



ROOTS & BRANCHES

WETASKIWIN BRANCH

Alberta Genealogical Society

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

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Articles may not be reprinted
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EXECUTIVE: President: Alice Hoyle
Secretary: Pam Cooke

Vice President: Nelda Layton
Treasurer: Leroy Koop

BRANCH MEETINGS: Third Tuesday of the Month.
Except July, August, December

PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS

Alice Hoyle

Happy New Year to all the Wetaskiwin branch members. I hope you are ready to face all the challenges that 2026 will inevitably bring.

One thing I have been pondering is: is it more productive to look forward to the future or is it more productive to reflect on the past? Can we change the course of our lives by looking back at some of the things that happened and perhaps coming to a decision about our future based on what we now realize were steps along our journey that we should have altered? Yes, hindsight is 20-20, and yes, the poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost reflects on this very question.

Our ancestors must have asked themselves this numerous times. I wonder if that is the reason why some ancestors who came from dangerous, war-torn situations preferred not to talk about their past. They already knew that looking forward was their only option.

As Canadians, I hope we can always look forward with confidence, feeling that the future will allow us and our descendants the opportunity to reach our full potential as citizens, matriarchs, patriarchs, historians, and all the other roles we may be placed into.

May all you strive for in 2026 be within your reach.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Sharon Aney

December 31... is it the end of an annual cycle or the middle of the season?
Are we looking at things unfinished? Or at new beginnings on January 1?

I am in both camps. 2025 personal and family activities have wound up with our Christmas celebrations. We look forward to the new year with a return to our winter get-away in Osoyoos, BC, where, at leisure we will refresh our spirits, reconnect with friends from across the prairies and sharpen our wits at the bridge tables.

On the other hand, work awaits my return in the spring as there are leads to follow up regarding my research of the history of the Manluk Theatre building..... and the City Archives inventory will need to be continued unless a volunteer angel appears. 😊

One of the Christmas gifts from the heart of someone dear to me is a package of seeds carefully and lovingly gathered..... so I look to new beginnings in the spring.

Whatever your situation.... Russ and I wish you a 2026 of Health, Hope, Love, and Peace!



Rosella Plaquin

Volunteer of the Year Award, Curling Alberta.

from Mickey Pindergast, Director

CONGRATULATIONS, ROSELLA PLAQUIN!

"If there was a description of an ideal volunteer, it would be headed by a picture of Rosella Plaquin and would go on to say that a great volunteer is someone who is dedicated, passionate, reliable, and willing to contribute their time and skills to making a positive impact on their chosen area of contribution." S. Cormier

Nominating umpire, Sherry Cormier....."Rosella is all of those things and more. Since joining the Curling Alberta team in January of 2012, she has demonstrated a high level of commitment and reliability consistently showing up and fulfilling her responsibilities. She freely provides valuable services whenever asked and reaches out to participate at every opportunity. In my opinion, she is one of the premier timers for Curling Alberta.

Being a former Elementary Special Education teacher, she demonstrates flexibility, adaptability and an openness to learning new skills. We all like and appreciate her positive attitude and her being a team player who works collaboratively with others. Her warm personality and contagious chuckles get us all through any situation."

CONGRATULATIONS, OLGA READE!

On September 10, 2025, at its annual meeting at the Peaceful Valley centre, the Battle Lake Ladies Club recognized Olga Reade for her labour of love for the organization. Olga had recently completed the book, "91 Year History of the Battle Lake Ladies Club, 1934 - 2025" .

As the historian of the organization for over 30 years, **Olga compiled the book**, documenting the activities, service to the community, triumphs, hardships and the endurance that women faced over the decades. She was presented with certificates of recognition from the County of Wetaskiwin and the Government of Canada. The BLLC presented copies of its history book to several libraries and museums in the area.

From: Pipestone Flyer, Oct. 31, 2025

Our ANNUAL MEETING in February includes election of Officers.
Alice Hoyle who has given 8 years of exemplary service to our branch as President, will not be putting her name forward.
Please give serious thought as to how you can share your talents and experience for the benefit of the branch!

SE

PTEMBER MEETING PROGRAM - Member Chat

Marcella

A few years ago she was contacted though ancestry.com by someone who said she had photos of Marcella's family... her great grandmother had babysat Marcella's grandfather... after several years the person is coming to Alberta and will bring the pictures.

Also..... She was contacted by someone who said there was a close DNA match. It turned out that an uncle had had a youthful relationship and fathered a child. There have been several contacts between both families since then.

Alice -1

As she had told us a few years ago, Alice was informed that she had a half brother, discovered by DNA testing. This summer his 2 daughters came to visit Alice. She toured them through the area: family farm, cemeteries, the school where their mother had taught. They told Alice about their father's work with the Canadian government, which took him to many countries. They speculated that he may have been a SPY!

Alice -2

Had a relative vacationing in Scotland who wanted to find ancestors' graves. Alice had given her the information that was needed, but the cemetery was large and hilly. The relative walked around for quite a while, unable to find the graves, and stumbled and fell..... only to find that the grave she was looking for was right there!! Alice had a similar experience herself in looking for the grave of a niece's family in a Lacombe cemetery... driving around without success. She decided to stop and relax on a bench... only to find that the grave she was searching for was right beside her.

Olga

Her parents came from Ukraine, but married in Canada in 1934. A child was born in 1935, but died of an illness. A few years ago Olga looked for the baby's burial place and found a "cluster" of baby graves in a Calgary cemetery ... possibly indicating an epidemic causing deaths. Olga wants to put a marker on the grave.

OCTOBER MEETING PROGRAM – a webinar BY THOMAS MacENTEE

CREATING AN ANCESTOR SKETCH

Creating an ancestor sketch (summary) with pertinent facts is a good way to organize your family history, as well as providing an outline for chapters of your family story.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM – Where did you ancestors come from? Did your family have military experience?

Claudia – spoke of a great grandfather who lived in the early 1800s, and was difficult to reconcile with the rest of the family tree. DNA results showed that he was the wrong person with the same name. Research continues to find the right person.

Mavis – spoke of reconnecting with an uncle's family in BC on a recent visit.

Pam - spoke of a trip to Toronto, calling at the home where her mother had lived for many years and leaving her mother's memorial card for the new owners. She also connected with a cousin and received some memorabilia of their Scottish ancestors

Bob – on a visit back to England he made a "cold call" at the home where he was raised and was warmly received. He has traced his ancestry back to 1180. An uncle died in WWI, and is buried at Flanders Fields.

Sharon - spoke of her maternal grandparents experiences in Poland in WWI... grandmother & children in a refugee camp and grandfather fighting the Russo – Polish war from 1918 - 1920.

Nelda - many family members came from British Isles to USA in the 1600s and 1700s. Several generations of men fought in the World Wars, plus the American Civil War.

Lorraine – spoke of her husband's family who were in WWI, died and are buried in France. She was able to visit the cemetery and it was a very moving experience

Lee - told of his parents' families coming from Siberia and Crimea to Canada in the early 1900s. Being Mennonite they objected to wars, but a later generation uncle did join the army.

Carole – her dad had 6 brothers who enlisted and served during WWII. At subsequent Remembrance Day ceremonies in Morris, Manitoba her mother was proud to be asked to lay the wreath of remembrance because she had 6 sons who served. Carole has researched and made an album.

Alice – her paternal grandfather and several uncles served in WWI and WWII, but her father stayed home as a farmer with 2 children. When asked why they enlisted, they said "there were no opportunities here".

Her daughter has visited the Commonwealth cemetery and found it very moving to see all the countries of the Commonwealth that the very young men had come from. Currently a nephew serves as part of the Canadian contingent with NATO forces in Latvia.

A coincidence - a neighbour lent her a family history book... in which Alice read that the neighbour's family and Alice's husband's family had come to Canada on the same ship!

DISCOVER YOUR ANCESTORS – AN AFTERNOON AT THE WETASKIWIN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Alice Hoyle

On September 24th, four members of the Wetaskiwin branch of Alberta Genealogical Society gathered at the Heritage Museum in Wetaskiwin for a free walk-in event that would allow the public to attend and ask our members questions about genealogy and how to research ancestors.

This event was a collaboration between the Heritage Museum and the Wetaskiwin Genealogical Society. The suggested time of 1:00-4:00 seemed best suited for the Museum and the branch members who volunteered to assist those wanting help with their research.

Branch members supplied their laptops, research material, charts, etc. Advertising was supplied by the Heritage Museum by way of Facebook and their website.

As this was a walk-in event, we didn't know what to expect for attendance. We were pleasantly surprised when 11 people came to the Museum and during the 3 hours of the event, all 4 tables hosting branch members were kept busy with inquiries. The areas being researched contained an interesting variety: Switzerland, The Netherlands, Scotland, Russia/Ukraine, and various areas of Canada. One person was interested in researching the history of the land where she and her husband lived.

The level of experience in researching family also varied, from those who had researched for years to those who were just starting their researching journey.

Branch member Nelda Layton brought brochures and information about researching at the Family Search Centre in Wetaskiwin and that was well-received by those who were just starting out and appreciated being able to access information on the Family Search website without paying for subscriptions to databases.

The members of our branch who volunteered (Lee, Carole, Nelda, Alice) all felt it was a very enjoyable and productive afternoon.

The Heritage Museum suggested that they would be interested in hosting another similar event in the Spring of 2026. At the October meeting of our branch, we passed a motion to collaborate with the Heritage Museum next year for a similar walk-in event.

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## **RESEARCH REQUESTS**

Alice Hoyle

In the Fall of 2025 Tawny H. contacted our branch regarding obtaining a birth certificate for her great-aunt (Blanche H.) who was born in Alberta in 1919.

Sadly, I had to inform her that provincial regulations regarding birth registration requests require 120 years to have passed since the birth of someone in Alberta, before you can request a copy of their birth registration.

In further emails with her she told me the name of the Aunt's Father, and she thought they lived either in Wetaskiwin or rural Wetaskiwin. I looked at all the local history books for the area and found the father in the Freeway West Local History book. The write-up was obviously not written by one of the family members, but it was a short paragraph saying that the family lived in the area for a short while. Sadly, the mother of the household died, leaving several young children.

Blanche H. was one of the children and in researching this further, indications are that the children were, on occasion, raised in the households of other people. Not surprising, considering their father was a farmer left with young children to try to raise.

Eventually, family members relocated to the USA where extended family lived. Tawny H., the researcher, had done quite a bit of research before contacting us. She was hoping for a copy of Blanche's birth registration to confirm information she had.

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## VOLUNTEER HOURS

Sharon Aney

Every month we are asked to report to Lee the number of hours that we have "volunteered". And at each meeting Lee reports on how many hours he has been advised of... usually in the neighbourhood of 200 – 300. He reports this number to AGS.

The reason that AGS asks this of us is that when it applies for grants from the government or other agencies, it can report that our members are doing worthwhile work in our communities. Although these works are unpaid, they can be given a dollar value. The granting agency then sees that we are a viable and important society and (hopefully) will award funds to AGS for its operations.

I asked Lee if he had been keeping track of the hours reported. Of course he had! ☺  
This is his response: "I started recording hours in **2018**. Here is what I got".

|                                                   |           |      |          |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|----------|
| 2018                                              | 2,414.75, | 2019 | 2,849.75 |
| 2020                                              | 1,407.25  | 2021 | 1,595.50 |
| 2022                                              | 1,517.25  | 2023 | 2,357.50 |
| 2024                                              | 2,315.00  | 2025 | 2,171.50 |
| <b>TOTAL 16,628.5</b> volunteer hours in 8 years! |           |      |          |

Congratulations to all who have contributed! If we valued a volunteer hour at \$20.00, our members have given \$332,560.00 worth of work to our community. Wow!

We can continue to do this by using our talents and skills to help others with their family and historical research, and by helping at archives and museums and community events. It will be better for our communities and good for our well-being.

**PS.** Interestingly enough, I had this article ready to go when we learned that our members **Rosella Plaquin** and **Olga Reade** had received recognitions as volunteers with groups they belong to. Genealogists are great volunteers!



## WORLD WAR 1 FAMILY LOSS

Bob Maynard

At our November meeting discussion Bob mentioned relatives who had not survived World War I. Bob has shared the biographies of James C. Maynard and William Maynard, copied from the Parish book at Marden in Kent, England.

These two men were uncles of Bob's grandfather.

### James Charles MAYNARD



**33445 Gunner, 24<sup>th</sup> Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery**

Killed in action on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April 1917, age 26

Buried in Grave IV.K.20, Achiet-le-Grand Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais, France

*James Maynard was born in Rolvenden in 1891, the son of James Maynard and Mary Ann Maynard (née Thrift), and was baptised in Rolvenden on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1891. His father was an agricultural labourer and engine driver. The family came to Marden from Rolvenden in 1911, and lived at 5 Spring Grove Cottages after arriving in the village. However, the younger James Maynard did not make the move to Marden; a pre-war regular soldier, he had enlisted in Canterbury in June 1910, joining the Royal Garrison Artillery, the section of the Royal Regiment of Artillery tasked with manning the heavy guns of British fortresses and coastal batteries. He went to*

### WILLIAM MAYNARD



**Regiment)**

Died of wounds on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September 1917, age 36

Buried in Grave VIII.H.22, Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

*William Maynard was born in Rolvenden in 1881, the son of Charles Maynard and Mary Ann Maynard (née Gilbert), and was baptised in Rolvenden on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1881. His father was an agricultural labourer. William worked in Rolvenden as a plumber and painter. He married Nellie Stuteley, a cook from Tenterden, in Rolvenden on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1903; they subsequently lived at Westfield Villas, Marden. Before joining up, he worked for six years for the Hon Mrs Alfred Lyttleton, of Wittersham House. From there he went to Hare Plain, Biddenden; he gave up his business to enlist in Cranbrook. He joined at The Buffs Depot in May 1917, and was posted to the 4<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of The Buffs for training. William was sent to France on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1917, arriving at 38 Infantry Base Depot in Etaples the following day, and was part of a reinforcement draft posted to the 7<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of The Buffs on 20<sup>th</sup> August. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1917, the 7<sup>th</sup> Buffs moved by train from Eringhem to St Jan Ter Biezen. The men were in huts and tents, and the area was very congested. Five days later, an enemy aircraft flew over the camp in the dark and dropped six bombs, doing a great deal of damage, and resulting in the deaths of 27 men, and the wounding of 65 others. William was wounded when a bomb fell on the tent where he was resting, and later died of his injuries. He had only been in France for two months. Two other men with Marden connections also died as a result of the same air raid, making it the worst single incident for the village of the war;*



## **WOMAN OF ASPENLAND      VIOLET (CARLSON) BRANDT**

Re-printed with permission from the Wetaskiwin & District Heritage Museum

<http://www.wetaskiwinmuseum.com>



Violet (Carlson) Brandt was born August 6, 1918 on a farm about seven miles north-west of Bittern Lake. Her parents, Arthur and Anna had emigrated from Sweden in 1913. Violet and her seven siblings spent much of their childhood helping their parents around the farm. One of Violet's chores was to take the cows back and forth to the to the pasture and in the summer always in her bare feet.

After taking a secretarial course at secretarial course at Alberta College in Edmonton, Violet worked at both the Treasury Branch in Wetaskiwin and the South Side Treasury Branch in Edmonton. In 1943, she married Earl Milton Brandt and moved to their farm in the Crooked Lake area.

Violet was passionate about sewing for which she had a natural talent. She had started when she was only six years old making clothes for her doll. Soon she was sewing clothes for her family and close friends and then for the neighbours around her new home. However, Violet's favourite garments to sew were wedding gowns and dresses for the bridal party. The last wedding gown she sewed was for a great niece in 1997 when she looked at a magazine picture and made the gorgeous gown without the need of a pattern.

Throughout the years she has made thousands of garments for hundreds of people, all beautifully done. Examples of her sewing are shown at the Wetaskiwin Museum in the beautiful replicas of gowns from the late 1800's. She has created many beautiful petit-point and large-scale needlepoint pictures, as well as oil paintings, one of which hangs here in the museum. Her relatives and friends have been the lucky recipients of many of these handmade treasures.



Violet has kept in touch with her relatives in Sweden and often has provided more than just bed and breakfast for those who come to visit. Her delicious family meals included homemade bread and buns, topped with even more delectable pies and sweets for dessert. Her specialties though, are big sugary cinnamon buns which people will drive miles to savour.

Violet is well-known for her tremendous generosity amongst friends and family . She was the kind of friend who always made herself available whenever someone was in need. Although she tends to be shy in large groups, her light-hearted personality always shines through when around a few close friends. She will always be known to all as Auntie Vi.

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## NIKITA YAKOVLEVICH GUTENKO MARCH 28, 1871 - OCTOBER 20, 1926 by Leroy Koop



Gail M. from British Columbia contacted the Wetaskiwin City Hall and asked for assistance in finding her Great-Grandfather Nikita Gootenko's burial site. The AGS Wetaskiwin Branch was recommended to her. Gail initially communicated with Alice Hoyle, branch president, asking for any information on where to start searching in Wetaskiwin, stating that any tips given would be greatly appreciated. Gail was planning a trip to Edmonton and while there she had hoped to visit Wetaskiwin to find out where her Great-Grandfather was buried.

Gail's thoughts were that Nikita lived on a farm in the Wetaskiwin County upon immigrating to Canada from Russia in 1924 and may have been buried on the farm site in the year 1926.

The first source of information was found by Alice in a local history book, ***FREWAY WEST: FALUN & AREA HISTORY***-1974, page 105. It stated the following:

Quote

### M. GOOTENKO

In 1925-6 a family named Gootenko moved onto the NE1/4-12-45-27-W4. They had arrived in Vancouver from Russia and come out to farm in Alberta.

There were three children, Walter Gila and Mary.

They lived here about three years, during which time Mr. Gootenko died. A short time later, Mrs. Gootenko and the children moved to Vancouver.

Unquote

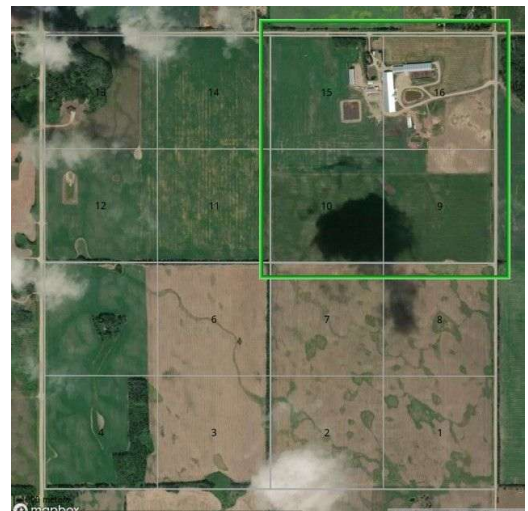
This information was passed on to Gail who did make the trip to Edmonton, but only late in November 2025. Gail tried to make an arrangement with Alice for a meeting but Alice was busy that day and suggested that I could take her place. Wintry weather forced Gail to cancel the meeting in Wetaskiwin, but by then I had already started to do research on Nikita.



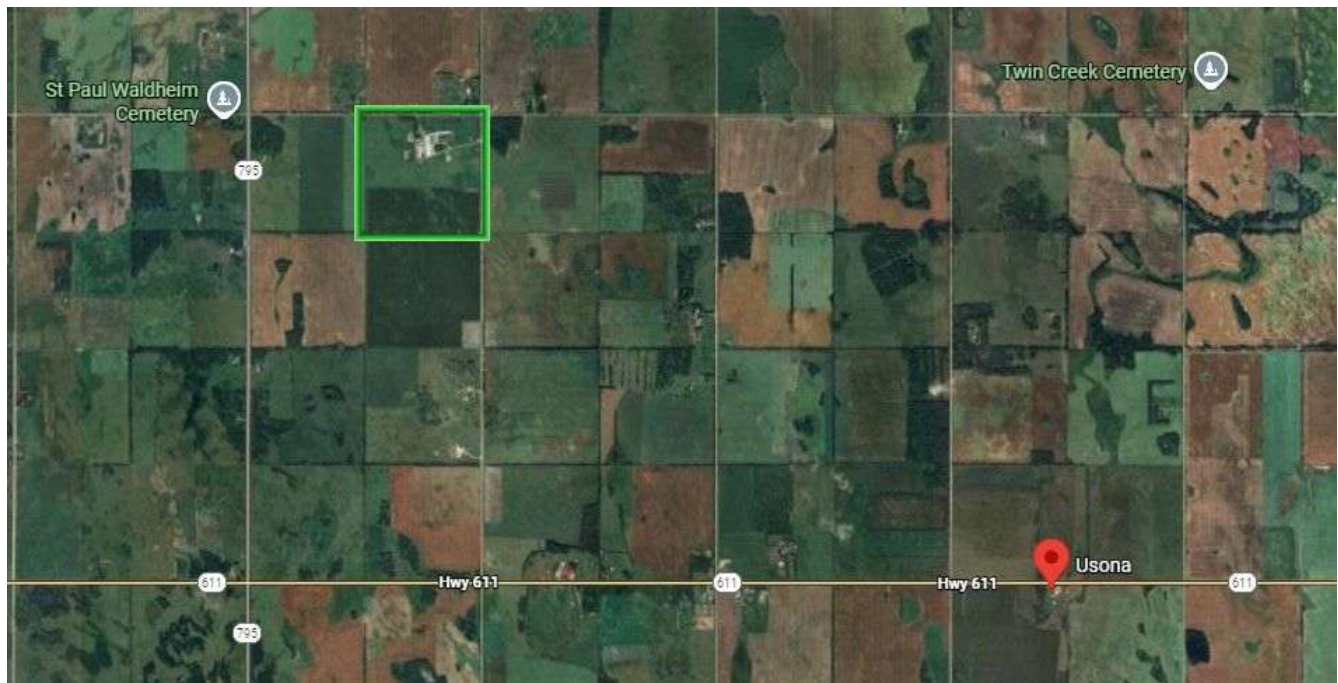
The Wetaskiwin County ownership map of 2018 was reviewed using the quarter section cited in the history book. The NE1/4-12-45-27-W4 was owned by Falona Springs Holstein Ltd. (green border). A farm phone number was found on a Holstein Registration file on Google. Gail left messages on the phone but she received no replies. The goal was to see if a family burial site was on the farm.

The Legal Land

Description Converter on Google was used to determine the latitude-longitude of the farm and obtain a Google Map display of the farm. **Note:** The site I used is no longer free.



Google Maps was then used to get a broader image of the area, roads and nearby cemeteries.



A FaceBook posting was looked at because it mentioned the Falona Springs Dairy Farm. I was surprised that I had access to it without having an account. The company posting the article had installed traction milling on the barn floors where the cattle needed to walk without slipping. It was mentioned that the owners were very loyal customers. On the bottom of the posting was a Google image of the farm yard with the owner family's name printed over top of it. Back to Google and the phone directory 411-Alberta, Wetaskiwin and only one name showed up that matched the farm owner's name. The name and phone number were passed on to Gail for future contact about a possible burial site.

At the onset of this research I tried to find the Gootenko family in the 1926 Prairie Provinces Census, trying to prove that they had resided on the Falona Springs farm. My thought was that even if Nikita passed away before June 1926, the month censuses usually started collected data, the family name should still be in the census. Gail had mentioned that the family moved to BC several years after Nikita's death. No luck. Gail mentioned another family that lived on the same farm as the Gootenko family. That name was Potapenko, a name also submitted to Gail by Alice.

The Potapenko family was also mentioned in the local history book on page 105 just below the Gootenko family. I am including this article because of the name stated and the construction of the house.

Quote

#### **DANIEL POTAPENKO**

Mr. And Mrs. Daniel Potapenko came from Russia in about 1925.

He built a house in the old country style. Poles were placed about two feet apart. Willows were woven in and out to form walls. Then mud was plastered over the top. This made quite a good wall until it rained. Then the mud would wash away and the walls would have to be plastered again.

There were four children in the family including Jennie, Metro and Walter.

About 1928 they moved to Vancouver.

Unquote







Find a Grave was the next step. The name Gootenko did not show up on the Usona Cemetery. I did something I had never done before, and that was to scroll through the listed monuments on Find a Grave. The Immanuel Lutheran Usona Cemetery has 43 monuments listed with two without headstones or markers. I came across the name **Unknown Tytehko**. What increased my heart rate was the death date of October 20, 1926 and that there was a monument. **IN RUSSIAN!**

Creating a more contrasted image and using a Google website that allowed one to type words in Russian script, here is what I came up with.

ЗДЕСЬ ПОКОИТСЯ  
ПРАХЪ  
НИКИТЫ ЯКОВЛЕВИЧА  
ГУТЕНКО  
РОДИВШЕГОСЯ  
28 МАРТА 1871  
УЕМРЕШЕГО  
20 ОКТЯБРЬ 1926

Using Google Translate, here is the English version.

HERE LIE  
THE ASHES OF  
NIKITA YAKOVLEVICH  
GUTENKO  
BORN  
MARCH 28, 1871  
DIED  
OCTOBER 20, 1926



The bottom two or three rows of words are just not legible and will probably need a personal trip to the cemetery to maybe clean it up and determine what else the monument states.



## HERE IS THE HOME OF NIKITA YAKOVLEVICH GUTENKO



*“Those who do not look upon themselves as a link,  
connecting the past with the future,  
do not perform their duty to the world” ... Daniel Webster*



HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!