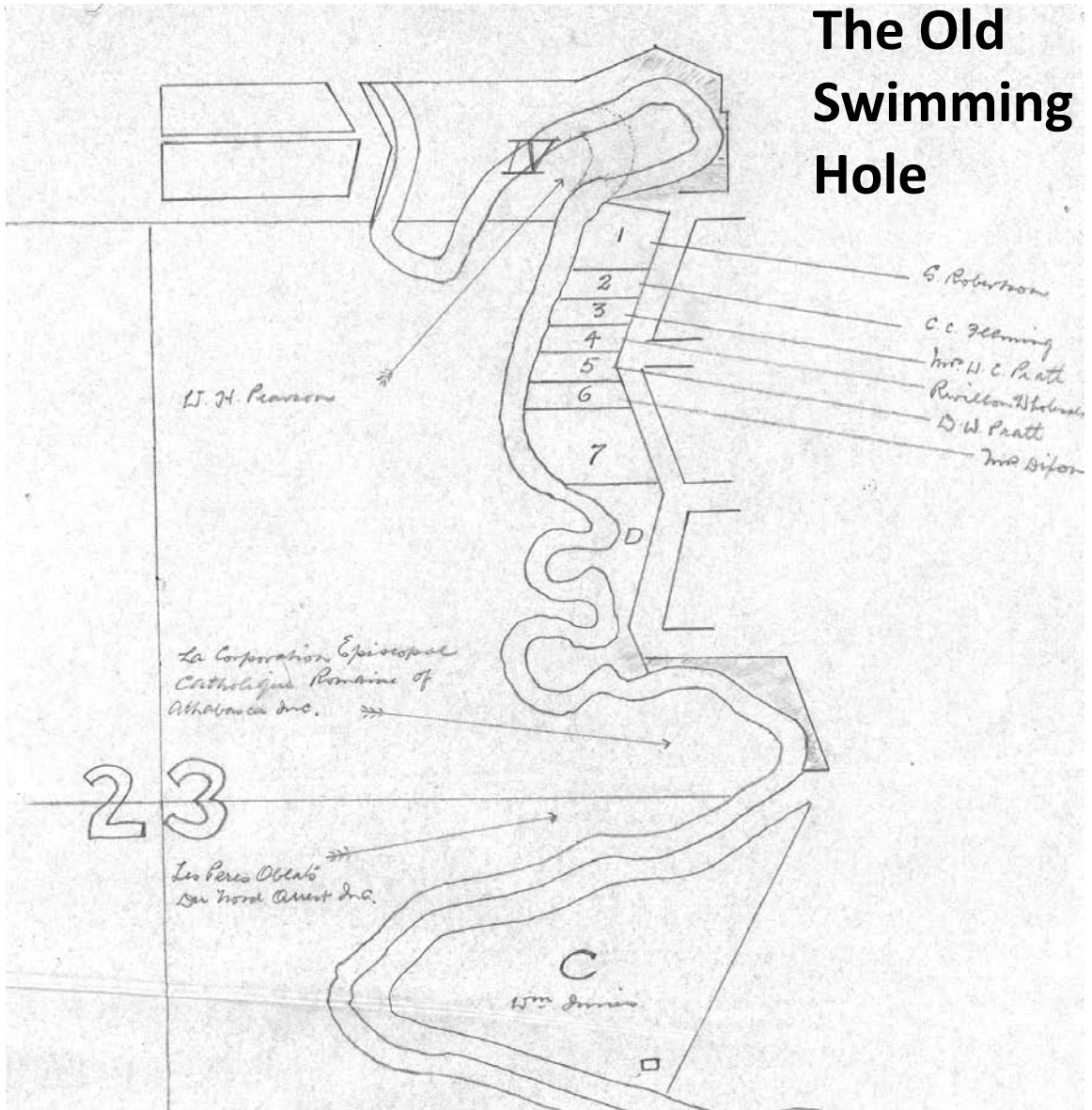


This poem was written by Erin Moure about her experience visiting her grandmother in her house by Bear Creek around 1960. It is included in Erin's book, Wanted Alive, published by the house of Anansi in Toronto in 1983.

The above photo was taken by Erin's father on the road in front of her grandparents' house. It shows Thomas and Anastasia Grendys with their grandchildren: Erin Moure, now living in Montreal; her brother Kenneth, now Dr. Kenneth Moure, head of the History Department at the University of Alberta; and in his grandfather's arms, Erin's youngest brother Bill Moure who visited the Archives with Erin on an exploratory trip in June.

Photo courtesy of Erin Moure

The Old Swimming Hole



This diagram, found in a 1932 file of correspondence belonging to the town of Grande Prairie, shows how the town proposed "to construct a couple of dams in Bear River, to provide swimming pools." The process included writing to all landowners of property which would be affected to ascertain their feelings, filing an application "in accordance with the provisions of Section 11 of The Water Resources Act", hiring an engineer from the Water Resources Office to do a feasibility study, and advertising the project in four successive weekly issues of the newspaper. Only after the project passed all these levels of approval could construction begin. Does anyone know if the project was every completed? Write down your memories and we will use them in the summer issue of the newsletter.

History of the Lakeside Golf and Country Club

(or How the Community of Eaglesham got its Golf Course)

by Mathew Wozniak

At the February 12, 1969 meeting of the Eaglesham Elks Lodge 515, William Wozniak made a motion that we look into the possibility of having a golf course in this area. A committee was appointed to look into the possibility, and the Elks Lodge promised to supply \$500 to start the golf course.

At the last meeting of the season in June, Clarence Nordvie reported that no progress had been made on the golf course but he was not giving up. He asked Mathew Wozniak and Orest Melnyk to go with him. There were many pieces of land suitable but the same question always came up, "How much money do you guys have?" It looked like the end of the golf course. Orest went home and Mathew and Clarence were having a drink when Mathew said that he had a piece of land by the lake, but it was awful—hills, sloughs and brush.

They went to look at it and Clarence said, "just what we have been looking for." The next day, Clarence, his son Wayne, and Mathew were staking out 9 fairways. The place had been brushcut in the winter of 1962, but with hills being mostly sand, brush pilers did not work, so it was left and by now the second growth poplar was about 15 feet tall and so thick one could hardly walk through it. They would bend a tree over and put a fertilizer bag on it and then when they were on a hill, they could tell where they had been. These hills, about 10 feet high, 100 to 300 feet in diameter and each with a depression on top, were made by the glacier.

The next day, Clarence and Mathew brought their tractors and then many more people came to help. Some days there were up to 10 farm tractors clearing brush. In about a month, the ground was cleared, worked and levelled. Andy Slevenski, Mike and Peter

Sanoski each donated 100 lbs of uncleaned fescue, and 100 lbs of Kentucky Blue grass was bought from the Wheat Pool. The grass was spread and Mike Dika loaned them big heavy rollers to pack the ground. All that was needed was for the grass to grow.

It then became apparent that if it were to remain an Elks golf course, it would be classed as a private course and not qualify for Government grants. The Elks Lodge did not have enough golfing members to run a golf course, so it was turned into a community golf course. Clarence Nordvie made the motion that it be called "Lakeside Golf and Country Club". An organization was formed, the original directors were Clarence Nordvie (president), Mathew Wozniak (secretary), Andy Slevinski, Marion Fisher, Orest Melnyk, Ernest Socha, Pete Diemert, and Leon Lefevre. Each director put in \$10 so we could open an account.

The ladies of the club organized a walkathon from the Eaglesham corner to Watino. Gilbert Bice pushed Walter Erickson in a wheel chair and we realized about \$1,000. Not a word had been said about the land, selling price or terms. Mathew agreed to sell the land, 240 acres (partly under water), for \$6,000. The club was to pay \$300 a year for the first 5 years and he would pay the taxes, which were less than \$30. As soon as they found that this was a golf course, taxes went up to \$220. By the time he got paid out, the value of the land had at least doubled.

The grass was first mowed in June 1970, and sand for the sand greens was hauled from Watino after the flood in the spring. Now the course was open for golfing. We attached a cash box with a slot in the lid to a picnic table for the payment of \$1.00 green fees. In the spring of 1971, a building from the Socha Farm was moved to the course and served as

our club house. The second weekend in July, 1971, we had our First Annual Golf Tournament. Jack Sanddal took the men's Championship flight, while Carol Nordvie took the ladies. Stan Parks from CKYL did our lighting for that tournament and many others after that, for which he received an honorary lifetime membership. There is a plaque to that effect in the club house. (It would be interesting to know how many golfers we had.)

To mow the grass, we bought a 6 foot, 3 section reel-type mower with a 12 hp motor. If it rained a lot and the grass got too tall, the motor didn't have enough power, so one section was raised and then we were cutting 48 inches. It then took a long time to mow the fairways. Tony Desgagne did this job for many years for very little pay.

For many years our roughs were terrible, where the fairway ended. It was so thick with grass and trees that finding a ball was practically impossible. Orel Desgagne, with the help of friends and relatives, spent many evenings thinning out the brush in the first 12 or so feet by the fairway.

When we were building the Golf Course, one day Clarence said that the Rycroft Railway Station would be sold and we should buy it. I thought to myself, "dreamer". In the spring of 1978, we were notified that the station was for sale by public tender (highest bidder). The whole board went to look at the building. It was very impressive but first we were not sure that we could afford it, and then we thought the Rycroft people would not like it if we bought the building, so we did not put a bid. First of July, N.A.R. phoned us—the bids closed and there were no bids. Well now, if Rycroft turned it down, we'll have another look at it. We found a man that would move it for \$5,000, we bid \$2,200, bought the building, made the foundation. Unfortunately, our mover was stuck in a muskeg in Fort McMurray, and the bank foreclosed on him. One of the conditions of the sale was that the building was to be moved by September. We explained to the NAR what had happened and they let us move it in the spring, but we had to pay more. The building was too long to be

moved in one piece, and in the east end, which was the freight shed, the floor could not be moved. The fireplace in our clubhouse is where the freight was taken out, and the patio doors on the north side is where freight was brought in. Stan Parks was station manager in Rycroft, and his children were born in this building.

As soon as we had the building in place, we asked for power. Alberta Power wanted \$1,200, which we didn't have. The next spring, we asked again and now it was \$2,400 which we didn't have. Next spring it was \$4,800. We were informed by the Rural Electrification Association that about 4 miles east, 1 ¼ mile of powerline was to be dismantled. We could have it for \$200. We staked out the line, had a man from Girouxville drill the holes. A John Deere 4020 with front end loader could not lift the poles with the line attached. We had people that would climb and untie the line but getting insurance was practically impossible. With a Steiger Bearcat tractor, we could lift the poles with the line attached to them, and lay them across the road. Another crew untied the line and loaded the poles on a trailer with the JD 4020. Next day we stood the poles with an extension on the 4020 front end loader, tamped them, laid the line on the road. Alberta Power crew climbed the poles and tied the wires, supplied the anchors, transformer and ground rods. We didn't pay the R.E.A. so all it cost us for power was the \$150 it cost to drill the holes.

In 1981, while Jules Boivan was president, it was decided to install a basement under the building. The estimate was \$9,000 but ended up costing \$40,000. This provides much needed storage and meeting place. In 2003 we were having problems with our septic tank. We dug it up and found there was a hole in the top of the septic tank—they had just laid a piece of plywood over it. Now the plywood had rotted and it was very expensive to install a new septic tank.

For years the clubhouse was heated with propane from a 500 gallon tank. The problem was that at

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Journey to the Millennium

The Valleyview & District Chamber of Commerce "Journey to the Millennium" Photograph collection tells the history of Valleyview and its surrounding area.

The display consists of 122 panels with a total of 803 photographs, illustrated with excellent descriptions, documents and stories. They cover many topics, such as early days at Sturgeon Lake, resource development, transportation, community and family histories.

The panels were compiled by Mary Ellen MacGregor and Sandra Wittertacker to celebrate the history of the town, its organizations, businesses and people. They are displayed at the Valleyview Library, but can also be studied and read through the SPRA website. Choose the link to ANA Database on the home page of www.southpeacearchives.org and search for "Valleyview." Scroll down to view photographs & documents.



Top: "Old Sunshine" Papstisis - Chief Woodpecker & Thomas Kerr standing in front of Kerr's home at Sturgeon Lake, ca. 1916. Above, Raw furs displayed in front of the Hudson's Bay Store at Sturgeon Lake. Left, An aerial view of the Sturgeon Lake Hudson's Bay Post in 1953. Top left: Original Wooden Forestry Lookout Tower at Puskwaskau (west side of Sturgeon Lake).



Clockwise from top left: Summer of 1959. Grandma Ramstad and Grandma Swanson enjoy the ice cream! Jay Lassen and a McLaughlin boy at a garage. Cantex Rig with Ernie Simpkin's Water Hauling Truck. Bud Brown in his father's, Syd Brown, truck in 1951. Syd Brown ran the grader for the government for 21 years.

What Archives Do and Why We Do It

South Peace Regional Archives Society was formed in July 2007, and is the governing body of this Archives. As a Society, we have four main objectives:

- 1) Education and Advocacy. We work to promote an understanding of what archives are and do, and advocate for sustainable funding for the Archives.
- 2) Acquisitions: Our goal is to be the major repository for archival records in the south Peace River Country of Alberta, holding municipal archives as well as community, organizational, business, family and individual archives.
- 3) Preservation: We want to be known for excellent archival practices in the ways we process, preserve, give access to, and reproduce the historical material in our care.
- 4) Accessibility: We encourage people to access their history by being a friendly, community-based archives, and by assisting researchers in finding the material they need and want.

These are our goals. We hope that you will join with us in promoting the importance of archiving our history, in encouraging those holding historical records to deposit them in the archives, in supporting the funding of archives as a community responsibility, and in telling your history through displays, photographs and stories. Thank you for your support.

How Eaglesham Got Its Golf Course *(cont'd from page 15)*

about 40 degrees below zero, propane stops vaporizing, so keeping the building from freezing was not only expensive but not overly dependable. It was decided to install natural gas. The line had to go across the lake to Gartly's. Problem was that the trencher was not able to get enough traction to move so it was pulled with Andy Legault's Steiger tractor. While the trencher had to move at about a half mile an hour, the lowest gear in the tractor was 2 miles an

hour, so the clutch on the tractor had to be slipping all the time. The Steiger also backfilled the trench. When the shower house was built, a gas line was also run to it.

I don't remember what year it was, but while Paul Bouchard was our greens keeper, Bernie Legault organized the moving of the gas plant buildings from a site north-east of Eaglesham. First we went south and cut two big poplars for skids. Taking the compressor out, the Company had cut one wall out so we had to lay a 4 x 6 inch angle iron all around to keep the building together. Randolph supplied an electric welder to join these, Barnaby farm supplied the 2 large skids and a cutting torch to cut the dozens of pipes. Eddy Kowalchuck had his Versatile tractor there but was not able to move the building. Mathew had to go home and bring a Steiger. The building is more than 20 feet tall so we had to pick a route where there were no power lines.

In the spring of 1989, the Dept of Environment gave us permission to take 40 acre feet of water from the lake. In 1990, work on the grass greens was started which took 2 years to complete.

The course is now a par 36, 3,200 yds. 9 sand traps, 6 water hazards, our greens are all over 5,000 sq. ft. All Tee boxes are elevated, the water lines are laid down the middle of the fairways so it is possible to irrigate them. We have a practice putting green, power hook-ups for 25 trailers, Children's Playground, public showers, and R.V. dumping station. The workshop is a steel building. Since we installed the grass greens, it now requires about \$100,000 worth of equipment to maintain the course.

The only way that we could have a golf course like this is if someone sold them an ideal piece of ground close to water at the price and terms that they could afford in a community where many people were willing to contribute much time, money and effort and continue to do so.

Society and Member News

Contributions Wanted

Genealogical queries
old photos and memories
full articles
corrections/reactions to this newsletter
announcements from
other historical organizations.
Write or E-mail your thoughts!

Looking for Christmas Gifts?

South Peace Regional Archives has reproductions of old maps, photographs, oral histories, and the following publications:

Grande Prairie City, 1906-1958 \$10.00
54 pp of articles and b & w photographs
City of Grande Prairie, 1958-2008 \$12.00
64 pp of articles and colour photographs
War Brides of the South Peace \$ 5.00
18 stories, illustrated by photographs
Memories of Grande Prairie, 1958 \$15.00
24 stories, illustrated by photographs

Members' Price is 40% off on publications!

**Available in Spring 2010, A new publication by
South Peace Regional Archives**

ONE HUNDRED SCHOOLS

in the County of Grande Prairie, 1910-1960

**A history of schools
in the County of Grande Prairie
will include photographs, documents, resources, and directions to each site.
240 pages and 560 photographs.
Price \$30.00**

Some Recent Acquisitions

Gail Frey
Fran Tanner/Jack Soars fonds
1916-[1980]

Ben Foster
Foster Family 8 mm film collection
1948-1967

Jean Kowalchuk
Blueberry Creek School Reunion posters
2006 [1930-2006]

Nora Babuik
WW II photo & letter re: Reuben Young
1943-1945

Spirit River Museum
Spirit Valley Women's Institute
[1940-1962]

Mavis Kachmar
St. Elia Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church
1957-1991

Svea Isherwood
Photographs of Beaverlodge & Research Station
1938-[1950]

Know Anyone Who Can Read Swedish?

The Archives is looking for a volunteer who can give a rough translation of a few government documents written in Swedish. It would help us obtain better biographical information on a settler from the DeBolt area.

South Peace Regional Archives Society Membership Application Form

Date: _____

This membership is _____ new _____ renewal (only name, amount & any changes needed)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Interested in being involved as a _____ volunteer _____ board member

There are two types of membership:

Full memberships are for individuals who want to be involved in the society, allowing them to attend meetings, vote on issues and run for office.

Associate memberships are for individuals who want to receive communications from the society to keep them updated on happenings at the Archives, but not attend meetings.

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

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Fax: 831-7371
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