



ASPEN COUNTRY

PIONEER WOMEN'S STORIES.

September 2016

Laundry on a Saturday.

Submitted by Faye Hughes.

My mother lived in a small farm home in south western Saskatchewan. This modest home had no power, no running water and no toilet facilities. Mother taught full time at a rural school and raised three children: consequently laundry day was on a Saturday.

The process of obtaining water for clothes washing was the first chore every Saturday. In the summer Mother and I, as a twelve year old, carried three pails of water from a low spot in the river which ran close to our farm. This necessitated several trips, hiking 1/4 mile each time. Then the kitchen cook stove heated the water in a big boiler, the prairie heat adding to the heat in the house. At least we had a gas powered washing machine. In the winter, the laundry chores seemed even more arduous as we had to first gather and melt snow in the big boiler and then heat. Because the kitchen oven was hot, Mother always made rice pudding for our noon meal. I still have the original recipe. I enclose this humble recipe in memory of my Mother who met the challenges of domestic duties under difficult circumstances.

Rice pudding

1/ 2 cup rice. 1/4 teaspoon salt. Cover with cold water and cook on front lids of the stove until water boiled off. Don't stir.

Beat 1 egg , add 1/2 cup sugar add a little nutmeg and 2 cups of milk. Pour over rice and put in oven.

Stir once in awhile and thicken up.

2016—2017 Speakers Series.

All events are on Wednesdays at the Red Deer Museum, starting at 7 pm.

October 19, 016: Canadian Women in Aviation. Ms. Shirlee Matheson has written a number of short stories on aviation history.

November 16, 2016 Women's Suffrage on the prairie. Dr. Sarah Carter, Department of History, University of Alberta. DR Carter has many publications on women on the parire as well as one specifically on the suffrag movement in Canada.

December 7, 2016 Christmas in Holland. Join us for a traditional Canadian meal with a touch of the Netherlands At the Pioneer Lodge 4324– 46A Ave. Tickets on sale at the AGM.

January 18, 2017. Development of Blackfalds. Ms,Judy Carleton. Judy is the president of the Blackfalds Historical Society and Archives.

February 15, 2017. Unrecognized Black Pioneers in Alberta. Dr. Bickersteth was born in Sierra Leone, raised in Canada. He explores the black identity in Alberta.

March 15, 2017. Dr. Stephane Perrault students will present us with their latest research and may touch on Canada's sesquicentennial.

April 19. Prairie Sunset

CAHS Board

President: Lianne Kruger 403-347-1836

Past President and Acting Secretary:
Bill MacKay Innisfail 403 227-3563

Treasurer:
Paul Pettypiece Springbrook 403-886-852

Membership: Faye Hughes 403-343-1881

Directors: Dr. Robert Lampard
Marguerite Watson
Marion Hives
Ron Williams Strome
Doris MacKinnon
Paul Gowns

Newsletter Editor and layout:

Cassandra Dye

Shirley Dye sadd@shaw.ca

Contacts:

Central Alberta Historical Society

4525-47A Ave

Red Deer AB

T4N 6Z6

Fax: 403-342-6644 ATTN: CAHS

Email: President

lianne.k.kruger@gmail.com

Membership: Faye Hughes
bev.hughes@shaw.ca

Visit our website:

www.albertahistory.org Link - CAHS

MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS

Biography: Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, Ph.D.



I was born in a small farming community just outside of the historic town of St. Paul-des-Métis, and moved to Red Deer in 1987. After working for several years in the commercial, non-profit and government sectors, I returned to post-secondary studies in 1995. I earned a B.A. in English, followed by an M.A. in Canadian History and a Ph.D. in post-Confederation Canadian History with a major in

Aboriginal studies and a minor in British Social History. After the completion of my degrees in 2012, I instructed communications at Olds College and Red Deer College. I am now the Coordinator of New Program Development for the School of Continuing Education at Red Deer College, and I instruct History at Burman University. I continue to research and publish on primarily Métis history and invite you to visit my website at www.dorisjeannemackinnon.com where you can find reviews of my work, or contact me to discuss anything “historical”! I have always been committed to volunteerism and have worked on many initiatives, including the Mayor’s Committee to End Homelessness, Central Alberta Special Equestrians, CrossRoads Evangelical Missionary Youth Programs, Loughheed House National Historic Site, Lifelong Learning Council of Red Deer, and as Coordinator of *Art From the Streets*. I was happy to become a board member of the Central Alberta Historical Society in 2014 and I look forward to an exciting year of exploring opportunities to share this region’s stories.

After you read your newsletter please lend it to a friend or neighbour that may be interested in attending our AGM or our speakers series

Central Alberta Historical Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

Canada and World War I, 1916

Speaker: Dr. Stephane Bueverment

September 21

Pioneer Lodge 4324—46A Ave

Tickets available at the museum

Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

Women's Work was Never Done.

Submitted by Shirley Johansson Dye.

My grandfather Sigtriggur (Trigve) Johansson and grandmother Sigrídur took a homestead in the Markerville district in 1889. Gramma died in 1937. My dad told me that he didn't realize how hard his mother worked until after he grew up. Dad had one sister seventeen years older, who left home when he was so young he didn't remember her ever living there. He was like an only child.

Before she went to bed, his mom would get the wood stove heated up and get a pot of water boiling, then add rolled oats for the morning's porridge. The oats were rolled at the farm and took a long time to cook. She would leave the pot to cook until the fire burned down.

In the morning she would get up, light the fire again, move the porridge closer to the heat, and get the coffee started. This process also started to warm the house. Then she went outside, milked the cows, fed the chickens and brought the eggs and milk to the house. Then she called grampa and my dad! She remained very busy all day, every day with the many tasks of a homestead woman.

After the evening meal grampa moved the lamp to the parlour where he would read aloud from the latest newspapers from Gimili and Iceland or read from the Bible. Gramma would sit on the other side of the table in the semi-dark and knit. Enough mittens, socks and sweaters had to be produced to keep us warm all winter. The wool came from sheep grampa had sheared and gramma had washed and spun into yarn. Grampa and my dad would go to bed and gramma would get the porridge started for the next morning.



Mary Vanson's grandma shelling peas in her apron.

Gudrun "Goodie" Thompson Smith.

Submitted by Mary Vanson.

Life was difficult for many women in the 20's & 30's especially mothers of young children.

My mother was always a happy lady who saw the best in people and did the best she could for her family. When my mom was a young woman she had an office job in Calgary which allowed her to buy a few nice things for herself. She married Bruce Smith and moved to her family's homestead in the Markerville district just as the depression was deepening. After a few years on the farm, they had two kids and not much money for anything. She used ingenuity, thrift and love to give her family a good life.

There was always beef, pork, chicken and a huge garden, she could be counted on to "set a good table". As soon as we grew out of our handmade clothes, she made new ones. It was always "redoing and making do" with what she had. When we grew out of a sweater, she would rip it back, re-knit with some added wool and a new pattern. When the feet wore out of dad's socks she cut them off, picked up the stitches and knit a new foot. I think my mother's greatest skill was in dealing with hardships life handed her with a happy attitude, lots of love but very little cash.

Childbirth In The Bad Old Days.

As told by Helen Lewis.

In a field on a farm near Dickson Alberta, there is a pile of rocks in a field. It has been there for nearly 100 years. Every farmer who has owned the land has carefully farmed around it, never disturbing the rocks. The story is: A young couple moved onto the farm in the early twenties, it was late fall, giving them no time to prepare for winter. The husband went to Innisfail to look for work to get a grubstake, leaving his pregnant young wife alone. There were no neighbours near by, but he promised to be home before the baby was due.

The husband left for home in the first snowstorm with supplies for the winter and a little cash too. When the snow melted his body was found in the ditch west of Innisfail. He had been attacked; his supplies and money were gone. He was left in the ditch to die. The police rode out to the farm to tell his wife what had happened and found her dead. She had died in childbirth, her twin babies were dead beside her. There was nothing the police could do but bury the bodies and mark the grave with stacked rocks. No one ever knew their names.

Gramma Emma.

Submitted by Helen Johansson.

My Gramma Emma was an immigrant from Estonia about 1905. She had worked as a lady-in-waiting for a Russian Princess for several years and had traveled throughout Europe. The Russian Prince was involved in theatrical productions and Emma traveled with the troupe. She had the opportunity to learn five languages including British-English which lead to her traveling to Canada. She was called on frequently to interpret for travelers in her new country.

Crossing the Atlantic Ocean was a very strenuous journey on a crowded cargo ship which included animals of all sorts and many passengers with sea sickness. The trip took twenty days on rolling water and finally docked in New York. Then the railway transport to Canadian trains and the trip across to western Canada.

She met Grampa Mart in Calgary and they loaded her trunks of fine clothes on a horse drawn wagon and headed north to what was later called Gilby, close to Eckville. I don't think she expected to live in a sod shack on the bank of the Medicine River, but that was Mart's temporary home. He got his homestead in 1904 and was able to build a one-roomed log house in 1906. She probably had to rip up the now useless fine dresses to fill the cracks between the logs and sew more appropriate clothing to help on the farm. They started a herd of cattle and horses along with the chickens and turkeys. Mart had immigrated from Estonia 1903 and had been a farrier in Russia so had experience with horses.

Their first child Leyda, arrived in 1908 followed by my mother, Alma, in 1910, and another girl, Olga in 1912 and a son Robert in 1920. So the house was added onto and a central heating system was installed and a cook stove was put in so the cooking was no longer done in the fireplace. This required lots of fire wood. Unfortunately Mart was struck by a tree branch in the abdomen while cutting wood and died of his injuries in 1927. Emma was now a widow with four children to support and livestock to care for.

My Mother, Alma.

Submitted by Helen Johansson.

Leyda had finished school and was enrolled at U of A in a BA program, Alma was attending Olds School of Agriculture in the Home Economics second year program. She had to drop out and come home at the age of 17 and run the farm. She traded her dresses for man's overalls and went to work to support the family. She continued clearing land and raising the large herd of cattle and horses her father had managed. She even drove an eight horse team with equipment built by her father helping to build roads which was a requirement of the land owners.

This was hard on a young woman so a farm hand had to be hired. Along came a young man who had immigrated from Estonia and was eager to work. That was my father, August. Those two soon became a couple but Gramma Emma decided her daughter was not going to marry a farm hand, so she fired him. The romance continued by exchanging letters in a woodpecker hole in an old dead tree with the help of a friend. The marriage proposal was done in the same manner, and the same friend took them to Red Deer where they were married in 1932.

Their life together started in a tent on Alma's quarter of land, much like her mother and father, but with the responsibility of two farms to run. With Alma's help, Leyda was able to go on to become a Doctor of Psychiatry and served in the Army, Olga finished school and married a farmer, and Robert, August and Alma built a small shack where they lived for a few years then built a log house in 1937 where they raised their seven children. Land still had to be cleared and roots picked and hay cut and stacked. Alma continued working like a man well into her senior years.

The History of Aprons'.

I don't think our kids know what an apron is. The principal use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath because she only had a few and because it was easier to wash aprons than dresses and aprons required less material.

But along with that, it served as a potholder for removing hot pans from the oven. It was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears. From the chicken coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.

When company came, those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids. And when the weather was cold, Grandma wrapped it around her arms. Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove. Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron.

From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls. In the autumn, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds.

When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men folk knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner. It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that 'old-time apron' that served so many purposes.

Grandma used to set her hot baked apple pies on the window sill to cool. Her grand-daughters set theirs on the window sill to thaw.

The government would go crazy now trying to figure out how many germs were on that apron. I don't think I ever caught anything from an apron, but love.



Mom Put Us On Water Duty.

Submitted by Susan Garlough.

I grew up on a small mixed (grain/ animal) farm in central Saskatchewan. I was born in 1952, my brothers in 1954 and 1955. We did not have running water at the farm. We relied on the well and on rain water. There was one summer that was extremely hot and dry. No rain. Mom needed water to wash clothes especially the diapers. She did not want to use the well water because it was getting low. We needed that water for drinking and cooking. So Mom took us kids and walked the ditches for enough water to wash those diapers. She said that she only had to do this a few times before it rained again. Can you imagine taking 3 little ones to gather water. I asked her why she didn't get Dad to find some water and she said it would not have occurred to her to bother him. He was working on the fields and was busy.

OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE



Roger and Viola Dye Wedding Picture

Viola Mae Fridley took the surname Dye in Fayette, Iowa, USA, and immigrated to Canada with her new husband, Roger Dean, sometime in the second decade of the twentieth century. Settling on a farm just outside of Alix, Alberta, the Dyes worked hard to build their home, family, and livelihood.

With the '28 harvest approaching, pregnant with twins Roger and Robert, and a house full with six daughters (Winnifred, Edna, Ruby, Gladys, Dorothy, and Betty), Viola had more than her hands full with an infant and 2 year old in that mix. Working hard and playing hard was nothing new to the Dyes, with Roger hurting his back performing a dance move one evening just prior to harvest commencing. He would see the arduous harvest activities through, however would not visit the doctor to tend to his ailing back, a decision that may have ultimately cost him his life. Roger Dean Dye passed away at the young age of 34 from an aneurysm in early November of 1928.

Widowed, pregnant, and with a northern prairie winter to face, Viola would draw on her own and her girls' strength, along with help from her parents to get through her pregnancy and keep her family safe. The twins were born in 1929 and the two youngest girls were carted off to Langdon, Alberta with Viola's parents to allow her to recover, care for the twins, and continue to run the farm. Among the many difficult decisions this young and widowed mother faced was to sell the farm and move to Langdon with her parents. She could not bring herself to do that, particularly because she wanted to keep the family together and honor her late husband, who had bought the farm chiefly for raising their family.

Viola would go on to work the farm herself along with hired hands and neighbors, in order to raise her eight children throughout the 1930's. Something of a renaissance woman (e.g. she was a self-taught piano player), she nevertheless would face many other difficult choices during this time of both the Great Depression and the Dirty Thirties. With quiet determination and strength, Viola kept her family together on their farm through some of the worst hardship the continent has ever seen.

Submitted by Viola's grandson, Ric Gibbons.



1934 on the farm at Alix (L-R): Winnifred, Ruby, Viola, Gladys, and Edna with twins Roger and Robert in the middle, and Dorothy and Betty seated.