

# *Research Success*

Completed by the Wetaskiwin Branch, Alberta Genealogical Society

---

The following research stories emanated from members of the Wetaskiwin Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society. The stories have been gleaned from the branch's own newsletter entitled *Roots & Branches*. Stories are printed with permission from *Roots & Branches* or the article authors themselves, and some editing has been done whenever follow-ups appeared in future newsletters.

Indexed alphabetically by *Surname*, and at the end by *Subject*.

## **Anderson, Nels B.**

On March 22, 2024 the branch received a request through our website from K. A., that stated:  
*"I'm looking for the gravesite of my great-great grandfather Anderson.*

*He had a farm there somewhere. Unfortunately I don't know what his 1st name was or date of birth or death.*

*My mom would spend summers on that farm in the 1930's and he was alive then. Needle in haystack perhaps!*

*Thanks."*

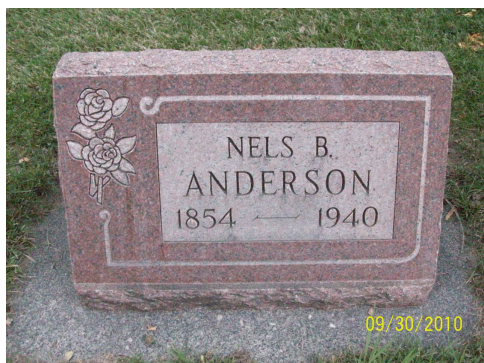
Oops! Not much to get started on.

An introduction email to identify the researcher was sent on March 25 and further stated; "I'll need a bit more information from you. You say you know nothing about him, but what about your grandparents & your great grandparents. Any names, including maiden surnames, & dates of births, marriages & deaths for those generations would be a great help. I look forward to helping you."

On Saturday of Easter weekend, March 30, K.A. was contacted by phone to find out if she had received the email. She had and she was asked to forward any information she had to the return email address. That same day she sent the names of her grandfather & great grandmother, a bit of family info of both, and a snapshot of a Find-a-Grave web page of **Emily Matilda Anderson Whitlock**, her great grandmother. This page was linked to Emily's father **Nels B. Anderson**, K.A.'s great-great grandfather, and to **Archibald "Archie" Whitlock**, K.A.'s grandfather. K.A. further stated she would like to visit the farm site where her mother biked as a child to the railway line and back.

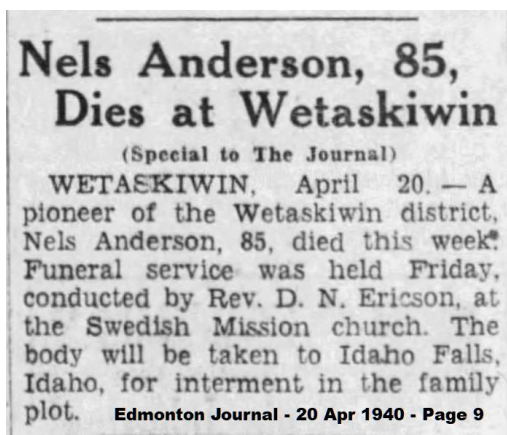
The research project had life.

It should be pointed out that Find-a-Grave information is not always correct. Apparently anyone can open an account with Find-a-Grave which allows one to edit the data. Although Find-a-Grave is good for clues and/or other family member names, the only data one should assume correct is the name and place of the cemetery. One should be able to assume that the photographer of the monuments would know the name of the cemetery.



In this case someone states that the Nels B. Anderson's monument death date of 1940 is incorrect and it should be 1939. Here was the first research project. The Death Registration for Nels B. Anderson was ordered from the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Nels died on 16 April 1940 and it also states that interment will take place in Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA.

The Edmonton Journal, 20 April 1940 also implied that Nels died in 1940.



The article to the right from The Post-Register, 22 April 1940, Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA also addresses the death year as 1940.

## Services Set for Nels Anderson, Early I.F. Resident

Funeral services for Nels B. Anderson, 85, Idaho Falls pioneer who died April 16 at his ranch home in Wetaskiwin, Alberta province, Canada, will be held Wednesday at 2 p. m., in the McHan funeral home here.

Interment will take place in Rose Hill cemetery.

A native of Sweden, born December 22, 1854, Mr. Anderson came to Idaho with his family in 1894 and settled in the New Sweden district.

He made the trip across the plains in a covered wagon with his family and a brother, A. B. Anderson, who still resides here.

Mr. Anderson left here in 1903 to take up residence in Canada. Mrs. Anderson died in 1897.

Survivors in addition to his brother here include the following sons and daughters:

Mrs. Hilda Cutter, Los Angeles; Mrs. Dora Terrill, Stanley Basin, Idaho; Mrs. Minnie Salter, Mrs. Maude Baker, A. W. Anderson and Elmer Anderson, all of Alberta province.

He also leaves another brother, C. W. Anderson, Oshkosh, Neb., and a sister, Mrs. Olive Rosene, Moline, Ill.

The body will arrive here Tuesday night.

The Post-Register - 22 Apr 1940  
Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA

The U.S., Evangelical Covenant Church, Swedish American Church Records, 1868-1970 indicated the following:

Name	Mr. Nels B. Anderson
Record Type	Burial
Death Age	85
Birth Date	22 Dec 1854
Birth Place	Skoge, Sweden
Death Date	16 Apr 1940
Burial Date	24 Apr 1940
Burial Place	Mission Church, Idaho Falls, Bonneville, Idaho, USA

The burial took place in **1940**.

The thing to remember? Always try to find as many sources as possible in proving an event date.

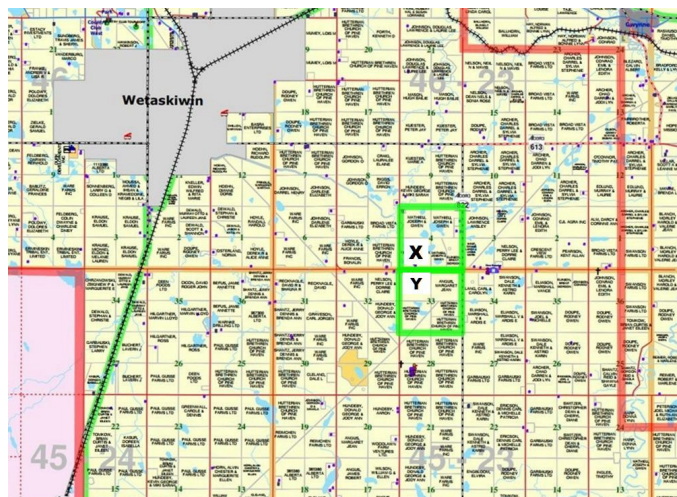
All four sources implied the year 1940 and that interment would take place in Idaho Falls.

Nels final resting place was Rose Hill Cemetery, Idaho Falls, Bonneville County, Idaho, USA.

Newspaper articles are important in reporting not only dates but also in filling in life between those dates.

The second part of this research project was to locate Nels' farm's actual location. Nels arrived in Alberta in 1903. In the 1906 Alberta Census, Nels lived on the SW 1/4 Sec 4 Twp 46 Rge 23 Mer W4. With him were three single children, his mom and dad and his sister-in-law. The 1911 census still shows his residence as this section but doesn't stipulate which quarter. At this time Nels had with him two single children, one divorced daughter with three sons and the sister-in-law.

Using the 2018 Wetaskiwin County Ownership Map the two sections that Nels was involved with are highlighted with a green boundary.



The "X" marks the SW 1/4 Sec 4 Twp 46 Rge 23 Mer W4 where Nels resided from 1903 for approximately ten years.

The "Y" marks the NW 1/4 Sec 33 Twp 45 Rge 23 Mer W4. Nels lived on this yard until his death on 16 April 1940.

Using the Legal Land Description Converter at <https://legallandconverter.com/>,

the legal land description was converted to Latitude 52.923391 and Longitude 113.281394. Entering these numbers into **GOOGLE Earth Pro**, an overhead view of Sec 33 Twp 45 Rge 23 Mer W4 was obtained. The yellow tack is in the centre of the section. Once again the "X" and "Y" indicate the two quarters that Nels resided on. The road markers were placed on this image to help identify where the Nels' farm was located.



After forwarding this research to K. A., she replied, "*Wow this is fantastic!!!*"

Source: *Roots & Branches*, April 2024, Vol. 22 #2.

## **Bedwell, Daveda Jean**

April, 2011: I have been contacted by someone named Tina, who is researching her grandmother. The grandmother's name was Daveda Jean Bedwell, born in Pendryl, Alberta on January 8th, 1932. She died October 25, 1993 in Nanaimo, B.C.

She was married approx. 1953 to someone they believe was named William A. Gilchrist. They had 2 children, Marlena and Cliff. Daveda then married Harold Twigge circa 1953-1955 in Victoria, B.C. and had 3 more children, one of which is Tina's mother. Tina's grandmother and Harold Twigge divorced. Daveda then married Henry Stimpson in Victoria, and they had one child. The family doesn't know their grandmother's parents' names. I suggested that Tina request from Alberta Vital Statistics, the certified copy of her grandmother's birth registration, as the parents should be listed there. I looked in the local history book "Packhorse to Pavement" (covers the Pendryl area) and could not see any write-up on Bedwells. This book lists all the quarter sections, and who owned them through the years, so I spent some time looking at all the names. I luckily found property owned by a Todd Bedwell (SW13.45.6.W5); also in the write-up on someone named Tom Street, mention was made about the Bedwell family. I tried researching in B.C.; however the dates she gave me just seem to be beyond the criteria for public access. I did find a Harold C. Twigge in the 1949 Hendersons Directory for Victoria, and I advised Tina of this. Although I checked obituaries for the Nanaimo area, I couldn't find one for her grandmother. I decided to check the AGS Homestead Records: jackpot!! I found 4 homestead records for Bedwells, all in the same area as the above land location for Todd Bedwell. I have forwarded all this information to Tina, as well as advising her how to order the Homestead Records or view the documents herself at the Provincial Archives. I have asked her to touch base with me, once she gets some of this research done. It will be

interesting to know what she finds out, as when she initially contacted me she had very little information to provide. Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2011, #5.

## **Call to Southworth**

CALL/SOUTHWORTH: I had a request for information on the marriage of Elsie Call to John Southworth in Wetaskiwin, July 1911. The request came from someone who wanted to confirm how to get a copy of a marriage certificate, and also wanted to know what data was on the certificate. I was able to provide him with the information he requested, as well as direct him to the Alberta government website where he could download the necessary forms. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2011, #1.

## **Daly, Daniel Henry**

In February, I was contacted by someone searching for an ancestor named Daniel Henry Daly. Mr. Daly worked at the Driard Hotel in Wetaskiwin, and died in 1907. I was able to search the Wetaskiwin cemetery records, and found where he had been buried in the old Wetaskiwin Cemetery, as well as a bit of military information that was noted on the records. I have sent this to the researcher, and she has now asked that I look for any other records available. This is an on-going search, as Mr. Daly isn't mentioned in any area local history books. Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2011, #2.

## **Dufva, Albert**

Recently, I was contacted by someone wanting an obituary for Albert Dufva who died in 1949 and is buried in the Water Glen Cemetery near Ferintosh. She had the obituary for Mrs. Dufva (Elvira). In doing my research I found that Albert actually died in Vancouver. I gave the researcher all the BC Archives data numbers, etc. so she could request the death certificate if she desired.

I checked the City of Wetaskiwin Archives' obituary file but there isn't one for Albert Dufva (Elvira's is there). I did see on the 1940 voters list that the Dufva family was living at R. R. 2, Wetaskiwin. They obviously moved to Vancouver between 1940 and 1949 when he died. I also found that Albert was drafted in 1918, in Calgary. He was single, 22 years of age, and listed his mother as his next of kin. I sent the researcher all this information along with his regimental number and the information on how she could look up the records. (in the Ferintosh book, Albert Dufva is listed as a local man who served in WWI). The Dufva family does NOT show up in the following local history books: Pioneer Pathways; Gwynne; Bittern Lake; Lewisville; Ferintosh. Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2013, #14.

## Faifield, David Alexander and Mary Jane "Mollie" (Small)

### *The Saga of David Alexander Fairfield + Mary "Mollie" Jane Small* by Leroy Koop



On April 11, 2022 a request was received through the branch website from Judy H. It stated:

"I'm looking for my father and aunt's death certificate. They drowned in the Belly River near Wetaskiwin on about July 14, 1926. I'd also like to know where they are buried. I suspect it's in the Wetaskiwin Cemetery. Their names are:

Fairfield, David Alexander  
Fairfield, Isabel----

At first glance, with a father dying in 1926, it appeared our client must have been around 100 years old, having been born before 1926. The request, the way it was worded, would indicate that the two drowning victims were brother & sister or brother and sister-in-law. Furthermore, the river Belly River was unfamiliar to me and I have lived in the County of Wetaskiwin since 1978.

But a genealogy researcher continues on.

The lists of buried souls in the two Wetaskiwin Cemeteries failed to contain any Fairfield names. The AGS Surname Database did reflect a David Alexander Fairfield (about 39) and an Isabel (about 10) buried in the Wainwright Cemetery.

Now I thought it had become necessary to determine where Belly River was located. Using GOOGLE maps it was determined that the mouth of the Belly River was on the Old Man River northwest of Lethbridge. Furthermore, on current roads, it would take 5 to 6 hours to drive from the Belly River mouth to Wainwright. A search on the internet indicated that the Belly River area was known for fishing, camping, hiking trails and that the river originates in northwestern Montana at Helen Lake, near the base of Ahern Peak in Glacier National Park. So, although Belly River area was a good spot for fishing, it was a long way to travel from Wainwright to Belly River in 1926.

But a genealogy researcher continues on.

A newspaper article in the Wainwright Star, July 21, 1926, found on the PEEL website, was the first eye opening of a very sad story. David Alexander Fairfield and his daughter Isabel were victims of accidental drowning on 13 July 1926<sup>1</sup>. Isabel, 10 years old, was playing on the family raft used to travel across the Battle River to the village of Fabyan, 11 km northwest of Wainwright on Hwy 14. Isabel fell and slipped into the water. Father David saw it happen and,

although he couldn't swim, jumped into the river to rescue his daughter. The river was just too deep. Two gentlemen on the other side of the river saw what was happening and came across to try and help. The two bodies were finally pulled from the river with a long pole. Father and daughter were still clinging to each other. A real tear jerker, even now as I write this article.

But the sadness continued in the newspaper article. The wife of David and mother of Isabel was "at present unfortunately award of the government at Ponoka". More research and conversations with Judy H. revealed that Mary Fairfield nee Small, the wife and mother, had suffered a head injury back in Scotland, falling down a mine shaft while delivering lunch to her father, a coal miner. Because of severe headaches Mary was admitted to the Ponoka Hospital about 1921 where she passed away on 28 Feb 1940<sup>2</sup>.

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death<sup>2</sup> for Mary Jane Fairfield attached to the Death Registration<sup>2</sup> in 1940 states that Mary's "immediate cause of death was intestinal obstruction due to Carcinoma of the Sigmoid Colon". Also, under "other morbid conditions" are listed "Pulmonary Tuberculosis and Catatonic Schizophrenia". Nowadays the word catatonic is not affiliated with only one specific illness. Today, although a lifelong condition, the catatonic symptoms are treatable.

Three other children of David and Mary, ages 8 to 12 were left behind without a parent to look after them. Although by this time, as further research proved, David had three brothers who also lived in Canada by 1923, no family members took over the care of these orphans.

David Alexander was born on 27 Jan 1884<sup>3</sup> in Gilnahirk, Belfast, Down, Ireland to David Fairfield Sr. and Margaret Ann Dunlop. David Jr. married Mary "Mollie" Jane Small on 20 Jun 1913<sup>4</sup> at 191 Currie Street, Edmonton, the home of David's brother, James. Mary was born on 18 Oct 1889<sup>5</sup> in New Cumnock, Ayrshire, Scotland to James Small and Isabella Killan.

Despite their short life together David and Mollie's family has grown from those three young orphaned children to include 4 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren, 9 great-great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-great-grandchildren.

David and Mollie, I consider it a privilege to have been given the opportunity to research your ancestors for your descendants. I just wish it had been a happier story. David and Mollie, may you rest in peace.

Sources:

<sup>1</sup>David's Death Registration was obtained from the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

<sup>2</sup>Mary's Death Registration and Medical Certification of Cause of Death was obtained from the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

<sup>3</sup>David A. Fairfield's Birth Registration was located using Ancestry.com and IrishGenealogy.ie.

<sup>4</sup>David and Mary's Marriage Registration was obtained from the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

<sup>5</sup>Mary "Mollie" Jane Small's Birth Registration was obtained through ScotlandsPeople.

Information on the 1901 and 1911 Censuses of Ireland were available on the National Archives of Ireland website. Source: *Roots and Branches*, September 2022, Vol. 20 #3.

## ***Mary Jane "Mollie" Fairfield nee Small***

Update by Leroy Koop June 2024

On April 24, 2024, 2 years and 2 days after I sent my last report to Judy H. from Lethbridge, granddaughter of Mollie, I received the following email:

"It's been a long time since you did that marvelous genealogy work for our family (Fairfield and Small). Since then, we've taken some action with our grandmother's grave in Ponoka-- Mary Jane Small Fairfield. We've had a small monument made and installed, and we will travel to Ponoka to have a tiny graveside service May 28 at 2 pm.... I thought you might be interested to know I didn't just let this "die"-- and that we will honour the woman who had such a difficult life in Canada. We would love it if you could attend, but if not, I thought you might like to know about our follow-up to all your hard work. We wouldn't be doing this if we hadn't had your help, and you know I'll be forever grateful."

Wow! That is the first and only time that a client of a research project of mine actually let me know what happened after the project. My wife and I immediately put the service date on our calendar. No way were we going to miss that service.

May 28 was a beautiful day in many ways. Nine people were at the graveside service; Judy and her two brothers, all from Alberta, and their only first cousin from British Columbia, along with a minister, two representatives from the town of Ponoka and the two of us. All were given the opportunity to say a few words. My words were directed at Mollie, saying how honoured I was to have been able to find her for her family which then led to this great event. My research found Mollie's resting place in the Forest Home Cemetery in Ponoka.



The family honoured Mollie with a plaque.



After the service the four grandchildren, my wife and I visited for two hours in a quiet room, getting to know each other, viewing the few photos the family had and discussing the research project. Discussion also took place about what to do about David, the grandfather, and Isabella, the aunt, who drowned in 1926 in the Battle River near Fabyan and are buried in the Wainwright Cemetery.

A very meaningful and emotional day! Source: ***Roots and Branches, September 2024, Vol. 22 #3.***



## Gimby, Rebecca (Ginby)

### *The Importance of Obituaries*

by Leroy Koop

Obituaries are usually the last written document of the deceased. Although events furthest away from the death date may be suspect, much information is often available to a genealogy researcher.



Cartwright, Man.—By the death of John Gimby the west has lost another pioneer and patriot. Born in Toronto, or as it was then called "Muddy York," on February 10, 1829, he moved to Owen Sound in 1849. Here he married his cousin, Rebecca Gimby, and together they faced the blizzards of the west in 1877, settling near Winnipeg in what was then known as the Caledonia Settlement. Three years after he came to this locality and settled on the banks of a stream which today is known as Gimby creek. Here his wife died in 1891, and about three years later he was married a second time, to Mary Somersell, also of Owen Sound. Thirteen years ago he sold his claim on Gimby creek and went to reside in Wawanesa, from whence he passed away on Sunday, February 17. The remains were brought back to be laid by those of his first wife and were accompanied by his son and grand-daughter, C. M. Gimby and Nurse Gimby, both of Edmonton, Alta., who had been caring for him during his illness. He leaves to mourn his loss a wife and three sons, Mrs. Gimby, of Wawanesa; C. W. and Fred, of Edmonton, and George, of this village. Deceased was for many years a member of the Methodist church, his name appearing second with a number of others in forming what is now known as Cartwright Methodist church, in 1887.

Obituaries often give family names of the deceased for 3 or 4 generations; parents of the deceased, the deceased and spouse; and children and grandchildren of the deceased. Death date, birth date, marriage date and age of the deceased may be included as well as where the events took place. If you're really lucky you may get the "key" to your research.

I was asked to find out information on my brother-in-law's great-great grandmother named Rebecca. The only information he had of her was the first name and that she was married to a John Gimby. John was born in Ontario in 1829 and died in Manitoba in 1918. This information came from a family pedigree chart published by an extended family member.

Researching John Gimby in Canada in Canadian Censuses 1861 to 1891 only showed Rebecca as John's wife with the assumed surname of Gimby. John and Rebecca's life together began in the mid 1850's before civil registration in Ontario and with no available marriage church records. From the Manitoba Vital Statistics it was determined that John died on February 17, 1918. Having that information led to the newspaper obituary.

The displayed obituary was from the Winnipeg Free Press, March 1, 1918. The "key" to continued research on Rebecca was; "...he married his **cousin** Rebecca Gimby...". Was Gimby her married or maiden surname? The article also states that after Rebecca's death in 1891, John married a Mary Somersall. The Manitoba Vital Statistics show that John Gimby married an Annie Mary Cadman who previously, as Annie Mary Somersall, had married Joseph Cadman. Since the

obituary writer was using Mary's maiden surname, it was assumed that Rebecca's maiden surname of Gimby was also used and that John and Rebecca were possibly first cousins.

With a maiden surname of Gimby, Rebecca's parents were discovered as being William and Sarah (nee Stafford) Ginby (not Gimby) and that Rebecca was born in October 1827 in Marsh Parish, Cambridgeshire, England.

Thanks to a newspaper obituary this research came to a successful conclusion. Source: *Roots & Branches*, April 2022, Vo. 20 #2.

## **Jans, Andrew and Clara**

A very new request, just received, is from Germany, requesting information on the Andrew and Clara Jans family who lived in the Gwynne/New Norway area. I will begin working on this and let the researcher, Mr. Krieger, know what I find..... I am pleased to advise that I was contacted by the daughter of Gertrude (Jans) Holt, regarding the information sent to me by Gertrude's German second cousin. I have forwarded the information to Gertrude's daughter, and it is my hope that Gertrude and her second cousin have made contact with each other..... and thanks also to Myrick Rosser, another Wetaskiwin branch member who assisted me with the Jans enquiry. Source: *Roots & Branches*, October 2011, #8.

## **Jensen, Anton and Christine**

Mr. Jacobsen from Denmark is looking for information about his Jensen relatives (Anton and Christine). I found them in the Wetaskiwin cemetery database, and I have taken digital photos of the graves as well as the cemetery entrance, and sent this to Mr. Jacobsen. I then researched the obituary records at the City of Wetaskiwin Archives and found quite a long obituary for Anton Jensen, but unfortunately nothing for Christine. This information has been sent to Mr. Jacobsen. An interesting side note is that one of Mr. Jensen's daughters was married to Fritz Kirstein, a very well-known butcher in Wetaskiwin for over 40 years! Source: *Roots & Branches*, October 2011, #6.

## **Johnson, Otto Emile and Mary (Switzer) Johnson, John and Jacoba/Johanna (Lund)**

Search for information on great-grandparents: Otto Emile Johnson and Mary (Switzer) Johnson (her maternal great-grandparents) and John Johnson and Jacoba/Johanna (Lund) Johnson (her paternal great-grandparents). I was able to suggest several websites for her to check, and note that she has posted information on ancestry.ca. I have emailed her to find out what the status is regarding her research as I don't want to duplicate research she has already done – I am still waiting for a reply from her. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2014, #19.

## **Knack, Frederick & Elizabeth**

A request was forwarded to me by the Zion Lutheran church secretary for research on Frederick & Elizabeth Knack. The CD of the City of Wetaskiwin cemeteries in our library gave dates of burial, (1938 and 1940) and estimated birth dates for both. The church secretary had already contacted the City Archives and found an obituary for Frederick. Using peel.library@ualberta.ca, the site for online newspapers, in Wetaskiwin papers, I found an entry for Frederick's farm auction sale in 1922. There were many mentions in later papers mentioning two daughters as they were promoted through their

school grades, but I was unable to find any further information. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2014, #20.

## Kochanowicz

One person contacted me, asking me to refer him to Sharon Aney, a Wetaskiwin branch member, as he saw her article in *Relatively Speaking*, the Alberta Genealogical Society newsletter, and felt they had a “Kochanowicz” connection. From Sharon: "After analyzing his family lore, the information I had received from my researchers in Poland several years ago, and visiting the Polish Genealogy Society of America website and <http://www.familysearch.org> database, I was able to determine that his great-grandfather and my great-grandmother were siblings." Source: *Roots & Branches*, October 2013, #17.

## Littlechild, Justine



I decided to write about the summer of “53 for two reasons. Firstly, that summer holds the fondest memories of my Mom. Secondly, I want to dedicate these writings to her”.

Agnes Littlechild

For some reason we were let out of Ermineskin Residential School early that year. No one picked up my sister, Josephine, my brother David and me, so after supper Father Lateur, the Principal, took us home. We found Mom alone with the little ones. Our cottage style home was neat and clean, lots of wood and water. Thus, we settled down quietly, going about our chores, not knowing what the summer would bring. Eventually we did ask Mom where Dad was but she only shook her head.

The next day my brother David asked Mom if he could jog to the store. She said yes, providing he chopped wood first. Much later that evening David was brought home in a hauling truck by two of our cousins, Larry Hodgson and Percy Wolfe. He proudly announced to Mom, “I am going to be a movie star. I am going with a group of

people from Hobbema to Banff to make a movie called ‘Saskatchewan’. They were to leave in about a week. Since Chief Dan Minde, Jean, my eldest sister Kathleen and Willie were leaving as well, my mom gave her blessings. This left Mom, Josephine, me, Jerry (who died in 1974), Danny, Theresa, and Linda to fend for ourselves.

Mom had planted a huge garden in front of our house, facing the road south. A few days later, after being home, Josephine and I were pulling weeds in the garden when we heard ‘The Singer’, Gilbert Ermineskin, singing his songs as he passed by with his wagon team. We always knew it was him for he had a beautiful voice. He would be singing these songs,

“Mawasakwatokeyaikanaï”, a long word meaning when the sundance lodge is being built. Gilbert was obviously moving somewhere because he had all his family and tent poles sticking out of the wagon.

Soon another wagon passed by. This time it was Jim Ermineskin and family. This one looked a little sophisticated. He had tied a red bandana at the end of his tent poles.

Josephine and I ran inside. Mom was sewing at her usual west window. We asked her ...”Mom, where all these people going with their tent poles sticking out?” She said “There is a sundance going on at Riverside”. We asked if we could go. We even offered to pack. “I don’t know”, Mom said, thinking out loud. “We don’t have much grub and who is going to pitch up our tent?”

Finally we talked her into going. First she would make two veils and two bonnets and make bannock. She worked late into the night by the coal oil lamp. Josephine and I packed two sets of clothes each (that’s all we had), plus we had to wash some clothes by tub and washboard that evening.

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.

My Mom’s cousins, Fred and Bobby Bull were visiting Dan Minde and offered to put up our tent behind our grandparent’s tipi. In no time our tent was neat and cosy. Those years the Sundance was carried on very traditionally. There were about 15 men and women riding abreast, singing the songs around the encampment. The lodge was being made; it would be up that evening and those participating would be going in.

Bobby Bull invited Mom to come and visit her sister-in-law, Lucy. There was a stick game, “Chika wonak” going on in their tent. Mom was so happy with the invite. I saw her taking her new bag of sewing. Josephine and I didn’t mind watching the kids. Mom came back soon and said she made \$6.00 selling her work. We couldn’t go back to the store, so we had to settle for the one and only store on the Sundance grounds.

Mom bought some ring bologna, bag of potatoes, oatmeal and goodies for us. She also bought a big jar of cream from Baby Saskatchewan. She had come by peddling her cream. Soon we were cooking supper by the open fire. Mom made tea for herself.

Our dessert that night was each a bowl of cream with bannock. We sat around the campfire and listened to the singers on horseback. When it was time to retire Mom made us pray to Jesus on a and Theresa for good luck. She didn’t want to ask for money from her parents. They were too busy getting ready for a big giveaway for a horse dance.

The next day Mom was cooking the same menu: bologna, potatoes and tea. It was late in the afternoon when I saw a familiar figure coming towards our tent. It was my uncle, Pete Wolfe. He

had on his usual combination overall and he looked tired. Mom asked why he was walking. He said his hauling truck broke down in Ponoka. He had gotten a ride from Ponoka to the grounds and he was looking for a ride to Kramers. He said, "Sister, do you have anything to eat? I am so hungry". My Mom invited him to eat with us. He said it was a delicious meal. He then looked in his pocket and took out a crumpled \$5.00 bill and gave it to Mom. Mom told us to tidy up and change the kids. She went back to the Louis Bull encampment to peddle the last of her sewing. I know she had sewn herself a pretty dress, but she took it along.

She came back and told us, "Now we can go to the store". We had \$15.00 whole dollars! We hitched up our team again and rode to Kramer's. Out of \$15.00 we got a big box of groceries.

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.

I never saw my grandparents for the rest of the summer but it was the beginning of a good summer for us. It was lonely at times, but only when it rained and we couldn't go to the store. Mom still sewed by the lamp. Whatever work she finished she would bring to the store on the 20th of each month (family allowance day).

Also on that day we would come to Ermineskin School and Mom would faithfully pay Sister Alfred. Sister Alfred had a small concession in the parlour of Ermineskin School where she sold peanuts, chips candy and toiletries. In the top shelf she had different rolls of broadcloth, lace, ribbon and paisley prints. Mom had a charge account here, where she bought materials for her bonnets, veils and dresses. The 20th of each month was a big day for us. We would pick up our cheque, come and pay Mom's bill at Sister Alfred's, then to Frank Bolt's to get groceries, then to the poker grounds.

Joe Kramer had a post pile near the bush where the Lightnings live today. By the big trees were the card circles. There were 5 cents games, 10 cents, 25 cents and the big time gamblers had dollar games. They mostly played 5 cent and 25 cent games. Josephine and I stayed in the wagon to mind the kids and we always had our grub box along.

Mom trained me early to be responsible. Sometimes when she pulled the pot she would give me money to go and buy sweets for the kids. Most times I kept that money in my petticoat pocket. If she lost money in the circle the money in my pocket was what she made. But I remember some summer evenings when she made good. Those times we would stop by Frank Bolt's. She would go to the back door and Mrs. Bolt would always open the door for us and we would shop. Mrs. Bolt kept cardboard boxes for us and we used them as throw rugs by the door at home.



*Agnes Littlechild in the flower red dress. Her mother, Justine holding baby Jerry, who died in 1974.*

One day Mom didn't have any start-up money, not even a quarter. But we still hitched up Shorty and Frank and went to the store. This sunny day I was sitting in front with Mom; I always had to carry the baby.

I glanced and Mom and she looked like she was praying. Just as we were passing by where Annie Oldpan's house is she suddenly stopped the horses and told me to go pick up the money on the ground. I kept asking where. She got annoyed. Finally she used her whip and pointed to the ground. There was a neatly folded, but dirty \$5.00 bill. How she ever saw it, I don't know. She won \$31.00 that day.

Sometimes I found Mom very quiet. Did she miss Dad? Most times she would keep busy sewing and cooking.

Early one morning she told us to get ready. We thought we were going to the store. Instead we travelled about half a day. We turned into a farm yard. There was a new tent by some trees off to the side of the farm house. When we stopped in front of the tent my Uncle Leo and Aunt Isabelle Lynch came out. They were so happy to see us. Mom was crying as she hugged her sister-in-law. I guess Uncle Leo was working for these people who seemed very kind. We stayed overnight. When we were leaving the next day the farm lady gave us garden vegetables. It seemed that Somebody up there was always watching over us. We started digging up our potatoes after our visit with Uncle Leo. Our meals consisted of fried potatoes, green onions, romaine lettuce and wild berries.

On Sundays we would go to church. After church Mom would charge a few treats on her account. One week day we came to the school. While Mom was getting her sewing supplies, Sister Yvonne came out from the kitchen and asked Mom if she wanted some cranberries. Mom was delighted, of course. Sister gave us two cardboard boxes of cranberries. She said some ladies from Samson came to sell them to Father Latour, but she did not have the time or energy to clean them.

We picked up a bag of sugar at Frank Bolt's and came right home. Once home we had to get our canning jars from the cellar. It was too hot to make a fire in the house so we made a fire outside and sterilized the jars there. Mom canned 24 jars of those cranberries; they came in handy during the winter months.

Mom gathered us one morning after breakfast and told us we all had to work our garden. We had to take out our vegetables before it got too cold. I noticed she was sewing more, and once in a while she would come and measure us. Josephine and I used to listen to our battery operated radio. We would find the station KMON from Great Falls. It was a country and western station. We gathered from the radio that it was back to school time. Our hearts sank.

We were out in the garden one afternoon when we saw a familiar team and buggy coming down the road. We started waving our arms and ran to tell Mom that Kokum and Mosum and Willie were coming. We could hardly see Willie, he was squeezed between the old couple. Willie was so chubby and very tanned.

We saw that the back of the buggy was full of boxes. They told us stories about the making of the movie "Saskatchewan", and how there were poker games at night with Morley Indians (Stoney Indians) and the Crees from Hobbema. Grandpa said he even played cards with Allan Ladd and Shelly Winters. So it was not only Mom who played poker that summer of '53!

Chief Dan Minde gave lots of money for Mom to get us ready for school. In the three boxes were gifts: one box was full of groceries, one box full of new material and one box full of used winter coats. I remember Mom being so busy sewing that we quit going to the store. She undid the winter coats, washed them by hand and hung the pieces to dry. She made three quilts out of the coats. Then came our big trip to Wetaskiwin to shop for school clothes. We tied our horses and wagon by the card grounds and went by Greyhound bus.

We went back to boarding school very happy but Mom looked worried. Some weeks went by when Mom finally came to see us. She did look happy. She was with my Dad. They were in a hurry. She came to pay her bill to Sister Alfred. Mom and Dad told us to look forward to a family wedding. So came the end of a memorable summer when Mom, me and Josephine were all best friends.

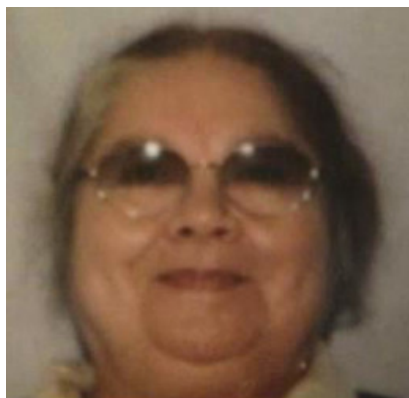
~~~~~

Thank you to Pam Cooke for submitting this memoir written by Agnes Littlechild.

In Pam's words: *"It was given to me over 15 years ago and I have always admired it. I like the elements of happiness, resilience and self reliance in it, and it is also a great period piece of Cree life and culture"*.

~~~~~

**Agnes Alice Littlechild 1939 – 2006** submitted by Pam Cooke & Melody Littlechild,



Agnes was born and raised in Hobbema (Maskwacis). Her parents, Smith and Justine Littlechild, had a family of 13 children. She was a boarding student at the Ermineskin Indian Residential School, St Joseph's Convent in Red Deer and graduated from Grade 12 at Blue Quills Indian Residential School in Saint Paul. She was raised as a Roman Catholic and was active in Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Church in Maskwacis throughout her life.

Agnes was married twice, to Johnny Ermineskin and Raymond

Tootoosis. She raised a family of 5 sons from her first marriage and 2 daughters from her second marriage.

Agnes enjoyed volunteering, writing, canning, (especially the wild saskatoon berries and chokecherries that she liked to pick and garden produce), as well as doing hand work like crocheting, sewing and beadwork.

Agnes was proud of her history and culture, spoke fluent Cree, and believed in and practised her Cree traditions and ceremonies. She loved her community and believed in working to improve it. She served her community in many ways, by working for Ermineskin Cree Nation for many years, with membership, the Elder's department and serving on boards and committees. Agnes was a gifted speaker and spokesperson and was frequently asked to represent her Band outside of Maskwacis, as an Elder offering a blessing, or as a committee member.

“Any person can learn what they decide to learn.

It is what you do with learning that brings harmony, balance and peace in life.”

Agnes Littlechild, Elder, 2002

Source: *Roots & Branches*, April, 2017, Vol. 15 No. 2.

### **McPayne/ Davis, Mack/Maxwell Sheridan/ Sherwood, Christa/Christine**

Dona C. brought her “brickwall” for the members to discuss and hopefully provide some hints of direction to continue her search. Her difficulty arises with finding the ancestors and origin of her paternal grandparents, Mack/Maxwell/ McPayne/ Davis and his wife Christa/Christine Sheridan/ Sherwood/ Cousins.

I contacted Jean B., a Wetaskiwin branch member, and asked if she was interested in doing some research. I emailed her the information Dona had supplied, and Jean phoned me to tell me she had the local history books for the areas in Alberta where Dona's family lived! Wow, how fortunate was that! Jean has found some information on the Davis family, and this has been forwarded to Dona. Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2012, #9.

### **Motuz, Metro**

I received a request for information about a Metro Motuz who was born in 1919 in Manitoba. Approximately 1949, after his marriage to Helene Tanguay ended, he moved to Alberta, working in the oil fields. He may have remarried someone with the first name of Alexandra. The Calmar Community Cemetery Association shows a headstone with Metro Motuz, born in 1919 and died in 1974. The researcher is trying to get confirmation that this is the same person, and she would like to find an obituary for them. She also contacted various other sources, and she advised me later that she had been sent an



obituary for Metro Motuz – this from the Edmonton paper. A phone call to the City of Wetaskiwin Archives confirmed that the researcher has also asked them for the same information, and they have advised her that there isn't an obituary for any Motuz family member in their records. Our branch member Jean Browse, who assists with research, advised me that there is a Motuz living in Devon – possibly the son of Metro. Jean gave me the person's name and phone number and I have passed this along to the researcher. Further to this, Jean Browse searched the Calmar Local History book and there is no mention there of a Motuz family. Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2013, #15.

## Minde, Chief Dan



**Chief Dan Minde**

**Cree Name: Ka Mahihkani Pimohtew or “Walking Wolf”**

**1883 - 1959**

By Pam Cooke, Maskwacis, AB., Dec 2024

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. 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. Mamitoneyihcikan, his mother's Cree name means mind in English. 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 Samson 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 of a snapshot 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 lives 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

HOBBEMA, 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 XXII, 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 later bestowed upon Pope Francis at Maskwacis in July 2022, where 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 Littlechild.

When Wilton was inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, he loaned Dan Minde's outfit and a replica of his headdress to honour him. Both are still there 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 every- thing 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 other 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 parents Joe and Emma Minde were responsible for paying for her school fees. In a story Theresa 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) 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. He was a tremendous horseman, and his tipi painted with horses was a familiar site at the Ponoka Stampede and the Calgary Stampede. His tipi drew many visitors & 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.

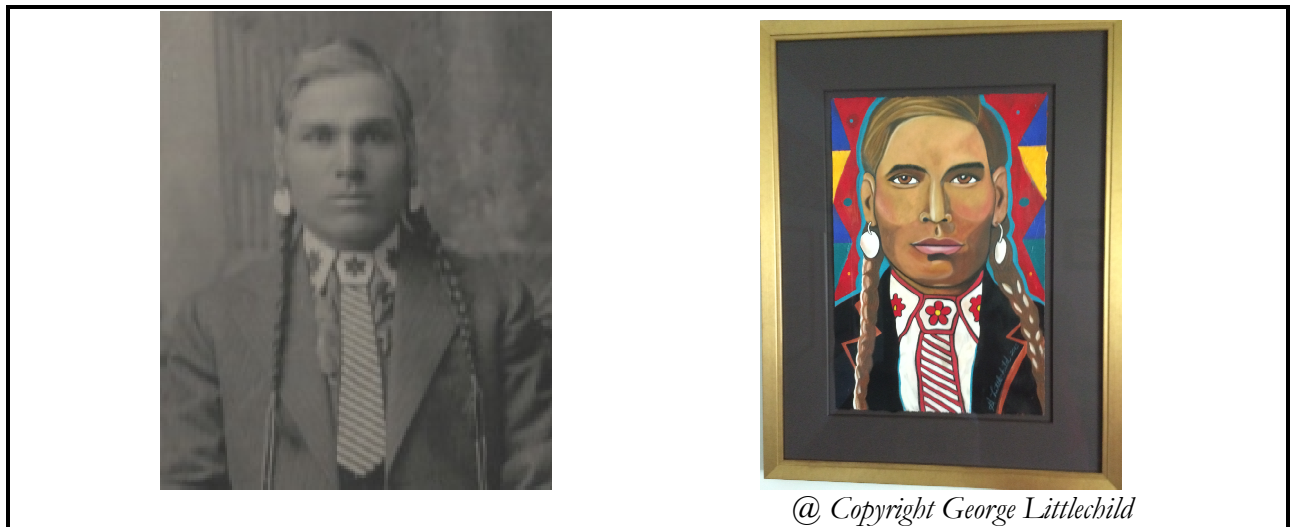
That particular sundance was the last time I had partially witnessed a horse dance. It happened right in front of Dan Minde’s tipi. I remember two cars came to give lighting to where the

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*

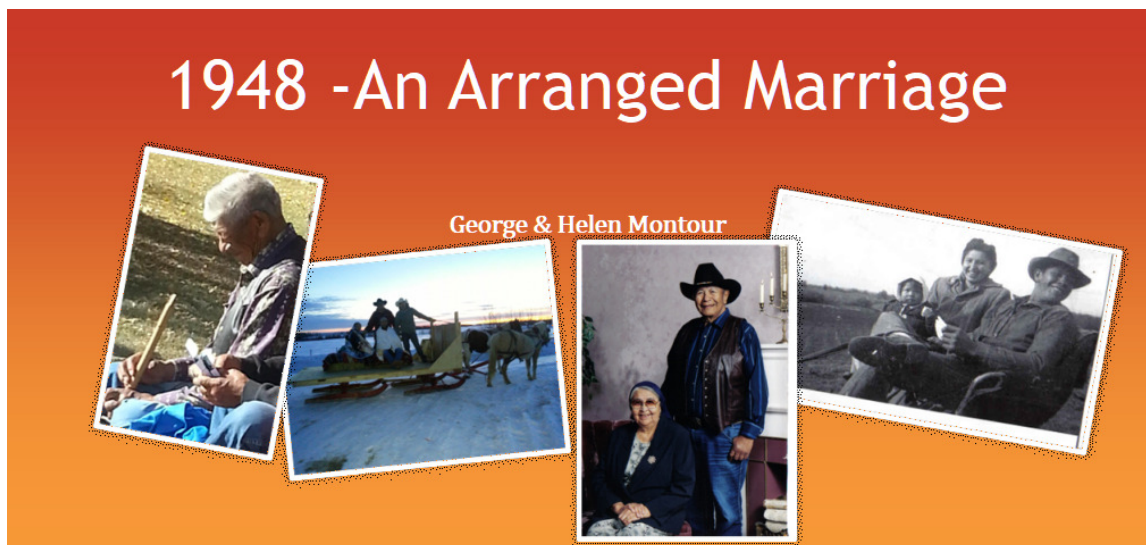
Researching our ancestors helps us to realize their influences and the legacy that they endow us with. Chief Dan Minde, a faithful Chief and leader, believed in the power of formal education, traditional Cree knowledge and that leadership is about service to your community. His influence is seen in his 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 seen below. It was given as a graduation gift to our son Nigel Wildcat in 2015.



Thanks to my husband Brian for editing and formatting this story. Source: *Roots & Branches*, January 2025, Vol. 23 #1.

## Montour, George and Helen (Dion-Buffalo)



**January 16, 1948**

**by Denise Montour**



*George Olive Montour Born August 25, 1929, married Helen Joyce Dion-Buffalo Born October 13, 1930. They remained married for sixty-six years and raised twelve children. They had many-many grandchildren and great grandchildren they loved dearly.*

Before the turn of the new year a young eighteen-year-old woman's' parents made the decision for an arranged marriage. This was a customary law in those days and very much expected. Helen's narrative recalls her parents' invitation to visit the parents of George Montour. Years later Helen would lovingly express in retelling how it was that "I am still visiting". Both George and Helen had very good humor, were gentle souls and had so much knowledge and wisdom.

Justine and Joe Montour, parents of the Groom George; and Helen's parents: Joe & Sarah Dion-Buffalo, made their consultations and negotiations as part of the Iyiniw traditions for an arranged marriage. Joe and Justine Montour arranged that their son George was a good man, a good hunter, a good provider, and that he obeyed his parents, an important detail. As such, would make a good husband and family man.

Each family negotiated the values of a spiritual union that would enlighten the path of marriage. As in accordance with Iyinew (Cree) customary law, Helen and George began their married life in the household

of his parents. They would soon move and work at Dyberg Farm; where their first child Virginia was born in 1949.

January 16, 1948, saw a four-day wedding celebration. Joyful recollections include having the entire four nations of Maskwacis in attendance of a wedding pow-wow, then ending with a western dance and celebration. This was hosted at the onâcowsis residence upon the samson reservation.

## Indian Residential School

Both George and Helen Attended the Ermineskin Indian Residential school at differing times. Helen was 10 when she attended for three years; while George began when he was 5 years old until he left at age 16. My parents were strong advocates of their identity and often encouraged belief within the Iyiniw ways of living, instilled long before settler society's beliefs encroached our ways. Our customary law of arranged marriage had become less practiced or witnessed while they lived. Yet, George and Helen believed in its' practice as a sacred governance for our peoples. Both believed that arranged marriages governed many Iyiniw mannerisms necessary to raising children and family as a customary law.



*Elders George & Helen Montour remember attending the Ermineskin Residential School. Photo courtesy of the Samson Archives and Museum and the Wetaskiwin Times*

Regardless of the schools attempt to abolish identity, and nehiyawewin, George and Helen did retain their language of nehiyawewin. Both exemplified pride within their identity, promoted, and advocated Iyinew pimatisiwin, the life practices of our peoples. George and Helen were instrumental in the community of Maskwacis and known as spiritual leaders, healers, mentors, and wisdom holders.

## Life and Times



A spotlight upon George Montour in the Bear Hills Native Voice Newspaper and The Times (Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada) · 8 Apr 1970. This image shows George showing a Charolais Bull during the years of managing the Ranch called the Bull Farm in Maskwacis and on the Samson Cree Nation. As an extension to the Bull Farm, my father also managed the farms in Devon and Buck Lake, all owned by Samson Cree Nation.



## Witnesses

Helen and Jim Omeasoo were the wedding standby's for George and Helen Montour. This image shows their continued support throughout the years. I cannot recall the year this image was taken; however, I suspect that it was some time in the 90's. My younger brother Robbie sits at the far-right cheering on this beautiful embrace and show of affection.



## Family



*L-R Top row: Phyllis, Dinah, Leon, Justine, Lucy, Delia, Ivan. L-R middle row: George, Ursula.  
L-R bottom row: Denise, Helen, George jr. Marilyn and Robbie*

George and Helen had a combined total of sixteen children. The image shows twelve of the children.

Deceased children: Virginia Florence Montour B: October 16, 1948. D: February 4, 1949. Dennis George Born January 18, 1956 died January 24, 1956. On February 8, 1986 a drunk driver took the lives of their daughter Marilyn with her children & Eldest grandchild: Marilyn Freda B: September 22, 1951 and her children Verlyn B: June 23, 1979 & Leon Craig B: October 30, 1982. Eldest grandchild, Nicole (Nikki) Montour B: October 4, 1972.

## 66 Years



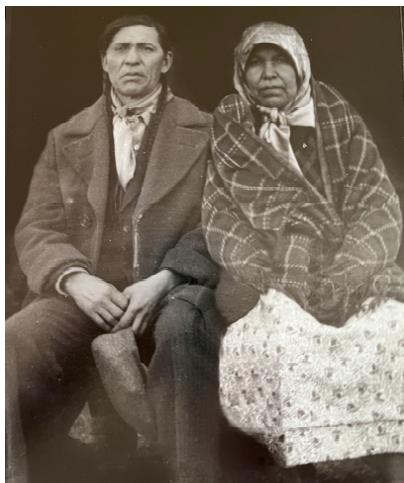
On January 16, 2014 George and Helen celebrated 66 years of Marriage.

On April 20, 2014, Helen Joyce Dion-Buffalo transitioned into the spirit world.

On December 28, 2015, George joined his wife, Helen. Forever to celebrate their journey in the Happy Hunting Grounds with our ancestors.

## Parents of the Groom

Justine & Joe Montour with Frank Caplette. Relative from Rocky Boy Montana USA. Photo taken at a Sundance in Maskwacis early 50's. Joe was a World War one veteran. Born in North Dakota USA in 1898. Justine was the granddaughter of The Light, Jasaway. Her parents were Marie (Jasêwey) & Antoine Ugly. Marie was of Blackfoot and Cree mix.



## Parents of the Bride

Sarah (onâcowesis) & Joe Dion-Buffalo  
(Image has unknown date, year and place)  
Joe Dion served as Chief in Samson, and the child of Pierre Dion & Catherine Peggy Allard Mostosomêh. Pierre came from Big Bear lineage. Sarah was the daughter of Betsy Samson & headman Louis onâcowesis or Natuasis

Source: **article author, Denise Montour, February 2025**

## **Phippen, William and Dorothy**

I had a request for information on William and Dorothy Phippen, both deceased. The researcher wondered where they were buried, and I was able to provide the information that they were both buried in the Old Cemetery in Wetaskiwin, including the plot numbers. He was contacting the City of Wetaskiwin Archives to request their obituaries from their archival records. He has since asked me for more information on his extended family, and he has sent a 3 page document outlining the history of the Phippen family. I have printed the document, and it is now in the family histories section of our WGS library. Source: *Roots & Branches*, October 2013, #16.

## **Quigley, Ian**

In February, our branch received a request for assistance from Ian Quigley. He was looking for information regarding his grandmother and his mother's adoption. This was responded to by Don B. and Claudia M. who were also contacted by Mr. Quigley and they were able to find considerable information. Mr. Quigley's reply was very positive and he praised their helpfulness and was very grateful for the information provided to him. Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2013, #13.

## **Strand, Lawrence Wallace and Matilde (Baker)**

Mr. Mitchell from USA contacted us, looking for information about Matilde Baker Strand and Lawrence Wallace Strand. I also found their burial information in the Wetaskiwin cemetery database, and took photos as above, and have sent this to Mr. Mitchell. I found an obituary for Lawrence Strand, but nothing for Matilde Baker Strand and this information has been sent to Mr. Mitchell. He asked a very general question: "any information on them or any other Strands would be appreciated". As there were quite a few Strands in the area, I will ask him for more guidance in order that information sent is relevant. Source: *Roots & Branches*, October 2011, #7.

## **Turner, John Henry Leslie**

FROM SCOTLAND TO SASKATCHEWAN, AND ALBERTA

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, an email was sent to the Wetaskiwin Branch, AGS, asking for assistance in obtaining information about the Great Uncle of Ruth Close – a man named John Henry Leslie Turner.

The email read as follows:

Dear Sirs/Madam:

I note that you have information on burial places in Wetaskawin (sic). My wife's great uncle died on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1956 and is buried at Wetaskawin (sic). His name was John Henry Leslie Turner and he was originally from England. (dob: 16/01/1872). John Turner farmed in the Wetaskawin

(sic) area around Labarynth (sic) Lake. In addition his father, George Turner, also from England, died whilst on a visit to him and the only information we have is that he died in October! (pre-1913).

My wife and I intend to visit Wetaskiwin on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2015, and it would be greatly appreciated if we could find out where her great uncle is buried.

With Best Scottish Wishes,

Duncan and Ruth Close, (nee Turner)

Sanquhar, Scotland

I received the above email on the Wetaskiwin Branch email – I knew that our Research Coordinator, Gary Rode, would be busy at this time of year so I decided to just look up the cemetery information and send it along to the Close family.

I checked the cemetery records for Wetaskiwin and found that both John Henry Leslie (J.H.L.) Turner and his father George Turner were buried in the ‘old’ Wetaskiwin cemetery. I noted the plot designations, and also noted that when John Turner bought the plot for his father George, he also bought an adjoining plot, where according to the City of Wetaskiwin records, a small grave was located. JHL, himself, was buried in a different location when he passed away in 1956.

In addition, I looked in the local history book “Pioneer Pathways” but did not find a listing for the Turners. I also looked in the “Freeway West” book, and struck out as well. Then, I decided to look in the Gwynne local history book, and was amazed to find a 2 column write-up about the Turners! According to the Gwynne book, the Turners took out a homestead: I decided to look at the AGS Homestead Records database, and was thrilled to find several listings for George and/or J.H.L.!

With this information in hand, I sent a lengthy email to Duncan and Ruth Close, advising them of what I had found. I also scanned the write-up from the Gwynne History Book and emailed that to them. In addition, I sent them the homestead data from the AGS website, and gave them detailed instructions about the site: how to search for the records, and how to order the documents if they so wished. Then, because they had advised that they would be in Wetaskiwin, I gave them instructions on how to find the cemetery where the two Turners were buried.

This was only the start of emails back and forth between Duncan and Ruth Close, and myself. They were completely amazed by the information contained in the Gwynne History Book: it was their understanding that J.H.L. Turner had ventured to Canada, and his father came after – actually, it was the other way around. There was such a lot of family information contained in the write-up – information that was completely new to Duncan and Ruth. On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, they responded to my email from the

previous day, telling me that they were “amazed to get such a speedy reply to our enquiries about my forebears”.

As my curiosity and ‘detective traits’ don’t allow me to just leave things without checking out the finer details, I decided to look at the County of Wetaskiwin map to determine exactly where George and J.H.L. Turner had been homesteading. According to the information contained in the Gwynne Local History Book, they had actually owned a minimum of 5 quarters of land – which in the early 1900’s would have been quite astounding!

I checked out all the land locations: I found out that all of the land now lies within the County of Leduc. The County of Wetaskiwin map that we have does not extend beyond the limits of that county, and we did not have at our house, a map of the County of Leduc. Then, I remembered a very old map that we had, showing the land locations and ownership of land extending a considerable distance from the County of Wetaskiwin, in all directions. A magnifying glass and some patience soon produced positive results: I found all the land that the Turners had owned, and was able to get land locations. These land locations matched the ones that had been listed in the Gwynne Local History Book! Success.....

Having found out all this information, I decided to contact the Close family again. They had advised in an email that they were going to visit their daughter, her husband and their children in Saskatchewan prior to coming to Wetaskiwin. It occurred to me that perhaps they would like to drive out to the land where George and J.H.L. lived. When I broached the subject with them, they were quite excited about the prospect of seeing Ruth’s ancestor’s lands.

I set about creating a map of the area where the Turner family had homesteaded; after several attempts I managed to get one drawn that showed the area north of the County of Wetaskiwin where the land was located. Then, I photocopied a map of the Wetaskiwin to Gwynne area from the County of Wetaskiwin map. I made a detailed drawing, using arrows on the maps, showing how to drive from the Wayside Inn (where they were staying) to the various homesteads. Not being satisfied with just the maps, I also typed out more than a page of detailed instructions – advising exactly how to drive to the land locations. I scanned all this information and emailed it to them.

After creating and sending all the above, I began to wonder, “Is all this too confusing – should I just volunteer to pick them up at the Wayside Inn and take them to the land previously owned by George and J.H.L.?” At this point, Duncan and Ruth were already in Saskatchewan, visiting their family. I sent an email to them, hoping that they would be checking their email even though it was addressed to their Scottish address. I advised that, if they wished, I would be happy to pick them up and drive them to the various locations where George and J.H.L. Turner had owned land. Very quickly, they responded

that they would be very grateful to have me drive them there: they had been looking at the maps and the instructions and wondering if they would be lost in the countryside somewhere! ☺

A plan was set: they would phone me when they arrived in Wetaskiwin; I would pick them up at the Wayside Inn and we would spend the afternoon driving out in the countryside.

At our October genealogy meeting, I conveyed the above information to the members: a day or two later, Carole Koop contacted me to advise she would be interested in joining us for the afternoon. The day arrived: we were lucky that the weather was perfect for a drive in the country. We all met at the Wayside Inn, and after introductions were made and a bit of chatting done, we all got into my vehicle and headed east.

Duncan and Ruth were so easy to talk to: Duncan is the President of their local Heritage Society and he has done a lot of volunteer research for people, so they did not need any introduction to the world of genealogical research!

Carole brought her camera and her photographic expertise: as we drove north from the bottom of the Gwynne Hill (secondary HWY.822) we pointed out various interesting sites along the way. At each of the land locations the Turners had owned, Carole took pictures in order that she and Lee could email them back to the Close family once they returned to their home in Scotland. We were delighted at the second location, to see several deer hop across the road in front of us. Perhaps they were greeting the Scottish visitors?

Duncan and Ruth were so amazed to see the land where her ancestors had lived. They were quite surprised that the land holdings were so vast. Carole was able to take a picture of the County of Leduc “address” at the site where J.H.L. had lived after George died, and suggested to them that once they were back home they could use Google Maps to look at the land on a more detailed basis.

Carole had kindly planned for a picnic and had brought some tea, and some of her delicious baking. On the way back we stopped at the Coal Lake campsite and had an impromptu picnic – complete with muskrats swimming beside us, in the spillway from the dam at Coal Lake. We had a wonderful visit with Duncan and Ruth – we all felt like we had known each other for years, instead of hours! ☺

Duncan generously gave me a copy of a book he has written: a history of the Post Office in Sanquhar, Scotland – the World’s Oldest Post Office. It has been continuously operating as a post office in the same location since 1712.

I drove Duncan and Ruth back to the Wayside Inn; they stayed overnight and then proceeded to Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise and the mountain areas before heading back to Saskatchewan to their family.

Thankfully, the weather held for them the whole time they were in Alberta. Once they were home, Lee Koop sent them, via email, a detailed map of the stops we made, along with the pictures of the lands accompanying the various locations. We also had some lovely pictures of Duncan and Ruth at the campsite, and these were sent to them by Lee and Carole, and myself.

I thoroughly enjoyed meeting Duncan and Ruth, and feel that I have made new friends in the process. I think this is one of the benefits of doing 'volunteer' research, and being willing to donate personal time in order to benefit others.

Although the main research of the Turners has been done, I have to admit that I am continuing my sleuthing, in the hopes that I can shed more light on the mysteries of their lives here in Canada. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2016, #1, page 11.

## **WEAVER, Arthur**

A relative of the above person contacted me because her grandmother was having memory issues because in the same conversation, she indicated that the above person, who was 12 years old at the time, had been shot and that was the cause of his death.

Naturally, the person who contacted me wanted to get the story straight as she did not want to pass along incorrect information to the family. She saw that the Moore Funeral records indicated they had records of the death.

I looked at the information and was able to advise her that the cause of death was a 'car accident'.

I also suggested that she order the death records from the Provincial Archives of Alberta as this would give her more information. She thanked me and advised that she would be ordering the documents from PAA. Source: *Roots & Branches*, January 2022, VOL. 20 #1

## **Webster, William Brown and Elizabeth (Chapman)**

I have a request from Greg W., Quesnel, B.C. His grandparents were married and had 2 children born in Wetaskiwin in the 1930's. He wondered if there were census records for them in the 1920's and 1930's, and of course I had to reply to him that this was not available yet. His grandparents were: William Brown Webster, born 1905 in Dundee, Angus, Scotland, and Elizabeth Chapman, birth date/place unknown. They married in 1932 in Wetaskiwin. Once again, our branch member Jean Browse came to the rescue: she found information on "Betty Chapman" in the local history book, "Freeway West", and this information was passed on to Mr. Webster. I suggested to Mr. Webster that he could request the marriage information from Alberta Vital Statistics. I also suggested that he look at the Wetaskiwin newspapers online at the Peel Library (U of A) site as perhaps

there was mention of his grandparents in the local paper in the 1920's and 1930's. I also did some sleuthing on ancestry.com and found a family tree for the Webster family and I contacted him about that, but haven't gotten a reply back from him as of today's date.

Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2011, #4.

## Wilkins, Katherine née Hollingsworth (1868-1942)

In January 2017 we received a request through our website from Jan Krijff of Hemmstede, Netherlands for a photo of a "**Kathleen**" Wilkins married to Ernest D. H. Wilkins. It was discovered that Mr. Ernest D. H. Wilkins was a lawyer in Wetaskiwin and his wife was **Katherine** Hollingsworth. The only Kathleen Wilkins found was the daughter of Ernest & Katherine, a daughter who died at age 16 while living in Wetaskiwin.

The Wilkins family consisted of six children. A second daughter, age 5, also died while living in Wetaskiwin. Of the 2 sons, one died in World War I at age 26. The other married at age 35 and died in Montreal.

Jan was emailed on February 26 with the preliminary findings, asking him to clarify as to who he was interested in, the daughter, Kathleen, or the mother, Katherine. No reply from Jan was received.

Seven photos of the Wilkins family were found in City of Wetaskiwin Archives. These were scanned with the intent to email them to Jan. Another email was sent to Jan requesting clarification to the identification of the person in question. By March 15, 2017 Jan still had not replied. No photos were forwarded to Jan.



On October 29, 2017 Jan sent an email to our researcher's personal account, stating that he had not received any emails from our branch. He had learned of our Wilkins family research from our April 2017 newsletter online and really wanted to know what we had discovered.

Jan provided some details as to what he was doing. He was writing a book on Helena Bossevain, a young lady from the Netherlands who immigrated to Canada in the 1890's and had befriended "Kathleen". Jan is basing his story on letters received and/or written by Helena. The letters always referred to a "Kathleen". Also noted was that "Kathleen's" first child was born in Calgary in 1892. A reply email was sent attaching the





portrait photos you see here, a collage of the four oldest children and our research notes. Their oldest son, Reginald, was born in Calgary in 1892.

On October 31<sup>st</sup>, Jan replied: "The information that you have provided below has definitely closed my search.... The photographs are terrific, and I have been in touch with the City with regard to the rules about the use of them. I do plan to use them in the book, if I can. Many, many thanks." Source: *Roots & Branches*, v.16:1 (Jan 2018).

## Wolfchild, Sarah

Search for information on great-grandparents: Sarah Wolfchild, married to Orville Hawkins Smith. Orville was buried in Hardisty; Orville was born in 1849 and died in 1931; Sarah was born in 1862 and died in 1911. The researcher knew of a book in which the great-grandparents are mentioned, and I was able to advise him that the book was available to read on the *Ourroots.ca* website. I did find a burial record for Sarah Smith, with the corresponding birth and death years, at the Union & R.C. cemetery in Okotoks. I found the contact information for the cemetery and forwarded that to the researcher. I will continue to search for more information for him. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2014, #18

+++++

## By Subject . . .

### Brightview School and area

In March, I had an email from someone asking if anyone in our branch comes from the Brightview area. She has a picture of Twin Creek School and the students from 1936, and the picture says "Brightview", 1936. Her grandmother was the teacher at the school: Mrs. Dykeman. She also wondered if there was a history of this school available, and if we wanted a copy of the picture. She also wondered if there was info online about teachers in the old one-room schools in Alberta. I suggested to her that I would ask our membership if anyone was from the Brightview area, and I also suggested that we would probably appreciate a copy of the picture. One of our branch members, Jean Browse, contacted me regarding this: she lived next to the school and had more information that she shared with the researcher! The researcher has since emailed the pictures to me. Source: *Roots & Branches*, May 2011, #3.

### Saskatchewan Funeral Cards

I received one request from the U.S. for further information about the Funeral Cards listed on our website. This request was forwarded to our member Sharon Aney, as she has in her possession, the funeral cards from various Saskatchewan locations. Ironically, the

person who requested the information was looking for a relative of Sharon's! Yes, it is a small world. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2013, #10.

## Service Alberta

I also had a request from Florida for information on how to access a death certificate for someone who died in Wetaskiwin in 1907. The woman who contacted me knew that two ancestors died in this area in 1907, and were buried in the old Wetaskiwin cemetery, but she wanted the information from the death certificates. I was able to give her the Service Alberta website applicable for out-of-province requests. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2013, #11.

## Wetaskiwin Obituaries

One other request was quite interesting: a Swedish man, living in Venezuela, requested information about his relatives who emigrated to Canada in 1910, settled in Alberta (various locations), died in this area in 1956 and 1981 and are buried in the old Wetaskiwin cemetery. After several emails back and forth to him (to determine exactly what he already knew so I didn't spend time duplicating information he already had) it appeared that he wanted information on the extended family; specifically how he could contact them. I went to the City Archives to look at the obituaries....happened to mention to the Archives' staff that this was related to a research request from Venezuela, and guess what.....they also had had a request from this same person for basically the same information and they had already sent the obituaries to him. As we try not to duplicate each other's research efforts, I did not copy the obituaries, but am in the process of compiling a list of sources for current information that he can access via the internet (ie, Canada 411, GenWeb, etc.).....I have forwarded to the gentleman from Venezuela, a long list of possible websites, etc. that he could use to attempt to locate living relatives. I also advised him about the 411canada site and gave him the URL's of various message boards, etc. Source: *Roots & Branches*, February 2013, #12.