



## Keeping History Current



**An old water pump on an abandoned farmstead**

## Events

Unfortunately, the Kleskun Lake /Ranch tour has been postponed due to the pandemic situation. The tour has been planned, but will have to wait for better times. The Special Meeting will be carried out via electronic means.

The Board is currently developing events to be presented this winter if conditions permit. They include:

: October/November – a presentation on a relatively unknown radar line that ran through the Saddle Hills during the Cold War.

: January/February – a film event, titled “Canada’s New Farmlands” produced in 1947, featuring the Peace River Country, especially the Grande Prairie area.

: March/April – a presentation on the Land Settlement Data Base results that PCHS helps fund.

## President's Message

Hello;

This is the fall edition of our Newsletter. The Canada geese are starting to gabble about the trip south.

Despite the heat, the smoke, and the pandemic, I hope members were able to enjoy some aspects of summer. Here's hoping for an open and warm fall.

Some PCHS members participated in the Forbes Tea and Tour this summer, but the field tour to the Kleskun Lake Ranch area had to be cancelled. As noted elsewhere here, there are events planned for the winter period, but they will depend on the circumstances at the time.

There is a variety of topics found in this edition of the newsletter. We list reasons why people might like to join the PCHS, but follow that with an interesting reason to resign.

Articles following include the Heritage Fair, the Old Bezanson Townsite, past forest fires, and the visit of a Canadian historian to Peace River.

My thanks to all the writers who stepped forward for this edition.

Enjoy.

Regards  
Pat Wearmouth, PCHS

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## Notice

The Historic Society of Alberta has enacted a policy on membership dues. Members will be reminded to renew after three months, and removed from membership after six months if no renewal is forthcoming. The Society keeps the master membership list, and receives dues on our behalf. Please go their website, [www.albertahistory.org](http://www.albertahistory.org), to renew memberships or to join. Or contact them in the Calgary office at: Phone 403-261-3662 or Email [info@albertahistory.org](mailto:info@albertahistory.org) The office is open for phone calls Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the first and third week of each month, from 9:00am to 3:pm. Payment options include sending a cheque or paying by credit card over the phone

## Peace Country Historical Society

*P.O. Box 687 Station Main  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3A8*

**Vision:** To encourage the appreciation of the history of the Peace Country.

**Mandate:** The mandated area of the Peace Country Historical Society is the Alberta portion of the Peace River Country.

### Board of Directors

Pat Wearmouth – President  
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Susan Thomson – Heritage Fair, Education Kits  
David Leonard – Advocacy & Land Settlement  
Pat Wearmouth – Newsletter  
Charles Taws – Web presence

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## What We Can Offer

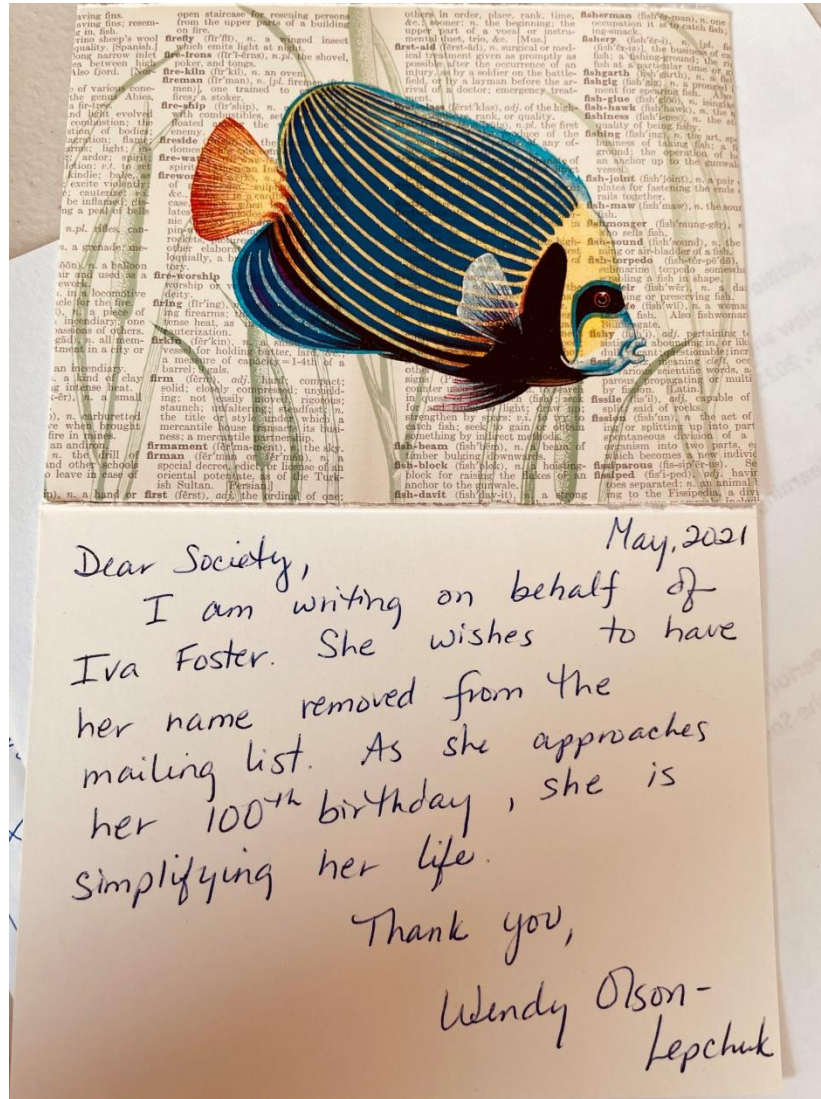
- A chance to help set direction for our Peace Country Chapter, and to learn about Peace Country history, at membership meetings.
- A chance to meet other people who enjoy history.
- A chance to contribute as a volunteer in various projects that we carry out.
- A chance to advocate for the history of our area,
- A chance to get out and see various historical sites in the region

We hope that you choose to continue your membership in our Society.

And if you are not a member yet, please consider joining. The same contacts work for you as well.

## A Society Member Resigns

This past spring the Peace Country Historical Society received notification that a long time member, Iva Foster, wished to resign her membership. We thought you might enjoy the notification and the reason she gave for her leaving us. The card was sent by Iva's granddaughter.



We wish you the best of luck Iva.

## A Brief History of the Northern Alberta Heritage Fair

Daryl White

In 1994, I assembled a model of Egypt's Great Pyramid out of clay bricks in small moulds. Along with a tri-fold board covered in pages designed on a Macintosh Classic II that belonged to family friends, it was my entry into the school's heritage fair. It was well-received and I went on to exhibit my project at a city-wide fair at the New Sudbury Shopping Centre. I didn't know it at the time, but my pyramid was an entry in one of the early heritage fairs in Canada held in the mid-1990s under the sponsorship of the Charles R. Bronfman Heritage Project.

The fair then looked much the same as heritage fairs do now. Students work alone or with a partner, choose a topic, research it, and then construct a display. The trusty tri-fold boards are the norm, with historical images, information from research, and often bibliographies on display. Students also keep copies of their research notes as part of their interview with the judges, when their depth of knowledge and understanding are assessed. Many students have models or props and some wear period costume. The projects are evaluated on their research, originality and creativity, and the strength of their interview.

Years later, having moved to Grande Prairie to teach at the College, I volunteered to judge at the 2011 Heritage Fair held at Maude Clifford Public School. The Fair definitely had some projects that lived up to my history teacher mother's complaint of the preponderance of "tin foil Stanley Cups," but many showed the same sort of passion for history that had drawn me to my project nearly two decades earlier.



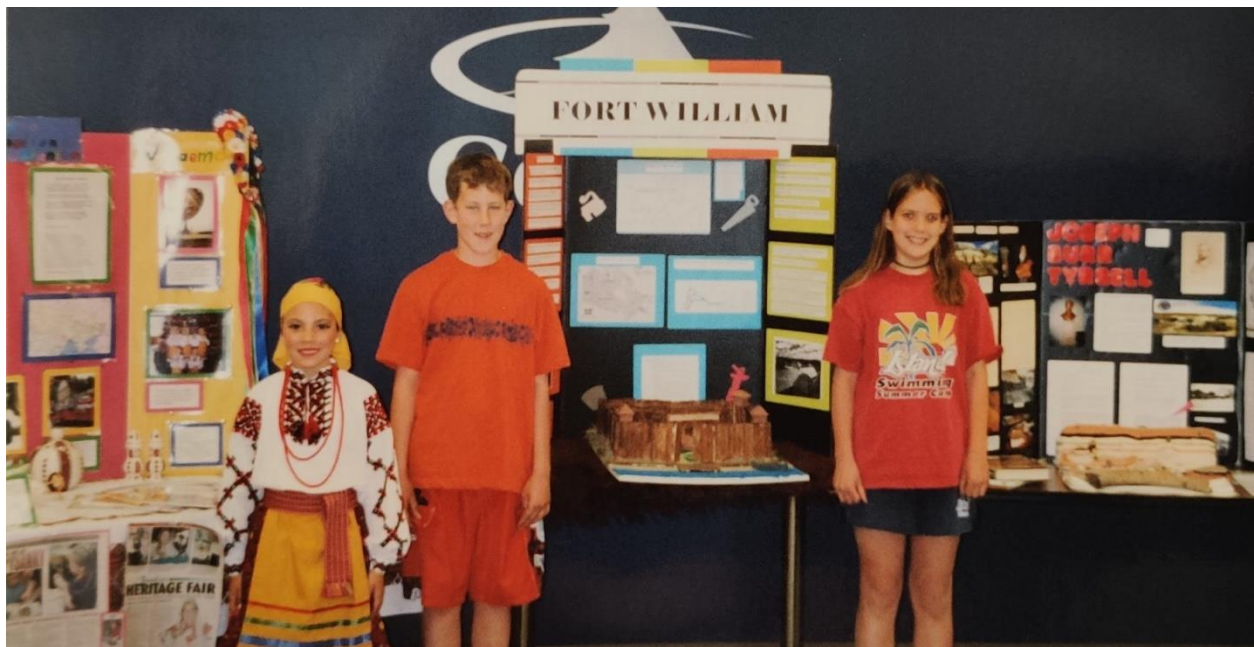
**Shirley Fredrickson (L) and Lynn Page-Scott**

Running the Northern Alberta Heritage Fair that year was a woman well known to many of us in the Peace Region heritage community. Shirley Fredrickson was small in stature and already 77 years of age but had a forceful presence when she needed it. People I spoke to in Alberta's heritage community regularly commented that they were amazed at what Shirley accomplished, bringing so many students together on a limited budget. She had coordinated the Fair since 2006 and continued to for another couple of years before letting Susan Thomson and me take over much of the leg work while Shirley stayed on as an advisor. Shirley's enthusiasm for the Fair was evident to any who volunteered with her and came through in her comments to the *Herald Tribune* that "some of the things they do . . . it totally amazes me and amazes me every year what these children can come up with." Since Shirley's passing in 2017, the Fair has awarded a "Shirley Fredrickson prize" to the student we felt best represented Shirley's dedication to the spirit of the Fair and a passion for history.



Shirley's involvement with the Fair began with her work at the Heritage Discovery Centre, part of the Grande Prairie Museum. The Museum had supported the fair since 1995 and worked in partnership with Lynn Page-Scott, a teacher from Good Shepherd School in Peace River, though the files we have do not show if Page-Scott was the lead in Peace River the entire time. There was a Grande Prairie district fair held to select participants for the regional fair which rotated annually between Peace River and Grande Prairie. While national funding first under the Bronfman Heritage Project and then under the Historical Foundation had ended, a number of local sponsors and Museums Alberta provided material support. Before Shirley took over the fair, the Museum often contracted individuals to handle the coordinator role. Treena Kennedy and Lana Pfau both served as coordinators in the early 2000s.

The Northern Alberta Heritage Fair was and is just one of many across Canada. In the early 2000s, there was a national fair and the regional winners got the chance to exhibit their projects at sites across the country. Alison Crerar took her War of 1812 project to Hull, Quebec. She was joined by Shiron Brennan and Sadie Oberle from Peace River with projects on Brennan's family history.



**Students at the Sudbury Fair 2003**

## **Archaeology at the Old Bezanson Town Site**

**Pat Wearmouth & Wanda Zenner**

Most of our members will be familiar with the Old Bezanson townsite. It is located southeast of the current hamlet of the same name. Both are named after A.M. Bezanson, an early promoter of settlement in the Peace River Country.

Bezanson founded the townsite in 1910, based on his belief that a railway would soon arrive there from the southeast. Residences, a church, and several commercial buildings were constructed as the townsite developed. When the rail arrived in Grande Prairie in 1916 from the north, his hopes were dashed. He left the region and the town was abandoned. Some buildings were moved to the new Bezanson on the highway. Others were repurposed, or simply left to their fate.

The buildings however, left footprints in the form of cellars and berms (foundations). This past summer some initial exploratory archaeology work was carried out on these footprints. The work was done by two investigators, Drs. Meaghan Peuramaki-Brown and Shawn Morton. They are instructors at Athabasca University and Grande Prairie Regional College respectively.

The project's aims are to supplement the historical record of Old Bezanson, determine the archaeological potential of the site to become a larger project, and to share the findings with others.

Work was carried out using a technique called shovel testing. This is a quick way to discover what lies below the ground surface, and indicates where a chance of further discoveries might be found.

To begin with, provincial permits were obtained to do the work. Next a reconnaissance survey of the Old Town site was carried out to discover where the old cellars and berms (foundations) were located. Many of these are already known and marked. PCHS member, Wanda Zenner, was involved in this, as she is familiar with the site's history. From the reconnaissance survey, the archaeologists chose sites to sample.

The sampling process consisted of first laying out a north/south line through the cellars and berms. Five metre intervals were marked along the lines, and at these marks, a shovel created a 40 by 40 centimetre divot in the ground. The soil from these was screened for

artifacts. Items found were catalogued for further assessment. The process can be followed through the pictures below.



Artifacts discovered included nails, glass, and in one divot, a flake from the process of creating an arrowhead. The latter of course would be from a much older time than the other artifacts.



And speaking of artifacts, Wanda Zenner provided an interesting advertisement connected with the Old Town of Bezanson.

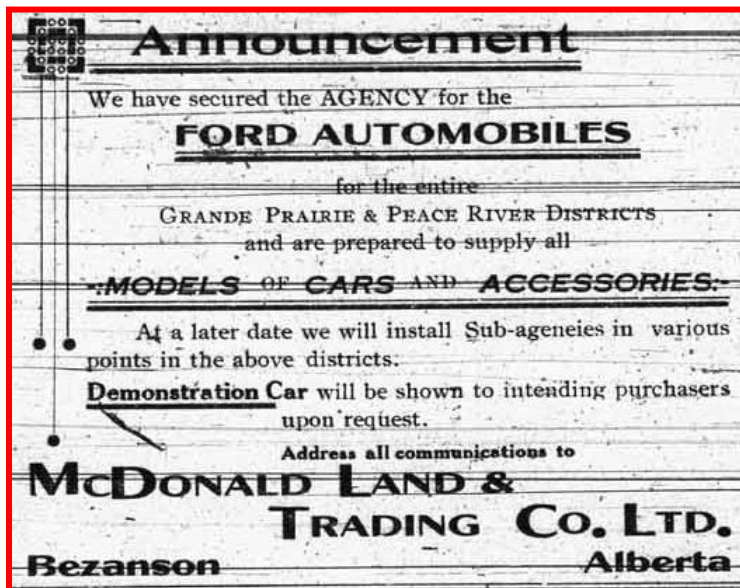
# **BEZANSON TOWNSITE**

## **“Ford Dealership”**

When you access the “Townsite” at this time, it is hard to imagine the extent of the business development that was once available to local residents. Once again, A.M. Bezanson’s ability to promote the Townsite as the hub of the Peace District was certainly evident when you realize that the only “Ford Dealership” in the area was located at the Townsite.

*The March 14, 1916 issue of the Grande Prairie Herald reported:*

**McDonald Land Co. to Locate Here**



“The McDonald Land & Trading Co., which recently purchased property on the corner of Main Street and Third Ave. South, has announced that construction will begin immediately on their large store, and that by the first of May the firm will be in a position to meet all the requirements of the hardware and furniture trade in this district. The company is one of the largest and most responsible firms to locate here. R.S. McDonald and E.E. Peterson, manager, formerly of International Falls, Minnesota, hold an enviable record in business

circles and are prepared to give a very comprehensive service to its future patrons.

In addition to hardware and furniture, the company will handle automobiles. They are agents in the Peace River Country for **the Ford Automobile Co.**, and on or about April 1, will receive their first shipment, comprising a carload of cars and accessories. In order to facilitate the work of selling automobiles and at the same time to afford accommodations to those who have cars, the McDonald Land & Trading Co., will put up a garage next to their store building. The firm will also deal in real estate, conducting a general business in farm and city property. The contract for the new store building has been awarded to E. E. Worden. Its dimension are 60 by 80 feet with a double front”.

*Rt - A.M. Bezanson and family with his Model T Ford taken near the Townsite.*



## **The Big Smokes**

### **Forest Fires of the Past**

#### **Pat Wearmouth**

This past summer was filled with the news of forest fires. And the summer skies were filled with their smoke. Alberta did not experience as severe a fire situation as many other provinces but the potential certainly existed.

Forest fires have been a part of the Peace Country's story for thousands of years. They have ranged in size and severity over time, largely dictated by a particular year's weather pattern. Forest fires are a two edged sword. They can wreak havoc on a mature forest and the wildlife habitat, the watershed protection, and the timber of commercial size that it provides. On the other hand, fire is actually the major means of forest renewal here. It removes the previous stands of trees, opens the area to sunlight, and releases the nutrients that make new forest growth possible. The forest development cycle begins again.

#### **Three summers of Smoke**

An early example of a severe and very large fire which affected the region comes to us from a story that Albert Hanson, a local lumberman, heard in 1961. The story was told to him by Mrs. Campbell, an Indigenous woman, who was thought to be about 103 years of age at the time.

In the late 1800s, she and her family were living at Lake Saskatoon. They made their living trapping muskrats in "Bear Swamp", situated where Bear Lake is now. At the time there was only a very narrow channel of open water across the swamp. On the four mile trip across the swamp, there were only three places where their canoe could be turned around. Mrs. Campbell's job was to skin the muskrats that her husband took out of their traps. He would reset the trap and they would carry on. She stated that they did very well.

But in 1889 it quit raining. The local forests started to burn. The fires burned for three years, on the surface in the summers, smoldering underground through the winter, and flare up again in the spring.

She described to Albert how the fires burned. First the needles would burst into flame and burn off. Then the ground would start to burn and the tree roots were burn off and the trees would fall down. The tree trunks would then burn up. By time the burning was finished there was nothing left but ashes.

To survive, Mrs. Campbell's family spent the worst days of the fires in Lake Saskatoon, with the children being held over the parent's heads. Their belongings were buried along the shore of the Lake. They could come ashore in the evenings when the fire went down, but went back in the Lake in the day time.

The rains came back after 1891, but by then the family had left for higher country towards Chetwynd in B.C where hunting and gathering was still possible. They left mainly because there

was nothing left to eat, and no wood around Lake Saskatoon. When they came back three years later, there was still very little around the Lake and they moved on to the Pipestone Creek area. When they went to check the trap line they had used, there was now a lake rather than a swamp. The swamp had burnt out, and the rain had filled resulting depression which we now call Bear Lake.

Mrs. Campbell's story, although told years after the fact, is supported by records from tree age studies along the Alberta foothills. It appears that the fire she speaks to was part of a fire that consumed much of the forest between Jasper and the Grande Prairie. The age of the majority of pine trees, the major tree species in the area, were such that they had to have originated in the 1889 to 1891 period.

Other studies done in Alberta have found that the fire return cycle in this Foothills Forest ecosystem is around 200 years. To the east of the foothills in the Boreal Forest, the fire return cycle is more like 50 years. The point here is that over a 200 year period, a lot of organic material and debris can build up on the forest floor. This, and the lack of rain would have been a cause for the fires Mrs. Campbell described as being so devastating.

### **The River Ridge Fire**

The year 1938 was particularly bad for fires in the South Peace region. There was little snowfall in the winter of 1937/38, and rainfall in the spring was considerably below normal. The forests were exceedingly dry. Reports in the June editions of the Grande Prairie Herald stated that fires were scattered all along a line from Bay Tree in the west to McLennan in the east.

An early loss to fire that year was the Buffalo Lakes Lumber mill just south of Woking on the railway line. At the time this was the region's largest mill and employed many people. Jim Evans, the owner was not sure if it would be rebuilt, but in the end it was, much to the benefit of the local economy. Other smaller mills were lost as well, and many timber berths were fully or partially burnt out.

One of the hardest hit areas was north and west of Spirit River, in what are now the Blueberry, Gordondale, and Bonanza districts. The causes, it was established later, all had to do with careless burning of brush piles in land clearing operations, or trap line access trails. In the early years of settlement throughout the Peace Country there was a strong sense that the most important thing was to get farms developed. This is understandable, but it created constant friction between that necessity and the need to protect the forests. Forestry reports repeatedly mention frustration at the reluctance of Justices of the Peace to prosecute settlers burning without due care.

As the fire situation worsened, Howard Pegg, a local farmer was hired by the Spirit River forest ranger to patrol these fires. Patrol meant to follow the edge of the fire on horseback or foot, and look for fire places where fire might flare up again.. Based on patrol reports, firefighting crews could be placed where they would be most effective.

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, Pegg was moving a crew to a different location on once such fire, when he discovered a new fire northwest of Gordondale. This fire, which came to be called the River Ridge fire was already of considerable size, but was being damped down by some local rain showers.

Pegg and others patrolled the new fire's edge without encountering serious issues until July 15<sup>th</sup>. At this point the fire reports showed that there was a total of 128 miles of edge. However between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of July, the weather turned hot and windy and the fire began to move. From then until late September fire crews chased the fire east. Fire guards were constructed but the fire would escape as hot weather and wind drove it.. Despite the best efforts of crews, the River Ridge fire was not brought under control until October of that year. At that point, the fire exceeded 200,000 acres in size. It was the biggest fire by far ever to occur in that particular region.

In retrospect, this lack of control should not have been a surprise. In 2010, Jeff Henricks, a Provincial forest fire investigator, interviewed some of the men who worked on the River Ridge fire. Their stories illustrate how few resources were at their disposal to fight the fires. They described how they had to walk for miles from their homes to the fire. There were no camps for



them, so they slept under the shelter of spruce trees. All their fire line work was done with hand tools, those being axes, shovels, and five gallon water bags. There was no mechanized equipment available, nor road that could have used to speed up transport of supplies. Food was brought in by horse pack trains from the supply point in Spirit River, but that was often disrupted because fires blocked the pack trails.

The men said they knew at the time that they were not being very effective in preventing the spread of the fire, but they kept at it. They earned 15 cents an hour, and some were away from home for most of the summer.

**Typical firefighting crew and equipment from the 1930s/40s**

### **The Moosehill Fire**

The Moosehill fire was in the news as recently as 2019, as that year was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fire which occurred in May of 1944. The fire was probably best known because two young firefighters died in the fire, the first such occurrence in Alberta's fire history records.

The fire began near Webster and worked its way to the north and east. In its path was a sawmill owned by Jesse and Mildred Sanborn. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Trix Willis, the local forest ranger sent a crew to the mill to try and protect it from the fire. WWII was on, and Willis did not have a lot of able



bodied men available for fire crew duty. Among others, he sent three inexperienced young men, Wilfred Derocher (19) Ralph Klein (18), and Stanley Krzyczowski (20).

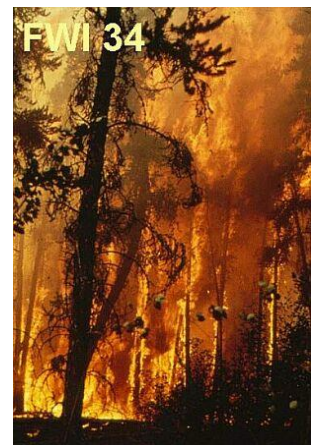
The fire crew arrived at the mill in the mid-morning and set about putting in protection measures. But by noon it was quite obvious from the increasing winds and smoke that the fire was not going to be stopped. Jesse Sanborn told the fire crew and his sawmill crew to get into the water pond that was on site for use in the mill's steam engine. He also asked the three young men to let the horses out of the barn before getting in the water. They did so, but when they came out of the barn, they became disorientated and could not see the pond.

After a few moments discussion, they decided to try and run through the fire in hopes of finding unburnt ground or at least cooled down. As they started out running, Raphael Klein slipped and fell, hitting his head on a stump and knocking himself out. Stanley K. who was in the lead turned to see that Klein was on the ground, and that Wilfred Derocher had turned back to try and help him. Stanley turned back as well, but was literally being burnt alive. He saw no movement of the other two, and expected the worst had happened. He turned again and headed west through the fire, making it to Webster and help. He survived, but spent months in the hospital recovering from his burns.

Back at the mill, the mill crew and remaining fire fighters huddled in the pond, only peeking out to breath. Their exposed flesh would almost immediately start to burn from the radiant heat. A few hours later, things had cooled enough that they were able to get out the water and do a head count. They knew then that the three young men were not with them. Since it was not known what had happened, the crews also made their way to Webster. The next morning, a search party went out to the mill site. They found the bodies of Derocher and Klein where they had fallen.

In hindsight, had Willis known how fast and ferocious the Moosehill fire was to become, he might well have made no attempt on control until things quieted down. Modern day firefighters use a tool called a Fire Weather Index (FWI) to predict how a fire will behave. The FWI is derived from Information on temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, and the amount and dryness of fuels. The higher the numerical index is, the worse the situation is going to be.

The index created from historical data for 1944 gave the Moosehill fire a rating of 110. For comparison, the recent fires at Slave Lake and Fort McMurray were 64 and 35 respectively far below the intensity of the 1944 fire.





On May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Alberta Forestry placed memorial plaque at the site of the Sanborn mill, in memory of the two young men who had died while fighting the forest fire.

This article started off stating that Alberta had not experienced the same level of fires as other places had in 2021. Bruce Mayer, Head of the Forestry Division in

Alberta explains how this likely came about.

*“It has been an interesting year for sure. We started off like everyone else watching the season unfold, first month or so wasn’t too abnormal. Then June/July hit, and wildfire took hold from Ontario west to BC, including AB. We had wildfires all across the north, with Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray being the hottest areas.*

*Then if you recall we had the ‘heat dome’ as it was called, and with that, lightning storms weren’t able to develop here, we had limited moisture in the ground to support any lightning. The heat dome had such high pressure; it kept those storms from developing. Then Alberta had east winds, and the smoke for a week or so steady; smoke from Ontario, MB and SK from the east at lower elevations; and at the same time, smoke from BC at the higher levels. This smoke allowed relative humidity to stay higher, and our wildfires settled down, giving us a break the other provinces didn’t get”.*

# Peace River through the eyes of Harold Innis

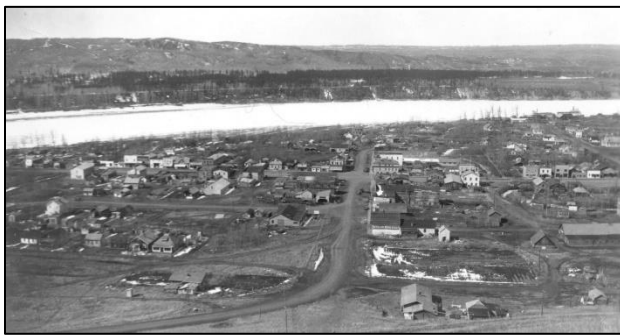
Daryl White

Harold Innis is a name that students of Canadian history know well. The University of Toronto historian and administrator was the author of several works, most notably *The Fur Trade in Canada*, the 1930 work which established an interpretation of Canadian history that influenced historians for decades. An economic determinist, Innis sought to explain the creation of Canada in terms of its resource development. The Europeans moved westward seeking Indigenous trappers and their valuable furs. This drew the French down the St. Lawrence and through the great river valleys, with La Verendrye reaching the Prairies, and later the Northwest Company pedlars continued that tradition to the Pacific. In doing so, they laid the east-west ties that defied the geographic structures of North America and created a national destiny distinct from the United States. A deep thinker about connections in human societies, Innis also wrote about the Canadian Pacific Railway and later broadened his studies into communications and influenced the work of Marshall McLuhan.

In the 1920s, Innis was a war veteran (with a shrapnel wound that continued to bother him) studying and writing for a Canada eager to establish its identity separate from Great Britain. He sought to understand Canada through trips that spanned the country. John Watson, an Innis biographer, describes Innis “ransacking” the towns he visited the way a historian would an archives. He sized up the communities and struck up conversations with the residents to get a sense of how the town, its economy, and its institutions worked. He took hundreds of pages of notes which are available in his papers at the University of Toronto.

In 1924, Innis undertook a trip that carried him across the Prairies and on into the Northwest Territories as he traced fur trade routes on the Peace and Mackenzie Rivers. In doing so, he left us a description of the town of Peace River through the eyes of one of Canada’s great historians.

Innis travelled before commercial flight was well-established, and thus he reached Peace River by rail. He noted that the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia Railway track was rough and, with the



Peace River 1928 - SPRA photo

train running only twice a week, also overcrowded. He changed trains at McLennan for the slow (average of ten miles per hour) trip to Peace River. The fifty-cent meals (approximately \$15 today) of chicken, dressing, potatoes, and pie seem to have made the experience a bit more pleasant.

As the train made its final 800-foot descent to the level of the Peace River and crossed the steel

bridge, Innis had his first look at the river and the town. He described it as a “frontier town. Large numbers of cafes and places with rooms. A considerable number of log-houses – several small houses . . . Board sidewalks. Second-hand shops – mostly guns. . . . Generally everything far advanced.”

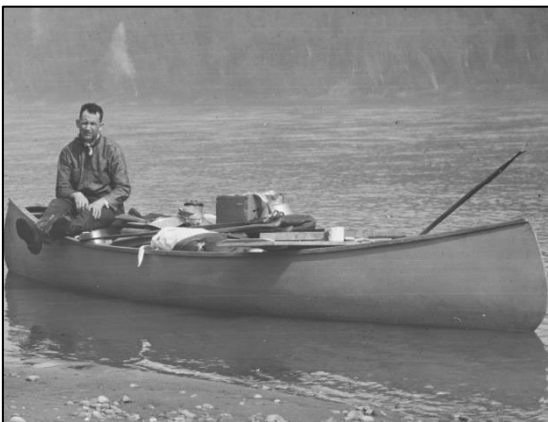
Innis’s notes clearly show him trying to get a sense of the history of the community. He noted that it was at the bottom of a “U” on the river and was “one of [the] best possible places for crossing.” For that

reason, it had been part of a route to the Klondike gold fields, with the NWMP building a barracks near the crossing. A ferry had been started in 1908 but was supplanted by the railway when the latter arrived in 1916, a development that led to the near disappearance of activity on the western bank. The first school had started in 1912 and the village was incorporated the following year, the same year the Bank of Commerce and fire hall opened. Innis also noted that H.F. "Twelve-foot" Davis was buried near the town, but apparently no one told him the 1893 date on his gravestone was incorrect (Davis died in 1900).

Innis sought to understand the economic base of the region. Mining had not panned out with the coal mines on the Heart River abandoned for want of a market and development capital while the Ingenika Gold Mining Company had sunk \$200,000 into prospects near Hudson Hope without any return. Forestry was doing better. The Fort Norman / Norman Wells oil rush of the early 1920s had generated a demand for lumber and the mills at McLennan continued to ship spruce to eastern Canada. Oil exploration was evident and Innis noted ten wells on the Peace within 30 miles downriver of the town.

Agricultural land was, of course, part of the great draw of the region in the early twentieth century. The region was shipping out 2.6 million bushels of no. 1 and no. 2 wheat. Innis curiously noted that there were "too many grain growers – an easy life." That observation seems to have come from conversation with the railway station agent and certainly stands in contrast to the familiar struggle of homestead farmers. Innis did note that cattle were difficult to raise in the region because of the cost and poor quality of the winter feed ("slough hay") and although Peace River had a dairy started as a partnership between the community and the Edmonton City Dairy, the cream was not as good as Central Alberta. He speculated that an experimental farm could help overcome a lack of skill (he made no reference to the Beaverlodge experimental farm which opened in 1917 and was Canada's most northerly such research facility).

The fur trade, naturally, loomed large in Innis's conversations, including one with prominent trader Sheridan Lawrence. Revillon Frères had bought out Bredin-Cornwall's posts in 1906 and ended the "cut-throat competition" which had prevailed but the Hudson Bay Company remained "very big buyers." By this point, the beaver pelts so important before Confederation had declined in importance in favour of foxes and coyotes. Innis detailed the cost of grub staking a trapper with firearm and ammunition, traps, and supplies for up to \$700 (approximately \$20,000 today) and while the average profits were reported to be three times that, Innis noted this was "probably exaggerated."



Peace River was but a stop on Innis' journey and he travelled on the *D.A. Thomas* for Vermilion Chutes before continuing by canoe to Fort Smith. Innis made a number of these journeys over the next few years, and they lent credibility to him as someone who had seen the facts on the ground, so to speak. In his notes from Peace River, one can see the early observations which formed the basis of his most famous conclusion: "River is a very important determining factor in direction of economic activity."