

TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 3, Issue 2, March 1, 2012

published by South Peace Regional Archives Society



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Please attend SPRA's AGM, Saturday, March 24

March 1, 2012

Dear Members & Supporters;

Our theme for this newsletter is the Central Peace, the most northerly area in this Archives' mandate.

There are five other archives in the Peace Country: Ft. Vermilion in the far north; Peace River Museum, Archives and Mackenzie Centre; South Peace Historical Society & Archives in Dawson Creek; the Archives at the Ft. St. John-North Peace Museum; and Hudson's Hope Museum & Archives. Together we try to serve the entire Peace Country of Alberta and British Columbia.

While it the goal and the desire of SPRA to preserve the documentary history of the entire south Peace, we admit that the bulk of our collections are from the Grande Prairie district where we are most active and most visible.

So sometimes our collections are sadly lacking. For example, we have no photographs of Tangent or the first Nurses' Home, or of Peoria, White Mountain, Bridgeview or Willowdale.

But we do have content, which to an archives is the most important thing. There are often multiple copies of photographs in family collections, and so there is still hope to find those, but there is only one copy of the minutes and records of an organization.

Although we speak of "acquisitions", archives do not normally go around acquiring and collecting records. We depend on people living in the area and dedicated to its history, to deposit their own records.

So thanks to Nick Poohkay for donating the records of the Tangent Municipal Nursing Society (p. 3), to Alice Fortier for her story about Peoria (p. 5), and to Margaret Bowes for donating items from her own family history (p.12-15).

And thanks as usual to Leslie for her article on why we keep the original records. Isn't it lovely to all be in this together?

Sincerely,

Mary Nutting, Archivist

TELLING OUR STORIES

PUBLISHED BY

South Peace Regional Archives Society

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The purpose of the SPRA Society is to promote and encourage the appreciation and study of the history of the south Peace River Country by acquiring, preserving and making accessible to the public, records in any format which reflect the history of this area.

Tangent Municipal Nursing Society fonds

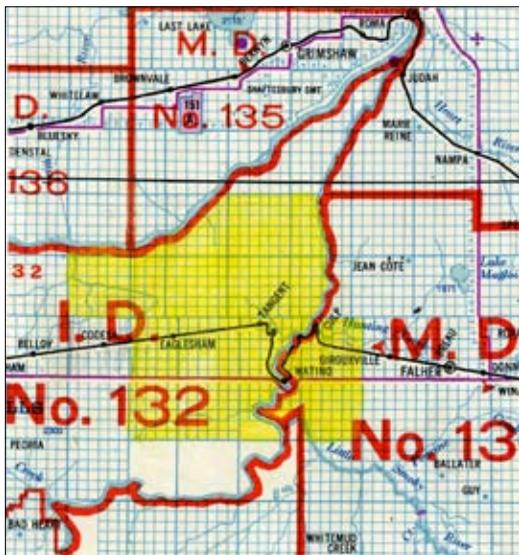
Tangent Municipal Nursing Society. -- 1948-1971. -- 10 cm of textual records.

Agency History

In 1934, the Alberta Minister of Health approved an application to form a district nursing area in the Tangent-Eglesham area. The nurse would be stationed at Tangent, but the nursing area would include Eglesham, Watino, Rahab, and any other areas that could reach her. Five representatives were elected to act as a Nurse-Home Committee, and they were responsible "to provide a well constructed house consisting of an office, waiting room and living quarters for the nurse." The community was also to provide furnishings for the Nurse's cottage, an adequate supply of water, and maintenance to the building.

Funds for all of this were raised by holding bingos, picnics, raffles and card games. Home-made ice cream was sold after Sunday Mass when funds were low. The nurse was paid, in part, by the fees she charged for services rendered, but often she accepted eggs, milk, wild meat, garden produce or firewood as payment. When a home visit by the nurse was required, the patient's family was responsible for her transportation.

Below, map showing the area served by the Tangent Municipal Nurse in 1957. Right, 1948-1949 financial records of the Home Committee, maintained in French.



Eggesham.		Do.	Pal.
intéret 1948 Depress Veillie		3795	
Compte Langlois		1940	
Luminaire (Papier)		1200	
Enregistrement (Banque)		800	
Payé sur 2 tot.		5000	
1. Nurse pour maison (Dep.)		1940	
R.D. Dubois (Compte glace)		1000	
Charbon.		9315	
Charriage (charbon)		200	
Telephone		30	
	1948		25220
1949			
Juillet 30-9			
Bill Langlois heures heures		531	
Dec 9-9 R. J. D. Palon			
Assurance 3 ans - 2000.		1910	
Dec 89-92 Emprunt foyer			
pour Brick siding 900ft.		15270	
Dec 13- Pour charbon siding		525	
Nov 30-92 11750 lb Coal.		7813	
Truckage.		1175	
Janvier 50 = 1/4 de Bois.		1300	
Nov-9-50 = Sur 2 Tot. 16 AR.		6850	
Sept - 48 = Sur 2 Tot.		4500	
Nov 16-9 Papier (ciment en papier)		56	
Oct 19 Papier à bouillie Cylace		250	
1-10 Dépresses de feuille		855	
Nov 16 - Remboursement d'emprunt		6500	
		49625	
Jan 29-50 Cash en main		1892	
		51517	

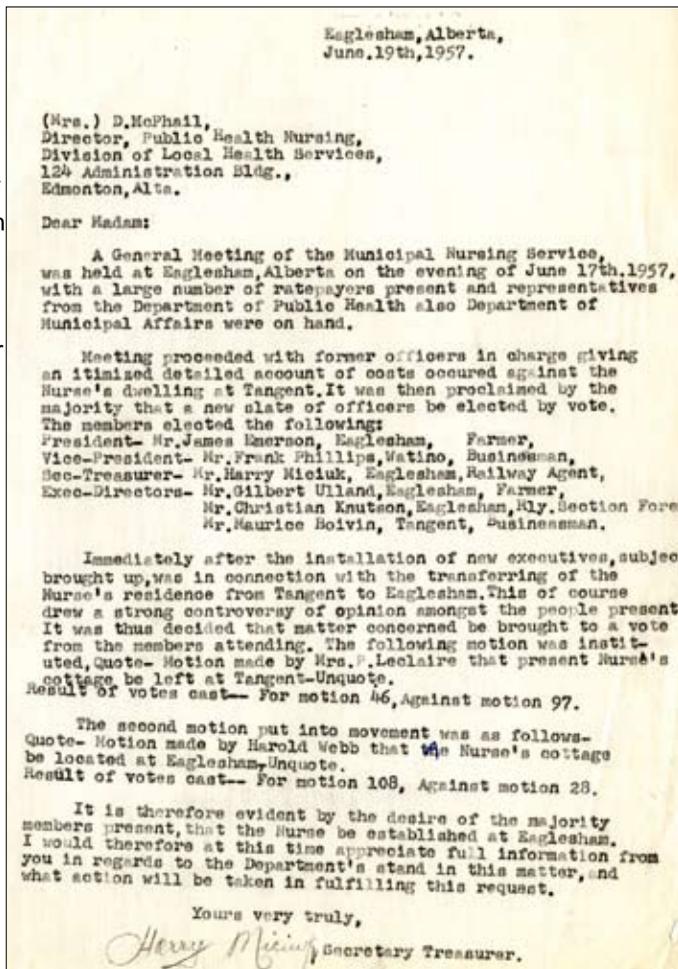
Right, letter describing the vote to move the nursing service to Eaglesham, 1957.

In 1948, the Tangent Municipal Nurse's Home Committee was incorporated to look after the facility, and on April 1, 1950 there was an agreement between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Health to provide a Municipal Nursing Service in part of Improvement District No. 132. Although the society continued to be the owner of the Nurse's Home, responsible for any building and maintenance, an agreement with I.D. No. 132 financed the Home with a monthly rental fee.

In 1958, a new nurses' residence was built in the Village of Eaglesham, after a mail-in ballot established Eaglesham as the favoured location of the service. The legal description was Plan 2937 HW, Blk 1, Lot 13, on the SW 30-78-25-W5. A loan was taken out to build the home, financed by the monthly rental fee of \$650.00 from the I.D. When the loan was paid off in 1961, the contribution from the I.D. was lowered to \$100.00 per month.

At the time there was a serious shortage of nurses in the province of Alberta, especially those qualified for "emergency nursing" and willing to work alone in the rural parts of the province, so the Nurse's Home in Eaglesham was often vacant. In 1962, the Grande Prairie Health Unit took over responsibility for public health, and the cottage was used by their nurses and dentists for regular clinics. It was also used by doctors based at the Spirit River Hospital who would visit the area periodically.

It was the policy of the Alberta government to close down municipal nursing services in districts where road conditions improved to the point that hospital and medical care were more easily accessible, and on November 30, 1967, the Minister of Health closed the Tangent Municipal Nurse's Home. The Society was dissolved in 1971.



Scope and Content

The fonds consists of legal documents, executive records, financial records and correspondence, dating mainly from the building of the Nurse's Home in Eaglesham in 1958, but with a few legal documents and financial records dating back to the creation of the society in 1948. Although the Society was formed under the name of the "Tangent Municipal Nurse's Home Committee", this name and the name "Tangent Municipal Nursing Service" appear to be used interchangeably throughout the records.

Adoptees are Angels

by Alice Fortier

Did you ever wonder how an adopted child would feel? Or, would you adopt?

In the Peoria community there seemed to be an abundance of childless couples so—1928 saw a childless couple adopt a little girl with beautiful red hair and freckles, Bonnie. Well, they weren't sure they wanted to keep her and thought they might send her back to the orphanage as they had a year to make up their minds.

The days flew into months and the time came to send Bonnie back. Mom got her ready while Dad went to hook the horses to the sleigh for the long trip to the train. Coming in, Bonnie had this big smile for him. "Do we really want to send her back?" he said.

The best decision was made, papers were finalized and Bonnie had a home.

The same couple made an announcement in church, they were going to the Beulah Home in Edmonton to pick out a son—they wanted an older child! Another older couple who had raised their own three children and hadn't run out of nurturing asked if they could bring back a baby boy for them too, the younger the better. ("While you're going to the store pick up a loaf of bread for us.")

The trip was made, two baskets were at the front of the church with a two week old baby boy and the other was eleven months, for all to ooh and aah over! Seeds were planted in many heads, soon there were more babies!

The older couple who had raised their own three children loved their first adopted son, Delvin, so they put their order in for a playmate, Kelly, a year later. By now two of their own married daughters couldn't seem to have any luck starting their families so they thought adoption was a great idea. Mom and Dad and the two girls all decided they would each send for girls! Connie, Bernadine and Betty joined the families within a few months of each other.



Where is Peoria? It is a farming community south-east of Rycroft.

Connie's Mom sent for another daughter, Donna, and immediately got pregnant with Dennis, then Linda and Nancy. When her marriage broke up, Mom and Dad couldn't see all these children home-less so they opened their hearts and home to raise all these eight children. Times were tough through the Depression but the gardens got bigger, more cows to milk, sheep, chickens, which just made more work for everyone. What a happy busy home it was, everyone working and playing together.

On May 28, 1933, a letter was written asking for a baby girl with blue eyes, dark hair, fair skin of English descent. July 11, 1933, Prince and Queen, a snappy little team of Uncle Lawrence's was hooked to a Bennett buggy to make the seventeen mile trek into Wanham to meet the train.

Daddy held the horses as the older steamer slowed down and stopped to let the nurse step down off the train. "Mrs. Bennett, here is your new baby, Janet Ann Jacobs." The accompanying layette consisted of three sleepers, three vests, twelve

diapers, two blankets and three bottles of milk. And away went the nurse back on the train!

Yes, you guessed it, that's me!

I had to be introduced at the grocery store and checked out and of course nature had taken its course, my "didies" were full! This was the story I liked them to tell me when I was a little girl!

After the horses had been rested, fed and watered, we started on the trip home through Peoria. We stopped at Davis's to show off our baby as Virginia was a few months older.

Winters were cold and there was always work to be done—the cows had to be fed, watered and milked, chickens cared for, wood to be bucked up, split and carried in to feed the hungry heater, lamps and lantern cleaned and filled. Snow was brought in to be melted for household use and some years the animals had to be watered with snow water. No lack of exercise or time to be bored! I vaguely remember playing and backing up and falling backwards into a tub of melted snow water!! I guess I bellowed really loud for Mom to fish me out!

Farming took its toll on Daddy as he was raised in London. He didn't like farming, most of all the cold weather and the mosquitoes—he would smear Coal Tar all over any exposed skin to catch the mosquitoes! Can you imagine going to the biffy?

The summer of 1935 was very wet and everything grew—grain, hay, wild berries, and the gardens and a big surprise for the folks.

My birth mother's father found out where I was and came to visit! Apparently legal information from Mr. Hill at the adoption agency, knew of my whereabouts and was traveling through with his work as Collection Agent for the Cockshut Plow Company. He inquired and as in those days everyone knew their neighbours and the children. With so many adopted children in the area, it probably made it easier. I was only two, so I didn't know about this for many years.

In 1936, we left Uncle Lawrence's place and bought the Fraser place in Peoria, 7 miles away. We moved into a 2 room log house. In the bedroom, a bed hung in the ceiling over the double bed and the other bed swung down from the wall in the kitchen. Both these had straw ticks. How exciting when threshing took place in the fall and we could empty the "straw dust" out of the tick and refill them. They smelled so good and were nice and comfy!

Mr. Hill visited often as by now there were several more adopted children and he made the rounds until the year had lapsed, the adoption deemed final.

W. Sterling rented the land and the folks grubbed stumps, using dynamite for the tough ones—Uncle Lawrence would come with the horses, which I loved, and pulled stumps once they were loosened.

Charlie Gummerson worked for Sterling, breaking the land and on the threshing crew.

Adoptees and their families at Peoria, ca. 1937. SPRA 2011.58.03.



He was an interesting old Norwegian who I tagged after at every chance. When the teams came in to rest and be fed and watered, the men had their dinner in this little house. Charlie would tell me—“Don’t go near that buckskin horse as it is a rebel.” He returned later to find I was hand-feeding this rebel! Can you imagine what he would have liked to do to me? Many years later, when I was hollering at my own kids, he told them this story with his broken English.

The summer of 1936, I was 3 years old and my natural grandfather came to visit again in his car. Uncle Lawrence kept me very busy showing me how this car worked to distract me and keep me from going into the house. “Do not ever come back or try to see her again”—car and driver were gone. Months later a “Doris Doll” appeared and I loved her so!

In 1940 I started school in Peoria, 1 ½ miles to walk, my first year, my brother Fred’s last year as he was 7 years older. A new house was also built with lumber locally made at a mill where Daddy worked during the winter and lumber was his payment.

I will remember the one and only well-deserved spanking my Dad ever gave me! That was while he was cleaning up around the basement of the new house.

Daddy wasn’t a farmer and didn’t like it and felt he would be of more help if he worked out and sent the money home to buy machinery so Fred could farm. The next five years during the war he worked at a munition plant in Calgary making airplane parts, after that he worked in Kelowna.

In 1945, a killer wolf came through the area attacking sheep and cattle. It took 5 cows all in one night from some folks who were very poor, hardly scraping through. Uncle Lawrence told of their bad luck. One day I said to Mom, “I’ll give that family some of my outgrown clothes and my Doris Doll to make their girls happy.”

The years, along with life in general rolled on and I married and had 7 children but there was a gnawing at me, an indescribable emptiness and I knew I wanted to find my natural grandfather who had

found me so many years ago.

Uncle Lawrence came to stay with us for a month and he told me my Grandpa’s story, what a fine caring man he was, his wife and about my mother and also the gift he had left for me of the Doris Doll!! Uncle Lawrence had said we were very alike and he cared so much so I decided I would find him! But I found out later he had passed away in 1969.

A phone call to Marcia Davis in 1980 in Banff, the lady told me all about the family and said she was not the Marcia I was looking for but knew her and had visited in Vancouver recently and had the phone number. [She told me] Marcia (my mother) and Don Davis have 6 children, 5 girls and 1 boy. The strange part, she never asked who I was!

In 1981 I wrote to Parent Finders and was told I would be contacted once the agency had talked to my mother; they called the same day. Parent Finders said “My mother wasn’t ready to meet me yet but she would write.” She explained her reasoning and I understood and respected her.

The letter finally came along with a picture of her taken the same year I was born. I made myself

do the chores and grabbed a Kleenex box before I could read the letter. She said “I care deeply about you and she loved me”!! We will keep in touch, Love Marcia.



A photograph of Alice Fortier’s mother, taken the year Alice was born. SPRA 2011.58.01.

I felt a Peace I had never known before. The tears I wept were tears of relief and intense joy. I really belonged and I was somebody!

Continued on p. 18.

Explore the History of White Mountain-Willowvale-Bridgeview

by Mary Nutting

White Mountain was one of the earliest areas in the south Peace to see permanent settlers, who were already there by 1900. With its neighbours, Bridgeview and Willowvale, White Mountain fills the agricultural area between Spirit River and the Burnt River Valley.

Start your tour on Highway 2 south of Rycroft, turning west on the White Mountain Road (Twp Rd 774). Five miles west (on Range Road 62), White Mountain School once stood on the north-west corner of the intersection, with White Mountain looming in the west. This school district was formed in 1915, with 52 homesteaders already on the school tax roll. In 1918 a proper school was built here, complete with outbuildings and a basketball court. It operated until 1950 and also served as a gathering place for dances, card parties, Christmas concerts and church services until the hall and church were built.

Turn north on Rge Rd 62 and just before the next intersection (Twp Rd 775) you will see the White Mountain Cemetery. Once there was a small Presbyterian (United) Church here, and across the road, the White Mountain Hall from 1931-1969. The church was built in 1916 and closed in 1957. The first person buried in this cemetery was Johnny John McArthur.

John J. McArthur was the uncle of J.D. McArthur, the railway magnate who built the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway into the Peace Country in 1916. J.D. built a large estate house and farm in the Spirit River area which was operated by his cousin, John Arthur McArthur. John Arthur's parents, Isabel and John J. also came north. It is this John J. died who died in 1933 and was buried at White Mountain.

Turn west on to Willowvale Road (Twp Rd. 775) here, and go one mile to where the Brooks Ranch and the first school were located on the trail into Spirit River Settlement. Dustin Brooks arrived from the State of Michigan in 1903; his family joined him in 1905, and in 1906 a daughter was born. They named her "Peace". Around 1912 a three-storey house with a stone foundation was built on this site, and in 1915 the first school was established across the road. As the largest house in the area, the Brooks home became the flu hospital for the 1918-1919 Spanish Flu epidemic, with Mrs. Brooks acting as nurse. In 1921 the family removed to Spirit River, and in 1925 back to the United States. The old farmsite you can see from the road is presumably the Brooks Ranch site. The house is gone, but a fair number of old barns remain.

Cross Secondary Highway 731 and continue west on Willowvale Road. Four miles west, as you enter the rolling landscape which eventually becomes the Saddle Hills, you will see the silos of what was the Willowvale Dairy. The Willowvale School is still there in the yard, and beside it would have been an Anglican Church. The Church was built in the early 1940s and moved to Spirit River in the late 1950s. The community pound was also on this quarter section owned by Bill Bell.

Just before the road dips into the Spirit River Valley, where the Willowvale Bridge once was, turn south on Range Road 72, then east on Twp Rd 774 and head back to Highway 731. The road leads first through farm fields with glimpses of enticing trails up into the hills, and then through a stand of trees on the north side of White Mountain.

Heading south on Secondary Highway 731, the first landmark you see as you top a small hill is Mike

Dika's elevators. In 1980, Mr. Dika built these three towering elevators as the basis of an automatic feeder-cattle operation for 2500 cattle. The severe recession of the early 1980s curtailed the project and for many years, the incomplete silos stood out against the sky. A smaller version of the project is now in operation.

When you reach Twp Rd 772, take a side trip west to where the first farmers, including Alex Edey and Julius Jolly, settled in the Bridgeview area in 1928-30. Alex Edey was the local blacksmith, with a forge and anvil ready to repair and create new machinery parts. Julius Jolly was the shoemaker. The first families were all wiped out in a forest fire in 1931, barely escaping with their lives.

To the north you have a good view of the south face of White Mountain, where the Kirkness family operated a ranch for the Hudson's Bay Company in the late 1800s. Later, tobogganing down the sides of this mountain was a favourite winter sport for the young people of the district.

A little further west was Pring's Mill Trail, a former Indian pack trail which already existed when the land was surveyed from 1911-1919.

In 1929, George Pring established a sawmill in the timber to the south-west. The mill had a steam engine, sawmill and planer, and was fed by natural water springs. The site included log cabins for the men who brought their families, and barns for the workers' cows. Some of the men batched in a large two-storey house near the mill, but Matt Kozabeck also ran a boarding house there.

These mills were an important source of winter work for homesteaders, even if they were paid in lumber instead of ready cash. The mill was also the source for the sawdust in the ice houses which preserved winter ice for summer water. This timber berth was wiped out in the 1931 fire.

Back on Secondary Highway 731 continue south into the Bridgeview area. Look for the coulee where the first bridge was built in 1929, just before the Bridgeview Store and Post Office. These buildings

are gone but the school is still there, marked by a line of Manitoba maple trees, as well as the Church, with its square porch and steeple, and a small cemetery tucked in behind.

Bridgeview School was built in 1929 and closed in 1953. The site included a teacherage and an ice house. Inside the school was a baby grande piano. After the school was closed, the building became the Unifarm Hall for Local 1506. The church, Bridgeview Alliance Tabernacle, was established by the Christian & Missionary Alliance in 1939. It closed in 1967, and for a time was a community church. The graveyard is looked after by Grace Gospel Chapel in Spirit River.

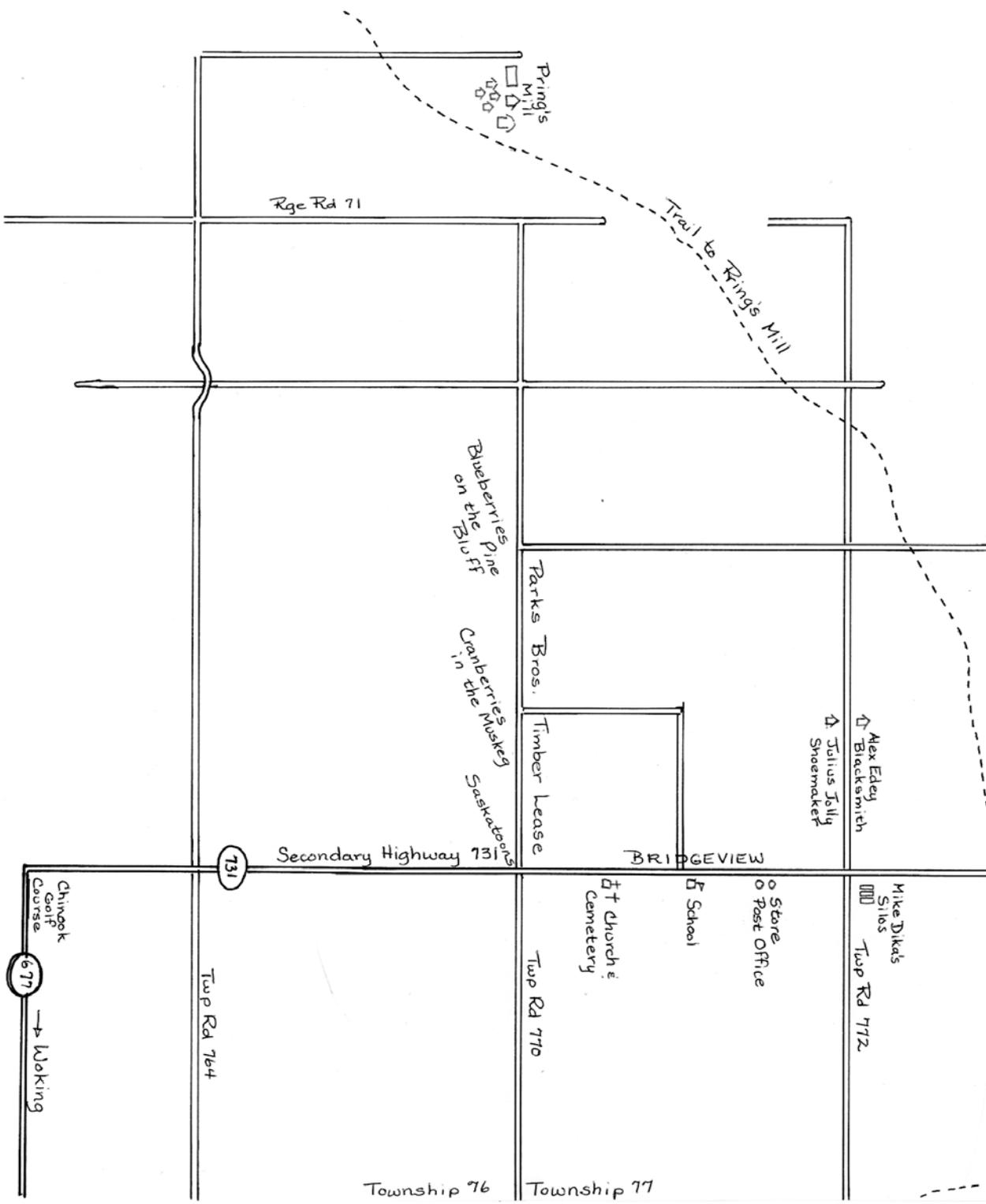
Another side trip west down Twp Rd 700 will take you through where the Park Brothers had their timber lease in 1947, another source of winter work for the men. In the summer this was where the families could find saskatoons along the edge of the bush, cranberries in the muskegs, blueberries on the pine bluffs, and raspberries at the old Pring's Mill site at the end of the road. Wild strawberries seemed to grow in everyone's pasture.

This is the southern border of the White Mountain-Bridgeview area. Following Highway 731 south will take you out of the past, through Woking and back to Highway No. 2.

Sources:

[Memories and Moments of White Mountain, Willowvale and Bridgeview](#)

Alberta Registries, Township Maps



Ring's Mill

Rge Rd 71

Trail to Ring's Mill

Blueberries Pine on the Cliff

Cranberries in the Muskeg

Saskatoon's

Parks Bros.

Timber lease

Alex Edey Blacksmith
Julius Jolly Shoemaker

Mike Dikals Shoes
Twp Rd 772

Secondary Highway 731

BRIDGEVIEW

Store
Post Office
School

Ch. Church & Cemetery

Twp Rd 770

731

Twp Rd 764

Township 76

Township 77

Chinook Golf Course

677

Woking

Winter's Ending

Winter's Ending

by

Alice (John) O'Brien

and Margaret (O'Brien) Bowes

My Grandmother's parents came from Wales and her father was a miner. They lived in Bend, Oregon and then moved to Nanaimo, B.C. where there was work for miners.

Grandmother had several siblings and since her mother died when our Grandmother was quite young, it meant she had to do a lot of the household work as well as attend school.

Grandmother loved many school subjects, especially poetry. She could recite pages of poems from the classics. At the young age of 18 she began teaching. The attached picture shows our Grandmother with her class of 52 students of all ages. Grandmother taught at Ladysmith. Nanaimo is where she met our Grandfather Dr. Lewis J. O'Brien who was the doctor for the mines in Nanaimo. They were married in 1903 and in 1904 our father Herb O'Brien was born. Next our uncles Gurth, and Eric were born, then our Aunt Margaret and then Uncle Hugh. Both Uncle Gurth and Uncle Hugh became doctors. Our father Herb was killed as a result of a car-train accident in 1931.

Grandfather joined the army in 1914 and served in what was then called Salonika. Conditions were terrible for the soldiers and the medical staff were always short of the necessary supplies. When Grandfather returned to Nanaimo after the war he decided he would like to move to a "new frontier" and try to forget the tragedies of war. So he and Grandmother left their nice home in Nanaimo with all its conveniences and moved to Grande Prairie with their five children. No water and sewer but there was electricity!

*"Mother, it seems this winter's never ending,
So long it is since first we had the snow.
I loved it then, but now I am so weary
Of winter's cold and long to have it go."*

*"Have patience, dearest child, o'er all the prairie
Soon will the pasque flower's dress of mauve be seen
and in the near-by bluffs the slender poplars
Will clothe themselves in lacy robes of green.*

*The little stream that flows below our dwelling,
Released once more from winter's icy chain
By warm winds stealing through mountain passes
Soon will begin its journeying again.*

*The wild birds soon among its fringing willow
Will build their nests, and from the tallest tree
In that tall group of balm of gileads near us
The redwing blackbird pipes his notes of glee.*

*The meadowlark will pour from yonder fence-post
It's liquid music through the pleasant air,
The robins' cries of mingled fright and anger
Will warn us some marauding cat is near.*

*We'll rush to watch the wild geese flying northward
From lands become too warm for them to bear
And wish that we had wings" – Oh listen, mother,
Did you not hear the call of the killdeer?"*

Alice O'Brien

Winter's Ending.

"Grandmother, it seems this winter's never ending,
So long it is since first we had the snow.
I loved it then, but now I am so weary
Of winter's cold and long to have it go."

"Have patience, dearest child, o'er all the prairie
Soon will the pasque flowers dress of mauve be seen,
and in the near-by bluffs the slender poplars
Will clothe themselves in lay robes of green."

The little stream that flows below our dwelling
Released once more from winter's icy chain,
By warm winds stealing through the mountain passes
Soon will begin its journeying again.

The wild birds soon among its fringing willow
Will build their nests and from the tallest tree
In that tall group of balsam of gileade near us
The redwinged blackbird pipeth notes of glee.

The meadow-lark will pour from yonder ferny pen,
It is liquid music through the pleasant air,
The robin's cries of mingled fright and anger
Will warn us some ^{paran} ~~man~~ ^{thing} is near.

We'll rush to watch the wild geese flying
From lands become too warm for them to bear
and wish that we had wings - O golden mother
Did you not hear the call of the hill deer? is
Alice O'Brien.

Grandmother always took the time to play card games, picnic at the Wapiti with us (now called O'Brien Park) and recite poetry. She also composed poems and we think "Winter's Ending" is beautiful and would like to share it with you.

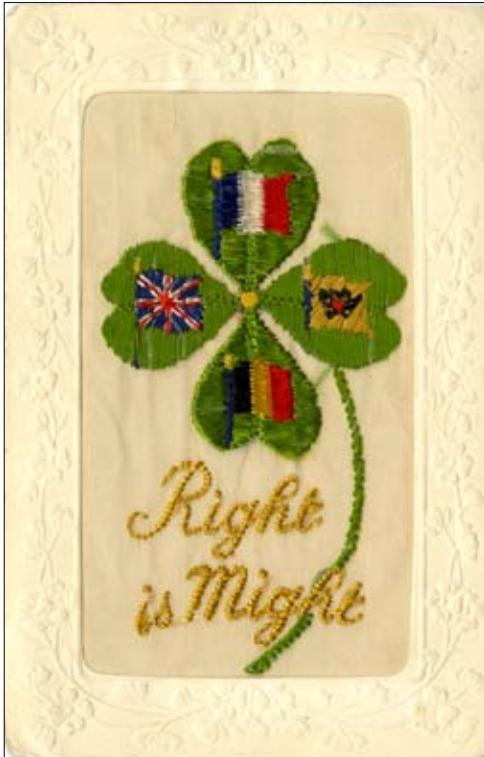
Both Grandmother and Grandfather are buried beside their sons Herb and Gurth, daughter-in-law Jean (Alexander) O'Brien, their daughter Margaret and son Hugh and grandson Sean O'Brien at the Grande Prairie Cemetery.



Right, Alice John with her class of 52 students of various ages in Ladysmith, B.C. ca. 1900. SPRA 2011.18
Above right, Alice with her husband Dr. L.J. O'Brien in Grande Prairie ca. 1945. SPRA 177.89



John Pringle, War Correspondent



A World War I postcard inset with Flemish embroidery. On the reverse side is written: "To "Jeannie" from "Jack" Pringle France Feb 16 - '16." A later notation states: "Oct 2 - 16 word reached Spirit River of his death. Killed in action." SPRA 1996.5.1. The Jeannie referred to was Jean Alexander, the mother of Margaret Bowes.

John Percival Pringle arrived in the Peace Country in 1912, filing on a homestead just north of the Spirit River Settlement on September 24th. When World War I started in 1914, he walked some 200 miles from Spirit River to the end of the railway, which then brought him to Edmonton to enlist in the 101st Battalion.



Spirit River about the time John Pringle left in 1916.
SPRA 2001.01.009.

Following is a partial transcript of a letter written to a friend, telling him of his journey out to enlist.

September 12, 1915

It is well over a year now since I came away. I had a hard trip of it that time & will never forget it. I pulled out very early that morning and the only one I remember seeing being Claude Knowle until I got down near the Burnt (River) where I saw Mr. & Mrs. Parks. Made Egg Lake that day getting into Clyde Smith's camp next morning.

Had trouble that day getting all balled up in the country east of Egg Lake owing to surveyors cutting so many new trails. Made the Cache at the top of the hill on the far side of the Smoky that night. Left there next morning intending to only go to Round Lake but when I got there about supertime I heard a boat was going down the lake next day so decided to hit for Grouard.

Wow! I have had some "hikes" at different times but that "took the biscuit". You can figure the distance if you want to & you can see it was no snap especially the latter part over that fierce Round Lake trail on a black night. Hit Grouard early next morning dead tired but still going strong until away around near the mission. I met a fellow who said the boat didn't go until night. I flopped right there beside the road & slept for three hours when I hit for town.

There I met Pete Nord (killed), Roy Flaherty (killed), Harry Coombes (wounded) & several more. Two or three of us decided to take the boat that night the rest to come in a day or two.

We reached SawRidge the next morning early and as luck would have it the first through train from SawRidge to Edmonton ran that day and we caught it. I made it to Edmonton in five days, which wasn't bad. R. Harvey had left Spirit River two days ahead of me on horseback and I beat him to Edmonton by a whole day. We were there until the next Saturday where we pulled out for Valcartier....

In January the 9th battalion moved to Fichworth along with the 11th, 12th and 17th to form the base Brigade. We were broken up there and drafted to different battalions to bring them up to strength. I came to the 2nd last spring along with a few from my own Company... I am glad to hear that a number of the boys have joined and I hope I am alive to see some of them later on...

Lieutenant Pringle wrote regularly to the Grande Prairie Herald from the trenches in France, giving the people back home a glimpse into the lives of boys at the front lines, as shown in the following headlines and excerpts from letters to the Grande Prairie Herald.

Coy. Sergt. Major Pringle Wounded by
Shrapnel--Heavy Cannonading is
Very Trying on the Nerves

March 24, 1916

Last Thursday was particularly trying for the shells were big ones and between noon and five o'clock, Fritz [Germany] managed to send nearly eight hundred shells over the section we were occupying. Of these fifty-two failed to explode and about one hundred and eighty were high explosive shrapnel, leaving close on to six hundred of the 'big boys' to worry us. That may not seem like a great many, but when you see a shell flash past you, drop, burst and leave a hole twelve feet across and ten feet deep, its rather nervous work waiting for the six hundredth to come!

Names of Many Local Boys
Appear in Casualty Lists
Canadian Casualty Lists Contain Over a Thousand Names
in Two Days--Local Contingents Are in
Thick of Fighting

May 16, 1916

I am sitting up in my blankets and having just given my clothes a thorough going over for "seam squirrels" [fleas], will be comfortable enough for a time, to allow of a letter being written to you... [The fleas] seem to dig themselves in at night and even after months of constant association I cannot get accustomed to them. You know of course that they are a great plague, but I don't think anyone of you realize how the discomfort caused by them runs a man down.

May 23, 1916

They say that one hundred thousand men lie buried in this valley and I can well believe it. One's thoughts take queer quirks sometimes and I know that as we silently picked our way along the road I could almost feel the spirits of that mighty army of the dead around us.

August 4, 1916

It's just two years ago today that Britain jumped in and got her feet wet out here and two years ago next week since I left in the early morning for outside, surely afraid that Peace would be declared before I could get out. Waugh! They have been two wonderful years, years that I would not have missed for anything and yet years that have meant more to the world than equal previous time in history, and years that to many of us will mark a period where all things else stood still. I am rather curious to know just what will happen when it is all over.

Lieut. Pringle Charges German
Machine Gun Single Handed
Was Shot and Instantly Killed Just as He Reached Parapet
After Shooting Members of German Gun Crew--Ontario
Officer Describes Action as Bravest He Ever Saw

What Archives Do and Why We Do It

by Leslie Pearson, B Sc, MAS

Author's Note: We've had another question from one of our readers, sort of. Gord Mackey is one of our Board members and a family member of his posed an interesting question, which Gord later asked us. We thought it would be a great candidate for a fuller explanation here in the newsletter, just in case any of you have ever had similar thoughts. And thanks to all (any?) readers that were disappointed not to see this column in the December 2011 issue!

If you are a long-time reader of ours, you may remember the column from our March 2011 issue on digitization. If not, here's a quick refresher to bring you up to speed. Digitization is when information is transferred from an analogue form (ie. documents, photographs, film, tape, etc.) to a digital form stored electronically and accessed using a computer.

Gord's relative asked why an archives would keep the original material once it has been digitized. This is a reasonable question. If the originals don't need to be kept, archives would require a lot less storage space and spend a lot less money rehousing all those old records in acid-free folders and boxes and caring for fragile media like tape and film, right?

Storage of original material at SPRA.



While both these observations are true, archives take into account much more than storage space and saving money when they decide what to keep and what not to keep. The main focus of the Archives is always on preserving the original material, whether there are digital or other copies, or not. There are several reasons for this.

One issue is the value of the original material itself. Digitization is not able to duplicate the entire look and feel of the original. Most archival material is digitized as a two-dimensional image of whatever the record is, yet even paper and photographs are three dimensional objects. If a more complex and expensive digitization process is used, you might be able to go around the material, turn it over, zoom in to see the texture of the paper, etc., but being able to manipulate a document or photograph onscreen is not the same as holding that same record in your hands. And that brings us to the idea of nostalgia. Which would you prefer: finding a photograph of your great-grandfather, whom you had never met, and being able to actually touch it, turn it over and read the personal inscription on the back in his handwriting or seeing the same photograph posted on a website, with the knowledge that the original has been destroyed? This reasoning might seem a trifle sentimental, but there is a special connection that seems to occur through physical contact with an original record, that is simply not possible in the digital realm.

Another reason is authenticity. If someone ever needs to verify the authenticity of a document or photograph, that it is what it says it is and can be trusted, it would be important for the authenticator to have access to the original. You've seen those television programs, they are always looking at the paper, the ink, etc. to see if they are consistent with the materials in use at the time the document was created. Sometimes fragments are even removed for chemical testing. This would be impossible if the original had been destroyed in favour of a digital copy.

You may be thinking, “That’s fine, but who is ever going to need to authenticate my grandpa’s farm records?” Another reason is that the digital copy is never as good as the original. Some detail is always lost in the transfer process. The amount of detail visible is also dependent on the resolution at which the object was scanned. For example, we recently had a request for a regimental photograph. Using a magnifying glass, you can see tiny details on the faces of each soldier. I could scan it at our normal resolution of 3000 pixels along the longest side (300dpi for an 8x10 inch image). The photograph at this resolution would look fine on the wall, but if you tried to zoom in on the faces in the photograph, they would be pixelated and all you would see would be a bunch of squares. Or I could scan it at a much higher resolution of 6000 pixels along the longest side (600dpi for an 8x10 inch image) which would allow us to pick out individual faces and their details. Now you might be thinking, “So what’s the problem, if you need to scan at high resolution to get the detail, just do it!” The issue with scanning everything to that high of a resolution is that the created files take up much more memory space, take longer to load, and can be harder to manipulate. And it’s not all that often that you need to see the minute details or have an image able to be enlarged to poster-sized for display. But sometimes you do. If the original is gone, you are stuck with whatever resolution the image was scanned at.

There’s another reason for keeping the originals



Left, portion of regimental photo at 350 dpi. Right, portion of same photo at 87.5 dpi.

connected to scanning. Technology is always improving and changing. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the scanning technology and programs of the future will be better than what is available to us now, potentially allowing us to capture greater detail using less memory, etc. If we’ve preserved the originals, we’ll always have the option of going back and transferring the material again, using our better technology. If the originals are no longer in existence, we will be forfeiting that opportunity. For example, some of you may remember the mimeograph machines that used to be in common use for duplicating documents. Today, even a low-cost desktop photocopier that you could easily have in your home does a better job.

Another factor to consider is the cost of digitization. The kinds of records preserved by archives are frequently fragile and are not suitable for high-volume batch digitization, which would be cheaper, but could easily damage them. Most archives also operate with small budgets that do not allow for large amounts of money (or time) to be spent on digitization. Choices have to be made as to what should be digitized. If the vast majority of archival records are not being digitized and need to be kept in their original form, there would be little gain in destroying the small number that have been digitized.

The long-term preservation of digital files also presents a problem. The examination and preparation of digital preservation methods and strategies is a key area of current archival research, with

varying degrees of success. There are numerous theories and proposals, but a permanent, reliable, readily-available, affordable solution to long-term digital preservation has yet to be developed. The only thing that is certain is that the long-term preservation of digital material will continue to be a huge challenge for archives in the years to come. Smaller archives particularly, with their more limited amounts of resources and exper-

tise, have a difficult time ensuring that the digital objects they create will be able to be accessed and used long into the future. If the longevity of digital files is in question, surely it is only common sense to maintain the original analogue material just in case the digital files become inaccessible. In addition, going digital is not without cost. The money you are hoping to save by not having to store and care for the originals can quickly get eaten up in the costs associated with storing and maintaining the digital files.

As an archives, we are concerned not just with preserving information, but the records themselves. Does this mean that digitization is a bad idea? Of course not. If you read my March 2011 column, you'll remember how useful a tool digitization can be, especially for providing access for long-distance researchers and as a method of preservation for some of our more unstable materials, like magnetic tape. But I hope you are now aware of how important it is to keep the originals too.

Continued from p. 7. "Adoptees are Angels"

In 1982 while I was in Vancouver I called Parent Finders. They advised me she was ready to visit on the phone. When I called I said, "This is Janet, born in 1933"! p a u s e... and we visited for 2 hours, I felt complete and she sounded so happy but she hadn't told her other children, but Dan knew I existed. She hadn't told him we had been in contact.

Can you imagine raising your family, honestly and omitting to tell them you had made a mistake at 20 and the result you gave up for adoption? Think for a moment, at 80 you have to fess up!?

We lost contact for 10 years because of different moves we'd both made. I knew if we were ever to meet it would have to be soon.

In 1992 there was an Adoption Agency Registry that I called and yes, here is the phone number.

The phone call was made at 12:00 "This is Janet Ann." "Oh where are you? Can we meet?" "Yes we can meet, what time is good?" "2:00 PM."

Let's take a cab so we don't get lost!—guess what, the cabbie got lost! But we made it by 1:50 and I stood with my finger on the buzzer of their condo.

We looked at each other and then we were in each others' arms—She stroked my face as she had done when I was a new baby, "You are still my beautiful baby"! Tears of joy flowing freely!

Dan, my mother's husband, came home from his usual game of golf. "You are Alice" he said as he wrapped his arms around me. What a warm caring soul. We spent the afternoon there talking of our children, they were so interested in the likenesses, the things we take for granted when we are a normal family—whatever that is!

We visited often, phoned and wrote—due to health and age they couldn't fly here and driving was too hard for them, so we made the most of the visits we did have.

By now our small community had sixteen adopted children. We are all very close and seem to be more like brothers and sisters, keeping in touch.

In 1998 we had a reunion of all the adoptees who could come—what a great gathering with twelve adoptees and their spouses. We told of finding our roots through Parent Finders and how complete we feel now.

My life is complete and I feel at peace knowing where I came from, I understand the hurt my mother went through giving me up, how she battled with herself, meeting me after sixty five years and telling her secret to her other children.

We are both now at peace with ourselves and God. We're proud and thankful to have healthy, well adjusted, loving and caring children and families.

Every ending is a part of a beginning.

Editor's Note: Alice has compiled a book with the same title as this article, containing first-person accounts of many of the adopted children at Peoria. It is available for research at the archives.

New at the Archives

Recent Acquisitions

Evy McBryan slide collection,
by Ken Belke

Many and Remarkable:
Alberta's Women's Institutes
by Betty Welter

Maps of Grande Prairie & Flying Shot Lake
by Oliver's Funeral Home

Montrose School Scrapbooks
by Noel Beauchamp

Lake Saskatoon Community Club records
by Kathy Sebastian

Grande Prairie Composite High School yearbooks
by Gail Frey

"Hockey Legends" 2006 & 2008
by Stan Neufeld

Looking for Organization Histories?

Check out the new "Organizations" database--
find the link on the front page
of the SPRA website.

This is the first installment in a project to transcribe the Isabel Campbell newspaper index from the Grande Prairie Public Library.

Thank you to Kathryn Auger
and Leita Askiw
for their hard work.

The next installment will be the names portion of the index, which will be great for genealogy!

POW Documents Transcribed

Thank you to volunteer
Randy Repka

for transcribing papers from Library & Archives Canada regarding the Prisoner of War workers at the Hales Ross Lumber camp .

These papers are now available for research.

Are You Enjoying This Newsletter?

Would you like to receive it mailed to your home four times a year? It's free when you are a member of the South Peace Regional Archives Society. See the Membership Form on the back of the newsletter. You can also give memberships as gifts to friends or family.

Submissions to this Newsletter

SPRA Society encourages submissions in the form of stories, poems, memories, letters. Do you have a story, or does someone you know have a story about the past in the south Peace? Submit it to us by mail or e-mail, or call us at 780-830-5105.

Benefits of Membership

- Be actively involved in preserving the history of this area.
- Have a voice in keeping archival collections in the Peace River Country.
- Become more aware of the issues and types of collections in archives.
- Receive a quarterly newsletter and notice of meetings & events.

South Peace Regional Archives Society Membership/Renewal Form

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Interested in being involved as a
_____ volunteer
_____ board member

There are two types of membership:

Full membership--get involved in the society, 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: spr@telus.net

Society and Member News

Notice of Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers

for the

South Peace Regional Archives Society

on Saturday, March 24, 2012

in the Community Room at the

Grande Prairie Museum

Schedule:

10:00 a.m. Grande Prairie Museum

Society AGM and

Isabel Campbell Museum Award

11:00 a.m. South Peace Regional

Archives Society AGM and

Beth Sheehan Archives Award

12:00 noon Combined Lunch (suggested
\$5 donation)

**We hope to see all members with
voting privileges there!**

Interested in being a Board Member?

**The Society is seeking two new board
members to serve for three-year terms.
Meetings are held four times a year--in
April, June, October and January, on
Fridays from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.**

**Phone Mary at 780-830-5105
for more information.**