

Personalities of Moose Jaw

Self-admitted packrat — a renowned collector



WITH HIS COLLECTIONS
... Austin Ellis

MR. AND MRS. Reg Withrow of Tuxford recently celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. A dance attended by 85 persons was held in their honor in the Tuxford Hall with the Silver-tones supplying the music. Dale McFadden was master of ceremonies and Colleen McFadden of Trail, B.C., attended the register. A smorgasbord supper organized by Flora McCurdy and Loretta Puddell was held.

The former Annie May Murray of Moose Jaw married Reginald Withrow of Tuxford at the Zion United Church manse June 19, 1954 with Rev. Morris presiding. They have lived on the farm in the Tuxford district for 21 years.

Guests from outside the district were Lester McKenzie of Deroche, B.C., Eva Mc-

Fadden, Stephen and Colleen of Trail, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon McFadden of Castellar, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Boilard and Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Boilard of Seba Beach, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Gray of Calgary, and Heather Meyers of Okotoks.

A family get-together was later held at the farm home of Dale and Jean McFadden. A ball game and smorgasbord supper was held.

1979

Austin Ellis who recently retired as director of the Moose Jaw Art Museum after 12 years service is probably one of the foremost collectors in the province.

"Some people call me a packrat because I collect everything I can get my hands on... in fact, I have a hard time throwing anything away," said Ellis.

Ellis has been collecting Indian artifacts for the past 40 years going out to River Park and Five Mile Dam every spring.

"I have a large collection of arrow heads," said Ellis. But his collection goes much farther than that. He has a wide variety of bone tools, pottery, elk teeth and beads.

"I remember collecting over 200 pieces from one field alone," he said.

Ellis tells the story about how the Indian artifacts in the Moose Jaw area are remnants from Chief Sitting Bull and those that followed him from the American wars.

He said: "Some of his descendents still live in the Wood Mountain area."

But Ellis' collecting goes much farther than Indian artifacts.

He has the largest collection of Model T Ford parts in the province.

"I have enough parts to make four antique cars and I'm in the process of reconstructing a Model T that will be driven in parades and probably displayed at the Western Development Museum here in the city."

"It will be a 1910 model and should be completed by the spring," said Ellis.

Ellis also has a large gun collection that dates back to the Hudson Bay trade musket. "Most of these items are stored away for safekeeping at the present time," he said.

"I also have a coin collection dating back to the 1850s along with a complete set of Olympic coins." These are stored in a safety deposit vault at a local bank.

In addition, Ellis has a number of paintings done by Canadian artists, many hanging in his home.

"Some of the items are still packed away and I have forgotten exactly what many of them are," he said.

He values his various collections at more than \$20,000 which "is just a conservative

estimate."

Since his retirement in September, he has been constructing a building behind his house and soon most of these collections will be on display for everyone to see. "This is sort of a mini-museum of my own," he said.

"Over the past few years I have not been as active a collector because of my position at the museum, but I still take my yearly outings looking for Indian artifacts."

Ellis can remember the early beginnings of the museum when it all started back in 1951 at Alexandra School. "It was a committee of the city that ran it then and when the school needed the space the museum was closed," he said.

Then the city decided a new museum would be the 1967 Centennial project for the city and in June of 1966 it was opened. "I became director in the spring of 1967," he said.

Most of the items were donated and they deal with the history of Moose Jaw and district. "I think we purchased only about two collections but the other 90 per cent was donated," said Ellis.

Ellis said he has visited cities between Victoria and St. John's as a member of the Canadian Museum Council.

"I have been involved with the museum since its early beginnings and my time of employment as director has been more fun than work. It is almost an extension of my hobby," he said.

"I came to Moose Jaw 46 years ago from High River, Alberta and have seen many changes."

He married Kay Clarke whose father was a city alderman and owner of Clarkes Men's Wear since 1903. His family of six children are living as far away as Cape Breton, Port Hawksbury in N.S., and Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

He attended high school, business college and took several museum courses.

Ellis has always been an avid sportsman and 25 years ago was a member of the Moose Jaw Ski Club. "We used to rent a bus on weekends and go to Buffalo Lake."

The club died a natural death said Ellis when snow became scarce. "Now they make snow, a luxury we didn't have available a few years ago," he said.

Ellis also was in track and

field, winning the 400-yard event through the YMCA at Weyburn about 40 years ago. "Two of the original Y members, Hub Gutheridge and Floyd Dash are still around and I can remember the enjoyment we had with the Y leaders corps."

He has been a member of the tennis club, aquatic club and the badminton club at Zion Church, where he first met his wife, Kay.

"I enjoy boating and like to spend time at my cottage. I used to water ski too," he said.

His first job when he came to Moose Jaw was at Wimster's Hardware and since that time he has broken a lot of ground. He is a member of the Moose Jaw Lions Club, holding positions as treasurer and director. "Recently I received my 35-year pin from the club," said Ellis.

Ellis joined Zion United Church when he came to Moose Jaw and has served as an elder, steward and has been a member of several other committees.

"A lot of water has gone under the bridge since I started in the city as a hardware clerk and now I'm just going to take it easy."

"My wife Kay is holding up the works a bit as far as travelling is concerned because she still teaches music on a part-time basis. However, Ellis said he will be spending some time with his family across the country.

Ellis said he has been going South for about four years now and is now in Cuba.

Kay Ellis said: "Austin has not been idle since his retirement. He has built a place for his collections and is now starting on a family room. I would say he has worked harder since he's been home than when he worked at the museum."

"I certainly have seen him less since he's been home," she said.

Ellis said: "I have never yearned for the political field and now that I'm retired, I will spend more time on my collections, do a bit of travelling and just take it easy."

Of course, for Ellis, taking it easy could mean combing the woods for Indian artifacts, scrounging around for old automobile parts or cleaning his gun collection.

"I guess I'm a born packrat and will continue looking for interesting things to collect... you know a leopard can't change its spots."

DELIGHTFULLY PREDICTABLE

Christmas joyful festival, Canada

Christmas is a delightfully predictable festival in Canada. Each year families gather together to eat the same food, follow the same rituals and experience the same joy as they ate, followed and experienced the previous year. But that does not mean the traditions of Christmas are without variety.

Canadians trace their heritage to every corner of the globe, and many of their celebrations at Christmas reflect the origins of their forefathers.

The Canadian frontier is revived in the festivities of the Metis, a people of French-Canadian and Indian heritage. Groups in northern Canada still make the buffalo the centre of their Christmas celebrations.

The evening of Dec. 24 kicks off a party that might last as long as two weeks. Sometimes there is a church ceremony, but always there is a large family gathering. Men take their guns into open fields and fire them to signal the beginning of the season.

Gifts are exchanged around the fire, and family members wear their finest clothes — including Metis sashes and moccasins.

The traditional feast is a reminder of Christmases past, and only the best will do. The most tender part of the buffalo is served, together with wild deer and moose meat. Berries, potatoes and wild rice complement the meat dishes.

When appetites are satisfied, singing, fiddling and dancing go on through the night, often taking the form of contests. Those who have enough energy, can go horse riding the following day — until the celebrations resume in the evening.

Christmas in French-Canadian homes is also based on the traditions of early settlers. Preparations begin weeks, or even months, in advance.

On Christmas Eve the mother puts the final touches on the meal, while the older children set up a nativity scene, or creche — usually under the tree. About 11 p.m. the younger children are awakened, and the family attends midnight mass together.

The reveillon or Christmas feast is set out about 2 a.m. It is a joyous family reunion, with numerous relatives sharing the fun and food. The reveillon must surpass all other special meals, and nothing is spared.

Delicacies include tourtières,

or meat pies, turkey, vegetables, potatoes, and fruit cake or a Christmas log (a special cake) for dessert. Wines are poured freely for young and old.

After supper, gifts are exchanged and carols are sung around the tree. Party games and dancing often carry the celebration into the wee hours.

European customs have lent a special touch to Christmas in Canada. Traditions are influenced by differences between regions and even small villages in the homelands.

Italian festivities are a good example. Families from southern Italy share a special supper on Christmas Eve, while northerners celebrate the following day. Since Dec. 24 is traditionally a day of abstinence, the meal is a meatless one. Various seafood dishes are served, with eel being the most popular. Codfish, smelts and anchovies are fried in oil. Vegetables and fancy pastries complete the dinner, and desserts are made with seasonal fruits.

The entire family attends midnight mass, then returns home for an evening of playing cards.

Children have their day on Dec. 25, when gifts are exchanged in the morning. Though southern Italy has no fir trees, Canadian tradition makes a Christmas tree a must. Little people visit the nativity scene at their parish church. And homemade spaghetti is usually prepared for the afternoon meal.

Northern Italians serve "panettone", a breadlike cake with raisins, at their noonday breakfast.

One custom common to both northern and southern Italo-Canadians is the visit of the "Befana" on Jan. 6. "Befana" is a Latin abbreviation of Epiphany, the day of the wise men's visit to Bethlehem. Legend has it that good children receive gifts from an old woman who carries a sack. Those who misbehave get nothing but a chunk of coal.

German and Austrian-Canadians spend Christmas Eve with the immediate family.

Austrian families love to serve breaded filet of sole. This dates back to the days when fish was a luxury for an inland people. Hot spice wine and a variety of fancy homemade cookies put a finishing touch on the dinner.

Everyone attends church together after supper.

Then the beautiful tree-lighting ritual begins. The youngest child recites a short prayer, and the family sings Silent Night in German. Anyone who plays a guitar or accordion is invited to accompany the singers. The tree dazzles as it is lit for the first time, a reminder of the days when real candles were used. Everyone joins in the merriment of giving out the Christ child's gifts.

In German-Canadian homes, Dec. 25 is a joyous family celebration, highlighted, if possible, by a visit to Grandma's. Hers is a special tree, decorated with handmade ornaments, marzipan and chocolate treats that are there for the eating.

The Christmas feast includes goose or duck, a roast pig, sauerkraut and potato dumplings. Desserts are sure to satisfy any sweet tooth — Black Forest cake, Christmas raisin loaf, and special cookies baked a month in advance. Each child is given a colorful plate of goodies to nibble during the day.

Estonian customs have also been transported to Canadian soil, and are shared with the immediate family.

Church services begin the celebration on Christmas Eve, and during this time Santa arranges gifts under the tree.

Feasting begins about 8 p.m. Blood sausage is served with pork roast, sauerkraut and various types of rye and other breads. The hearty farm fare includes root vegetables like beets and carrots, and dill pickles. Dessert is a dried fruit compote, and the traditional vodka is served throughout the meal.

The children's favorite time, however, is after dinner when a family member dresses up as Santa and distributes gifts. Each child recites an Estonian poem or sings a song, memorized painstakingly weeks before Christmas.

Dec. 25 is a quiet day, set aside for visiting friends and enjoying leftovers from the Christmas Eve feast.

Canada's Dutch immigrants spend the Yuletide season quietly. Gifts are exchanged about two weeks earlier on St. Nicholas Day, Dec. 6. This is a children's holiday, and they still hang their stockings "by the chimney with care."

St. Nick was a third century

bishop known for his generosity. English colonists in New York eventually adapted his name to Santa Claus.

Christmas Day is spent with the family. In accordance with Canadian customs, turkey and vegetables are usually prepared for dinner.

Colorful Polish and Ukrainian customs have also found their way to Canada. On Dec. 6 St. Nick leaves each child a present under his pillow.

Polish festivities begin Christmas Eve when the first star appears in the sky. With that, the Christmas feast is under way.

A blessed host of unleavened bread is shared among family members, and good wishes are exchanged. The white tablecloth covers a layer of hay, reminding everyone of Jesus' birth in a manger.

Since no one should be alone at Christmas, an extra place is set at the table. Legend says that any weary traveller could stop by and feel welcome at once. A figure of the Christ child is somewhere on the table, sometimes in the centrepiece.

The dinner itself is a hearty one. Traditionally there were 12 courses, representing the 12 apostles.

Borsch, a beet soup, begins the meatless supper. This is followed by jellied fish and "pierogi" — dumplings stuffed with potatoes and cheese or cabbage. Fancy cakes and sweets complete the meal.

The youngest child gets the privilege of distributing the gifts after supper. Homemade ornaments adorn the tree. The family gathers to exchange stories, then usually attends midnight mass together.

Christmas Day means a chance to visit and, perhaps, share a traditional Canadian turkey dinner.

Almost the same rituals take place in Ukrainian homes, but not until two weeks later. The Julian calendar moves Christmas celebrations to Jan. 6.

Just for this special occasion, "kutia" is prepared. This is a delicious dessert of cooked wheat kernels and poppy seeds, sweetened with honey. The father serves the "kutia", wishing each family member in turn a Merry Christmas.

All these traditions combine to make Canada's Christmas mosaic the celebration it is.

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LITTLE TOWN

I like to live in a little town
Where the trees meet across the street
Where you wave your hand and say "hello"
To everyone you meet.
I like to stand for a moment
Outside the grocery store,
And listen to the friendly gossip
Of the folks that live next door.
For life is interwoven
With the friends we learn to know;
And we hear their joys and sorrows
As we daily come and go;
So I like to live in a little town,
I care no more to roam,
For every house in a little town
Is more than a house:
It's home.

McKenzie horses sold

To The Editor:
It is our wish to put a few lines
in your paper to our many

friends who have enjoyed the McKenzie Belgian horses for the past 32 years. We have sold the six into Central Ontario.

We will be showing them at the Royal Brandon Winter Fair the first week of April and the buyer shall pick them up the end of that week for their 1,600 mile truck ride.

We have used most of these horses together for the past three years and have taken great pleasure in the way they perform. Some of them weigh 2,300 and all over one ton so they are in real shape for a show and a truck ride.

We have used 109 horses in our six or eight horse hitches since

we started and we knew if we could understand a horse as quick as he knew us, we would have no trouble and we were fortunate.

We have bought our horses mostly through a sale in Waverly, Iowa in spring or fall and have had many good ones.

A religious outfit in Iowa has been farming and raising good horses for 40 years and sells brood mares from \$10,000 to \$17,000 each so who can say we shouldn't farm with horses.

We would still have a community and time to play ball after supper.

George McKenzie
Moose Jaw

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