



ROOTS & BRANCHES

WETASKIWIN BRANCH

Alberta Genealogical Society

*BRINGING THE PAST
TO THE PRESENT
FOR THE FUTURE! ©*

Website: www.abgenealogy.ca/wetaskiwin-branch

Email: wetaskiwin@abgenealogy.ca

JANUARY, 2025

VOL. 23 #1

EXECUTIVE

President: Alice Hoyle
Vice President: Nelda Layton
Secretary: Pam Cooke
Treasurer: Leroy Koop

BRANCH MEETINGS

Third Tuesday of the Month.
Except July, August, December
ZOOM DURING WINTER MONTHS

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ROOTS & BRANCHES

is published three times a year by and for the members of Wetaskiwin Branch of AGS. It is emailed to members and posted on our website.

COMMITTEES

- **Newsletter**
Sharon Aney
sharonaney@gmail.com
- **Webmaster**
Leroy Koop
- **Volunteer Research**
Alice Hoyle
Leroy Koop
- **Membership**
Leroy Koop
- **Programs**
Claudia Malloch
- **Publicity**
Alice Hoyle
- **Historian**
Rosella Plaquin

BRANCH LIBRARY

Located at City Archives
For access call 780-352-0227
(Heritage Museum)

If a local researcher is required contact
wetaskiwin@abgenealogy.ca

LDS FAMILYSEARCH CENTER

Wednesdays: 6:15 pm - 8:15 pm
Thursdays: 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS

Alice Hoyle

As I write this, we are coming to the end of another calendar year. I say "calendar year" because I feel our lives are often geared to other types of years. There is the school year, the taxation year, etc. As you and your loved ones reflect on the past calendar year, I hope you feel that you have lived a full life; one of discovery (genealogy), one of adventure (travels), one of connection (family), and perhaps one of introspection and reflection.

We all have a story to share: the history of our lives may not contain any earth-shattering moments, but in future, our descendants will appreciate knowing what our lives were like. If you don't lean toward the prospect of writing down your history, make sure you tell your children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren about your early life. When our descendants only see us 'as we are today', they don't know about the obstacles we have overcome in our lives. They don't know the little stories that make us the person we are today.

Years ago, I started jotting down some of the funny incidents that happened in our family: a child who called Deep Browned Beans, Deep Frowned Beans: a short line about our 3-legged dog, etc. These little bits of memory will be passed along to family members.

I guess this could be a "plug" for Sharon's newsletter. She is always hopeful that we submit articles in order that the newsletter she creates is more personal. Please do your part in making her job easier.

When you read this, the holiday season will be over. I hope the new year is a promising one for you. Take time to reflect on what is important to you this year and take the steps necessary to incorporate those important things into your life.

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**EDITORS COMMENTS** Sharon Aney

25 years ago we established our branch of AGS. As I remember my early years in genealogy, I used "snail mail" to ask relatives for family information.

In the 1990s we began taking 1 month winter vacations in St. George, Utah. As Russ went to his morning golf game he dropped me off at the Family History Centre. I was amazed at the competence of elderly volunteers (probably younger than I am now) who cheerfully showed me how to use the microfilm and fiche readers... I was hooked on census records. Once we had a personal computer at home I became adept at using the FHL online catalogue and wrote to the St. George FHC to order films for me in advance of my visits. They did!!

And I found "Message Boards", which led to one of my most intriguing genealogy / family history finds: "The Legend of Jean Cadieux", of which I wrote in the Feb 2015 issue of this newsletter. Societe Genealogique du Nord Ouest in Edmonton is a treasure trove!

Fast forward through the years when Ancestry, and digitized records from all kinds of archives and institutions brought the genealogical world to our fingertips! It is amazingly easy to connect with distant, newly-found DNA cousins.

However we connect, and whatever information we find, it is still up to us to make sure that **OUR** family tree is accurate.

We must also remember that many of our "sources" and sites are actually business enterprises. And so, not all of the changes are positive. Note the "23andMe" articles on pages 18 and 19.

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**We Remember
Friedrich Otto "Rudi" Grab
March 08, 1947 - October 24, 2024**

MEETING PROGRAMS

SEPT. 2024 – How I Spent my Summer

Rosella and her family vacationed in Scandinavia for 3 weeks. Highlights: the Troll Highway, crossing the Arctic Circle twice (in Finland & Norway), the Resistance Museum in Oslo and learning about the effects of WW2 in Scandinavia. She attended a family reunion on her late husband's side.

Alice and her daughter-in-law took a 10-day tour of Newfoundland, visiting the Viking site from 1000 AD at L'Anse Aux Meadows on the tip of the northern peninsula because of her interest in Viking history. She mentioned that Viking sails were woven from wool and took many years to make, meaning that Viking ship excursions were years apart. The tour also visited Cornerbrook, attended a presentation of the 9-11 emergency at Gander, and St. John's. **In Nova Scotia they visited Pier 21, Peggy's Cove & the Titanic Cemetery.**

Bob was given a book binding machine and has been converting binders to books. He has been digitizing his mother's letters from Africa, and has traced his family tree back to 1592. He will receive a Lifetime Community Achievement award from Millet on Oct 26.

Mavis and her husband Neil took a road trip to Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Minnesota, and North Dakota covering 4000 km over 18 days, visiting 11 different family groups. She took along family charts to be updated by all their relatives, took pictures of family papers, receiving many spontaneous invitations & meals as they travelled.

Programs ... cont'd ...

OCTOBER 2024- Membership Requests

Claudia circulated a chart on which members shared their family names and areas of research. It will be shared with members.

Sharon shared ideas on how to find inspiration to write family stories: homesteading. occupations. Doing research for general information in community history books, libraries, etc. Take ideas from photos of sports, work uniforms, groups, events, etc. Start small to write a chapter in your family's history.

Alice: presented a comprehensive list of sources for research in Ontario. Some would also contain good information for other provinces: Peel Library: <http://library.ualberta.ca/peel/books> University of Calgary has local history books that used to be accessible on Our Roots <http://digitalcollections.ucalgary/archive/Local-Histories-2R3BF1FOGWNK0.html> She is willing to assist if you ask her.

NOVEMBER 2024 – Facilitated by Claudia.

"IN A RUT? 7 WAYS TO JUMPSTART YOUR RESEARCH" Legacy Family Tree Webinars by Elizabeth Shown Mills

SAVE THE DATE!

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR BRANCH!!

MAY 31, 2025

10:00 am *At the Seniors Centre*

WILL BE HEADLINED BY
BOB LAYTON!!



Bob Layton is an avid advocate of preserving your family stories. He will encourage you to do so in an entertaining and informative way.

DETAILS TO COME AS PLANNING PROCEEDS.

HARRIET WILMOT AND HOW I FOUND HER

by Nelda Layton



Harriet Wilmot is my grandmother's (Helena Harriet Mackenzie Weaver McMurray's) grandmother. The descendants of my great grandfather, Alexander Mackenzie Weaver, have been looking for Harriet's English connection since the early 1900's.

Harriet met Angus Mackenzie, who was an able-bodied seaman, and a member of the crew on the ship, *Portland*, that traveled from England and docked in Auckland, New Zealand on 31 August 1864. They were married in Auckland and had two children. Murdock Mackenzie was born in Auckland on 23 August 1865 and my great grandfather, Alexander Mackenzie, was born on 15 November, 1867 in Nelson, Marlborough, New Zealand. Harriet died less than a year later, from a heart condition, in Renwicktown, Marlborough, New Zealand on 18 September, 1868. (It is interesting to note that my grandmother, Helena Harriet McMurray was born on the same day, September 18th).

When Harriet died, her husband, Angus Mackenzie, was away working. It is possible that he was on the crew of another ship or working as a sawyer, a profession he had in Dundee Mills near Auckland and possibly in Nelson. Two prominent ladies in the community took Harriet's young boys into their homes for two years and then they were placed in the homes of two childless sisters. (It is rumoured that Angus came back for his family and was run out of town.) Mary Ann Jones and her husband James Davies adopted Murdoch. Alexander was never adopted by Eleanor Rosa Jones and her husband, William Weaver, but he took their surname. Unfortunately, William Weaver drowned in 1878 when Alexander was 10.

I started to search for Harriet in 2015 when I retired. Our family, including our New Zealand family, thought she was the daughter of a wealthy baronet, Sir Henry Sacheverell Wilmot (1801) but when I researched his daughter, Constance Harriet Wilmot, born in 1835, I discovered that she married and died in England. I researched many other "Harriet Wilmots" in England that were approximately Harriet's age, but when I researched them, none of them had a New Zealand connection.

On March 29th, 2021, I was doing some family history research when I felt prompted to go look for Harriet. Harriet had become a brick wall for me, but I started to look for her anyway. I came upon an 1861 Census in Kings Norton, Worcestershire, England. There was a Harriet Wilmot listed as a servant. She was 20 years old, which corresponded to how old we thought she was. I felt a distinct impression that I should look at her employer, Thomas Forgham. When I started to research him, I discovered that he died in New Zealand. My interest was piqued, and I did some more research on the Forgham family. I wondered if the Forgham's took their servant, Harriet, with them to New Zealand. I looked on the *Portland's* ships list to see if the Forgham family was on the same ship as Harriet. Sure enough, the whole Forgham family had sailed to New Zealand.

That was when I knew that I was on to something. I sent my brother, Dave (the real genealogist in our family) a text, "I'm pretty sure I found Harriet Wilmot last night." It was a surreal moment! Using the 1861 census, I was able to identify Harriet's parents (Elisha Wilmot and Elizabeth Sanders.)

I am hopeful that I will be able to find the Scottish connection for Harriet's husband, Angus Mackenzie, using DNA. Interesting note: there is a belief by some members of my family that Angus' real name was Alexander Mackenzie, and that he was the third son of the king of Scotland who moved to New Zealand. We have found no verified sources to indicate that this is true. Angus signed his name with an "X", so he probably didn't come from royalty. Harriet could sign her name and was most likely educated by the wealthy family that she worked for.

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### CHIEF DAN MINDE

by Pam Cooke

**CREE NAME: KA MAHIHKANI PIMOHEW OR "WALKING WOLF", 1883 - 1959**

*(Thanks to my husband, Brian, for editing and formatting this story)*



Chief Dan Minde is my husband's great grandfather. Dan's son was Joe Minde, his granddaughter was Theresa (nee Minde) Wildcat, and his great grandson is Brian Wildcat (my husband).

Brian's family frequently talked about Dan Minde, the last traditional chief of Ermineskin Cree Nation, as well as his mother Mamitoneyihcikan, also known as Maggie Minde. Mamitoneyihcikan, his mother's Cree name, means "mind" in English.

Dan Minde was born in present day Saskatchewan circa 1883.

His mother along with family members, who were followers of Lucky Man, (who was a follower of Big Bear) fled the 1885 Rebellion, walking across the plains to reach Hobbema. There were stories of great hardship and fear of starvation during that journey. They survived by eating prairie gophers, and horse meat when their horse died. They carried their meagre

belongings in pails and bags tied to their dogs' backs. **Source:** *Family Oral History*.

There is a death certificate for a Maggy Mind, aged 65 (b.1843) who died of consumption in Hobbema in 1908, but it is unconfirmed if this is Mamitoneyihcikan. Emma Minde, wife of Joe Minde also mentions in her book, "Their Example Showed Me the Way", p. 109, that Mamitoneyihcikan was still alive and lived with her other son Sam Minde when he was first married in 1907. **Source:** *Ermineskin Transfer & Adherents 1886-1950*.

Dan's first wife was Celina Yeyekastos (Saddleback) from Samson Band #9. They were married circa 1902 and had 3 children together, Sophie, Julie and Joe. Celina died circa 1909. He married his second wife Mary Jane Louis, from Dawson's Band #32, in 1912. They had two children, Paul (who died in infancy) and Justine. Mary Jane also known as Jean died in 1971.

Dan Minde is recorded as Ermineskin #42 in the band records. **Source:** *Ermineskin Transfer & Adherents 1886-1950*.



Dan Minde with wife Mary Jane Minde & children Sophie, Julie, Joe and Justine.  
Photo Circa 1918

Census information gives us more snapshots of Dan Minde. He is listed as a farmer in 1906, 1916, 1921 and 1931. His birthplace changes from Alberta to Saskatchewan in the later censuses. In 1931, he lived in a frame house with four rooms valued at \$1400. It is of note that he could not read or write but believed strongly in formal education, with grandson Wilton Littlechild becoming the first lawyer from Maskwacis, and granddaughter Theresa Minde becoming the first teacher from Maskwacis. Another grandson Maurice Wolfe served on Ermineskin Council for over 30 years.

Dan Minde was also involved with the Indian Association of Alberta from its formation in 1939.

## Ermineskin Chief Buried At Hobbema

HOBBEWA, ALTA. — Daniel Minde, chief of the Ermineskin Indians until two years ago when he was hospitalized, was buried at the Hobbema Roman Catholic cemetery recently.

Representatives of the Indian Agency, R.C.M.P. and members of the tribe attended the service in the chapel.

Seventy-five years of age, Daniel Minde was a man who worked hard in his lifetime to better the lot of his fellow-Indians. His interest in reserve activities was one which greatly aided many improvements. His greatest interest was in the expansion of the school catering to the Indians of the district.

He was also a strong supporter of the Roman Catholic Mission.

He was elected a councillor first in 1929 and held that position until he was chosen chief of the tribe in 1943.

He relinquished his position as chieftain two years ago when he became hospitalized following an illness. His Indian name, Ka Mahigan Pimuttet, means "Walking Wolf." He is survived by his wife, and three children, Mr. J. Minde, Mrs. P. Wolf and Mrs. M. Smith; and scores of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

At the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Daniel Minde was awarded a Coronation Medal for his work.

The service was conducted by Father G. M. Latour, O.M.I., Father M. Landry, O.M.I., Father G. E. Rheaune, O.M.I. and Father A. Paradis, O.M.I., who delivered an address in both Cree and English.

Dan Minde was the last traditional chief of Ermineskin from 1943-1959, and a band councillor or headman from 1926-1943.

Dan died on Feb 6, 1959, at the Hobbema Indian Hospital, age 75 and is buried at the Ermineskin Cemetery.

**Source:** *Province Of Alberta Registration of Death.*

**Source:** *Indian Record Vol XX11, No. 4, Winnipeg, Canada, April 1959.*

Some of the information in this obituary is inaccurate. Dan Minde was chief until his death and his Cree name is properly spelled in the title.



Chief Dan Minde, circa 1955.

This is probably the outfit that his wife Jean made for him. ->

There is an interesting story about Dan Minde's beaded outfit, seen in the attached picture. It was sewn by his wife Jean and completed in 1955. After Dan died in 1959 it was entrusted to Father Latour OMI, principal at the Ermineskin Residential School. Family members did not know what happened to the outfit until 1993, when it was found at the Provincial Archives. It had been held at the Oblate Museum until 1968 when it was transferred to the Archives. It was said to have been on loan. This outfit was eventually returned to the Littlechild family in care of grandson, Wilton Littlechild.



When Wilton was made an honorary chief he received Dan Minde's Cree name, Walking Wolf, and a headdress. This headdress was bestowed upon Pope Francis at Maskwacis in July 2022, when the Pope delivered an apology for the abuse at residential schools in Canada. It was given to the Pope with the blessing and support of elders and the organizing committees, by Chief Wilton Littlechild.

When Wilton was inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame in 2018, he loaned Dan Minde's outfit and a replica of his headdress to honour him. Both are still on display.

We learn more about Dan through stories from his family. His leadership continues to influence future generations. His grandson, Chief (Dr.) Wilton Littlechild who became a lawyer, Member of Parliament and Commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, along with many other achievements, recalls his grandparents' influence.

"He is honoured to have been raised by his grandparents, Chief Dan Minde and Mary Jane Minde and his philosophy for life can be accredited to them. His grandfather taught him from a cultural and traditional perspective, while his grandmother instructed him to pursue a formal education." **Source:** *Alberta Order of Excellence Recipient, Inducted 2014*

Our grandparents reared us with a belief that you should always work for and give back to your community. My grandfather, Chief Dan Minde, a leader for 33 years, said to us: "You will be given your community in a certain condition. While it is in your hands, do everything that you can to make it better and then proudly give it to your children — the future." **Source:** *Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, 2006 Distinguished Service Award – Wilton Littlechild*

Chief Wilton Littlechild expands upon this philosophy as Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner in the final TRC report:

"When you work for our community, you must do everything you can to make it better, then pass it to the next one...." These were my late grandfather's (Chief Dan Minde) words to me in Cree as a twelve-year-old. I was, and had been, a residential school student for six years already. The true meaning of this instruction really took on full significance for me during these past six years. **Source:** *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939 p. XIII*

His granddaughter, Theresa C. Wildcat (nee Minde), became the first teacher from Maskwacis in 1952. Both received a Queen Elizabeth II medal. Dan, along with all Alberta chiefs received the Queen's Coronation medal in 1953 and Theresa received the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal in 2002. Theresa set an example of sixty years of dedicated service, with a sincere and deep interest for the betterment of her people, the advancement of First Nations education and the preservation of Cree language and history. The new Theresa C. Wildcat Early Learning Centre opened on Ermineskin Cree Nation in 2023 and was named in her honour.

"From an early age, Theresa heard her grandfather Chief Dan Minde tell his grandchildren, that formal education and traditional knowledge is what will make our people strong. She always told us, it was her grandfather who taught her about her culture and her traditions, but most of all he taught her to be proud of who she was, to be Cree and to love your people. He had a strong and positive influence on who she became. Dan Minde was the last Traditional Chief of the Ermineskin Cree Nation." **Source:** *Knowing Ourselves, Our Culture and Our Language: The History of Indian Education in Alberta, Written by great granddaughter, Clara Wildcat 2014*

"Theresa Wildcat attended Ermineskin Indian Residential School in the 1930's and 1940's. The school didn't go past grade 7. After completing Grade 7 at Ermineskin Residential School, Theresa was enrolled at St. Joseph's Convent in Red Deer, but her grandparents Joe and Emma Minde were responsible for paying for her school fees. In a story Theresa that often shared, her family was prepared to support her education, but her Mosom (Grandfather) Dan Minde, paid a visit to the Indian Agent to discuss his granddaughter's enrollment at St. Joseph's Convent. After Dan Minde's visit the arrangements were made for Indian Affairs to cover the costs of Kokum attending high school."

"My [attainment of my] PhD is an 80-year journey of my family advocating for access to sites of education and taking on the responsibility to build sites of Indigenous education" he says. \* **Source:** *Matthew Wildcat (Great-great grandson of Dan Minde) 2023 medium.com RIBBONS blog.*

\*It is of note that Dan Minde addressed the Catholic Indian League of Canada in 1955 with a proposition to establish an Indian high school at the Ermineskin Residential School. His belief in formal education and this experience with ensuring his granddaughter received a high school education would have informed his advocacy. His influence across multiple generations and over time is still present.

Traditional knowledge and ceremony were also part of Dan Minde's life. His teepee painted with horses was a familiar site at the Ponoka Stampede and the Calgary Stampede. His teepee

drew many visitors and was also the site of many poker games! I hope to find a photograph of his teepee one day.

Theresa recalls more memories of her grandfather. "Dan Minde [my grandfather] did the sundance but he also went to the church. That time the chiefs were powerful. I respected my grandfather a lot, his beliefs... The sundance was a very powerful thing. I respected it because my grandfather was in it. My grandfather went every year to the sundance. The people would wait for the children to be out of residential school and then they would head to the sundance at the end of June or in July". **Source:** *Conversation with Theresa C. Wildcat 2011*

Granddaughter Agnes Littlechild also remembers:

"Early in the morning we got our two horses, Shorty and Frank, harnessed them, packed our tent, blankets and our grub box and headed off to Riverside. When we arrived we looked for Kokum and Mosom's tipi. It was easy to find. Chief Dan Minde always had a Canadian flag on a pole in front of his tipi. His tipi was the one with horses drawn around it: very colourful. That particular sundance was the last time I had partially witnessed a horse dance. It happened right in front of Dan Minde's tipi. I remember two cars came to give lighting to where the drummers were. Mom said one car was Sam Minde's and the other was from the States. Dan Minde was a participant. He had on his chief's outfit. I remember his horse wearing some fancy pieces of beadwork on the halter and neck. I don't remember the ending part of that ceremony."

**Source:** *Short Story: The Summer of 53 and Mom by Agnes Littlechild. Also published in Roots & Branches April 2017.*

Researching our ancestors helps us to realize their influences and the legacy that they endow us with. Chief Dan Minde, a faithful Chief and leader, believed in the power of formal education, traditional Cree knowledge and that leadership is about service to your community. His influence is seen in his many descendants and their work in a variety of ways to make Maskwacis a better place. They continue his leadership today.

Artist George Littlechild painted this portrait of Dan Minde from the 1918 family photo. It was given as a graduation gift to our son Nigel Wildcat in 2015.



@ Copyright George Littlechild

## **ARCHIVES UPDATE**

Leah Johns BA, History  
Wetaskiwin Heritage Museum Archives Coordinator

This has been an incredibly busy and productive year at the Archives!

Thanks to many of you, and others, we have been able to complete about 60% of our inventory, I think. We have completed the City-created collection that is on the 3 shelves in the vault, as well as the County-created collection on those same shelves.

It is an ongoing process still, and if any of you are able to volunteer and want to, please reach out to me (780-352-0227) and we can absolutely work something out. I am always looking for volunteers. One of the main jobs that I need volunteers for is to continue "counting" our inventory. Bonus for this job: getting to take a look at our documents and see what they say as we go through them.

I can also use volunteers to help us with transcribing the data that we get from the Archives onto the computer. One of the reasons that inventory takes so long is that once we count the collection, I, with the help of my summer student and volunteers then transcribe the handwritten documents onto Microsoft Excel and then into our Database to make it easier to search. This is quite time consuming. We are creating a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet because we have thus far been unable to find a complete register of all the items in our collection and so we are creating it from scratch.

If either of these appeal to you, please reach out and let me know. I will at this time say that mornings are possible. I just need to ensure that we have two people here at the museum at that time.

I am happy with how the inventory is going and am so grateful for all the support that we have received from Genealogy and the public. We would not be where we are without you all. Thank you.

It was so exciting this year to find various items that were recovered from the Old Courthouse, now City Hall this year during a renovation. In this collection, we found old wallpaper, an evidence tag, and a kids drawing, amongst other things. We also found that the Archives holds items going back to the 1890s! So cool every time we stumble upon things dated at that time!

Throughout the year, we also had numerous research requests for photos and family history that I had the pleasure of being able to work on.

Also this year, I spent time helping with our school programs and summer camps, and various other events that the Museum hosts each year. The Museum also hosted a Read-A-Thon fundraiser with the schools in the city, county and Maskwacis and we are currently in the process of working out how many people and schools participated. In 2025, we are looking forward to more fundraising opportunities (more information to come in the fullness of time).

Most of all, we are excited for our "Fashion History in Wetaskiwin Through the Years" exhibit that I am developing using information and photos from the Archives, the Museum as well as

information gathered from the community at large. In fact, if any of you feel like contributing to the exhibit (your quote may very well end up in the exhibit) please let me know.

In the meantime, I have posed these questions on our Facebook pages:

What are some of your favourite memories of shopping in Wetaskiwin? What were/are some of your favourite stores to buy clothes from? What are some of the trends you remember from years/decades past? What do you remember about catalogues? Which catalogues were most commonly found in your house? How important were the catalogues to your family? What kinds of things did you order from them? What happened to them after you ordered from them?

2025 is shaping up to be another incredible and busy year and I can't wait!

Warm Regards, Leah

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RESEARCH – CARRUTHERS

Alice Hoyle

A request came to our branch for information on the Carruthers family. The person requesting assistance was doing research for a friend.

Information provided was that the Carruthers surname showed up in the Moore Funeral Home records. A search of those records showed that William Carruthers died in Wetaskiwin in 1926. Also in the records was a record for the death of Mary Ann Carruthers, who died in Winnipeg, but her funeral arrangements were made by a J. A. Carruthers who resided in Lethbridge. The researcher knew that William Carruthers and Mary Ann Carruthers were buried in the old Wetaskiwin cemetery.

He wondered if there was any other information available on the family.

1. When I searched the old Wetaskiwin cemetery database, I found that there were actually 9 listings for the Carruthers family. All plots were together: 61-1, 61-2, 61-3, or 61-4. All plots were occupied, but City of Wetaskiwin records are sparse regarding 'who' is buried in some of the plots as well as the interment date.
2. As per the request for more information on the family, I searched all the local history books. Although the researcher indicated the Carruthers family lived in the Wetaskiwin area, I could not find any mention of them in the following local history books: "Pioneer Pathways", "Freeway West", "Treasured Memories – Gwynne Historical Society".
3. I decided to broaden my search: I found mention of the family in the local history book "Battle River Country – the History of Duhamel and Area". I also found their name in the local history book "The Bitter 'N Sweet – The History of the Bittern Lake-Sifton District". Both of these books can be viewed on the University of Calgary website, which now houses the books we previously were able to view on ourroots.ca. I sent the UofC website link to the researcher.

4. I searched the Provincial Archives of Alberta website for births, marriages and deaths. There were 14 Carruthers mentioned in this database: I sent them to the researcher, along with the link for the BMD records at PAA.
5. Ironically, a couple of months ago I was looking for a newspaper document for someone in my extended maternal family: there, on the Wetaskiwin Free Press newspaper (beside the record I was looking for) was the obituary for William Carruthers. I contacted the researcher and asked if he wanted me to send this to him and he responded "yes, please". Moral of the story: we never know what we will find when we start looking at old newspaper articles.

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## **BURIED IN WOOLENS**

Bob Maynard

Funerals are now filled with personal choices, but for nearly 150 years in England one important choice was controlled by law.... the clothing that people were buried in. The Woolen Act of 1667 and 1677 decreed that all who died in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries would be legally required to be buried in woolen.

In Sussex parish records of 1789, it was written that James, son of William and Mary Maynard, was "buried in woolens this day of April".

While researching your family history you may come across references in a parish record to an ancestor being "buried in woolens". What did this mean? For many centuries the woolen trade had been important to the wealth and prosperity of England. But with the introduction of new materials and foreign imports some people thought the industry was under threat. Many of these sat in Parliament as members whose constituencies were in woolen and cloth producing areas, or as landlords whose income came from rent paid by tenants who lived by relying on wool and sheep. They combined to pass an act to try and maintain the demand for domestic produce.

The first Act was passed in 1666 and the second rather more famous in 1678 repealing the first. It aimed to lessen the importation of linen and to encourage woolen and paper manufacturers within the Kingdom. The Act required that when a corpse was buried it should be only dressed in a shroud or garment made of wool. "No corpse of any person except those who shall die of the plague shall be buried in any shift, sheet or shroud or anything whatsoever made or mingled with flax, hemp or salt and hair, gold, silver or any stuff or things, other than what is made of sheep's wool only".

Failure to comply resulted in a £5 forfeiture ( the equivalent of more than \$150.00 today). One half of this went to the farmer, the other half to the poor of the parish where the body was buried. Within eight days of the burial an affidavit had to be provided attesting that the burial complied with the Act. An affidavit had to be sworn in front of a Justice of the Peace or Mayor, or two credible people. If the parish did not have a JP or Mayor, the Parson, Vicar or Curate

would administer the oath. In practice the affidavit would often be sworn at the same time as the burial and certified by the officiating priest. Many people did not like this idea.

The affidavit took various forms. Some appeared in registries. Other appeared as a separate register or in a specially printed form. Affidavits do not survive in this form in the Archives. The Act was not very popular as people wanted to be buried in their finery, as opposed to a cheaper garment or shroud in an official white colour, and a very thin material. Many people were prepared to pay the £5 and a member of the family became the informer, so that in effect only half the fine would be paid.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century wool had become less important to the economy. The start of the Industrial Revolution began to diversify the workforce as well as the types of textiles that could be manufactured cheaply... especially cotton, after the invention of the cotton gin and spinning jenny. The Woolen Act was becoming less relevant and was largely ignored. The Act was repealed in 1814.

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GNEALOGY TIP OF THE DAY, DEC 18, 2024

Michael John Neill

Sooner or later it is necessary to estimate a date of a genealogical event. Often this is to help us sort out individuals with the same name, determining when a person is too old to be having children, determining that a person is likely too young to be a certain person's parent, etc.

But when you estimate a date of an event—say “born about 1870,” have a source or a reason for that estimated date.

Margaret Smith was born by 1850 because it is assumed she was twenty-one when she married in 1871—then use the marriage record as the source of the age.

Thomas Jones was dead by 1880 because his wife is listed as a widow in the 1880 census—then use that census enumeration as the source of the death information.

George Jones and Babushka Johnson were married by 1830 because their first child is known to have been born in 1831 and use that child's birth as the source of the marriage date.

Having a source doesn't mean the age is accurate. People lie about their age when they get married, people separate and referred themselves as widowed when their spouse is still alive, and people reproduce without being married—but at least you have a source for where the year came from. You cannot analyze the accuracy of a date without knowing the source of that date.

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*A pack rat is hard to live with,  
but makes a mighty fine ancestor.*

## THE WOMEN OF ASPENLAND

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Wetaskiwin & District Heritage Museum  
<http://www.wetaskiwinmuseum.com/>

### ELSIE (SCHMIDT) JESPERSON

Information compiled in 1997



During Elsie's early childhood they did not have modern conveniences such as electricity, running water, or travel. Growing up, her chores included feeding baby chicks, ducks and geese, gathering eggs, helping with hand-milking the cows, weeding the garden and helping with household chores.

Elsie Jespersen was house mother of Bethany Homes for Children for forty-four years. During this time she cared for a steady stream of children, as many as fifty-five at one time.

Elsie and Harvey Jespersen took over the crudely refurbished army barracks on April 1, 1948. They were determined to create a loving home where spiritual as well as physical needs of children would be met. Conditions were basic, at first, with no running water and a boiler that had to be stoked by hand. Although they had no financial backing they agreed they would never refuse a child because of lack of funds.

Elsie grew up on a farm and this background became increasingly useful as the Bethany farm expanded to include poultry, pigs, dairy cattle and a large garden. Elsie learned to sew at an early age by making dresses for her dolls from scraps, a skill she put to use when outfitting children who arrived at Bethany with very few clothes.

Of all the difficulties, the hardest thing for Elsie was saying good-bye to the children: "We walked around with lumps in our throats for days after.

Finally I said to myself 'Look, these are not your children to keep. You knew that from the beginning.' I had to make up my mind then, that when they came, we would love them, and when they left we knew God would provide for their care elsewhere."



The largest single family to come to Bethany Home, 1951



Harvey holding daughter, Priscilla, Elsie holding Bobby, the first boy placed in their care. 1947 --->



Elsie Jespersen died on February 13, 1999 at the age of 77.

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MORE ABOUT BETHANY HOMES

Our member, Mavis Nelson recalls:

Many church groups from Wetaskiwin volunteered time and effort to assist the Jespersen's in their charitable endeavor. I went with members of our church to do cooking, mending, baking, cleaning, etc ... and Neil and I "did chickens". What is "doing chickens"? we might ask.

Those of us of a certain age, who were raised on farms, will remember that the chicken(s) had to be caught and beheaded with an axe. Then the feathers were plucked and the carcasses singed over a flame to remove pin feathers. The carcass was cut open so that the innards were removed and the carcass was dismembered. After being washed the pieces were now ready to be cooked for a meal or preserved by canning or freezing.

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A local teacher and playwright, inspired by the book: *Save My Children by Emily Wierenga*, has researched and dramatized the lives of Harvey and Elsie Jespersen in a play called, **"Forty Two Acres"**. It is scheduled to be staged at the Manluk Theatre, in Wetaskiwin in May, 2025.

"In 1947 the Jespersen family came to Wetaskiwin originally to work for the newly established European Christian Orphanage. When the Canadian Government refused to allow permits to bring orphaned children into Canada, Harvey and Elsie Jespersen turned unfinished army barracks, a barn and a silo, into "Bethany Homes for Children." For 43 years, and no government assistance, Harvey and Elsie Jespersen ministered to approximately 750 children through the power of prayer, open hearts, hard work and patience. Together they transformed forty-two acres into a place of refuge for children. Countless families and businesses in Wetaskiwin, Gwynne, Camrose and surrounding towns generously supported Bethany Homes for children in remarkable ways."

@Manluk May 2025

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Did You Give Your DNA To 23andMe? Here's Why You Might Regret It Soon

Amid financial challenges, DNA testing company 23andMe is reportedly exploring a potential sale, which could place the genetic data of over 15 million customers in the hands of new ownership.

The implications of this sale are significant, raising concerns over data privacy and the potential misuse of sensitive genetic information.

What's at Stake?

23andMe's genetic database, built over nearly two decades, includes a wealth of information about customers' health predispositions and ancestral backgrounds.

While the company's privacy policies claim to prioritize customer consent, a sale could result in a new owner with different priorities.

This change may impact how customers' DNA data is utilized, potentially opening the door to various uses not initially agreed to by users, including by insurance companies, pharmaceutical firms, or law enforcement agencies.

Privacy Concerns and Legal Issues

23andMe is not subject to HIPAA regulations, which means its data privacy protections are comparatively limited.

Although U.S. law, specifically the Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act, restricts the use of genetic data by health insurers and employers, it does not extend to life or disability insurers. This leaves a critical gap, potentially enabling future owners of the data to leverage it in ways customers didn't anticipate.

The Broader Implications

This potential sale shines a spotlight on the ethical considerations surrounding consumer genetic data. Genetic information is unique and irreversible, making its protection vital.

As companies like 23andMe navigate financial pressures, customers must consider the long-term implications of sharing their DNA. Once data is shared, it becomes nearly impossible to control how it will be used in the future. The possible sale of 23andMe underscores the challenges of balancing commercial interests with the privacy rights of customers.

As the future of genetic data sharing unfolds, consumers may need to rethink the costs and benefits of submitting their DNA to companies whose ownership and data policies could change unexpectedly.

The evolving landscape of genetic data privacy serves as a reminder to carefully consider the risks involved in sharing one's most personal information.

DNA and genetic testing firm 23andMe is in turmoil following a data breach last year and its ongoing financial decline. The once-pioneering giant now faces an uncertain future amid efforts to take the company private, intensifying concerns about what might happen to the genetic data of 23andMe's some 15 million customers.

Best known for its saliva-based test kits that offer a glimpse into a person's genetic ancestry, 23andMe has seen its value plummet more than 99% from its \$6 billion peak since going public in early 2021 after failing to turn a profit. That lack of profit was attributed to waning consumer interest in 23andMe's use-once test kits and lackluster growth of its subscription services. The company was also floored by a [huge months-long data breach](#) that saw hackers steal the ancestry data of almost 7 million users throughout 2023.

A lack of federal regulation and a cluttered mess of state privacy laws ultimately means that if 23andMe faces a sale, the data of millions of Americans is also on the table. The company's privacy policy says that its customers' personal information "may be accessed, sold or transferred" as part of a bankruptcy, merger, acquisition, reorganization, or sale.

PROACTIVELY DELETING YOUR ACCOUNT

While 23andMe appears to be resisting a sale to a third-party company for now, Wojcicki's recanted comments have already sounded alarm bells among privacy advocates, who are urging 23andMe customers to take action now to protect their data from being sold by requesting that 23andMe deletes their data. Meredith Whittaker, the president of end-to-end encrypted messaging app Signal, said in a post on X: "It's not just you. If anyone in your family gave their DNA to [23andMe], for all of your sakes, close your/their account now."

Eva Galperin, the director of cybersecurity at the EFF, also warned users to take action. "If you have a 23andMe account, today is a good day to login and request the deletion of your data," said Galperin in a post on X. Requesting the deletion of your data on 23andMe is relatively easy.

Log in to your 23andMe account and navigate to **Settings > Account Information > Delete Your Account**. 23andMe will prompt you to confirm your decision, warning that deleting your account is permanent and irreversible.

There is an important caveat. As noted in 23andMe's privacy policy, account deletion is "subject to retention requirements and certain exceptions," which means the company may hold on to some of your data for an unspecified time. For example, 23andMe will retain your genetic information, date of birth, and gender "as required for compliance" and will retain limited data related to your deletion request, "including but not limited to, your email address, account deletion request identifier, communications related to inquiries or complaints and legal agreements."

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