

Peace Country Historical Society
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Grande Prairie, AB, T8V 7X9



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The Winter Issue
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Promoting, Preserving, Publishing Our Heritage



Policing on the Alberta prairies in 1920. APP Constable Patrick Healy (foreground) observes.

From early 1917, the newly formed APP was provided a few horses and Ford Model T's, and was primarily composed of former RNWMP officers, with 85% of members previously being employed as Mounties. Despite efforts to depoliticize the new police force, the provincial government was excited about the prospect of the Alberta Provincial Police, in particular enforcing the Liquor Control Act and prohibition, which RNWMP Commissioner Perry was happy to ignore.

The APP's duties expanded quickly as the police force was viewed as a tool for facilitating provincial policy, which was well beyond the scope of basic policing. **The expanded responsibilities included transporting sick and isolated homesteaders** to the hospital, administering the estate of institutionalized persons, administering the Mother's Pension Act which provided funds to widowed or deserted women to feed their children, inspected poolrooms, cafes, and cattle, and as a debt collection service.

Upcoming Winter/Spring Events – see details on [PCHS Forum](#) | [Facebook](#)

Our YouTube channel is up at [The Peace Country Historical Society Podcast - YouTube](#)

New podcasts 5 and 6 are coming soon, covering Local Policing, and Local Hockey history.

Our Annual General Meeting and Elections will be held on Sunday, Apr 27th , 2025.

Peace Country Historical Society

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

Mandate: The mandated area of the Peace Country Historical Society is the Northwest region of Alberta

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Theatre Grande Prairie
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What We Can Offer

A chance to help set the direction for our Peace Country Chapter at membership meetings or other communication means.

A chance to learn about Peace Country history during presentations and tours, through Facebook, the Newsletter, the Website, and 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 preservation of the history of our area.

Qualify to submit applications for HSA grants to fund special projects.

We hope you choose to continue as a member, or choose to join our Society.

Editor's Message

Ron Thoreson

As we enter a new year of what we expect will be turbulent times, we might consider what will likely become the historical record of our times. In small ways, we ask you -our members- to pass on your experiences for future generations, whether orally or in written stories.

Some of our members are self-motivated to add their submissions, and others need a gentle reminder. Your perspective is valued and should be shared with our community of friends who appreciate your stories of earlier years built on struggles and accomplishments.

I came across a compilation of quotes from a celebrated American historian and philosopher, Will Durant (1885-1981). He favoured a more inclusive version of history, where wider contributions should be considered. Born of French-Canadian immigrants, in a prolific life of 96 years, one of his shorter quotes was: "History is mostly guessing; the rest is prejudice." That was a style more akin to Will Rogers, the American humorist and his contemporary.

He also wrote in a much longer form, and his wife Ariel Durant was often a co-author. Durant's *The Story of Civilization*, his major work over 4 decades, consisting of 11 volumes sold 2 million copies in 9 languages. He sought a wider study of history, and lamented a society "choked with news, and starved of history."

"Perhaps the cause of our contemporary pessimism is our tendency to view history as a turbulent stream of conflicts — between individuals in economic life, between groups in politics, between creeds in religion, between states in war. This is the more dramatic side of history; it captures the eye of the historian and the interest of the reader. But if we turn from that Mississippi of strife, hot with hate and dark with blood, to look upon the banks of the stream, we find quieter but more inspiring scenes: women rearing children, men building homes, peasants drawing food from the soil, artisans making the conveniences of life, statesmen sometimes organizing peace instead of war, teachers forming savages into citizens, musicians taming our hearts with harmony and rhythm, scientists patiently accumulating knowledge, philosophers groping for truth, saints suggesting the wisdom of love. History has been too often a picture of the bloody stream. The history of civilization is a record of what happened on the banks."

"It is the present, not the past, that dies; this present moment, to which we give so much attention, is forever fluttering from our eyes and fingers into that pedestal and matrix of our lives which we call the past. It is only the past that lives.

Therefore I feel that we of this generation give too much time to news about the transient present, too little to the living past. We are choked with news, and starved of history. A wise man can learn from other men's experience; a fool cannot learn even from his own. History is other men's experience, in countless number through many centuries. By adding some particles of that moving picture to our vision we may multiply our lives and double our understanding."

— Will Durant (1885-1981)

What's Been Keeping Us Busy?

We've had recent events to recap, but the society's board and other members also do a lot of other work. When we can, we assist other groups and individuals with inquiries on their historical research and finding programs or people that may be able to assist them in preserving both stories and structures. Beyond our event reviews there are examples on the index page such as the 1911 Halcourt United Church project, the recovered Lake Saskatoon Ag Society medal, remembering the Wembley Ferry at Pipestone Creek, Constable Patrick Healy's life story, and Pat Wearmouth's article on forestry towers titled History on the Move.

We have direct representatives on both local and provincial boards or committees. We serve with the Historical Society of Alberta, and the County of Grande Prairie Historical Resources Committee. Our members work in various ways with the Alberta Genealogical Society GP Branch, the South Peace Regional Archives, and the Spirit of the Peace Museum Network.

We'll soon be meeting again with reps from AGS GP and the Archives to formalize a Tri-Board committee coordinating our event calendars, finding more ways to support one another, and multiplying our impact on important common causes. With the Historical Society of Alberta considering organizing a provincial speakers bureau, and PCHS looking to help manage a seminar on best practices for collecting and saving oral histories, there are exciting possibilities for the future.

Are you considering collecting oral histories? It's important to realize that every family has a variety of memories and stories of earlier generations that continue to be lost with the passing years. Some may have a writer or a videographer in their home or social group, but that is generally the exception and not the rule, and oral history offers a special path.

Collecting stories can be simpler today with a recorder in almost every pocket. Historically interesting story sources can be found in various cultural groups, families, ages, and occupations. Learn how to unlock those stories with planning, patience, and respect.

If you're interested in sleuthing, there are occasional mysteries to help people solve. We occasionally refer people toward research resources that can add important context and detail to otherwise random facts. This is also a key service that the local branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society provides, connecting families to their ancestors and historical records.

We've also been advancing a number of public advocacy projects. Our key person with an accumulated wealth of experience to apply to these files is Dr. David Leonard. He is generous in passing on that knowledge, and always working to preserve local history. A couple of typical examples are the work with the Halcourt United Church preservation group, and the Cutbank Lake potential recreation area with its adjacent historical Monkman Homestead.

No Chestnuts on hand!

so on December 8th, Generations Readers Theatre roasted (in verse) some PCHS Executives instead.



Pat Wearmouth, forester by trade, a president became
Preserving, conserving, and appreciating history
Life as he knew it would never be the same
When BS's & P&L's soon proved to be a mystery

How lucky he was to be immersed in budgeting
Along with researching and planning in the foreground
With his booming voice, he was natural at presenting
While orating Podcasts, he became quite renowned.

The Presidency he left behind but could not disengage
A tour guide born with historical sites to stage
He likes to hike but in all the wrong places it seems
And a townsite to experience, not just in your dreams.

David Leonard, a historian VP who "knows it all"
Originating from Sexsmith, he calls Edmonton home
No hockey fan, he prefers the game of baseball,
Playing for the Sexsmith Rangers, in years unknown

Writing and research are David's passions
"Peace Country" books, became his forte
But as retirement is just around the corner
Will David ever be watching the "Oilers" play?

David is that travelling tumbleweed
He blows down the highway, listening to a tune
"Sons of the Pioneers" in his highway steed
Listen close, you may hear David croon.

Duff Crerar, Scottish with a dash of Irish descent
Has a passion for history as the past has soul
A retired professor with unconventional methods
A military expert soon became his fundamental goal.

Originally from Ontario, the family moved west
And Grande Prairie became their postal code
Dedicated to family, community and Country
Upon Duff, the Queens Jubilee Medal was bestowed.

Haggis, 'neeps & tatties', ice cream and a single malt
Is a favorite meal to watch Star Trek with his wife
Duff enjoys building models of historic ships & aircraft
Adding electronics & motors to bring them to life.

Duff wanted to become a pilot at one time
To be able to travel in space is now his dream.
He would leave the portrayal of his biopic
To the big screen starring Martin Sheen.

Charles Taws was born and raised in rural Ontario
In a house attached to a general store
He and his brothers spent their spare time
Serving folks, stocking shelves, and much more.

Charles travelled west from Ontario
With his brother nine years ago
To become curator of the Grande Prairie Museum
And the Heritage Village which he treasures so.

Charles has taken on the role of secretary for PCHS.
His precise minutes are emailed to us right away.
He books city venues for meetings and events
And makes certain the venue is ready in every way.

Susan Thomson, treasurer of PCHS
The job fits Susan to a T
Her attention to every minuscule detail
As always, it amazes me!

If you ask her to find a numerical fact
From a document three years old
"No worries," she says as she smiles at you,
Handing you the highlighted figure to hold

The Heritage Fair held again last May
Giving students a chance to take part
Spearheaded by Susan's capable hand
A successful event from the start!

Retirement hasn't slowed her down one bit
I get dizzy thinking of all she gets done
But Grandma's time with her four precious gems
Will always be number one!

Ron Thoreson, known as an ultimate triple "P"
As he Promotes, Preserves and Publishes history.
Although the hat of president is a perfect fit
He is a quiet, intellectual man who avoids publicity.

Raised & living in the area of Huallen
Wife Donna, and four daughters completed his family
For cemetery enhancement, he now levels headstones
All in an effort to maintain the history of a community.

Ron, a natural photographer, uses his skill to enhance
Productions of the Peace Country Historical Society
Editing quarterly newsletters & managing Facebook
Authoring some articles – he's a busy retiree.



Lake Saskatoon Lost and Found

A medallion was awarded in 1914 to G. M. Smith for "Best Herd of Cattle owned by one Exhibitor" at The Beaver Lodge & Lake Saskatoon Agricultural Society Fair, whose farm was located at the west end of the lake. The award was sponsored by the Lake Saskatoon branch of The Canadian Bank of Commerce (below). Found during a recent house renovation in Oregon, it was returned for safekeeping to The Saskatoon Lake Agricultural Society, a current similar namesake society.

Note the horse, sheep and hogs standing watch as a milkmaid, with stool and pail, does her job.

In these early years, Lake Saskatoon was the largest settlement in the area, with Grande Prairie in its infancy. Flying Shot Lake was a larger settlement at the time. Our thanks to Kristy Williams, a PCHS member for submitting the medallion photos in a search for some background information.



South Peace Regional Archives, Item 2003.87.02 (ca. 1920) Nancy Greer and Mack Prentiss in front of the Canadian Bank of Commerce on the main street of Lake Saskatoon. Upstairs is the hardware store, to the right is the undertaker's and livery combined.

History on the Move

A Fire Lookout Tower Cupola Finds a New Home

By Pat Wearmouth



Fire tower cupola



The lift crew

Some of you have seen the fire lookout cupola atop a wooden tower in the Forestry yard on 84th Avenue in Grande Prairie. For over 50 years, the structure sat in this yard or the previous one, which was located where the Northwestern Polytechnic dormitories sit.

Alberta's Forestry and Parks used the cupola to train fire lookout observers for their seasonal employment. However, with time, the wooden tower deteriorated and the training moved to the Hinton Forestry School. This summer Forestry donated the cupola to the Grande Prairie Museum. There, it will form part of an outdoor display, to open during 2026.

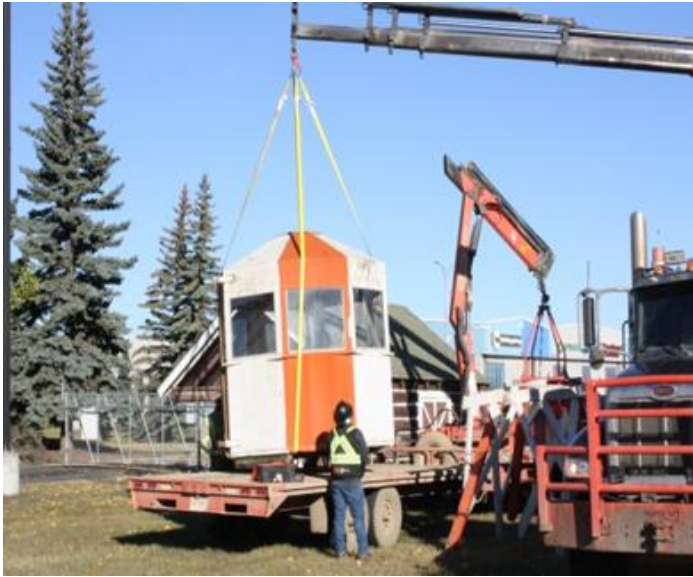
ROIL Projects Inc. of Grande Prairie contracted to move the cupola. The sequences of photos below show how they accomplished the task.



Hooking up the straps from the boom



Cutting the cupola off the tower



Loading the cupola



Ready to transport



Arrived safely at the Museum



Helicopter moves tower

This ground-based move differed from the last one, which occurred in the early 1970s. Then, the cupola and the tower were slung under a helicopter, and flown to the new site. Lifts for working towers are still routinely done in the forest. It is possible to do so because cupolas are very light and are flown to remote locations and placed on lofty towers. Unlike the short tower shown here, working towers, made of steel, often reach a height 100 feet (30 meters), or sit on mountain tops.

Fire lookout towers are a part of the forest protection system in Alberta. They account for 40% of the fires located. The balance comes from a combination of lightning strike detectors, air patrols, and public reporting.

Until the 1940s, there were no fire towers in the area. Forestry staff relied on their own horseback patrols, often climbing trees to get a viewpoint. As well as reports from trappers and hunters who were in the forest. The issue was always whether to travel to the suspected or reported fire. Many times, after taking multiple days to get to the reported location, the fire was out, or out of control. The few hand tools

available were of little use. This situation lasted until communication technology became available to use between remote forest towers and the fire control centre in town.



Saskatoon Mtn. tower

The first fire tower in the area appeared in the early 1940s, after two-way radios and telephones became more common. The Forest Service built a wooden structure on Saskatoon Mountain at the north end of the clearing that later became the Radar Base location. It had an extensive field of view. So much so that when the Base was built in 1952/53, it had to be replaced by two towers. One was in the Saddle Hills, the other south of Grovedale on Bald Mountain. Other towers were built in the following years. As of now, there are 8 remaining in use.

Given the importance and effort to put towers in place, lookout training was then—and is now-- imperative.

The Lookout Observer course covers all aspects of the job. Smoke detection is the priority. Observers are trained on how to safely climb the towers, to feel comfortable in the cupola, and to scan for fires using binoculars. They also train on the use of the Osborne Fire Finder.



Osborne fire finder

This device includes a circular map of the observable area for 360 degrees with the degrees marked on the circumference. Over this is a sighting device that can find the direction of the smoke from the tower. As well, the distance to the smoke from the tower can be estimated in relation to prominent landmarks which are shown on the map. The Osborne allows the lookout to report the position of the smoke in a manner that is useful to the central fire control staff. They can cross check with other lookouts, and plan for fire suppression.

Reporting requires training on another skill, which is the use of the two-way radios that connects the observer to fire control staff. There

are protocols in place for the transmitting of the information efficiently. This is important during a fire season, as there may be many lookouts and multiple fires that the fire control centre needs to manage.

Another part of training is that of reporting data from the weather stations which are on each tower site. Lookout observers take readings of temperature, relative humidity, and fuel dryness, which are reported, usually three times a day.

Other training included the maintenance and operation of generators and batteries upon which radio communication depended, as well as general site maintenance.

Other duties arose from time to time. During WWII, the military asked lookout observers to monitor and assist pilots who were moving aircraft from the States through Alberta to Alaska for onward flight to Russia. Again, during the Cold War of the early 1950s, lookouts trained to look for long range Soviet bombers who might be headed for the U.S.A.

In some respects, the move to the Museum allows the cupola to remain as a teaching tool. The public is now the student. They will see the basics of fire detection, and will come away with an appreciation of the remote and out of sight work that occurs on those sentinels in the forest.

Revisiting the Cutbank Lake Proposal on October 30, 2024

For the past 2 decades and more, the Monkman Homestead Preservation Society has been trying to achieve the restoration of the homestead of Alex and Louisa Monkman off Cutbank Lake (SE27 TP72 R6 W6) which was designated a provincial historic resource in 2001. Check the “Canadian Register of Historic Places” on the internet and click onto the “Monkman Homestead.” Thanks to the County of Grande Prairie for its assistance in the past in this endeavor. In doing this, we have come to realize that the value of the site lies not only in the historic buildings, but also in the landscape and natural habitat around Cutbank Lake.



Looking from the south shore to the north, the arrow points to the Monkman barn with a silver metal protective roof.

Cutbank Lake Overview with Proximity of the Monkman Homestead

A delegation of community and society representatives attended a presentation led by David Leonard in front of the County Council and staff to request that the 2013 proposal be reconsidered in the next budget term.

The lead time can allow a new usage assessment study for recreation needs, and resolve current land title and other land usage consultation planning that may be considered.

The RCAF at 100 Years: Our November 6th Event

PCHS and the Grande Prairie and District Branch of the Genealogical Society of Alberta hosted our November 6th event for both of our organizations and the general public, with an RCAF Centennial-themed presentation by Wanda Zenner titled “Winged Warfare”, and a second act from Duff Crerar based on family memory to spark a discussion on military artifacts, souvenirs, and stories from personal mementos with family and community collections. Attendees shared their military memories and conversations, one being Lloyd Sherk who traced the history of his rotary and fixed-wing career explained through the numerous military patches on his RCAF flight suit.



A Remembrance Day Wreath

On **November 11th**, Duff Crerar and Charles Taws placed a wreath on behalf of PCHS members.

The Grande Prairie and District Pipes and Drums attended and performed.

Our thanks to William Vavrek Photography for the photos.



PATRICK FRANCIS HEALY (1888 -1933)

An extract from *'All Join With Love'* – a history of the Healey, Morrow, Clarke, and Cumberpatch families.
We thank Tricia Hagan and David Healey for Patrick's life story, shared with our appreciation. Ed.

Patrick was the youngest son of Patrick and Catherine Healy (nee Fox), with two older brothers (my grandfather Thomas, and John/Jack) and two sisters (Bridget and Helen). He was born in Garrons, Stradbally, County Laois, Ireland and was just two years old in 1891 when the family was recorded living in England at Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire, where Patrick Sr was employed. By 1901 they had all moved to Oak Terrace in nearby Rugby.

In the 1911 census, age twenty-three, he was still living at Oak Terrace, his occupation listed as a carpenter. But later that year Pat was on the passenger list of the SS Southward, destined for Quebec and Montreal. Alongside his name on the list were Walter Hilgard and Harry Soper, also from Rugby, whom Pat later referred to in a letter home. So we can assume that the group emigrated together and it is possible that, with war on the horizon, they decided that going abroad was the better option for them – although



Pat subsequently enlisted and fought in France with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).

I think this studio photo taken there, with Pat seated on the left, involved some 'Wild West' dressing up, rather than representing their actual activities! It must have been sent home, as on the back (possibly written by his father) is, 'Went to Canada April 22nd 1911. Came back to "Tower" June 28th '17'. His parents had moved to the Rugby Water Tower cottage when his father was working for the Water Company.

Pat's visit must have been during his army training period in Bramshott Military Camp, Hampshire. As far as we can tell today, this trip and his visit at the end of the war were Pat's only ones after emigrating to Canada. A few letters sent home along with his CEF service record, and

some correspondence after he died, have allowed me to piece together an outline of his adult life. Pat appeared to have begun his residence in Canada in Toronto, working in construction. Although an established city, there was considerable employment to be had, continuing laying tramcar tracks, and building the new Union Station.

**Toronto in the 1910s
with the prominent early-era City Hall**



Laying the Toronto tram car tracks



He then decided to travel West to Saskatoon, a journey he described in detail in one of his letters home, passing through Chicago (just over the US border) and Winnipeg en route. He stayed for a time in Saskatoon and appears to have employed and managed other labourers, as he wrote of not getting paid himself for work undertaken, but still having to pay the men's wages.

While he reported the rates of pay to be good in Saskatoon, he eventually headed east again. Disappointed that the delay in getting paid stopped his plan to return to England, possibly to relocate for good, he went to visit his Uncle Matthew (Harry) Fox in Pennsylvania but met with a very negative reception. He pronounced him 'a confirmed crank' and was so angry that he didn't try to see his other uncle, Michael

Fox, but set off straight away for Toronto to visit his old friends there, now married and settled down.



When Pat enlisted in Saskatoon with the CEF in September 1916, he gave his occupation as a former mounted policeman with two years' experience in the RNWM Police – sending home the photograph (left) at some point. On the back is written, 'Sgt Major Pat Healy on patrol. It was a cold day "begad" and I would have enjoyed a ????? about this time.' He also sent a picture of a group of Mounties, although he didn't say if he was among them. On the back was written, 'Police



Drill Sergeant Patrick Healy, NWMP (on left) congratulates a Sgt at an inspection.

patrol on way through mountains in N. West Alberta." He soon rose to Drill Sergeant.

I have been unable to find Pat's record in the online register of Canadian Mounties but there is plenty of other evidence confirming that he served with the force, before and after the First World War, which perhaps explains why he later moved west again to Berwyn Alberta, where he eventually settled after he retired and bought a piece of land in the Peace region.

Just one of the remarkable and unexpected finds I have had online was of Pat's record of service with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. He enlisted in September 1916 as a private with the 243rd Overseas Battalion, his regimental number being 1051213. He gave his most recent address as the Royal Hotel in



Saskatoon, and his religion was recorded as Church of England – whether intentionally or as a mistake by the interviewer. Basic training for the CEFs was conducted in Valcartier camp near Quebec (above).

From there, Pat travelled to England in May 1917 on HMT Olympia, disembarking in Liverpool and proceeding to Bramshott Military Camp in Hampshire for further training, where he became attached to the 15th Battalion and was rapidly promoted to Acting Corporal and Company Sergeant Major. However, in August 1917 an entry in his record states, 'Reverts to rank of private at own request to proceed overseas' and by 1 September, he was in France serving with the 5th Battalion, first as a Lance Corporal then Lance Sergeant. So he appears to have operated in the field between September 1917 and November 1918, re-joining the 15th Battalion at Camp Bramshott when the war ended, after fourteen days' leave. In the four months there, he may have been involved in processing the demobilisation of the half a million Canadian men and women returning home from Europe via bases in England. It is interesting that although 22,000 of these opted to remain in the UK, Pat did not. But he did visit Rugby again before he left.

There are no details for Pat's individual activities in France, but a book written by another member of the 5th Battalion gives some idea of the conditions there, and the comprehensive Official History of the Canadian forces in WWI (to be found online) makes it possible to identify the key battles fought during his time there. As the war drew to a close the CEF were critical in pushing back the Germans in France and Flanders.

On his discharge paper in March 1919, Pat was identified as a Cadet Sergeant and he received a gratuity, including outstanding pay of 350 Canadian dollars (worth around CAN\$5,500 in 2022 and equivalent to £3,000). He returned to Canada in March 1919 on the troopship HMT Minnekahda. By 1920 he was again a Constable in police service, but now with the Alberta Provincial Police. In 1917 they had replaced the NWMP in Alberta to become the provincial force.

In 1922 Pat applied to be granted a homestead in Peace River, a quarter section of land, where he lived until his death in 1933. Sadly, the family had been out of touch with Pat for several years, Jack mentioning later in a letter that he had tried to trace him through the army. After he died a friend from his church wrote to his sister Bridget – now Sister Mary Gabriel - to say that a letter had arrived from her, on the

same day that he received the Last Sacrament. He had been diagnosed with bowel cancer in June of that year and had a colostomy but never really regained strength. His death certificate states that he died, aged 45, from 'secondary anaemia'. Another friend from the Berwyn community wrote a couple of years later: 'Along with most of Berwyn I knew dear old Pat well, met him first when I came to Peace River 14 years ago; acted with him often in amateur theatricals... it must be a consolation to you that during his long illness our good old Father Dreau visited him several times.' They added, 'We are justly proud of our men, pioneers, Mounties, and trail makers as they are. Many a story is told about them over the fire as the wind howls outside on a winter night. Some day perhaps a book will be written about them and in it Pat will have a place. He was very popular with everyone.' From his newspaper obituary notice, he was clearly well integrated with Berwyn's Catholic community as well as military and police veterans' organisations, and was apparently an active member of the church dramatic society.



The first Church in Falher, with Fr Dreau's quarters above.

Fr Marie Dreau (the first resident priest at St Jean-Baptiste Church in Falher, South of Peace River and Berwyn) wrote himself to his brother Tom in January 1934 describing his journeys between his base and Berwyn, where Pat was buried, further reassuring the family that he received a Catholic burial.

Pat. Healey Laid To Rest By War Comrades Tuesday

The funeral of Patrick Healy, who died at Berwyn last Friday, took place on Tuesday of this week from the Berwyn Catholic Church. Members of the Berwyn Branch of the Canadian Legion were in charge of the funeral, and Rev. Father Dreau, of Peace River conducted the service. Music was supplied by the ladies' chorus consisting of Mesdames Wailer, Clark, Elliott, Heffernan, Terrell and Miss McKenzie.

Patrick Healy was born in Limerick Ireland, and came to this country when a young man and served in the Royal North West Mounted Police. When the war broke out he went overseas with the 5th Battalion, rising to the rank of Sergt-Major. After the war he served several years with the Alberta Provincial Police.

Last summer he was taken to the War Veterans ward in the University Hospital in Edmonton, from which he returned only a few weeks ago. Death brought relief from a long and chronic illness.

His comrades of the Legion escorted his body on its last journey, the pallbearers being, S. O'Brien, D. Younger, H. McDougall, J. A. McKenzie, S. Elliot, R. Brew and Corporal Key, of the R.C.M.P., who represented the Veterans Society of that body.

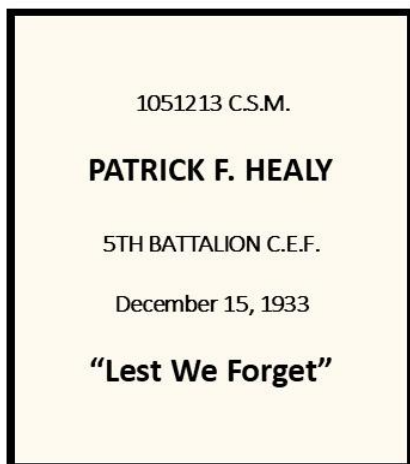
Mr. Healy was unmarried; the remaining members of his family being at present in England. Pat was a popular member of the community and a willing helper in all entertainments.

He is mourned by a host of friends.

“Without doubt, quite a number of Catholics and even non-Catholics were present at Mr Patrick Healey’s funeral. The little church of Berwyn was full enough.” A memorial stone (below) was placed on Pat’s grave in Berwyn Cemetery. The inscription is shown alongside. Fr Dreau suggested they might want him to say some Masses for Pat, with the implication that some payment would be made for this, “...for I am in a new country, working amongst poor farmers, who cannot do much these years, on account of the depression, to support their priest.”

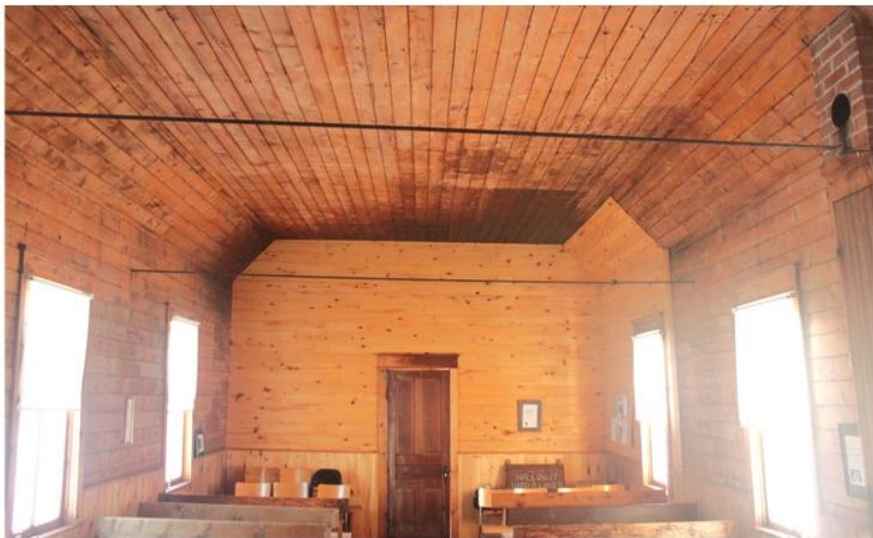
Tom subsequently wrote to the priest asking if he could vouch for an agent of the British Crown Assurance Corporation, who contacted them offering to sort out Pat’s estate, as Pat never married or had children and it was thought he did not leave a will. Meanwhile there had also been correspondence with Jack, who drew up a detailed list of Pat’s assets (CAN\$4,500 – primarily 160 acres of land plus buildings) and liabilities (CAN\$3,388 – much of which was a mortgage on the farm and doctors’ fees). Jack felt that it would not be in their interests to sell at that time as they were unlikely to release more than half the expected equity of approximately CAN\$1,100. He advised that rather than allowing the agent to manage Pat’s estate, they wait for the Western Trust Company to intervene (as per Canadian law if next of kin did not immediately take over his assets). In May 1934 the Company wrote to say that they would seek extensions to the mortgage so that the farm could be operated and improved that year. Jack liaised with the American Consul in Edmonton and co-ordinated the family granting of powers of attorney to the Company. They requested a copy of Pat’s will, which, as noted earlier, may not have existed, so it is not known whether any inheritance was ever realised by his relatives. No mention of it is made in any of the letters my father wrote in the 1930s.

As Jack wrote to Alice (my grandmother) and Tom after hearing of Pat’s death, “I don’t think there was ever a sweeter or smarter youth than Pat. The youngest of us boys and the first to go. God rest his soul in peace with dear Mother and Dad. There’s no doubt that but for the terrible experiences of the late war he would still be with us. But he played the manly part, so peace be to him.”



Patrick Francis Healy

THE HALCOURT CHURCH 1911



Originally a Methodist Church, the Halcourt United Church is closely associated with its cemetery, 1 km to the south, and the Halcourt School (1912) and Blacksmith Shop (1920s), both of which are still standing 4 km to the west and which have been designated municipal historic resources by the County of Grande Prairie. The Church stands on a small hill surrounded by a landscaped grass yard which, in turn, is surrounded by aspen, fir and willow.

Six km to the northwest of the Church is the provincially designated McNaught Homestead, developed by Sam McNaught, a Church attendee, and the home of his famous daughter, the artist Euphemia McNaught.

Ten km to the north is the Town of Beaverlodge, the eastern edge of which features the Beaverlodge Agricultural Experiment Station, developed in 1914 by Donald Albright, with several early-mid 20th century buildings still standing. Just off Highway 43 is the well-known Beaverlodge Cultural Center, featuring works by Euphemia McNaught, Robert Guest, and other recognized artists.

Until the opening of the new United Church in Beaverlodge in 1928, the Halcourt Church stood as the most prominent religious landmark in the overall Beaverlodge district.

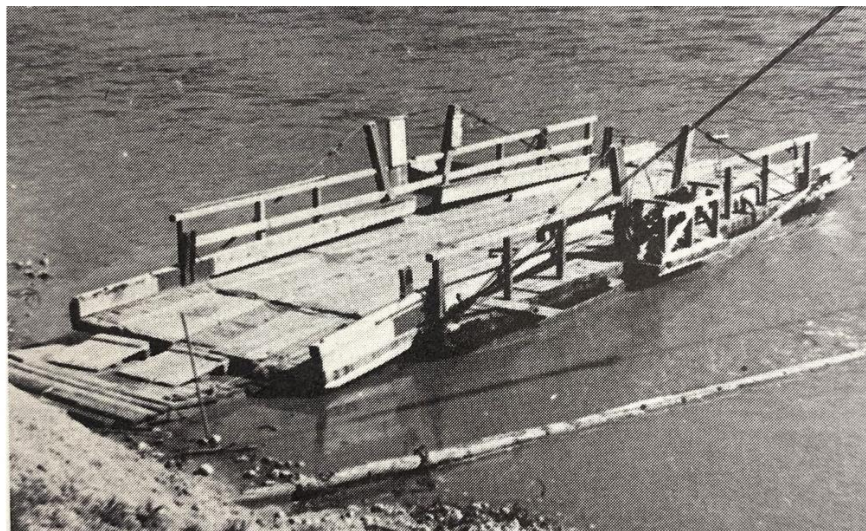
Although regular religious services were terminated there in 1961, the Church continued to be maintained by local residents in the years that followed. Special services also continued, especially funerals, and the building has remained a symbol of the original Euro-Canadian settlers in the immediate district of Halcourt.



The Wembley Ferry on the Wapiti River at Pipestone

By David Leonard *(with an editorial update for the two final paragraphs)*

During the late 1920s, the Peace River Country experienced a massive land rush, and, from April 1928 to April 1930, over 4,500 applications were made for homesteads at the Grande Prairie Land Office. Hitherto, there had been no applications for land south of the Wapiti River. Here, the terrain was heavily wooded, and had been used primarily as a venue for hunting and trapping by the earlier settlers. A small extent of lumbering had also taken place, with the logs barged to mills on the north side of the Wapiti. Not realizing that the world was in the early stages of the Great Depression, and fully believing that the vast expanse of settlement would continue, the government undertook to subdivide quarter-sections south of the Wapiti for homesteading in the summer of 1930.



As settlers would have no means of marketing their grain to the E,D & BC rail line (now the Northern Alberta Railways) at Wembley, Dimsdale or Grande Prairie, the government decided to install a ferry across the Wapiti at the mouth of Pipestone Creek. Its operation began in the summer of 1931. It was officially known as the Wembley Ferry.

By the time the Wembley Ferry was operational, the realization was rampant that the world was undergoing a depression. Grain prices were tumbling, and farm foreclosures mounting. Control of Crown land and natural resources had been transferred to Alberta and Saskatchewan the year before, and, in the spring of 1931, the provincial government made the decision not to allow homesteading in the northern reaches of the province by anyone except Albertans, for fear that immigrant settlers would become destitute and add to the growing list of public relief recipients. The early years of the Depression did, however, see a continuing stream of settlement in the Peace River region by Albertans, to the growing alarm of the local newspapers. The reputation of the region was strong, and, although grain prices were extremely low, the yields were higher than ever. Across the Wapiti, settlement began to take place, with homesteaders using the services of the Wembley Ferry. Settlement was not extensive, however, and it was not until 1939 that a post office and store was finally erected in the district at Grovedale, although a school district (South Wapiti) was incorporated as early as 1933. The seasonal ferry nonetheless continued to operate as the principal means of carrying goods and people with horse-drawn wagons or motor vehicles to and from the district.



The Wembley Ferry in 1954, and in 1970

The ferry continued in service until 1968, when the government decided to close the operation. Eight years earlier, a bridge had been built directly south of Grande Prairie across the Wapiti River, with an access road leading directly to Grovedale. Most people in the district were now using this road as their access route to the outside. In 1969, a movement was begun to have the Wembley Ferry run by locals, but it lasted only two years.



As the Department of Transportation files on the Wembley Ferry reveal, the ferry structure was constantly repaired between its inception in 1931 and its closure in 1968. What remained of the structure in 1971 was left on the north bank of the Wapiti River near the mouth of Pipestone Creek, where it has sat ever since. The site, however, is a scenic one, and, over the years, became a favoured spot for picnics. Owned by the County of Grande Prairie, it was developed into a County park in the 1982.

In recent years, bone-bed excavation for the Phillip J. Curry Dinosaur Museum in Wembley has grown near the park location. Remnants of the ferry returned to nature, and were removed this fall for safety reasons. Plans are underway to put a display and signage in place describing the ferry's history, and its importance in opening early access to the region.

As shown above, the primary support structural timbers and decking were all unsound. The most obvious salvage item that remained was the life preserver inscribed "Wembley Ferry" that was bolted to the plywood wall of a small shed on the deck. The life preserver has itself been preserved. It was rescued by County employees during removal of the other debris.

OLD FASHIONED SUGAR COOKIES

- 1/2 cup butter softened (or margarine)
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- Pinch salt
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract



Cream butter, sugar, eggs together. Add flour and salt. Continue beating at medium speed. Add extract. Roll on floured cutting board. Cut. Bake 8-10 minutes at 350 for 24 pcs

Thanks for this, Janet Tolway!