



ROOTS & BRANCHES

WETASKIWIN BRANCH
Alberta Genealogical Society

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

Website: www.abgenealogy.ca/wetaskiwin-branch

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January, 2022

VOL. 20 #1

EXECUTIVE

President: Alice Hoyle
Vice President: Lorraine McKay
Secretary: Patty Caputo
Treasurer: Leroy Koop

BRANCH MEETINGS

Third Tuesday of the Month.
Via Zoom until further notice.

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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.

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Rosella Plaquin
- **Youth**
Patti Caputo

FAMILY DISCOVERY CENTER

Thursdays 1:00 – 4:00 pm

GENFAIR: APRIL 23, 2022.

*HOSTED BY
GRANDE PRAIRIE BRANCH*

PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS

Alice Hoyle

Happy New Year to everyone. I sincerely hope you are well and that the year 2022 will mark a turn in the Covid distancing/isolating/masking requirements that are necessary for us to move forward.

"Hope" is a word that conveys such optimism and wishful, forward thinking – my hope is that this applies to the year 2022.

Personally, I have been surprised by the fact that I haven't done as much genealogical research as I should have done since Covid became a part of everyone's lives. In theory, the fact that we all had to stay home, not attend gatherings, and be mindful of who we came in contact with, should have meant a lot of time suddenly available for screen viewing. While I did fill my time with other pursuits, such as knitting and sorting through photos, it does mildly bother me that I didn't do more genealogical research. I hope all of you have been more diligent than me.

May the New Year bring you health, happiness and a renewed interest in family history. This could be the year that rewards you with solutions to your research brick walls.

One can only "hope".
Take care!

~~~~~

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Sharon Aney

*My Best wishes to all for a  
Healthy, Peaceful, Hopeful New Year!*

How are you connected with earlier generations in your family? Is it by a naming pattern? by an heirloom displayed in your home? by the foods eaten at special times? by the things we do to commemorate an occasion?

These traditions are part of our family and our family history. If we write about their origins, how we have followed and adapted them, and if we share the story, we can illustrate the connection between our grandparents and our grandchildren. That spans 5 generations! Think about it! Our descendants will thank us for telling them how they are a living part of the family line.

We are delighted to share some of the chapters that our members have written about their family "Traditions". See Page 4.

*"There is no greater agony than  
bearing an untold story inside  
you."*

– Maya Angelou,  
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

## MEETING PROGRAMS

### SEPTEMBER

**Claudia** invited her niece, Mika Malloch to join us on Zoom, so that we could thank her for her generous sharing of her professional talent in designing the covers for our most recent "Memories of the Covid-19 Pandemic" book, as well as our two "Canada 150" books in 2017.

Then members shared what we had done over the summer months:

**Pam** – was able to celebrate their daughter's (delayed from 2020) "full wedding" in July, as Alberta was "Open For Summer". On display were a collection of family marriage photos. The family's Cree heritage was honored by incorporating a "smudge" ceremony, a Cree welcome and blessing, and Chief Willie Littlechild sang a Cree wedding song. The Wildcat / Cooke family also welcomed their first grandchild who was named after a historic ancestor, Louis Piche.

**Carole** – was surprised when a cousin's daughter (who had moved to Norway for work) sent Carole a picture of a family ancestral house. She had gone to the village, recognized the house from an old photo, made a cold call, and was fortunate to find the occupants at home. They are family members who use the house as a summer home. She was invited in. Carole is now in contact with these family members to do more research.

**Bob** – continues to research and has found relatives through Facebook. He is beginning to work on memoir, based upon his mother's letters.

**Mavis** – Finally in August, they were able to meet their first great grandson who was 11 months old. She welcomed cousins from BC and Calgary who came back to re-visit their childhood homes and memories in Wetaskiwin. She treasured the opportunity, as she had just received word that another cousin had passed away.

**Lee** – had a quiet summer at home with lots of yard work. The family enjoyed two outings to Heritage Park in Red Deer to meet with their son from Calgary.

**Lorraine M.** – She made a memorial board of his life for the occasion to remember an uncle who had passed away. She and eight cousins wrote of their memories of him.

They had family times together fishing, and a group of 17 enjoyed the Lacombe Corn Maze.

**Robin** – had a hip replacement in May and so cut back on all activities, and is grateful for no pain! She thanked the couple in our branch who thoughtfully kept her supplied with frozen meals.

**Alice** – summer on the farm is always busy with gardens and haying. Their 15 year old grandson was delighted to operate the tractor. Their daughter came for a short vacation from Germany where she works. She was appalled by the Covid situation in Alberta. They cancelled family gatherings because their daughter-in-law, a teacher was exposed to a positive student, and their son to an unvaccinated, positive co-worker.

**Sharon** - had some small family get-togethers at the cabin. By late July the branch book, "Memories of the Covid-19 Pandemic" was edited and sent to the printer. In August they took a week to visit friends and family in Saskatchewan..... checking ahead with each to be reassured that all were double vaxxed, and were OK to receive visitors.

**Claudia** – was affected by covid.... although not infected. She had elective (but required) surgery that was scheduled for September, cancelled.

## OCTOBER

Claudia showed us 3 short presentations –

- 1) Diahn Southard, spoke about DNA testing and how to interpret the results, specifically relating to YDNA testing.
- 2) What is WATO: (What are the odds) – a way to narrow down the results from your DNA testing to optimize those results that are most likely to have a connection to your family

- 3) Become Symbol Savvy: 3 Easy Ways – a short presentation on how to access the various symbols and/or lettering 'oddities' in languages other than English. This presentation showed us how to easily access the various symbols we might want to use when creating documents.

## NOVEMBER

World War I: Women's Lives During the War – a webinar by Gena Philbert-Ortega. She shared various scenarios about how women were beneficial to the war effort; from the jobs they took on, to the charitable knitting/sewing/baking that they did, etc. She also gave us numerous resource suggestions for further research.

~~~~~

TRADITIONS

THE CHRISTMAS TREE STAR

by Robin Sheehan

Way back in 1969, my then boyfriend Ken and I, went Christmas tree shopping. On the 23rd of December there weren't too many trees to choose from. After a while we chose one. Our tree was shaped like a ball! Oh well, we had a tree! But we hardly had any decorations!

So with a thin white clothes hanger and some tin foil, Ken fashioned a star. I was quite surprised when I noticed the star had 6 points. I mentioned this to Ken and he said, "Oh, OK! I will make it with 5 points." Our star was perfect! Since then, every Christmas saw Ken's star atop our tree, with maybe some new foil here and there.

My husband passed away in January of 2018 and when Christmas came along, I thought we should have a change on our tree and put an angel on top rather than

the star. The tree looked lovely and the house was ready for company.

Our son and family arrived for a memorable Christmas without Dad. It was a very sad day for all of us. When my son walked into the living room and looked at the tree, I thought he would come out with his usual and quiet comment: "That looks nice."

However, his comment was "Where is the star?" When I explained it was in a box under the stairs, he disappeared and came back with the star. He removed the angel, got some extra twist ties and tin foil. After his minor repairs he attached the star to the top of our tree. "There," he said "that's better!"

I know Ken's star will crown our Christmas tree for many years to come.

~~~~~

### **WE REMEMBER THEM**

by Rosella Plaquin

I have a sentimental tradition that dates back to when I was a little girl. My Dad had been in the Canadian Army during World War II and when he returned he joined the Athabasca Legion. My Mom joined the Athabasca Legion Ladies' Auxiliary shortly after. They were always very active and it rubbed off on me. My Dad was either in the Colour Party or marching in the parade and I was always in attendance.

After marrying Jeff, who was a peace time veteran in the Canadian Navy, and belonged to the Legion, I decided to join the Ladies' Auxiliary.

We continued the tradition of attending the Remembrance Day services, and as we moved all over Alberta, we became more involved with the Legion, holding executive positions in both organizations.



It was with great pride to be in the Colour Party at many of the places we lived, and at one time even competed. My proudest moment came when I marched alongside my Dad in a parade in Edmonton.

We always encouraged our kids to be proud Canadians and follow in our footsteps, which they did, and do. After retiring and moving to Millet we carried the tradition one step further.

My Dad is buried in an Edmonton cemetery, and after participating in the Remembrance Day service we would drive to Edmonton to place a Canadian flag and poppy at his grave, say a prayer, and say the Act of Remembrance. Then we'd go for lunch. While my Mom was alive we would include her in this tradition.



After Mom passed away we would continue the same tradition, but now put 2 Canadian flags with poppies at their grave. At the same time we introduced our Grandson to the tradition.

In 2016 Jeff took our family tradition and initiated a project where the Millet Legion put flag stands beside each Veterans grave at the Public and Catholic cemeteries in Millet. This was done in conjunction with the Millet District Museum and Archives, and so it coincided with the No Stone Left Alone Project. Shortly before Remembrance Day students from Griffith Scott School, along with the Millet Legion, would place Canadian flags with a poppy in the flag stands at each Veteran's grave. The Legion and students still follow the flag & poppy tradition.



When Jeff died in 2020 and COVID hit, the tradition slightly changed. On Remembrance Day our family now does our own thing.

We go to St. Norbert's Catholic Cemetery first, to place a Canadian flag & poppy at Jeff's grave. At 11 o'clock my son, Shane, plays the Last Post from his phone, followed by 2 minutes of silence. Then our daughter, Kathleen, says the Act of Remembrance, to which we all respond:

"We Will Remember Them".

From there we drive to Westlawn Cemetery in Edmonton and follow the same tradition for my Dad and Mom. The day's activities end with a family meal at a restaurant.

My hope is that this tradition on Remembrance Day will continue well into the future.

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"Because paper has more patience than people."

Anne Frank

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

by Mavis Nelson

Christmas has different memories for different people. Christmas has always been a special time of year for me. By the time December had come Mom would have cleaned the house top to bottom. She would have washed all the walls and curtains, dusted everything, and cleaned all the floors. She would have sewed new clothes for my sister and myself, or ordered them from the Sears or Eaton's catalogue.

We would have spent hours looking through the catalogues thinking what would be fun to have. We never had much money so many things were just dreams. But we never lacked for anything. We would have been given our parts to start learning for the Sunday School Christmas program.

The tree was never put up until just a few days before Christmas. It would be a real one, making the house smell nice. Mom would have spent many days baking cookies. There would be *Pepparkakor*, *Sandskaker*, *Fattigmand*, macaroons, spritz, rosettes, sugar cookies, Scandinavian cookies (they had jelly in the middle). Plus some years she would make Christmas cake. She also made rye bread, tea rings, rusks and hardtack. We didn't lack for special things to eat. Mom loved to bake and cook. Oh yes, there were lots of meatballs made and put in the freezer for the special meals and quick meals. Dad and a friend would make potato sausage and root beer.

There was always lots of company in our home. Mom had the gift of hospitality. The kitchen eating area and the dining room were not that big. So, for big family groups, long tables would be put up in the basement. Fortunately, it had a cupboard, counter area and a gas stove. That all helped in serving the meals. Mom

had extra dishes in the basement, so that helped, and we would wash the dishes in the laundry area. In fact, most times Mom would wash them the next day.

Christmas Eve was a special day, and still is. Presents were wrapped and under the tree. A beef and pork roast would be cooking in a pot on the stove. (No Crockpots back then). For dinner time, we had *Dopp I Grytan* (Dip in the Kettle). The roasts were removed, sliced along with some potato sausage, and we would dip a slice of bread in the broth. I still do this with my family today. It is a favorite of our grandchildren.

The afternoon was spent relaxing by the Christmas tree. At supper time, everyone was sitting at the table waiting for the meal to be served. But first, the Christmas story from Luke would be read. Dad would read the story and pray before we would eat. Reading the Christmas story and family prayer is still an important part of our Christmas today.

Supper was always the same every year, lutefisk (dried cod fish prepared), white sauce, potatoes, maybe a vegetable, hardtack, and rye bread. Dessert would be rice pudding with raspberries and a plate of cookies. After the dishes were washed (and we had no dish washer back then), we would all gather around the Christmas tree. Gifts would be passed out. Usually, the youngest got to open one first. What fun.

Christmas Day would start off with going to early church, like 6 am in the morning! Most of the service might be done in Swedish. We did not always have a turkey but would have a roast chicken, meat balls, potatoes, brown beans, sweet potatoes, vegetable and a fruit salad, along with more hardtack, and rye bread. Dessert would be Christmas pudding.

Christmas today with our family is much the same as when I was growing up. Each year the number of people changes as each of our lives change. Our parents have passed on, our children have grown up and are married with children of their own. Now the grandchildren have started to marry and have children. Some live in other provinces and cannot come home every year. Last year we were only 2, this year we will be 5.

The meals are somewhat the same. I do not do all the baking that I used to, but only do a few special things. The Christmas Story from Luke is still read and a prayer is said, remembering the ones that cannot come home.

It is not the number of people that is important, but the meaning of Christmas. That has never changed for us. Christ is the center of Christmas.

~~~~~

## **BIRTHDAY HIDDEN TREASURES**

by Terry Komives

When asked for an article about our family holiday traditions nothing special came to mind. But then I recalled how we used to celebrate birthdays in my childhood. This tradition continued until our children grew up but then was forgotten. We have a five year old grandson so now is the time to revive that tradition!

When I was young and was served a piece of birthday cake we were told to "be careful there may be a surprise in your piece of cake". While cautiously eating our slice of cake we would find our treasure, usually a coin wrapped in waxed paper. Surprisingly we each found a coin and if you were really lucky you would find a quarter! It was a wonderful tradition that we all looked forward to.



My aunt included special objects in her cakes. If you received a coin it meant you would end up rich. The guest who got a slice with the ring inside would be the next to marry. If they were already married, the ring simply gave a boost of good luck. There would be one thimble to find and that person would end up an old maid or never marry.

A key was a special object which symbolized becoming of legal age so was designated for a 21st or an 18th birthday. Surprising how the person celebrating that milestone birthday always ended up with that symbol!

I have heard of others who put a diaper pin in the cake - if you got that piece you had to do the dishes! Of course with the choking hazards you needed to make everyone aware that there may be a hard solid object in their slice of cake. There was also a dentist factor.

This project got my detective juices flowing so I did some Google research on birthday traditions. Why a birthday cake? Cakes are the symbol of sweetness and celebrations. The cakes date back to the ancient Egyptians, who believed that when pharaohs were crowned, they became gods. Their coronation day was their 'birth' day. The first actual birthday cake was for children's birthdays in Germany in the middle ages. This was called Kinderfest.

When putting candles on a birthday cake, you should put the same number as the birthday person's age, plus one more for good luck (this is something I've never done or was not aware of before). Birthday candles can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, who burned candles as offerings to their many gods and goddesses. Putting candles on a cake was a special way to pay tribute to the Greek moon goddess, Artemis.

One of the most common birthday traditions is making a wish and blowing out the candles. If you blow out all the candles on your cake with the first puff you will get your wish. This tradition has been around since ancient time. Many of those ancient cultures believed that the smoke from the candles carried a person's wishes and prayers to the gods! For good luck the birthday person should make the first cut of the cake. Make another birthday wish before you slice and don't tell anyone what you wished for and your wish will come true. To seal the deal, the lucky birthday person should get the first slice of cake.

And who remembers the Birthday bumps, one bump for each year plus one more for good luck. At my age I'm glad they've been forgotten. In Ireland a child is held upside down and "bumped" on the floor for good luck. Italy, Hungary and Argentina replace the bumps with earlobe pulling!

I enjoyed researching the many customs and many different birthday traditions practiced around the globe.

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CHANGING TRADITIONS AT CHRISTMAS

By Chris and Rudi Grab

Traditions and practices surrounding our Christmas

celebrations have evolved significantly since our first Xmas together in 1972.



Our eldest child was born in the fall of 1973. Since he was the first grandchild in both Chris's and my families it was

easy to accommodate differing family traditions. In my parent's family the Christmas meal and gift exchange was held on Christmas Eve. Chris's parents observed the traditional timelines on Christmas Day. These arrangements worked well for about six years. At this stage some of Chris's and my siblings had gotten married and had started having children. Several of them began sharing their Christmas Eve with their in-laws. This meant that the traditional Christmas Eve functions were no longer shared with my siblings at the same time and location.

A friendly rivalry quickly developed between our mothers. Both of them insisted that we join them for Xmas dinner. This meant that we felt compelled to participate in two great meals (feasts) on Xmas Day. In practice this meant that we went for dinner at one location and for supper at the other location. Both mothers emphasized that I needed to eat "lots", otherwise it would be considered as a personal slight of their cooking. Consuming several heaping helpings at each location meant that I was usually "stuffed" to the point of being very uncomfortable.

A new pattern for Christmas developed after the passing of my father in 1992 and my father-in-law in 1996. We began hosting celebrations on Christmas Day for our immediate family. Visits and celebrations with both mothers continued until their passing in 1999 and 2001 respectively. This pattern of hosting our immediate family continued until the arrival of our first grandchild in 2004.

Revisions to our regular Xmas practices became necessary as each of our three children started having their own family. We emphasized that our preferred choice was to ensure that we got together with each of our three children and their growing family at some point during the Holiday season. In

practice this has resulted in some family get-togethers on Christmas Day, some on Christmas Eve, some on Boxing Day with several on another suitable date. Our three children usually coordinate a mutually agreeable date for the get-together amongst themselves.

For Christmas 2021 the selected date was Boxing Day – December 26. This was our best Xmas celebration yet. All three of our children along with their spouses attended at our acreage in Leduc County. All seven of our grandchildren, who range in age from three to seventeen, also visited for the day. A lot of visiting, conversation, game playing and gift exchanging took place.



Chris and I are already looking forward to what Christmas 2022 will bring.

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## **UKRAINIAN FEASTS**

by Sharon Aney

When I asked my daughters, "What do you feel is a tradition in our family?" their immediate answers were "Christmas Eve Supper!" ... closely followed by "Easter Breakfast".

My mother was not Ukrainian, so she learned how to prepare the meals from her mother-in-law and we learned about food from her. My dad learned the religious symbolisms at his mother's knee, and we learned the explanations from him. Our descendants learn from me. Traditions!

On the Eve of Christmas, Ukrainian Catholics have fasted as preparation to better celebrate the joyful coming of the Christ Child. Part of the preparation was to abstain from meat and dairy products on December 24<sup>th</sup>. Traditionally, the evening meal was made up of 12 meatless dishes, representing the 12 apostles.

The basic ingredients of the Christmas Eve feast were dictated by what was available in December to the peasant people, generations ago, in the Old Country, and we continue to prepare them:

- Kutia – wheat that has been roasted, boiled and enhanced with ground poppy seeds, honey and maybe nuts, as the sweet opening course
- Borscht – a beet based vegetable soup
- Perogies, with various fillings such as potato & onion, cheese, sauerkraut, salmon, dried fruit, etc.
- Baked fish and pickled herring
- Cabbage rolls
- Mushrooms in dill sauce
- Assorted sweet baking

The Ukrainian Easter breakfast table is also filled with foods that have a cultural/religious symbolism. They bring to mind the agony of Jesus' death and His resurrection:

- pickled red beets (His blood)
- horseradish & mustard (bitter herbs),
- ham or lamb (He is the Lamb of God),
- special breads (He is the Staff of Life)
- colored eggs (re-birth)
- cottage cheese (white for Jesus' purity).



I take portions of these foods to church for a special blessing ceremony on the day before Easter.

For us the importance of these traditional meals is that we come

together, and we recognize that there are cultural, religious and a family history to the meals that we enjoy.

But it is not all serious..... on Easter morning for the last 48 years, minus only a few years, between generations, our house rumbled as our 2 daughters, and in later years, our 5 grandsons raced up and down stairs, indoors and outdoors, looking for notes and candy eggs that would lead them to the next note and finally to an insignificant "treasure". The fun was the hunt, even if they were 20 years old! I have to admit that it was also fun for me to create new clues and hiding places every year.

We all know, and look forward to, what will happen on these occasions. Anticipation is part of the enjoyment.

~~~~~

ICE CREAM AT CHRISTMAS

by Wendy Thompson

My family didn't have a lot of traditions but the one thing we did every year was make homemade ice cream. We would go across the road and cut ice from the slough. The grandkids took turns turning the manual crank. For some reason they thought that was a lot of fun!

The other thing that happened was every Christmas Eve Santa would phone and tell the grandkids to get to bed so that he could come and deliver their presents. Worked like a charm. Usually there were sleigh bells that rang for authenticity. Good times!

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## MY CHRISTMAS VILLAGE

by Lorraine McKay

My yearly Christmas Village tradition started in the early 1980's. My husband bought me an Uptown Carriage Co. Livery Stable building as a Christmas gift.

Since then each year I purchased at least one new house from various retail stores such as Eaton's, Sears, Rona, Michaels, etc. I also received some as gifts. Over time I bought more at garage sales and from people down sizing their collections. One great garage sale find was a collection of six Norman Rockwell houses. Presently my collection consists of 125 houses with added accessories.

My original setup was on a small table



then on a larger table



and now it encompasses multi-tiered layers on a ping pong table and two additional tables.

After the foundations are in place, the houses are taken out of their boxes and set up in various themes such as a ski hill, train stations with a train running through a tunnel, fire halls, a skating area, fishing area, town squares, farm area, Santa's North Pole with elves & reindeer, schools, churches, a variety of department stores, pubs, inns, and more. The next step is to wire all the houses so they light up and then to camouflage the wiring. Looking through the house windows and open doors you can see the activities that are happening inside.



For many years my husband and I would set up the tables and create the village. We still do the initial table set up. Since the village has grown quite large, some family members volunteer to set up the display, with some assistance from me. The village setup has been different every year. Each Christmas family and invited friends, especially the younger children, look forward to seeing the village.

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*"The human soul can always use a
new tradition.
Sometimes we require them."*

Pat Conroy, The Lords of Discipline

THANKSGIVING

By Pam Cooke, Maskwacis, AB

WHY DID THEY LET THE TURKEY JOIN THE BAND?

"BECAUSE HE HAD THE DRUMSTICKS"

Verlyn Wildcat, age 11, 2016

And so goes one of our Thanksgiving traditions, **the Turkey joke**, researched and delivered by the children.

I have been hosting Thanksgiving for our extended family and friends for 28 continuous years at our home in Maskwacis, with the exception of the recent pandemic years. Our biggest attendance was 34, but lately we average in the mid 20's. Because we live in the country, our woods provide a beautiful backdrop of fall colours and usually seasonable weather means we can enjoy the outdoors and have a big bonfire.

Much tradition is woven into the preparation for thanksgiving, which takes at least three days. A day to shop for groceries and then squeeze a big turkey and ham into the fridge. A day for setting up. Over the years we have acquired Costco folding tables and chairs and spend the day before moving furniture out so we can set up tables in the living room and dining room. Decorating with tablecloths, flowers, mini pumpkins and dusting off the family china and serving dishes that have been acquired over the years is a favourite activity. And finally, one day to cook. One of my menu notes says: "the night before, find a good TV show to watch while tearing apart two loaves of bread [for stuffing] and also as the ham is cooking. Cover with a tea towel. You will need an Xtra large bowl."



At some point, we started taking a **group photo**, before dinner, when everyone is hungry and easy to round up. Brian sets up the tripod, starts the timer and then runs into the photo while we shout "Maskwa-cheese," which makes us all laugh. We have also added a photo with the oldest and youngest guest. After supper we bundle up and relax around a **bonfire**. Our friends, the Amers, often sleepover and stay for brunch the next day.

Years ago I bought a plush turkey and pumpkin from the Hallmark store on the main street of Wetaskiwin, which have also made their way into our photos and a few vignettes which I discovered on the camera the next day.





MEMORABLE THANKSGIVINGS

In 1994 Brian's brother Darrel had just been diagnosed with Non Hodgkin's lymphoma and we had a pumpkin seed spitting contest to add some fun to a sombre year.

In 2015 new found cousin Julia, and her two sons joined our Thanksgiving. Due to Ancestry research, I was meeting relatives from my father's side and was introduced to Julia who lives in Edmonton. Julia and I share the same great great grandfathers, which seems like a distant relation, but becomes a close one when considering the other 7.9 billion people in the world.



Green & white Thanksgiving in 2016



Theresa and children Clara, Brian, Carol and Daniel, 2010

In 2017, my Mom had an emergency admission to hospital the week before our annual event. I flew to Toronto and began delegating the shopping and preparation of Thanksgiving to my husband and daughter. However, Mom was recovering by the weekend and after finding a cheap Aeroplan flight I flew home in time to prepare our meal and then back to Toronto in time for Mom's discharge a few days later.

In 2020, having just attended son Matthew's wedding in Fort Erie ON our immediate family, had the opportunity to have a farewell Thanksgiving at Mom's house, which had just been sold. 50 Wareside in Toronto had been my family home for 58 years, owing to the longevity of my mother and it was a bittersweet memory to have a final family meal there. We ordered a delicious takeout meal from Bruno's and ate our meal on Mom's antique oak round pedestal table, using Aunt Norma's Occupied Japan china, purchased in the 1940's. Earlier in the day, we smudged in the backyard and scattered some of Mom's ashes in her garden over some of her favourite plants, including brown-eyed susans, peonies, rhubarb and the birch tree. (P.S. The antique table and cuttings from the plants found a new home at my friend's place in Newmarket).

THE FOOD OF THANKSGIVING

We are grateful for the fall harvest, the hands that have lovingly prepared this meal and the traditions of thanksgiving.

Our late Kokum Theresa believed "You don't do it alone", whether it related to community or family meals and this rings especially true with the preparation of our harvest meal. The turkey must be fresh. The ham comes from Sunterra. Clara cooks ten pounds of mashed potatoes. Carol brings freshly prepared cranberries. Linda brings a tower of tarts and never runs out of whipped cream. The three sisters, the corn, the beans and the squash remind us of the diverse heritage of our large family.

I am reminded about the changes in the preparation and the sources of the food over the years. In the early years my mother in law, Theresa, would cook the turkey, sewing in the stuffing with a needle and thread and wrap the pan with the cooked turkey in a flannel sheet to transport it over the three kilometres between our houses. We would watch for her car to arrive so someone could run out and carry in the turkey. She made a delicious stuffing with ground pork that we all anticipated every year. Around the age of 75, she delegated the cooking of the turkey to me.

At that time fresh turkeys were hard to find and I can remember driving down Malmo Road to a turkey farm for several years. It was a little shocking, not to mention unappetizing to see the barn raised white turkeys without black feathers. Nowadays we buy a Bellwood turkey (raised in Ontario) at Sunterra and it is always moist and tasty. If I can find Mount Scion summer savory from Newfoundland it goes into the stuffing, but usually it is just fresh poultry herbs. At first the ham was purchased at Queen City Meats, but when it closed we chose a Gammon ham from Valbella Meats in Canmore, also purchased at Sunterra.

The "three sisters": corn, beans and squash, which grow together and nurture each other, remind us of the heritage and relationships of this extended family and the importance of sharing a meal together and staying connected.

We learned of the three sisters from sister-in-law Lori who grew up on the Six Nations of the Grand River, near Brantford, Ontario. The vegetable trio was grown by the Iroquois (and other tribes) and the plants were meant to be grown together, eaten together and celebrated together. The three sisters have been a thanksgiving staple for twenty years. Butternut squash became a favorite after sampling it at the former Edmonton restaurant, Jacks Grill and enquiring after the recipe. The squash, when roasted and pureed with butter, salt and pepper is delicious. We now look out for other sister namesakes. Friend Linda comes from a family of "eight sisters" and the "Three Sisters" in Canmore always remind me of Thanksgiving.

Clara always gets the mashed potato job, peeling and cooking 10-15 pounds of potatoes. One year she experimented and made "skinny potatoes" with chicken stock. The group consensus ensured future mashed potatoes were only made with milk. Carol brings a delicious homemade cranberry sauce.



Dessert started off as a variety of pies but soon the Amers offered to make an assortment of tarts, much easier to serve, and visually mouth-watering on a three tier serving tray. Dessert became known as the Tower of Tarts. And we never forget the whipped cream.

THE BLESSING

We give thanks to the Creator for this Thanksgiving feast and our circle of family and friends.

Before dinner, the food is smudged with sweetgrass and everyone gathers in a circle for the blessing.

We looked forward to the words and encouragement of our kokum, mother and matriarch Theresa Wildcat who always led the blessing. When she passed away in 2011, the responsibility fell to me. Not being comfortable with spontaneous remarks, I prefer to write the blessing in advance. I also make note of our group's milestones of the past year, including births, marriages, graduations and decade birthdays, as well as those who have been affected by loss or illness.

The *sentences in italics* are excerpts from my blessings. Everything gets saved in a Thanksgiving file which includes blessings, menus, who attended and photos.

We always close with kokum Theresa's Thanksgiving prayer.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER - Written by Theresa C. Wildcat, 2003

We give thanks for the peace and goodness of our country – CANADA.

We give thanks for our leadership, the Chief and his Council for their insight and vision in governance.

We give thanks for our children, our grandchildren and the future generations.

*May the Creator grant us spiritual guidance and direction in our endeavours and destiny.
God Bless us all!*

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*“Yesterday is history,  
tomorrow is a mystery,  
today is a gift of God,  
which is why we call it the present.”  
Bill Keane*

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GARAGE SALE FIND LEADS TO HUGE GENEALOGY FIND

By Don Brosius

Recently while attending a Garage Sale, I came across an Ancestry DNA kit for \$10.00. Curious, I inquired and found out that her kids, who lived in the USA, had given it to her husband for Christmas, and he had no interest in using it at all. It seemed like it was all there, so I bought it. After registering and spitting in a tube, I mailed it off. I did have to pay Canadian Postage of \$14.25.

It seemed to make sense to register with Ancestry to receive the DNA data, so I reactivated an old Ancestry.ca account on the cheapest plan of \$ 45.00 for 6 months. After getting my old account set up, I noticed my old emails, including one to a Tim P. in 2013, who had ancestors from the small village my Grandfather had immigrated from. In 2013 he had told me my church records were on Microfiche in the archives in Eisenach Germany.

With the pandemic and the problems of traveling looming large, I decided to contact him again, to see if he knew of any researchers that could help me do my research. Shortly later he replied, notifying me that recently the records had been put online, and gave me the computer heading. Wow! For 19. Euros, or about \$ 30.00 Canadian, I had access to my German church records for 1 month, and can do 50 downloads.

The web site is www.archion.de. This covers 24 different regions of Germany. My region in Central Germany is then broken down in 8 sub districts. Again, my Sub District is Kirchenkreis Schleiz. It is broken down to over 150 churches or villages groups. Each church might have several books covering Baptisms, Funerals, Marriages, confessions, confirmations, and name registers. For example, Unterlemnitz, a small village, has over 15 books from 1593 to 1997. Most records end about 1900. Not all pages are readable.

So far I have added 7 paternal generations and their wives. The oldest record so far is 1656. This added about 20 people without adding any siblings. I found out where my grandmother was born and that her father was unknown or unlisted on the Baptism record. This appears fairly common over the years depending on the conditions such as war.

The records are great if you can read them as they are in German Script.



Most of the baptism records I have downloaded have the child's name, date, hour, and place of birth, date of Baptism, father's name and location and sometimes occupation, mother's maiden name, and lists 3 sponsors or Godparents, with name and location.

Often if the person hasn't moved away, they draw a cross and give the date of death in the border. There is also a number referring to the numeric quantity of births in that year for that church group.

MARY (CLAIR) MERAW

A WOMAN OF ASPENLAND



Mary Clair was born in Ontario on July 17, 1904, the third of six children.

They lived on a farm a few miles from the nearest town. Her father heard of the golden opportunities in the west, so in 1913, they bought a homestead at Kerrobert, Saskatchewan. Her brother was old enough then to also lay claim to homestead land. They started farming with three oxen and two horses. They had good gardens and crops to begin with, but in 1924, they had a complete crop failure, so they moved to a farm at Standard, Alberta.

When Mary was young, there was lots of hard work and no conveniences. Her father built a new home on the farm in 1915, but it was lost in a fire in 1916 (along with a new piano). They rebuilt and bought another piano as music and reading were very important to the family. The Clair children all took music lessons. A neighbour on the farm was an English homesteader who taught them piano. He lived with his mother and Mrs. Clair was very adamant the children call him Mr. and his mother Mrs. to show respect for their elders.

The school teacher always boarded with the Clairs. When the children were older they drove to school with a horse and buggy. In bad weather, Mary's father drove them to school. The teacher rode with them. School was closed after Christmas until March. It was then open all through summer. The Christmas concert was always a big event for the school. Mary loved to recite and act in plays. In their home, the Clairs always had a Christmas tree-not spruce, but a poplar tree from around the slough. They decorated it with green crepe paper and real candles. The candles could only be lit when father was in the room. They made gifts for each other.

There were many box socials at school and the money raised went to buy a school piano. On July 1st, a big picnic was held at the school. Before they could go, the Clair children had to pick rocks. Then in the afternoon at the picnic, there would be races and ball games and food to eat. Home-made ice cream was always on the menu. Ice came from a well on the Clair farm. Mary's father would put straw down on the ice to hold it longer - sometimes from August to September.

As a young person, Mary played tennis and golf, and rode horseback. Groups of young people would ride on Sunday afternoons to neighbouring stampedes. She was active in girl guides as a youngster. After she married, Mary was too busy to do these things, but she joined the I.O.D.E. in 1924, and is still a member. She has also been a member of the C.W.L. since 1920.

One of the children's chores was to bring the cow in from the pasture. They would then have breakfast and walk three miles to school. After school, they brought in wood and coal, gathered eggs and fed the pigs. When they were older they learned to milk. They had good times together as a family.

The Clairs were devout, so every Sunday they drove thirty miles to church by team of horses. They would leave at 5:00 a.m. to get to church by 10:00 a.m. they took turns going to church - one time her mother and two of the children would go, and the next Sunday, her father and

two children would go. The younger ones stayed home. The churchgoers would have dinner at an uncle's and then drive home. When Mary and Harry married and had children, they were very strict about attending church. This is still a tradition with Mary and her married children.

In 1924, Mary left to take a bookkeeping course. She worked for the Bell Shoe Co., learning to fit shoes and ladies' wear. In 1929, she went to Claresholm and worked in a shoe store doing shoe fitting. During this time, she met Harry Meraw, a salesman in the retail business. They married in 1942 at Battleford, Saskatchewan.



Harry had opened a business in Wetaskiwin in 1939. After they were married, they both worked in the store. The first store was in the Compton Block (now French Block). Later they bought across the street from Harry Smith and were there until they sold the business. They employed many local young people (boys and girls), from fifteen to twenty at one time. Mrs. Meraw trained them in business, taught them how to give change and good service. She enjoyed working with young people and the public.

The Meraws built a home in 1944. Harry left the store in the hands of his wife and worked for three months with one builder to build their home. It was ready to move into by August 19, 1944. August 19th was a significant date to the Meraws-Harry had opened his first store on August 19, 1939, and he was to die on August 19, 1980.

The Meraws had one son, Mickey, now working in Calgary for the government, and one daughter living in Lloydminster. In 1949, Mary's brother drowned while at work in the oilfields and his wife died shortly thereafter. The Meraws took two of the nephews, Hugh and Walter, and raised them as their own. They kept the two children's surnames (Clair) as they wanted the boys to maintain their own family ties. They now live and work in Edmonton. Mary's mother and father also lived with them. This was wonderful as her mother could watch the children while Mary worked in the store.

Mary Meraw has been a willing volunteer in many organizations in Wetaskiwin. She has a lot of friends and has done many crafts. She knitted and crocheted many items for her grandchildren. She took up ceramics. Many of the lamps and vases in her home are her creations. She did three needlepoint pictures of their house from a snapshot and gave them to her children for Christmas. Mary has a wonderful memory. Her advice is: "Don't marry too young and enjoy your youthful years. When you marry you are tied down and can't do some of the things you would like to do."

Mary Meraw died on March 23, 2001

Information compiled in 1997

Exhibit at Wetaskiwin Heritage Museum <https://wetaskiwinmuseum.com/exhibits/women-of-aspenland/>

RESEARCH REQUESTS

TOUSSAINT AND ROSE MAY (NEE KEARNEY) HEBERT

research by Alice Hoyle and Lee Koop

On November 8, 2021 we received the following request via our website:

"My great grandparents Toussaint (JIM) Hebert & his wife Rose May (Kearney) lived in Wetaskiwin from 1903 to 1916. I am looking for any record of them along with children Phillipe, Louella, Gladys (my grandmother), Mary (born there in 1903), Pearl Adelia (1907), Joseph (1908), James (1910) & Eva (1912). There should be records of their attending the Knox School that my grandmother talked about. There would also be the Kearney Family with them for some time, James & Jeannette (Janet) Kearney as well as (Jim) James Jr., John, George & Robert. Any information regarding their life in Wetaskiwin would be appreciated. From Wetaskiwin the Heberts went to Bonnyville and the Kearneys to Maple Creek Saskatchewan."

Since the request was for information on ancestors while they lived in Wetaskiwin (city or county?), our local history books were consulted first, for any references to the Hebert and Kearney families from 1903 – 1916.

The following books' indexes were looked at – result:

Siding 16 Vol I, II, III – nothing

Bittern Lake Local History book – nothing

Gwynne Local History book – nothing

Freeway West book – nothing

Ponoka Local History book - nothing

Pioneer Pathways – There was a write-up for a Phillip Hebert but it doesn't seem to be connected. He was born in 1926 and his father was Godais Hebert and his mother was Blanche Shobut.

The Alberta Genealogical Society Cemetery Surname database was searched for the Hebert family, and family members, Toussaint, Rose May, Phillipe and James, were found, all in Bonnyville, AB. The newspaper obituary indexes for Wetaskiwin area from 1903 – 1916 for Hebert and Kearney were searched, but nothing found.

The Alberta Genealogical Society Homestead index for Toussaint or Jim Hebert was searched and nothing in Wetaskiwin County was found. One homestead record was found for Buffalo Lake, AB and several in the Bonnyville area. The Peel's Prairie Provinces (PEEL) newspaper database was searched for the surname Hebert, but no articles on the family were found.

The only reference found for the Knox School in Wetaskiwin was tax receipts to area residents between 1901 & 1904. Unfortunately, these fonds are in the City of Wetaskiwin Archives which has been temporarily closed for a year now. Once the city archives reopens, if it actually does, further search on this school will be carried out.

In conclusion, this research project offered no rewards.

WEAVER, Arthur

A relative of the above person contacted me because her grandmother told her that Arthur had died in a car accident north of Wetaskiwin in 1931. The 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. (thanks to Sharon, who created an index for the records, and thanks to Lee for putting the index on our website). 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.

JOHNSON, Godfrey

I am still working on this request for information about when Mr. Johnson purchased land that appears to be in the Stettler area. The information I was given is rather scant but I do have a land location. I have advised her to look in local history books, which she apparently has. I have also suggested that she contact Land Titles in Edmonton to see if they can provide the historical data on the land she is curious about.

HANSON, Carl J.

I was contacted by someone with the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies group. They are preparing a celebratory publication that will be highlighting all of the past Presidents of the Society. Mr. Hanson, a rural Wetaskiwin resident, was one of the Presidents. The person contacting me said they did not have information on him and would really like to have a picture of him.

Sadly, I knew this would be in the Wetaskiwin Times for the dates he was president (1958-1962), and of course I could not access those papers because they are in the Archives. I was able to find a write-up about him in the local history book for this region. I also found extensive information about him in his obituary. All of this information was scanned and forwarded to the researcher. Because Mr. Hanson was also very involved with the UFA, now the Wetaskiwin Co-op, I gave the researcher the contact information for the Co-op as I know they created a publication highlighting their history. I also gave her the contact information for the Agricultural Society in Wetaskiwin as Mr. Hanson was involved with that organization.

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*"The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone,  
but the things you do for others remain as your legacy."*

— *Kalu Ndukwe Kalu*

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