

NORTHERN SKIES: PETER SHEARER GUNN AND
MARY ANN RITCH, FROM SCOTLAND TO
THE CANADIAN NORTHWEST – 1883 TO 1927

By

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Abstract – Northern Skies

Northern Skies is fundamentally the story of my great-great-grandparents, Peter Shearer Gunn and Mary Ann Ritch, who came over from Scotland to the Canadian Northwest in the late nineteenth century. It also has a large dose of Scottish, Western Canadian and Hudson's Bay Company ('HBC') history thrown in. Peter was an HBC recruit and he started off his career in 1883 in the Peace River Country, in the area of Alberta that was then called the Athabasca District of the Northwest Territories. Peter worked at most of the HBC Posts in the area before eventually becoming the In-charge at Fort St. John, on the British Columbia side of the Peace River Country. Mary joined him there in 1891. Peter was also an interpreter for two adhesions to Treaty #8 in 1889-1900, and when he and his family moved to Lac Ste. Anne, he became a member of parliament for that district for the Province of Alberta, where he played a role in the development of the railway in northern Alberta. Later, he was appointed Sherriff of the Peace River District.

With this project I deliberately fasten my family ancestry to important historical and cultural events. I take readers through time, as my ancestors move through time and 'space', and I show how the Jacobite Uprisings, the Highland Clearances, the Klondike Gold Rush, Treaty #8 and the development of the northern Alberta railway affect them, and are sometimes affected by them. As my ancestors move through 'space', I glimpse into their lives and the places they lived, and so this project also tells part of the story of Fort St. John, Lac Ste. Anne, Edmonton, and the Township of Rackwick on the Orkney Island of Hoy.

I hope *Northern Skies* demonstrates how we are all connected to the vastness of human and universal history and how through making these connections we can acquire a greater sense of identity and self authority. I believe it is through connection that the seemingly inconsequential threads that we are become the colours that shape the tapestry of human history and bring it to life. Although we are all minor players in the universal infinitude of history, we are there when history plays out, and although we are enormously affected by it, we can also affect it, and sometimes quite consequentially. Although the history of humankind is infinitesimal compared to the age of our Universe (if all the words in the Christian Bible represented time, the last word at the end of the Bible would be the span of humanity's existence), humanity did not simply spring into existence – we are a link in a chain of events that

spans infinitely backward and forward. Simply put, by virtue of our existence, we are connected to infinity. Therefore, by making conscious connections to history, we are in fact confirming this connection. So, in effect, by building a bridge between human history and the history of my ancestors, this project is an illustration of how we all “live in the light of eternity”.

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Northern Skies

Introduction

Peter Shearer Gunn and Mary Ann Ritch, my great-great-grandparents, came over from Scotland to the Canadian Northwest in 1883 and 1891, respectively. Before that, Peter lived and worked on the northern coast of Scotland around the Town of Thurso, and Mary lived in Rackwick, on the Orkney Island of Hoy. Peter was a Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) recruit and he started off his career in the Peace River Country, in the area of Alberta that was then called the Athabasca District of the Northwest Territories. Peter worked at most of the HBC Posts in the area before eventually becoming the In-charge at Fort St. John, on the British Columbia side of the Peace River Country. Mary joined him there in 1891. This is their story, albeit with much Scottish, Canadian and Hudson's Bay Company history mixed in.

The Highland Clearances

For the purposes of this history, I start with a brief outline of the 'unsettling' events in the Highlands of Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that resulted in a dramatic change in a way of life that eventually led to Peter's and Mary's decisions to emigrate to the Canadian Northwest. The religiously and politically motivated Jacobite Uprisings and their 'resolution' in 1746 were the primary catalysts that led to a cultural shift in the Highlands that precipitated sweeping economic changes.¹ From a cultural, political and economic perspective, the result was revolutionary. Some have labelled these the 'Highland Clearances', while others called them 'Improvements'. Either way, the lives of tens of thousands of people changed quickly and drastically.

The Jacobite defeat eventually led to the end of the ages old clan system, a feudal type system whereby men served as soldiers of the Clan Chief in exchange for tenancy. These lands had only been the Clan Chiefs "as part of a wider structure that safeguarded the interests of the whole clan". After the Heritable Jurisdictions Act of 1746 was passed, the traditional clan system was rendered pointless and it no longer made sense for the Clan Chiefs "to measure their importance in terms of the numbers of armed clansmen they could raise [...] A large population ceased being the chief's main asset: and "overpopulation" became regarded as a serious

problem”. The Clan Chiefs then needed to generate “a monetary income from lands they thought of as their own” and the result was that the “clan chiefs had become landlords”.²

Sheltered from the effects of the Industrial Revolution until then, the Highlands became more economically viable as grazing land for sheep and the wool they would provide to linen and textile manufacturers to the south. Without the clan system to protect them, subsistence farmers of the Highlands were strongly encouraged to vacate their lands to make room for sheep. Although not confessed to be the primary motivation, the process also significantly increased the fortunes of the ‘landlords’. The evictions began in 1762 in the County of Ross and Cromarty on the southern border of the County of Sutherland. The first mass emigration occurred in 1792, known as the ‘Year of the Sheep’, when Cheviot Sheep were first introduced to the Highlands. “Its large size, its hardiness and tolerance of Highland conditions, and its production of great quantities of high-quality wool and meat meant that volume sheep-farming suddenly became immensely more profitable, and the death-knell was sounded for the traditional way of life for tens of thousands of people across the Highlands and Islands”.³ Although blamed for large scale emigration from the Highlands, this first wave of ‘clearances’ was mainly a relocation of the population from the interior to the coast. Families who had subsisted on farmlands for centuries were forced to leave their ancestral homes and move to small ‘crofts’ along the coast to become harvesters of kelp. Landlords considered this an improvement in lifestyle, and excused the forced and sometimes violent evictions as a father would who forces his child to eat spinach: ‘Because they don’t know what’s good for them.’ Ancestral homes, upon which families had subsided for centuries, were destroyed. Many of the dispossessed were homeless overnight and were forced into occupations for which they had no training. Although after the shock, most did manage to recover enough to eke out a living in their new homes – for a while at least. Unfortunately, the kelp industry crashed in 1815 and the newly impoverished Highlanders had no option but to emigrate or to sell their labour to a factory down in Glasgow or Edinburgh.⁴

Donald Gunn, great-grandfather to Mary Ann Ritch, was born in 1766 in the Strath of Dunbeath, in the Parish of Latheron in the County of Caithness. His father William was also born there in 1742. The town of Dunbeath was one of many that were established on the southern coast of Caithness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to receive the area’s ‘cleared’ Highlanders. Badbea and Helmsdale were two of the more famous. The ‘Clearances’

in this area began as early as 1777.⁵ It is not certain that Donald and his family were actually evicted from their land, but in 1786 we find Donald in Gills, on the north-eastern tip of Caithness with wife Isabella (nee Barnetson) and newly born daughter Margaret.⁶ Donald was a fisherman. Sometime before 1792, when daughter Isabella was born, he and his family moved to Manclett, near the fishing village of Longhope on the Orkney Island of Hoy. According to censuses, Donald and Isabella spent the rest of their lives in Manclett. Daughter Elizabeth, born in 1797, later married John Ritch of Rackwick, Hoy whose son became the father of Mary Ann. Donald and Isabella had made a good decision. Their family, and several generations into the future managed quite well on this barren rock of an island.

Some of the more violent removals occurred in the County of Sutherland, and perhaps the most violent of these occurred in 1813. Hudson's Bay Company man, Red River Colonist, and Province of Manitoba Member of Parliament, Donald Gunn (1880), writes that the Dutchess of Sutherland "commenced [...] the selfish and cruel work of clearing the country of its inhabitants, leasing the farms to sheep-herds who stocked their holdings, in many places very extensive tracts, with sheep". These "unfortunate people were driven [...] from their humble, but once happy homes, which they had occupied, and which, in many cases, had been occupied by their forefathers, for many generations, under the good and kind Earls of former times". In June, 1813, the head of the Hudson's Bay Company, Lord Selkirk himself, arrived in Sutherland to offer the newly homeless – for their homes had been burnt to the ground – a life of opportunity in "a land flowing with milk and honey" on the Red River in the Canadian North West.⁷

The Kildonan Clearances were one of the more famous, likely because they were the first to be resisted. These clearances are relevant to this story for a couple of reasons: first, Alexander Gunn, Peter Gunn's grandfather, was born in Kildonan in 1802 to parents John and Barbara; second, with the assistance of the Hudson's Bay Company, the 'Clearances' directly resulted in the emigration of a group of settlers, many with the Gunn and MacKay surname, to the Red River area of the Canadian North West. Some of these settlers played a major role in the merging of its major rival, the Northwest Company, with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. This merger paved the way for a safer and more orderly settlement of western Canada. Some of these settlers would later be referred to as the Red River Gunns. The settlement was located in an area that would later be known as Fort Garry, which would then be renamed Winnipeg.

Peter's great-grandparents, John Gunn and Barbara MacKay, born in Kildonan, were married on January 2, 1793. They lived in Kildonan where they had five children. The Kildonan Clearances began in 1813 and ended about 1831. According to Angus Sutherland, who was interviewed by the Napier Commission in 1883, the population of Kildonan in 1811 was 1,574 and it was reduced to 257 by 1831.⁸ The notorious Patrick Sellar was hired by the Dutchess of Sutherland to clear the area. However, he met with resistance and as a result the people were violently expelled and their homes burned. I assume John, Barbara and family were cleared at this time. I am not certain where they relocated, but Helmsdale was specifically set up for the Kildonan residents, so this was likely where they first settled. Later on we find John and Barbara's son Alexander, with wife Elizabeth Dunbar (married at Ben Alisky in the Parish of Halkirk on December 24th, 1829), living in Lamsdale in the Parish of Reay on the south-eastern border with Halkirk. They had nine children, one of whom was Peter's mother Barbara. They moved from Lamsdale to Scrabster by the Caithness town of Thurso sometime around 1850.⁹

Professor of Scottish History and Director of the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies, T.M. Devine, writes that up until "the later 1850's, emigration from the Scottish Highlands was an important aspect of the Scottish exodus as a whole". However, he states that "for a period in the later 1840's and early 1850's, the Highland diaspora reached truly unprecedented levels". Prior to this, "much of Scotland's international mobility throughout the nineteenth century was led by the search for opportunities overseas", however, the "great wave of Highland emigrants" of the mid 19th Century, "was driven on in addition by subsistence crisis, clearance and peasant appropriation".¹⁰

The potato blight that had devastated Ireland began affecting the Highlands of Scotland in the fall of 1846. Due to the prompt response of relief agencies a disaster similar to that in Ireland was averted, but as the crisis persisted patience began to wear, donor fatigue started to set in, and latent racism against the 'Gaels' of the Highlands came to the surface. A destitution test was implemented and most support was withdrawn. The only alternative for the old and infirm was the Poor Law, a form of 'welfare' supported by 'taxation', which "meant a direct rising cost to local rate payers". Local rate payers were the landlords. Rumours also started to spread that "the government was contemplating the introduction of 'an able-bodied poor law'", which if so implemented would have had a disastrous effect on the "already weakened financial position of

many landlords”. As a result, strategies on several estates “started to swing away from containment of the crisis to dispersal of the people by mass eviction and emigration”. Economics at the time also led to a decrease in the value of cattle and an increase in the value of sheep, further encouraging “investment in sheepwalks and, with it, policies of clearance of small tenants and cottars as the most secure route back to financial stability for landowners”.¹¹

The County of Sutherland was one of the areas that was hit the hardest,¹² and it appears, unfortunately, that a family living in a parish in Caithness near the border of Sutherland, cleared from their ancestral homelands just three decades earlier, was ‘cleared’ once again. Alexander Gunn and family were living at Lamsdale when the potato famine arrived in the Highlands. In about 1850, after living in Lamsdale for over twenty years, they moved, or were removed, to the northern coast of Caithness to become crofters and fishermen. Sons John, William, and Alexander were working in the Lamsdale area as shepherds in 1851, but John and William soon emigrated to Ireland (marriages in Ireland in 1855 and 1858, respectively) and Alexander to Queensland, Australia. The younger children, including Peter’s mother Barbara, stayed with their parents on the croft in Scrabster by Thurso.

Mary Ann Ritch and Rackwick

Across from the northernmost point of the Scottish Mainland, a dark and barren island rises sharply out of the North Sea. It is a small, oblong shaped island about 10 miles long and 5 miles wide. From a distance, one would wonder why anybody would choose to live there. Its shores are edged by rocky cliffs that are relentlessly pounded by the waves of the North Sea’s Pentland Firth, and its windswept, peat covered, treeless hills appear lifeless. It suffers constant fog and mist and seemingly endless days of rain. Its winters are dark, and for a few weeks, the sun barely rises at all. In the summer, however, its days can last forever. In a few spots along the coast, the cliffs give way to valleys and bays where vibrant splotches of green sparkle against the blue green ocean. If one were to sail northwest through the Pentland Firth along the southern coast of this rock, and if they looked closely, they would see a small green valley reaching into a sandy bay of blue green water, with towering cliffs on either side. This would be Rackwick. “Nestling in the beautiful vale of Hoy, surrounded by the everlasting hills on all sides but one, and on that side washed by the waters of the Pentland, it was, in the spring and autumn, a sight to behold; in spring, clad in its beautiful emerald garb, when the crops were growing, and in

autumn when the fields were a blaze of gold, as the crops ripened in the sunshine. The beautiful rose-tinted cliffs bordering the bay of Rackwick lent a lustre to the setting, and added enchantment to the view”.¹³

Rackwick is an old crofting and fishing village on the northwest quadrant of the island of Hoy. There are only two ways to visit Rackwick. Via the sea – the Viking way – or via a four mile road (paved today) which meanders south from the town of Linksness on the island’s north coast (one gets to Linksness via a ferry across the Scapa Flow from Stromness, the second largest town on the Mainland Island of Orkney) past the Dwarfie Stane and around Ward Hill.¹⁴ This is a road that dead ends in the isolated valley of Rackwick - which in Old Norse means ‘Rock Bay’. It was here that on January 20th, 1865, Mary Ann Ritch was born to parents John and Ann in the Croft of Windbreck.

Subsistence farming of the comparatively fertile soil of this rock bay was labour intensive and small scale.¹⁵ Like the land of the Scottish Highlands, the land was once owned by the Clan Chief.¹⁶ Families eked out a living, basically growing and making what they needed. As families grew, the land was further subdivided. When crofting became popular in the Scottish Highlands (through force), a version of it also caught on in Rackwick. In Rackwick a portion of the rented land was used for growing food for the family, and the less fertile land surrounding the ‘crofts’ was used for grazing (usually sheep) and this land was shared by all crofters. It was an efficient and cooperative means of subsistence. This way of life was supplemented by fishing – lobster fishing being the most common. According to census data this cooperative means of subsistence supported a relatively large population. At its peak in 1881, the Rackwick Township, which was barely a mile wide and long, comprised 27 families totalling 141 residents on 22 crofts.¹⁷ I might surmise that because these families were descendents of exiles, they may have preferred the isolation and the security that Rackwick provided to them. For a short while, they were able to stay put, out of sight and somewhat immune to the economics of the mainland that ‘cleared’ and continued to clear families from their land, and they could eke out a living as crofters and fishermen in Rackwick in relative comfort. For a short while they were able to hold back the forces that dispersed their people to the four corners of the world.

Life in Rackwick was tough, but according to Bremner “there were few complaints”. As crofters, they had crops to seed and harvest; hard work made easier through cooperation and

celebration. “It was a case of helping each other with cutting and ‘scroo’ building. When the last sheaf was ‘stooked’, the occasion was celebrated by a big feast, known as the ‘cutting-maet’”. The life of the Ritch family was pretty simple. They weeded and planted in the spring, fished in the summer, and they harvested their crops and gathered peat in the fall. There was likely less work to do in the winter, but they would have had to keep their sheep and other animals fed and watered. It snowed frequently in winter, and the children were often kept from school to help with the chores. Rackwick was a family community, where everyone was either family or they were treated like family: “A share of the catch would always be given to the widows and needy of the township, before the remainder would be dried or salted for winter use and to ‘trade’ at the ‘shop boats’”. In actual fact, for Mary Ann, family existed everywhere. Although the marriage of cousins was not unheard of in those days, due to the isolation of Rackwick, these families intermarried quite extensively. Both sets of Mary’s grandparents and most aunts and uncles and great-aunts and great-uncles and their children lived in the Rackwick Township. Approximately 80%, or 113, of the 141 residents in Rackwick in 1881 were related to Mary Ann Ritch via her great-grandparents: Hugh and Sibella (nee Thomson) Ritch, Donald and Isabella Gunn, James and Barbara (nee Ritch) Sinclair, and Edward and Jannet (nee Thomson) Ritch.¹⁸

Life for this community of family changed somewhat drastically in the 1880’s. The Rackwick Valley could sustain quite a few people, but in 1884 subsistence life became harder to come by when Mr. J. G. Moddie Heddle of the Melsetter Estate, and landlord of the entire island of Hoy, decided he didn’t like sheep running around and eating his grass on the empty and relatively barren hills surrounding Rackwick. It was also at this time when this kindly landlord doubled the rents. In his statement to the Orkney Crofters Commission, my great-great-great grandfather, John Ritch, explained that his rent was raised from two pounds to almost four, although it was he who reclaimed the land with pick and shovel.¹⁹ With the changing economy and the ‘care less’ landlord the population of Rackwick could not be maintained. The valley was small and although supplemented by fishing (lobster, herring and cod), the available arable land could not sustain everyone. Therefore, starting in the 1880’s, many of those sons and daughters who would not inherit the croft upon their parent’s deaths moved on. This is when Rackwick started to die. From 1841 to 1881, the population of Rackwick had grown from 98 to 140, but by 1891 the population had dropped to 93, and to 55 by 1911. By 1911, only two children had been

born in the last ten years, compared to 35 born in the ten years prior to 1881. From 1881 to 1911, the average age had jumped from 29.6 to 41.5.²⁰

In this valley, men and women worked equally hard, whether harvesting their crops, weeding their gardens, sheering the sheep, gathering the winter's supply of peat, or catching and cleaning fish. As long as the women weren't single, they were treated equally too. However, unmarried women did not have as many options as did men. In the vast majority of cases, men 'owned' the land from which a living was derived. Without husbands, women were destined to become bar maids, servants or knitters. Therefore, many of them managed to land a husband, usually after becoming pregnant. After being admonished by the Kirk Session of Hoy (effectively the moral policemen of the Church) in order to have their children baptised, they settled down and grew their families in other parts – Orgil, or Stromness. Those who got pregnant and couldn't land a husband gave up their child to their parents; single women worked full time as servants or knitters so they did not have the time or the resources to raise their own children.

Mary Ann Ritch, a rather plain looking old maid at the age of 26, was offered a choice in 1891. She saw her parents raising her sister Betsy's illegitimate daughter. She could stay at Windbreck, the family croft, and hope to find a husband among a first, second or third cousin, and if not, live with her parents until they died, and eventually rely on the kindness of a brother-in-law. Like Margaret Manson, she could even hope to eke out a living on a small croft, and rely on the young boys of the Township to bring her turnips.²¹ She might be a servant for a brother-in-law or cousin, or perhaps a knitter, and her death certificate would read 'single pauper', or 'single knitter' at death. But, the crofting township she and her parents and her parent's parents were born in was dying. Ten years earlier, in 1881, Rackwick was at its height, and it was likely a vibrant place to live. But after Mr. Heddle had cut off their sheep from grazing lands, those who could, chose to move on. By 1891, the young were leaving and the population had dropped by 34% from 140 to 93.

In 1891, Mary Ann Ritch had little opportunity for betrothal, friends and family were leaving, and a "gaunt and forbidding" land, where in winter the cold wind from the west seemed "strong enough to lift the roofs off the houses", suddenly seemed less hospitable.²² She could stay in this dying township, or she could venture to the Norwest of Canada. To marry a stranger

who promised her the world. To a cold and dark land, where at night the stars and the aurora would help her pretend that she never actually left a home and a family that she would never see again. She could venture to a land of promise where life would be hard and cold or, she could stay at home where life was hard and cold and hope was hard to come by.

Peter Shearer Gunn to Canada

Peter was born February 9th, 1864 at Scrabster, a crofting and fishing village on Thurso Bay, just north of the town of Thurso. His mother Barbara Gunn was 18 years old, and no father is listed on the birth record. However, his father's surname was likely 'Shearer', as it was Scottish custom to use middle names for this purpose. In 1871 seven year old Peter was living with his grandparents, Alexander (69) and Elizabeth (63), and his mother's younger sister, Elizabeth (18). I assume he was raised by his grandparents which was customary for children born without a father in sight.²³ In 1881 seventeen year old Peter was working as a shepherd eastward across Thurso Bay at the town of Ham in the parish of Dunnet. Peter's grandfather Alexander had died earlier that year.

While in Scotland Peter always lived and worked on the coast, so he was likely a fisherman. Since Mary Ann was born into a family of fishermen, it is within the realm of possibility that Mary and Peter crossed paths from time to time. According to John Bremner the lasses of Rackwick gutted fish at Caithness' main fishing port of Wick, where the fishermen sold their daily catch.²⁴

Peter Gunn entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company on February 26, 1883 at Stromness, on the main island of the Orkneys.²⁵ From 1702 to the early 1900's the Hudson Bay Company stopped in Stromness to take on water and stores and to hire labour before heading off to the 'Nor-Wast'.²⁶ Peter's Parish of residence in February, 1883 is noted on his HBC record as Hoy, Orkney. While on the Island of Hoy, Peter had an intimate relationship with Isabella Bremner, with whom he had fathered his first child.²⁷ Peter would also become a life-long friend to Isabella's brother, Charles Bremner, with whom he travelled to the Canadian Northwest.²⁸ Although Peter likely lived and worked near the Bremners on the Island of Hoy for a while, about three miles north of Mary Ann Ritch's home, and although it is possible he and Mary were acquainted with each other, I do not believe he was actually engaged to Mary at the time –

although ‘romantic’ family memory does imply this.²⁹ Assuming a nine month pregnancy, Isabella became pregnant sometime near the end of March, 1883. Peter sailed to Canada on the *Ocean Nymph*, which likely left Stromness on July 1, 1883.³⁰ So Isabella was over three months pregnant when Peter set sail. In order to make sense of the fact that Peter and Charles remained life-long friends, Peter probably left with the intention to return to marry Isabella after his five year contract with the HBC was honoured.

Those who accompanied Peter on the voyage to Canada included Charles Bremner, John Sutherland and Francis Worth Beaton, who had entered the service of the HBC on February 28, March 13, and May 24, respectively.³¹ After entering the service they would have to wait until the beginning of July to set sail for the HBC’s York Factory, at the mouth of the Hayes River on the western shores of Hudson Bay. This timing was necessary because the ice at Hudson Strait and Hudson Bay didn’t usually break up until mid to late July. Unfortunately for these young HBC recruits this would be one of the longest voyages in the history of this ship.

According to transcripts of the ship’s logs for the *Prince of Wales*, which accompanied the *Ocean Nymph*, on its way to Moose Factory on James Bay it crossed the Atlantic and was in the vicinity of Davis Strait on July 20th, with “several icebergs in sight; close pack ice to the north”. On July 22nd, the *Prince of Wales* was “in the mouth of Hudson’s Strait; driving through heavy pack ice”, and from the 29th of July to August 5th the ship barely moved. The ship was “making very little progress up to the 15th, in company with American whaler, “George and Mary” of New Bedford, and “*Ocean Nymph*;” no clear water up to 21st, 22nd”. On August 23rd they were off Charles Island, and through Hudson Strait (it had taken a record 32 days to get through the Strait). On the 24th there was “no ice in sight” and by the 30th the *Prince of Wales* was more than half way across Hudson Bay, on its journey to Moose Factory, where it once again “fell in with pack ice” and was detained by ice until September 18th. It arrived at Moose Factory on September 20th, after an incredible 82 days at sea. The *Ocean Nymph*, being free of ice on the 24th of August, with York Factory as its destination, likely had a better time of it. It probably arrived at York Factory sometime around the end of August or beginning of September.³²

Cotter, H.M.S. (1921) notes that “in a hundred and fifty years” the *Prince of Wales* “had arrived only twice at a later date than the twentieth of September”. Captain Bishop said he

“encountered ice in the Atlantic some four degrees east of Resolution at the entrance of the Straits and punched through it all the way to Charles Island. A whole month was required to sail the six hundred miles. Captain Bishop, in relating this experience, said he was beset for weeks in the mighty grip of the ice king. The tremendous pressure sustained by the ship threatened at times to crush her to pieces. [...] The ship, though having sustained no vital damage, was torn and scored by her gruelling experience. Long days and nights of sleepless vigil there had been during the cruise for these hardy men of the sea”. The *Ocean Nymph*, because it was so late in getting to York Factory, “failed to make the homeward passage, turned back and wintered at Fort Churchill”.³³

Peter, Charles, Francis and John were likely well acquainted by the end of their two month voyage. The fact that they maintained their friendship would have simply been a matter of their ultimate destination and location while working for the HBC. The ultimate destination for Peter, Charles and Francis was the Peace Country, and for John it was Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River. Assuming the HBC recruits had arrived at York Factory by September 1st, the assumed route to Fort Edmonton (Francis Worth Beaton’s memorial as per ExploreNorth says he arrived in Edmonton before heading to the Peace Country) would be up the Hayes River,³⁴ across to the Nelson River via the Echimamish River, then to Norway House and Lake Winnipeg. From there they would have proceeded up to the Saskatchewan River via the Grand Rapids³⁵ and then perhaps by HBC steamer to Fort Edmonton, which according to Donald Wetherell began operating along the Saskatchewan and North Saskatchewan Rivers in 1876. If so, they likely would have arrived at Fort Edmonton in late September. A four day journey along Athabasca Landing Trail³⁶ by Red River Cart to Athabasca and then another week or two to Lesser Slave Post³⁷ could see Peter, Charles and Francis in the Peace River District in mid to late October, 1883.³⁸ This assumption about their route is corroborated in an article in the *Edmonton Bulletin* in 1920 about Peter Gunn, claiming he and friends travelled “from Winnipeg via the waterways, then the route of travel”. The four were part of a group of eight or nine, who “separated into two sections at a post on the Saskatchewan near what is now Prince Albert”. The larger group, including John Sutherland headed north, likely to Fort Ile a la Crosse, through the Methye Portage and onward to the Clearwater, Athabasca and Mackenzie rivers (Sutherland’s HBCA record has him at Fort Simpson in the Mackenzie River District from 1883-1888); while Peter,

Francis and Charles headed west along the Saskatchewan to Fort Edmonton “and north by the Athabasca and Lesser Slave Lake route to Peace River”.³⁹

The Peace River Country

In 1883, the Peace River Country, which would be the home of Peter Gunn and family for 17 years, was part of the NWT’s District of Athabasca and the northeastern portion of the Province of British Columbia.⁴⁰ The HBC virtually reigned supreme over the Peace River Country.⁴¹ Despite Canadian ownership, HBC was the ipso facto government, as it had been since the merger of the NWC and HBC in 1821. The HBC enforced the laws, had a monopoly over transportation and provided the necessary social supports. In the 1880s the population of the area was about 1,000, give or take, with only a handful of Europeans. Most were living around Fort Vermillion, Fort Dunvegan and Fort St John. The in-charge and junior chief trader at Dunvegan in 1883 was William Morrison MacKay, a Doctor from Scotland.⁴² He was promoted to Chief Trader in 1885 and he remained in charge of the Peace River District until 1889 when he became Chief Trader in charge of the Athabasca District at Fort Chipewyan. Ewen MacDonald was the Chief Factor for the Peace River District from 1889 to 1899. MacDonald was Peter Gunn’s superior for these ten years.

In 1878 the HBC created “a new Peace River District encompassing the posts at Hudson Hope, Fort St John, Dunvegan, and the new posts at Battle River and at Smoky River (Fort Grahame) which had opened in 1867 and the mid-1870’s respectively. In July, Dunvegan became the headquarters of the new district. In 1879, a post was opened at Grande Prairie and in the summer of 1881 Lesser Slave Lake Post was attached to the Peace River District”. After another reorganization “the district headquarters was transferred to the post at Lesser Slave Lake in 1886”.⁴³

Although there were some attempts at establishing agriculture in the region, without the railway and the settlers it would bring, the economy of the Peace River Country was almost entirely based on the fur trade. Like most new HBC recruits, Peter was a labourer at first. He spent most of his time at, around, and between posts in the HBC’s Peace River District. His Hudson’s Bay Company Biographical Record has him in the Peace River District at no particular post from 1883 until 1891. He was a labourer from 1883 to 1888. When he became fluent in

Cree, his official position advanced to Interpreter from 1888-1891. From 1891 to 1893 he was the Post Master at Fort St. John, then from 1893 to 1898 he was Clerk-in-Charge. Fort St. John daily journals have Peter arriving at Fort St. John in 1890, when he took over from George Kennedy and George Harvey. From that date onward the daily journals were written by Peter, indicating that he was in-charge from that point forward.

According to an interview of Peter Gunn, Peter, Frank and Charles “came in from Edmonton via Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River Crossing”. According to Peter, “There were two routes from the crossing of the Peace to Dunvegan, 70 miles upstream, one overland on the north side of the river by means of carts and the other upstream with big boats propelled by men called trackers and harnessed at the end of a long tow line walked or waded along the shore while men on the boat, with pole and helm, kept it off shore. The crew of trackers took turns in the harness, resting while in the boat; the men at the helm and at the bow did not have to track. The shifts of trackers were changed without stopping. Going upstream was slow against the strong current or around the bends or along the foot of ... cutbank. When passing the confluence of deep tributaries the trackers came aboard but they waded up to the neck across the shallow ones”. As stated in this interview, the trio separated at Dunvegan. “Beatton went back to Lesser Slave Lake; Bremner went on upstream to Fort St. John about 210 miles above Dunvegan while Gunn helped his boss build a raft 40 ft. by 30 ft. out of logs and on this ... drifted ... down stream 220 miles to another trading post at Battle River”. William Morrison MacKay would have been the ‘boss’ to which Peter refers. George Harvey was Clerk in Charge at Battle River from 1881 to 1885 and would have been Peter’s boss upon his arrival there. Peter was likely at Battle River for only a short while and he indicated that he was at Grande Prairie (established in 1879) for five years where “he was the only white man [...] (except for visits from Father Latrisme)”,⁴⁴ and it was from there that he went to Fort St. John in 1890. There is little information about Peter during the period from 1883 to 1890. However, Daniel Francis and Michael Payne (*Fort Dunvegan*) and David Leonard (various sources) provide excellent contextual information about the region, including the areas around Grande Prairie, Fort Dunvegan and Spirit River.

Peter, Frank and Charles arrived at Fort Dunvegan in the late fall of 1883 at a time when the residents of this small community were preparing for the winter. Francis and Payne explain that the “most time-consuming set of activities related to finding enough food to survive”, taking

about 25 per cent of the total man-days. Caring for livestock, woodcutting and hay cutting took up a large chunk of the rest of their time. As in Fort St John, much time was spent working on the gardens, which supplemented the food supply. Daily chores also included “cutting and transporting firewood and lumber for construction, sorting and packing furs, maintaining the roads and trails, and cutting ice in the river for the icehouse”. Regardless of which post Peter was working at, I would expect that his time was spent on similar activities.⁴⁵

According to his original contract, Peter was to be paid six English pounds per year.⁴⁶ Francis and Payne say that “generally speaking the men at Dunvegan, while certainly not growing rich, received a comparable wage to the rest of the Canadian workforce”. They also note that by 1891 the salary of the officer in charge at Dunvegan was 150 pounds, although Tate only received about 100 pounds in 1897. As the in-charge at Fort St. John, I would expect that Peter would have earned a similar salary.⁴⁷

Gardening was quite popular on the shores of the Peace River where a microclimate on its north shores provided a longer and warmer growing season. The gardens at Fort Dunvegan, for example, supplied most of the region with the necessary vegetables and wheat to complement the primary meal of meat.⁴⁸ Fort St. John was also positioned on the north shore of the Peace River and I assume it enjoyed a similar microclimate.

In early 1890, Peter was likely at the HBC post at Grande Prairie when he received the news of his mother’s death. Barbara died in Thurso at Durness Street on February 7th, 1890 from peritonitis compounded by pneumonia, with her husband William MacDonald at her side. Because telegraph services had not yet reached the Peace Country, Peter would have likely received this news via land mail from Edmonton a few weeks later.⁴⁹ His mother’s death basically cut off his last significant family tie to Scotland, and if Peter had any thoughts of ever returning to Scotland, his mother’s death would have likely laid these thoughts to rest.

Fort St John

On June 21st, 1890, a few months after the death of his mother, Peter arrived to take charge of the HBC post at Fort St. John, taking over from George Harvey – “Peter Gunn arrived from Dunvegan to relieve Mr. Harvey who goes to Lesser Slave Lake to confer with Mr. McDonald”.⁵⁰ HBC biographical records indicate that George Kennedy was also a clerk at Fort

St. John at that time. In the HBC journals for Fort St. John, it is noted that on June 4th, 1890, Kennedy, his wife and family returned to Peace River Landing.

Peter was the ‘In-charge’ at Fort St. John through to August, 1898. The HBC journals for Fort St. John for the period from 1889 to 1895 provided a host of information that was invaluable for this paper. Peter contributed to these journals from his arrival in June 1890 until the summer of 1898 (although the journals from 1895 to 1898 have been misplaced). Warburton Pike, a writer who visited the region in 1890, gives an interesting opinion about the daily journals at the Posts he visited, including Fort St. John. He says “each officer seems to have a different idea of what a daily event is [...] some officers aiming at making it what it was intended or ought to be, a chronicle which could at any time hereafter be consulted with confidence regarding historical, meteorological and agricultural events in particular, and information generally. [...] Each recorder stamped his character in his entries as plainly as if it were a part of himself, which after all it really is”.⁵¹ Peter’s journal entries were most certainly what they were intended to be, and I would agree that Peter’s character was ‘stamped’ throughout. I draw on this resource quite frequently throughout this paper.

It was likely during the summer of 1890 that Peter began contemplating marriage. Unlike many of the HBC men in the Peace River Country, he did not choose a ‘country wife’, and instead turned his eye to his Scottish homeland. Mary Ann Ritch, a lass from Rackwick on the Orkney Island of Hoy, left her family home to join Peter, with escort Tomas Mason,⁵² in May of 1891. According to Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935, Mary Rich and Tomas Mason were passengers on the Peruvian. Their date of arrival in Montreal was June 2, 1891. I assume that once they reached Winnipeg they continued by rail to Calgary. Although the rail to Edmonton from Calgary was not completed until late July of 1891, it is possible they took the train to the end of the rail, which would have been somewhere between Red Deer and Edmonton in the middle of June. I estimate that she and Tomas had arrived in Edmonton at least a week before the end of June. From Edmonton they would have travelled by Red River cart to Athabasca Landing, taking four days, crossed the Athabasca River and headed north and west to Lesser Slave Lake Post, arriving there in mid July. On July 2, 1891, Peter writes in his journal: “Roger Fergusson & J.B. Tustawits arrived from D. [Dunvegan] overland with 2 horses. The former comes to take charge here while I go to Slave Lake. The latter returns with me”. Although not mentioned, this

is likely when Peter received notice that his wife-to-be had arrived in Edmonton (likely a week or so earlier) and that she was on her way to Lesser Slave Lake via Athabasca Landing.

Interviewed by the *Edmonton Bulletin* in 1920 Peter discloses that the year following his posting at Fort St. John “he sent back to the Orkneys for his “girl” [...] to come out and be married to him. The wedding took place at what is now Grouard, the ceremony being performed by Rev. Bishop Holmes”.⁵³ According to the family story, “no wedding ring was available, but that didn’t stop the ceremony, as a horseshoe nail was twisted into a ring by a local teamster”.⁵⁴ Rev. Holmes had established the Anglican Mission at Lesser Slave Lake in 1886, giving ‘protestant Presbyterians’ Peter and Mary an alternative to a Roman Catholic wedding. Newlyweds Peter and Mary arrived at Fort St. John on Friday, August 14, 1891: “The boat arrived from Peace River Landing with a general cargo. P. Gunn and wife on board [...]. Tom Sinclair was steersman owing to the exceptionally high water the boat is a long time behind the usual date”.⁵⁵

In summer, the Peace River valley is simply stunning. Journalist Hugh Savage described the Hudson’s Bay Post of Fort St. John in 1911: “Landing here at Fort St. John, and as one walks to the post, the tremendous banks of the Peace appear like veritable mountains; in them appears a V-shaped cleft running back into the plateau which at this place is some eight hundred feet above the river. With this cleft as a background, and as it were framed in it, there stand the present buildings of the ‘Company’”.⁵⁶ I am certain Mary would have been suitably impressed by her new home. She might have noted the lack of a simmering peat fire, but I can imagine that the steep, sandy hills flanking the north shore of the river might have reminded her of the reddy-brown cliffs surrounding her home in Rackwick.

Peter and Mary would have quickly settled into the routine necessary for their survival in this remote outpost. Gardening, cooking, caring for the livestock (horses and the cow and calf), hunting, fishing and trapping would have consumed most of their days. Although I will not get into the day to day details of their lives, as I believe this has been sufficiently covered in other sections of this paper, I include some of the more interesting highlights.

In those days, at least at Fort St. John, it seems that Christmas Day was not a major event. Peter writes on December 25, 1891: “Christmas Day, not much stir around here. Santa Claus

forgot to visit us, and no wonder, anybody who could stay away will and be in no hurry to pass Xmas here. All the same it is a very fine day, and may the world at large enjoy a Merry Christmas.” It is clear from his journals however, that New Years Eve, and or New Years Day were celebrated with large gatherings, including the local Metis, Dunne-Za, and free traders. It appears that it became a tradition of sorts for the Gunns to provide a ‘banquet’ on, or around this day.

The most significant events, from a family history perspective, were of course the births of their children. Peter’s second child (Mary Bremner, Peter’s first child, was born over in Scotland on December 23, 1883, and in 1891, she was living with her grandparents in Tuffea, just a few miles north of Rackwick), and Mary’s first, was Elizabeth Ann Gunn, my great-grandmother. According to Peter’s journal, she was born at Fort St. John on June 12, 1892: “Mrs. Gunn was safely delivered of a young daughter this morning”. She was named after Mary’s mother, Ann Sinclair, and Mary’s grandmother Elizabeth Gunn.

In a letter dated January 6, 1958 to her neice, Olympic medalist Pat Underhill, Bess repeats the claim by her father that she “was the first female child of a white mother; first all-white child to be born there”. She reiterates that she only knew what her father said, that she “was the first white girl born on the Peace River, (Fort St. John)”. Bess mentions that she has no proof of what her father Peter told her, but does mention that there “was another family at Fort Vermillion by the name of Lawrence”.⁵⁷ Oddly enough, this reference to the Lawrence family gives some credence to the claim that Bess may have been the first ‘all white’ child born in the upper Peace (west of Peace River Landing). Historian David Leonard (2005) does in fact mention the Lawrence family, which, as far as I can tell (after a careful review of Leonard’s texts), were the first non-mixed ‘white’ family in the lower Peace (north of Peace River Landing). School teacher Erastus Lawrence and his wife Lydia and their children came to Fort Vermillion in 1879, and two of his brothers followed a few years later. Adding further credence to Peter Gunn’s claim is Bruce Wark’s 1898 reference to Mary as the first white woman to have ventured into the Fort St. John region.⁵⁸

Their second child was John Alexander, born on Saturday, January 27, 1894 – “Mrs. Gunn gave birth to a boy this morning”.⁵⁹ He was apparently the first white male child born in

the region. Their third child, Alberta, was born July 7, 1895 and then Peter Jr. was born October 14, 1896.⁶⁰

Eking out a living in the ‘last frontier’ involved some risk. On February 14, 1893, for example, Peter broke his ankle when his horse fell on him. The horse “shift and fell and the right foot of yours truly got on wrong side of him and a fine shape he made of it. Luckily old Muskisson was camped here and reset it for me; But talk of pain.” On February 22 Peter notes that he is still an invalid and it is not until March 31st that he writes - “I can go around now without my crutches. So I got out of that pretty good.” Peter is a master of understatement. He was basically out of commission for a month and a half – in a world where their day-to-day existence depended on hunting and trapping. The loss of his ‘labour’ must have been an enormous burden on others who would have had to pitch in (only two years earlier at this time of year, as I note further on, supplies were low and people were starving to death).

On June 24, 1893, Peter, Mary and daughter Bess set off to Peace River Landing, not returning until August 18th: Peter’s journal entry on June 23rd states: “I am busy fixing up for a trip to Peace River Landing along with my family. John Shaw will run the show until relieved. We will start tomorrow if all is well.” There are no entries in the journal until August 18th, when “The boat arrived from P.R.L. with a general cargo.” I will make the assumption that part of the reason the Gunns headed east for the summer was to attend the wedding of Peter’s friend, and uncle to his daughter Mary, Charles Bremner. In 1893, as noted by Leonard (2005), Charles Bremer married Margurite, the daughter of the most prominent Native member of the community, Jean-Baptiste Tustawits, in the St. Charles Mission at Dunvegan.⁶¹

The family had a really close call the next summer. On July 24, 1894, as per his journals, Peter started down river on a raft with his family on a bear hunt. The next day, they “returned from below after having got capsized at the mouth of Pine River and came near losing the children, but luckily we all got safe ashore. I lost my rifle and axe also my watch and chain which was in the pocket of my vest. I saw 2 bear but did not get a shot at any of them as the last one came ashore after I lost the rifle”. Bess would have been two years old and John just over six months old. It is telling that Peter’s main concern was over losing his rifle.

Toward Treaty #8

In 1883, the Dominion of Canada was in its infancy. It had become an independent country only sixteen years earlier. Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest and Yukon Territories and a large part of Manitoba were still part of the much vaster Northwest Territories of those days. Although Fort Edmonton was the regional headquarters for the Hudson's Bay Company, it was a town of just over 200. During 1880 to 1900, "Edmonton was primarily dependent on the Mackenzie Basin Fur Trade",⁶² which included the Peace River Country.⁶³ The Canadian Pacific Railway had only reached Calgary that summer and a line to Edmonton was not finished until July, 1891, the year in which Mary arrived. At that time Edmonton still only had a population of just over 700 people.⁶⁴ By 1883 treaties had been signed in all of the southern prairies, but for northern Alberta (the lands north of the Athabasca River) and for north-eastern British Columbia they were not. Peter had arrived at Fort Dunvegan before a treaty had been negotiated with the First Nations Peoples, before the North West Mounted Police had been established there, and when the closest railway station was in Fort Calgary, about 800 kilometers away. Leonard (1995/2000) notes that in 1901 only 37 "were to claim European racial origin" in the Upper Peace (east of the British Columbia border).⁶⁵ The Peace River Country was at that time, for all intents and purposes, the last frontier. Leonard borrowed the term 'The Last Great West' from *The Edmonton Journal*, and it became the name of his major novel on the history of the Peace River Country to 1914.⁶⁶

Peter and his family were there when the events leading up to the foundation of the Province of Alberta and the settlement of the north occurred, and he played an important role in the most major of these: the signing of Treaty #8 and the arrival of the rail in central and northwestern Alberta. This section of the paper focuses on the conditions and events leading up to the signing of Treaty #8, with a particular focus on Peter Gunn's perspective.

As the In-Charge at Fort St John, Peter and family played an important role in maintaining good relations with the First Nations Peoples, supporting them when they needed support, taking in their sick, feeding them when they needed feeding, providing entertainment, and forming the nexus of the fur trade that was the economic foundation of that region. At this time, the fur trade was experiencing a significant transformation, due mainly to dwindling fur supplies and to the arrival of free traders in the area. The Natives of the region, mainly including

the Beaver First Nations (Dunne-za), were experiencing frequent periods of starvation and epidemic illnesses, and thereby suffered large population declines. It was into an environment of stiff competition with free traders, and a suffering Native population that Hudson's Bay Company man Peter Gunn had arrived.

Francis and Payne explain that as the 1800's progressed, "the resource base on which the Dunne-za had depended for generations became increasingly depleted. First the bison, then the moose became scarce in the Peace River Country, largely due to overhunting to supply the demands of the fur trade. As these traditional sources of food and skins disappeared, the Dunne-za came to rely more on goods from the trading post for simple survival. Periodic starvation, while not unknown before the arrival of the traders, seems to have become more pronounced by the last quarter of the nineteenth century". The reliance on hunting and trapping of fur bearing animals made the First Nations and Metis extremely vulnerable to the varying weather patterns of the region. When harsh winters hit, they starved, and sometimes large numbers of them died. And with the white man came the white man's diseases. The combination of disease and starvation killed hundreds of Natives over this period. In effect, the fur trade's source of labour (Natives) and its raw materials (furs) were diminishing while competition was increasing, and as a result the economic foundation of the region was severely threatened.⁶⁷

The journals written at Fort St. John for the period from 1889 to 1895 indicate that 1889-90, and 1894-95 were particularly bad years for the Dunne-za, although there are references to starvation and disease throughout this period. It is also clear from the journals that all those living in the area were constantly under the threat of starvation and disease, including the HBC employees, their families, the missionaries and the free traders. A larger proportion of references in these journals are related to hunting and gardening, likely because their very survival depended on success in these endeavours. Peter's references to the killing of a pregnant moose can be seen in a much starker light when one understands the day to day struggle for survival that these people faced. One can better understand why Peter was more focussed on the loss of his rifle and missed opportunity to shoot a bear, than the thought that his children might have died when the raft they were on capsized during a hunting trip in 1894. It is also noteworthy that Peter and Mary's children were inflicted with the same diseases as the Natives they lived among.

It was the HBC's responsibility to care for the First Nations people as well as they could. HBC employees were of course likely motivated by altruism, and many of the HBC employees were Metis relatives, but the HBC was also dependent on the Natives for its economic livelihood. Because of this, and until such time as a Treaty existed between these First Nations peoples and the Dominion of Canada, the Canadian Government did not accept full social responsibility for them.

Francis and Payne confirm that native populations suffered enormous losses during those years. In 1891 Factor James McDougall inspected Dunvegan and he reported that the "Beaver Indians of this post are disappearing very fast". He elaborated that "In the past five years more than half of them died and very few children are growing up". On January 5, 1888 Chief Trader William MacKay "reported that ninety natives were gathered at Dunvegan 'literally starving, subsisting almost entirely on potatoes and other provisions received in charity from our Fort.'". Some even killed their horses for food, which "would be very destructive to their future hunting". Then, "Ewen Macdonald confirmed the seriousness of the situation in his 1890 report on the Peace River District". In 1896, according to Fumoleau, "Bishop Isidore Clut, OME, advised the Prime Minister that "twenty-seven out of a band of thirty Indians died of starvation on the shore of Peace River".⁶⁸

E.K. Preston, in his July, 1897 inspection report for Hudson's Hope (a post supervised by Peter Gunn) writes: "The Indians were badly off during the preceding Winter, and it was feared that the present Winter would see even greater hardship experienced by them. As at St. John's, both Furs and Game were becoming scarcer, while there are no Moose to be obtained near the mountains".⁶⁹ In his July, 1897 inspection report for St. John's, Preston mentions that according to Mr. Gunn, "there was a good deal of starvation" in the previous winter "and several horses had to be killed for food."⁷⁰ A similarly dire situation existed across the entire region. The HBC journals for Fort St. John, covering the period from 1889 to 1895, confirm this. These journals, written in the main by Peter Gunn, provide an excellent first-hand account of the day to day struggle for survival for those living at and around Fort St John.

The winter of 1889-90 was particularly difficult. Three First Nations children died between January 17th and February 6th, horses were killed for food, and because the First Nations people were in such poor condition, as noted by the in-charge at the Fort on February 21st, "in

consequence we are in a poor state ourselves being obliged to keep them from starving to death”. Although the winter of 1890-91 wasn’t as bad, Peter notes on February 28th that they “had the good fortune to kill a female moose. Which is a God send as we were down to straight bacon. [...] She was in good condition and had 2 young ones in her in-side. So I hope we will pull through the month of March all right. I have enough flour to take us through to spring but will be short of bacon as is usually the case in spring in this quarter of the globe. There is a sick woman and child here also her mother to look after her of course I have to feed them as all the Indians are far off”. 1892 was also a difficult year, but this time it was due to illness. Peter writes: “And now we come to the end of the year 1892. It has been a very hard one on the Indians owing to the sickness (La Griffe). Since last spring there are 10 young children all under 1 year old and 3 grown up people all passed in their checks and gone to the happy hunting grounds”. On June 5, 1893 Peter indicates that the ‘Indians’ are all starving. Then in June and July of 1894 another wave of illness hit. Peter notes on June 27, 1894 that “All the children around are down with the prevailing sickness”, including his daughter Bess. Some of the children died, including one of Napoleon’s, a Metis leader in the area. On December 31st, 1894 Peter writes: “In summing up the year 1894, there has been a lot of deaths among the Indian hunters and mostly all young men”.

The arrival of the free traders in the region contributed quite significantly to the changing economics that contributed to the starvation. With increased competition, the Natives received better prices for the fur and skins they provided, encouraging them to maximize this ‘production’. However, what they bought with this extra ‘revenue’ was flour, tea, tobacco, rifles, ammunition, and trinkets – something they did not need a hundred years before. The desire for something they did not need led to overhunting – to such a point that their food supply could not sustain itself – they were in fact robbing their balance sheet. The assets – healthy, productive herds of Wood Buffalo, Elk, and Moose – that provided the food that they needed to live – were hunted to such an extent that these ‘herds’ were no longer self sustaining – or in other words, like all good capitalists, they killed the goose that laid the golden egg. Eventually there were no more golden eggs. It led to a downward spiral. When one is starving, the opportunity to kill a female moose, that might have twin calves in her stomach, makes sense – economically however, it means that that female moose is no longer there to ‘produce’ more moose, and those two yearlings that might have been born in the spring wouldn’t be there to feed you next winter.

Although a major over-simplification, this is a good example of the short term nature and perspective of capitalist economies.

Increased competition, combined with a dwindling supply of labour, and a dwindling supply of fur and skins, eventually meant the end of the Fur Trade and the end of a way of life for the Natives. As a result of the over-hunting, Francis & Payne say that in 1876 “the trade seems to have begun a general decline which continued for the rest of the decade and probably for the rest of the century”.⁷¹ Leonard (1995/2000) confirms that “during the mid-1880s, the fur trade in the Peace River Country began a steady decline. Dunvegan especially experienced a sharp drop in furs received”. Then, after 1886, when the HBC District headquarters was transferred to Lesser Slave Lake, “the decline in trade at Dunvegan became even more acute”.⁷²

As pointed out by Fumoleau, when “Tache had pioneered a new gateway to the Athabasca country”, free traders “seized the opportunity to use the new route and to compete with the Company in the Athabasca District”. Fumoleau says that in 1895 Edmonton “depended entirely on the fur trade”, and the “improved and less expensive transportation system linking it with the Mackenzie District allowed free traders to move North and start new businesses”. As noted by Francis & Payne, “The trading monopoly enjoyed at Dunvegan by the Hudson’s Bay Company since 1821 came to an end in the 1860s when free traders began arriving in the Peace River Country. The first newcomers were miners from British Columbia who spilled across the Rockies in the summer of 1862 to look for gold near Fort St John and Rocky Mountain Portage”. Then, at Dunvegan in the winter of 1865, Henry ‘Twelve Foot Davis’, apparently the “most famous free trader on the Peace” established his post across from the HBC at Dunvegan. He also established a post at Fort St. John in 1891 and “continued trading on the Peace until his death in 1900”. The Elmore Brothers “arrived on the Peace in 1874 and were soon operating seven posts from Fort St John to below Vermillion”. Francis & Payne say that ‘Twelve-Foot’ Davis was one of the most active of the free traders in the region. Allan and Fred Brick, sons of the Anglican Missionary John Gough Brick, also started competing in the 80s and 90s. At first, ‘Allie’ and Fred were Davis’s men, and according to Peter’s journals, Allie managed Davis’ post at Fort St. John. Francis & Payne note that “Unlike earlier free traders, who had come across the mountains from the west, these traders used Edmonton as their supply centre”, and “...they were all active on the river competing with the Hudson’s Bay Company for local furs”.⁷³

According to the table on page 17 (Francis & Payne), the quantity of furs traded at Dunvegan from 1821 to 1848 ranged from about 25 to 60 packs. If the trade at Fort St John in the early 1890's is any indicator, then Fort St John and Hudson Hope, outposts for Dunvegan, would have accounted for about half of this. Based on Peter Gunn's journals the fur trade at St. Johns appeared to be quite consistent, even considering the competition from Twelve Foot Davis, the Brick brothers, and other free traders from Dunvegan, Peace River Landing and Lesser Slave Lake. The total packs of furs shipped to Peace River Landing from Fort St. John in June in 1891, 1892 and 1893, was 20, 21, and 22, respectively. And in 1894, 30 packs of furs were shipped.⁷⁴ This seems to contradict the supposition that the fur trade was declining in the late 1800's (this is not to say that the decline may have occurred after 1894 or in other regions outside of Fort St John and Hudson Hope). Instead of arguing with the experts, I did find evidence that one factor that may have impacted the profitability of the fur trade for the HBC was the steadily increasing price of furs due to the increased competition. According to the HBC Journals for Fort St. John, on October 2nd, 1889, for example, furs were considered to be at a high price, with beaver moving from 4 to 5 M.B. (Made Beaver – the standard 'currency' representing economic value as established by the HBC) and bears from 15 to 20. According to Peter, two and a half years later, on June 12, 1892, on the day of the birth of his and Mary's first child, and my great-grandmother, "Davis took the opportunity knowing I could not leave my wife and being Sunday, he raised bears from 40 to 55, beaver from 10 to 15, and marten from 3 to 4. He also put up moose skins from 15 to 17. I did not follow him in the last 2 articles but had to in the former and I got the best of it after all". During the two and a half years since October, 1889, the price of beaver and bear had basically tripled. This type of inflation related to the cost of inputs is anathema to profit focussed corporations, and would have been a major concern to the HBC.

It is clear that the arrival of the free traders had a significant impact on the trade in the region. With increased competition came the inevitable escalation in prices. This was perhaps considered a boon by the Natives, but it encouraged them to hunt more, and in the end, their income stream and food supply was severely compromised. The free traders also most certainly eroded the HBC monopoly and its profits. Like any corporation, the HBC had to reduce those costs it could. The HBC therefore turned its eye toward the significant cost of social and economic support provided to the Natives of the region. According to Wetherell & Kmet "The

erosion of its monopoly in northern Alberta persuaded Hudson's Bay Company management that its paternalistic policies could now be safely abandoned without harm to its commercial interests. Although the company continued to use limited relief to keep its trade advantage, it was eager to be rid of the task". This did spur the Canadian Government to provide some, albeit inadequate relief to the suffering Native population. "In the face of actual and anticipated starvation in the 1890s, the federal government was forced on several occasions to distribute relief (through the Hudson's Bay Company) at various northern posts. It did so grudgingly, and from fear of future demands, it insisted that the source of the assistance be kept secret".⁷⁵

Fort St. John was not immune to the effects of the change in HBC policy, but at least as late as 1897, according to the HBC journals and inspection reports, relief was provided whenever it was needed and whenever it was available. Sometimes, this was to the detriment of the HBC, placing it at a significant disadvantage in relation to competition from the free traders. In 1890 in Fort St. John, for example, the HBC provided significant support to the First Nations of the region during a particularly bad winter. As a result, when the late spring, early summer trading season arrived, provisions were not available for trade, and the free traders took advantage. According to Peter, on Sunday, June 22, 1890, "Davis (Free Trader) arrived from Rocky Mountain Portage on his way to Vermillion. He succeeded in getting quite a lot of fur as the Company store was quite empty which is to bad as the fur trade is all first rate". In his July, 1897 inspection report for Fort St. John, E.K. Preston notes:

A considerable loss from Indian Debts resulted during the past outfit at this Post. The Manager was very sanguine, and gave large Fall Advances exceeding the instructions given him. Food and Furs became scarce, and he had to give provisions, especially flour, the most expensive article of trade, as further help, and the Indians were not able to meet their obligations at the close of the outfit. The District Manager promised that on his next visit to the Post he would regulate each individual account, and place a limit upon it. It was not considered advisable, at such a Post as this, to totally abolish the Indian Advances.⁷⁶

During the latter part of the nineteenth century free traders were very active in the Fort St. John/Hudson Hope region. Peter Gunn interacted with them quite frequently, and as his journals indicate he established a friendly, yet vigorously competitive relationship with them.

Peter refers quite frequently to 12 Foot Davis, the Brick Brothers, Deone from L.S.L. and various other traders in the region. Although competitive, they were part of a small and sometimes ‘vibrant’ community. Fort St. John was the social hub of the region, and most ad hoc celebrations and major holidays were hosted by the Gunn family. Journals indicate large gatherings of free traders and Natives, especially around the end of October and New Years.

As recorded in the HBCA Journals for Fort St John from 1889 to 1895, Davis and his men were regular visitors – passing through on their way to Dunvegan and/or Vermillion or back to Rocky Mountain Portage near Hudson Hope. Davis and his men usually tried to arrive at peak trading season in late May or early June. For example, according to the journals, Davis and his men were there June 15th to 17th, 1889, June 22nd to 23rd, 1890, and June 1st, 1892. It appears that Davis set up shop at Fort St. John sometime in 1890 with future MLA Allie Brick in charge – for on February 3, 1891 Peter writes that T.A. Brick and Joe Bottle are “at the shingles” – presumably shingles on the roof of Davis’s post at Fort St. John. Peter confirms later on in his journal that on June 3, 1891, “Allie Brick which is in charge of Davis’s outfit here decided to go to Vermillion.” Peter makes several references to the Brick brothers, Allie and Fred, who would later become important political figures in the region. Leonard (1995/2000) notes that in 1891, Allie Brick “began trading for Twelve Foot Davis at Hudson’s Hope”, and the Brick brothers “expanded their trading operation, constructing a boat in 1894 and conducting business at Fort Vermillion and Fort St. John”.⁷⁷ According to Peter’s journals, the Brick brothers remained frequent visitors and/or residents of Fort St. John from October 1891 to May 1894 (and likely beyond). The last reference to Allie Brick, on October 24, 1894, “Allie Brick arrived with a boat load of general goods to trade at this post the coming winter. Quite a lot of snow on the ground. No letters from below”, does suggest that despite the competitive nature, cooperation was quite normal – Peter implies that had there been letters from below (Dunvegan, P.R.L. or L.S.L.), Allie would have brought them along with him. The free traders and the HBC men, at least at Fort St. John, worked and lived together – they might even have been friends.

So, in the 1890’s at Fort St. John the free traders had established a strong presence. As a result of the competition, the HBC’s profits were seriously undermined, and it was highly motivated to cut its costs. At the same time, as I documented previously, the Natives of the area were suffering from starvation and disease. The plight of the Natives living in the Mackenzie

River Basin in the late 1800's, and whose responsibility it was to ameliorate it, was however, a matter of considerable debate. Peter Gunn and family were on the ground and witnessed the starvation, illness and death first hand – the people of their community were suffering and dying and Peter's sympathies toward them were real. As noted above, he 'exceeded instructions given him' and provided large advances of provisions to the Native community during the winter of 1896-1897, a particularly bad year. It is also obvious that Peter was aware of the politics around this issue. His journal entry on February 28, 1891, is a clear indication of his stance: "It is high time the Dominion Government was stepping forward to assist the poor and needy Indians in this District as it is impossible for the H.B.C. to sell them provisions cheap and also to give it free." Peter was most certainly an HBC man, and it was his opinion that it was the Canadian Government's responsibility to support the Natives of the region – as opposed to the HBC's.

The debate over responsibility for the well-being of the Natives basically started when Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories were transferred to Canada in 1870. Although the land now belonged to Canada, the economic value of the Peace Country accrued to the HBC and the Canadian Government saw little value in a treaty that would obligate it to support the Natives on that land. According to Fumoleau, in response to a plea for assistance from Reverend Gough Brick, the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs said: "The Indians of the Peace River Country ... were outside of Treaty limits and ... the Government had never interfered in any way with their hunting grounds, and, as the Government had no treaty with those Indians, it had not felt it incumbent upon it to assist them, as it had Indians with whom it had Treaty relations".⁷⁸

The eventual signing of Treaty #8 and with it the support of the Natives of the region does not absolve either party (the HBC or the Canadian Government) of the fact that while they argued over whose responsibility it was to care for these people, over a period of twenty years the Natives of the region were suffering enormous losses. Leonard (1995/2000) notes that in 1900, from a population of about 1,000 a century earlier, the Dunne-Za were "reduced to about 500, with their language and traditions seemingly in rapid decline".⁷⁹

Klondike Gold Rush

Despite the desperate situation facing the First Nations people of the Peace Country, it wasn't until the Klondike Gold Rush and the horrendous treatment of these people by the gold

hunters that the Canadian Government decided to act. The Klondike Gold Rush, in fact, set off a series of events that would lead to the Gunn family's choice to leave their home in Fort St John and move to Lesser Slave Lake, and it would also lead to the Canadian Government's decision to finally treaty with the First Nations people of that land.

Fort St. John's location on the Peace River placed it on a transportation corridor that connected it with Fort Dunvegan, Peace River Landing, and Fort Vermillion to the east and north, and with the Rocky Mountain Portage near Hudson Hope to the west. It was via the Rocky Mountain Portage that the Peace River Country was accessed from the rest of British Columbia. It was also through Fort St. John that northern British Columbia and the Yukon were accessed by traders and gold enthusiasts via the Half Way River and overland to Fort Nelson. When gold was discovered in the Yukon in 1896, "hundreds of prospectors traveling north to the gold fields passed through the Athabasca-Mackenzie District".⁸⁰ According to Wetherell & Kmet, "James MacGregor, in his history of the gold rush through Edmonton, estimated that nearly 300 prospectors used this route to the Yukon in 1897 alone" and these "numbers grew dramatically in early 1898".⁸¹ And as noted by Francis & Payne, Charles Mair reported that "Between seven and eight hundred people had gone up to those regions *via* Edmonton, bound for the Yukon".⁸² Although seven or eight hundred people does not seem like that many, we must remember that in 1897 Edmonton's population was just 1,638,⁸³ and the population of the entire Peace River Country was barely 1,000.⁸⁴

HBC journals for Fort St. John from April 1, 1895 onward do not exist (or if they do, the possessor is unknown), so I will make the assumption that until late 1897 things pretty much carried on as they had before for the Gunns. However, as a result of this influx of visitors, beginning in 1897, the normally quiet life at Fort St. John changed abruptly. For those living there, a couple of hundred visitors over a few years would have had an enormous effect on their lives. E.K. Preston, in his July 1897 inspection report of Hudson's Hope suggests that "trade of the District will probably be affected by the gold mining excitement", and in his July 1897 report of Fort St. John he notes that the "trade of this place has, since the report, been affected by the travel to the gold fields".⁸⁵

I suppose that at first the visitors were a welcome distraction to Peter, Mary and family. As the numbers of prospectors increased through 1897 and into 1898, and their disrespect for the

First Nation's people and their property became obvious, however, the situation likely became very uncomfortable. I am not certain if the tension at Fort St. John existed in the Spring of 1898, but it is fortuitous for the purposes of this family history that one set of Klondikers diarized their adventure and supplemented it with a series of photographs. Robert D. Wark's narrative (2010) documents the journey from Edmonton to the Yukon of the group led by Alfred E. Johnston, with assistant Andrew J. Schultz, Detroit contractor William Billing, Real Estate Broker Melbourne E. Welch, Edward H. Thurston and scribe Bruce H. Wark. It includes photographs of the entire journey with excellent descriptions and/or summaries. "During the summer of 1897 at the height of the Gold Rush to the Klondike [...] Alfred E. Johnson [...] represented that he had confidential information received from a former partner, pertaining to a fabulous discovery of gold in the Peace River District of the Northwest Territories, and proposed to lead a party to the Spot for the purpose of staking the best locations before the knowledge became general". After some Detroit people formed the Excelsior Mining Company, "a party of five were sent in quest of the "Golden Fleece.".⁸⁶

Johnson's claims were of course groundless, but like most other gold seekers, they didn't discover this fact until they had travelled hundreds of miles through difficult terrain and freezing weather. The group left Edmonton on February 17, 1898. The temperature was 50' below zero, and on the following day they "all but perished in a dreadful blizzard that swept the plains". Travelling north from Edmonton in mid February is a pretty stupid thing to do, but because they were from Detroit their experience with winter weather likely numbed their brains. They were a resilient group and they carried on in a north north-westerly direction, crossing the Pembina and Athabasca rivers on their way to Lesser Slave Lake. Somewhere in the vicinity of the Swan Hills, "the last vestige of the much advertised trail through to Peace River disappears", and it was up to them "to discover a route and then cut a trail out". On March 11, 1898, Bruce Wark photographs the Swan Creek as it meanders toward Lesser Slave Lake, 50 miles away, although "there seemed no practical trail down the steep ravines". They did eventually manage to find a 'practical' trail to Swan Creek (a likely precursor to Chalmers Trail)⁸⁷ and arrived at Lesser Slave Lake on March 18 where they "headed across the 45 mile stretch to the Hudson Bay Company post on the Northwest corner". From there they headed to Peace River Landing arriving March 27 and then to Fort Dunvegan, arriving there March 31. Then they headed further west via the ice covered Peace River to Fort St. John, arriving there on April 10, 1898.⁸⁸

At Fort St. John Wark took a picture of a “load being hauled up the bank by four yoke of oxen” being watched by a large group of people, and he makes special note of “the woman – fifth from the right – the only woman at that time to penetrate this far”. This would of course be Peter’s wife Mary. On April 10th Wark takes a photograph of Peter, Mary and their four children, Bess, John, Alberta and Peter Jr. It is an important photograph, because, due to their early deaths, it is likely the only picture of Mary and Peter Jr. that exists (it is also an honest picture of frontiersman Peter, before he cleaned himself up to become a politician). The caption under the photo says, “This capable Scotchman is the Hudson Bay Company factor at this point. The seven year old girl in the foreground is Bessie, who speaks Beaver Indian language fluently, a feat very difficult for white men. She interprets for her father”. This is a surprising revelation, although if one thinks about it, it makes perfect sense. Bess was the first ‘white’ girl born at Fort St. John and her only friends would have been the Dunne-Za children living along-side her and her family – she would have needed to learn the Beaver language to have friends. Wark says “Bessie was a good friend of mine for the several days we were in St. John. She is here shown risking her health eating one of my biscuits, and is carrying a box I gave her, which formerly contained hypo for my photographic equipment”. After a few days at Fort St. John, the gold seekers then headed west to Hudson Hope, across the Rocky Mountain Portage and then up the Findlay river eventually arriving at Laketon on October 20th. Then, although they “had nine (9) months of strenuous efforts to reach this point” they discovered that they were “only nine days from the head of Pacific navigation – from Glenora – on the Stikine River, they “decide to go out to the coast, Seattle and San Francisco and return in the Spring to continue” their journey.⁸⁹

As for most Klondikers their trip was a waste of time, but this group was lucky – they didn’t die. Like Wark and friends, many of the Klondikers never made it to their destination, and those who did, found little of value there. Francis and Payne note that Charles Mair reported that many of them, ““after a tale of suffering which might have filled its boomsters’ souls with remorse, had found solitary graves, and the remainder were slowly toiling out of the country, having sunk what means they possessed in vain pursuit of gold.”⁹⁰ As noted by Leonard (1995/2000), “In July 1899, the *Ottawa Citizen* declared:

It is to be feared that when the full account of the experiences of the hundreds of gold seekers who sought to reach the Yukon by the Edmonton trail comes to be written, a terrible record of suffering, hardship and death will be revealed”.⁹¹

Apparently, the Klondikers weren't terribly respectful of the people living in the lands they were trudging through, and, as a result, as one might say, “the natives were restless”. The Gunn's Metis and First Nations friends and neighbours actually became quite agitated. Wetherell and Kmet write that “At Fort St. John, Natives were on the verge of revolt in 1898, and it was widely feared that conflict would spread throughout the Peace River country”. They add that although “the prospect of a Native rebellion at Fort St. John was unwelcome in itself, it was also worrying because NWMP forces were stretched to the limit since so many police were needed in the Yukon due to the influx of gold seekers and associated border tensions with the Americans” (p. 46).⁹² In 1897 the Federal Government thought it best to establish an ‘authoritative’ presence in the region with the first North West Mounted Police post at Lesser Slave Lake. Until then, “the nearest North West Mounted Police detachment was at Fort Saskatchewan. Due mainly to incidents involving Klondikers, it was decided to establish a resident force at Lesser Slave Lake in 1897, and an officer at Peace River Crossing one year later”.⁹³ This only added to the native's perception that their lands were being ‘invaded’ by the ‘white’ man.

Although some, including Peter's superior Ewen MacDonald, may have believed the Gunns were at risk from a native backlash, I am not certain they actually were. They were an integral part of quite a cohesive community at Fort St. John, regardless of their skin colour. However, outsiders would not have perceived it this way, and past incidents at Fort St. John may also have contributed to this perception.⁹⁴ It is understandable that one might believe that leaving the Gunn family at Fort St. John in the midst of a somewhat volatile situation was an unnecessary risk, so, in a letter to Peter, dated June 14th, 1898, Factor Ewen MacDonald writes “I will mention, however, for your own convenience, that you are to have a change of appointment, so that you may have affairs in readiness”. Then on August 8th, MacDonald writes from Lesser Slave Lake: “Hoping to see you here about 1st Sept. – I will probably have to leave here on 4th and will be absent for a considerable time and would like to arrange matters with you if possible before my departure”.⁹⁵

Evidence indicates that after the Gunn's left Fort St. John the situation there was quite unstable. As noted by ExploreNorth, "The Klondike Gold Rush affected the region, as the Beaver Indians refused to allow stampeders to pass through their territory in 1898. An excerpt from the 1899 Annual Report of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) describes the situation:

Mr. Fox (the post manager) informs me that the Indians here at first refused to allow the white men to come through their country without paying toll...They threatened to burn the feed and kill the horses; in fact several times fires were started, but the head men were persuaded by Mr. Fox to send out and stop them.

There is no doubt that the influx of whites will materially increase the difficulties of hunting by the Indians and these people, who, even before the rush, were often starving from their inability to procure game, will in future be in much worse condition... They are very likely to take what they consider a just revenge on the whitemen who have come, contrary to their wishes, and scattered themselves over their country. When told if they started fighting as they threatened, it could only end in their extermination, the reply was, we may as well die by the white men's bullets as of starvation.⁹⁶

Mr. Fox had taken over the Fort upon the departure of the Gunn's in August of 1898. I might suggest that the departure of the Gunns could have exacerbated the situation. The Dunne-Za may have worried that the departure of the Gunns would lead to an abandonment by the HBC, just as they were abandoned by the HBC in 1823. This family was central to their community and they had provided much for them for more than seven years.

After the Gunn family left Fort St. John "many liberties were taken [...], the lumber for the new Anglican mission was stolen to make barges", and without law enforcement in the area, "and the Klondikers having no personal stake in the northern communities, criminal behaviour became common, and many unhappy stories of trapline disruption, dog poisoning, theft, assault and even murder, were told".⁹⁷ Leonard explains that "The Beaver Indians at Fort St. John were especially vulnerable, being directly on the land route to the Yukon. Just prior to the Treaty, Henry Robinson confided that "all the white men have left St. Johns and they are guarding the HBCo's Fort. The attitude of the Beaver, they say, is threatening...it is possible, and very

probable, that all the white men's buildings will be destroyed." Despite the concern over a possible uprising, according to Robinson, in actuality "only minor disruptions occurred".⁹⁸ All the 'white men' who left St. Johns, of course, included Peter Gunn and family.

Treaty #8

Wetherell and Kmet write that "the Klondike rush confirmed in Canadian official circles that, in addition to control of the north by the NWMP, a treaty with the Native people of northern Alberta was now needed". Although "by the end of 1899 the rush was virtually over", in early 1899 the Canadian Government could not have anticipated this, and therefore, the presence of the Klondikers, and, according to Fumoleau, the expectation of mineral wealth, hastened the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899-1900". Fumoleau believes it "was the expansion of settlement northward, and the discovery of oil and other mineral deposits that finally brought about a change in government policy." Leonard (2005) adds that the election of 'development friendly' Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier in 1896, and the election to the riding of Alberta of Edmonton's Frank Oliver, a strong and persistent advocate for northern development, facilitated the move in this direction. Leonard says also that 'wary' eyes in Ottawa' took notice of the fact that most Klondikers were Americans who "made Dawson practically an American city", and as a result "new pressures were brought to ensure the Canadianization of the Canadian Northwest".⁹⁹

The federal cabinet approved the request for a treaty with the northern Indians in 1898 and in the summer of 1899, "two commissions travelled through the area, seeking the adhesion of Aboriginals to Treaty 8 and the distribution of scrip to other people with elements of Aboriginal ancestry". Then in 1900, because many Natives people were missed the year before, "another commission travelled the same route in 1900, undertaking the same business".¹⁰⁰

The Gunns were at Lesser Slave Lake when Treaty #8 was negotiated in 1899 and 1900. Although he is not mentioned, for several reasons I believe Peter likely played a role of some sort. He was a 'trusted' HBC man, he had lived and worked in the region for 16 years, he and his family were likely considered to be part of the community, and he was fluent in Cree. His presence alone would have 'upped' the trust factor, but he also likely aided in discussing some of the terms with the Metis and First Nations peoples gathered there. He was also interpreter for two subsequent adhesions to the treaty – at Dunvegan and at Sturgeon Lake.

Both from the Gunn's perspective and also related to Peter's role in relation to Treaty #8, of the many First Nations and Metis visiting Fort St. John, it is perhaps Jean-Baptiste Tustawits and his brother Duncan who were the most notable. Duncan Tustawits and family were the most prominent at Shaftsbury (near Peace River Crossing) and Jean-Baptiste Tustawits and family would become the most prominent family at Spirit River, where Peter's friend Charles Bremner lived with his wife Marie Tustawits. This is also where Peter had once shared an interest in the ranch he and Charles had purchased from the HBC in 1894, and where Peter and his son John would themselves acquire land in 1907 and 1914, respectively. It was also through Spirit River that the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway would be built in 1916.

Leonard (2005) notes the interesting situation where "Duncan, his immediate family, and their descendants were recognized as Treaty Indians, while Jean-Baptiste, his immediate family, and their descendants were recognized as Half-breeds". Duncan Tustawits would take "treaty along with 87 other people of Aboriginal descent around Shaftsbury and the Crossing", and he was a signatory on the related adhesion to Treaty #8 (Leonard, 1995/2000). Leonard (2005) says Jean-Baptiste "was born at Peace River Crossing" and in 1899, when Treaty #8 was signed, "had been living near Dunvegan. Jean-Baptiste "went on to serve with the HBC for periods of time, and also trap and trade on his own along the Peace River. He also worked for a while for Twelve Foot Davis at Moberly Lake", and in 1890, according to Warburton Pike "he had the biggest lodge at Hudson's Hope"¹⁰¹.

Peter's role as interpreter for Treaty #8 takes on an added significance when we understand the relationship he had with the Tustawits family. Peter's journals indicate a frequent and friendly interaction with brothers Duncan and Jean-Baptiste Tustawits throughout the years he and his family lived at Fort St. John. I noted previously that Jean-Baptiste accompanied Peter to Lesser Slave Lake to meet Mary in 1891. Before this, on August 12, 1890, Peter notes that Jean Baptiste "brought down his mother who is a object of pity, he left her here as she is unfit to pitch in the bush". One must assume a trusting and friendly relationship existed if Peter was entrusted with the care of Jean-Baptiste's mother.¹⁰² Then on April 10, 1893, Peter notes that Jean-Baptiste "lost one of his boys, having died very suddenly". Except in this case, in the rest of his journals, regarding the many deaths that occurred over the years, Peter never mentions who or who's child died. I suspect that the connection between the Tustawits and the Gunns

could very well have been akin to family. The community of Spirit River was just south of Dunvegan, and Leonard (2005) writes that Jean-Baptiste Tustawits was its patriarch.¹⁰³ In 1893, Peter's friend Charles Bremner married Jean-Baptiste's daughter and I believe Peter, Mary and family attended the wedding, as his journals indicate they had left for Peace River Landing on June 23, 1893 and did not return until August 18th, 1893.

I have a sense that Peter was considered to be an integral part of the community around St. John, Dunvegan and Spirit River. Although he was 'white' I don't believe he would have been considered an outsider by the First Nations people located there. He was likely a trusted friend who was probably regarded by many to be a friend and perhaps even a part of the Tustawits family. And he was likely a very important and trusted 'bridge' between the two worlds during the negotiations for Treaty #8.

I believe it likely that Peter was part of the commission that headed to Fort St. John "immediately after the Treaty was signed at Lesser Slave Lake".¹⁰⁴ However, "there was a distinct reluctance on the part of the Beaver around Fort St. John to sign Treaty 8" likely because of the Klondikers, and when the commission arrived in "July 1899, two weeks behind schedule, most residents had departed to pursue their summer hunts".¹⁰⁵ The commission returned to Dunvegan and treated with the natives there.¹⁰⁶ According to Leonard (1995/2000), on July 6 the commission "succeeded in taking the adhesion of 34 Beaver". Many more had been waiting but they headed off on their hunts before the Commissioners arrived. "Signing for the Beaver who had stayed at Dunvegan was Headman Natooses. Witnessing the event was Father Joseph Le Treste who, along with Hudson's Bay Company trader Peter Gunn, served as interpreter".¹⁰⁷

The next summer "another party led by Commissioner J.A. McRae travelled through the same regions, taking adhesions of natives missed the previous year".¹⁰⁸ One of these adhesions would have been at Sturgeon Lake, where Peter Gunn also served as interpreter. He was likely chosen because of the many years he had spent around Grande Prairie, a relatively short distance from Sturgeon Lake.

The terms of Treaty #8 remain in dispute to this day. Most of the dispute hinges around the oral assurances provided by those negotiating on the side of the Canadian Government. Peter Gunn's role as interpreter for two adhesions, therefore, was quite important regarding these oral

assurances. Based on my research, I believe he would most certainly have interpreted in good faith. He was trusted by the First Nations people and his life-long concern and attention to them demonstrates to me that he was always respectful and friendly to them. The main dispute was around the freedom of the First Nations people to hunt, trap and fish. According to Fumoleau, it was only “when the Treaty Commissioners promised them that they would be free to hunt and trap and fish for a living, and that their rights would be protected against the abuses of white hunters and trappers, did the Indians at each trading post of the Treaty 8 area consent to sign the Treaty”.¹⁰⁹

As far as I have been able to determine, Peter Gunn did not record his experience or opinion regarding Treaty #8, its ‘spirit and meaning’, or its consequences, however, free trader and future fellow M.P.P Jim Cornwall was at Lesser Slave Lake during the negotiations and he “left a signed affidavit of his recollections of treaty negotiations at Lesser Slave Lake”.¹¹⁰ He writes that, although not written into the Treaty, the Commissioners “made the following promises:

- a. Nothing would be allowed to interfere with their way of making a living, as they were accustomed to and as their forefathers had done.
- b. The old and destitute would always be taken care of, their future existence would be carefully studied and provided for, and every effort would be made to improve their living conditions.
- c. They were guaranteed protection in their way of living as hunters and trappers, from white competition; they would not be prevented from hunting and fishing as they had always done, so as to enable them to earn their living and maintain their existence”.

Cornwall reiterates that the Indians “would not sign under any circumstances, unless their right to hunt, trap and fish was guaranteed and it must be understood that these rights they would never surrender”. Cornwall adds that it was only “after the Hudson’s Bay Company Officials and Free Traders, and the Missionaries, with their Bishops, who had the full confidence of the Indians, had given their word that they could rely fully on the promises made in the name of QUEEN VICTORIA, that the Indians accepted and signed the Treaty, which was to last as long as the grass grew, the river ran, and the sun shone – to an Indian this means FOREVER”.¹¹¹

It was unfortunate however, that despite these promises, as Fumoleau so eloquently writes, “once the treaties had been signed, they were forgotten and disavowed by all levels of Government – The spirit of friendly co-existence of the Indians and non-Indians disappeared as soon as the ink dried up on the treaty documents”.¹¹²

Lesser Slave Lake

Peter and Mary and their four children, Bess, John, Alberta and Peter, left Fort St. John and likely arrived at Lesser Slave Lake Post in late August of 1898. The Gunns lived at Lesser Slave Lake Post for two years, until the Fall of 1900. Bess writes that “We came to Grouard in 1898 or 1899 and John and I started school at the Anglican Mission across the bay. [...] Rev. Holmes was the Anglican minister in charge of the school”.¹¹³ Shortly after arriving at Lesser Slave Lake, on September 27th, 1898, their fifth child, Barbara Jessie, was born.¹¹⁴ On February 2nd, over in the Orkneys at the family croft of Windbreck, Mary’s mother Ann Sinclair Ritch had died at the age of 70, and then on May 13, 1900, just over three months later, her father John Ritch died at the age of 69. Between these deaths, on May 4th, 1900, Peter and Mary’s third son and sixth child, Ewen MacDonald (Mac) was born. Naming their son after Peter’s superior and the Factor at that HBC post suggests a friendly, respectful relationship.¹¹⁵

Lac Ste. Anne

Peter Gunn and family arrived in Lac Ste. Ann in October, 1900, six months after the birth of son Mac. This is confirmed by the *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Mr. Gunn and wife came in from Lesser Slave Lake Tuesday. Mr. Gunn is in the Hudson’s Bay Co’s employ and goes to Lac Ste. Ann to take charge of the company’s post there”.¹¹⁶ With six children in hand, I can imagine the difficulty of such a journey. I assume the Gunns took the normal route by trail from Lesser Slave Lake Post, along the north shore of the lake to Athabasca Landing and then south to Edmonton.

One would be hard pressed to envision a now empty field on the south west shores of Lac Ste. Anne, with just a Roman Catholic church and two old cemeteries (one by the church and the other hidden in the trees to the west), to be a happening place at one time, but until the arrival of the rail in the region, Lac Ste. Anne was apparently such a place. For those heading west or northwest of Edmonton, the Lac Ste. Anne Trail was the only path to get there and the first

decade of the 20th Century was particularly busy with surveyors, prospectors, and homesteaders travelling through.

The sense of excitement in the area in 1906 is described well in the *Edmonton Bulletin*: “The big rush of settlers to the rich ranching and agricultural lands of Northern Alberta is creating an unprecedented activity in every direction from Edmonton, and the inviting valleys of the west of which Lac Ste. Anne is the gateway are receiving their appropriate share of this vast army of these hardy homesteaders”. Many of those passing through Lac Ste. Anne were on their way “to the Lobstick, the Pembina, and the Paddle River districts” to find “a suitable location” for homesteading. In the same article, it is noted that in order to make way for the influx of settlers most bridges had “been replaced by the erection of substantial structures” and it was anticipated that “work of improving the trail will soon follow”.¹¹⁷

Surveying of the townships (56 & 57) to the north-west of Lac Ste. Anne commenced in late 1905 with one of the first homesteads in the Rochfort-Sangudo area (about forty miles north-west of Lac Ste. Anne) claimed by Charles McKeen, my great-grandfather, on October 10, 1907. This future husband of Bess Gunn had arrived in Lac Ste. Anne in 1906 and he was a resident there. He also owned the livery barn, had the mail contract to points west and north-west and had established the first stage coach to Edmonton. He drew a map of the area west and north of Edmonton depicting all the trails as they existed in the spring of 1906. On the map he noted “No roads. Settlers widened old Indian trails”. According to this map, Lac Ste. Anne had a legion hall, the HBC store, a hotel, the Roman Catholic Church, and a pool room. The post office was in the back of the whitewashed Hudson’s Bay Store.¹¹⁸

Archie MacDonald, in MacDonald (2005), a settler moving through the area, provides an excellent description of Lac Ste. Anne. MacDonald and family travelled through Lac Ste. Anne in the first week of May, 1907. MacDonald writes: “In 1907, Lac Ste. Anne was a bustling community consisting of one small hotel, a livery stable, an ice house, a post office, two stores and a Mounted Police station with one lone constable. One of the stores belonged to the Hudson’s Bay Company and was manned by factor Peter Gunn”. He continues:

We could hardly push our way into the Hudson’s Bay store, it was so crowded with people. Up on the counter a good-looking young man stood tipsily, singing at the top of

his voice. He was a fine tenor and knew all kinds of songs in French and Irish, German and English. He was putting on a great show and everyone was enjoying it thoroughly. Later, the factor Peter Gunn told us that the singer was one of three remittance men who had just arrived from England.

Of course, the crowd in the store had not come just to hear the young man sing. They were trappers recently arrived from the Rocky Mountains with their winter catch of furs, and prospectors heading in the opposite direction. Women and children had come to meet their men folk who had been away all winter. Gunn was busy buying furs, and selling liquor, while the men settled their debts and gambled and made love and generally let their hair down.

In this atmosphere it was hard for us to get any business done, but we finally bought the things we had come there for and returned to our camp. The next day we made up packs for the two new horses and got everything ready for an early start. Life at Lac Ste. Anne at this time of year was a little too rich for the MacDonald blood.¹¹⁹

Mountain climber A.P. Coleman, after his failed attempt to be the first to climb Mount Robson in 1907, passed through Lac Ste. Anne on his way to Edmonton. He describes it as a famous old Hudson Bay post “surrounded by a scattered French half-breed settlement, not far from the shores of Lac Ste. Anne”. It is a “quaint little village, with the pretty whitewashed buildings of the Hudson Bay Company against a background of still yellow poplars and the grey Roman Catholic church, toward which gaily dressed half-breeds were sauntering, the oldest Mission in this part of the west. There was brilliant sunshine and the whole scene was attractive”.¹²⁰

From west to east, the trail Coleman followed to Edmonton was aptly named the ‘Edmonton Trail’.¹²¹ From east to west, however, Lac Ste. Anne Trail was the first part of what was also called the Mountain Trail¹²² or the Yellowhead Trail.¹²³ Today, remnants of the Lac Ste. Anne Trail can be found driving east on Highway 15 to Onoway, and the road skirting the south side of Lac Ste. Anne is still named Ste. Anne Trail.

The Gunn family lived in the Hudson’s Bay house. According to Bess McKeen (nee Gunn) it was a two story log house with eight large rooms, four with clay fireplaces in them.¹²⁴

While there, Peter and Mary had three more children, bringing the total to nine: Frederick (Buster) born in 1901, Mary Grace in 1903 and Thomas in 1906. Also in 1906, Peter's first grandchild, Catherine Dodd, was born over in Scotland. His daughter Mary would have two more children before her death in 1913 – William in 1908 and Donald in 1911.

Of particular interest to me was the arrival in Edmonton of Peter's younger half sister Hughina in 1906. After the death of her mother Barbara in 1890, Hughina had lived with her father's (William MacDonald) relatives. She then married William Swanson in about 1905 and they immigrated to Edmonton, Canada in 1906 (in the 1916 Canada Census they were living at 12436 – 97 Street). Colling, in an *Edmonton Journal* article, writes, "Gunn is well-remembered for his kindness and consideration, especially by a niece who met him in 1906 when she was a baby". Quoting Jean Phillips (daughter to Hughina): "'I guess I owe my life to him as I was critically ill from an infection from a vaccination. [...] He nursed me through that first night. He had a team of oxen waiting at the train station to take us home with him''".¹²⁵ This must have occurred shortly after the Swanson family's arrival in Edmonton.

There isn't much documented history of what life was like in Lac Ste. Anne in those days, but we get a glimpse from an article in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, in reference to events at Lac Ste. Anne on Victoria Day, 1907: "The 24th was celebrated in good old style and the lake was looking the best and the weather was simply perfect. In the afternoon a fine programme of sports was gone through". Eldest son John Gunn participated in the 'Free for All' with horse Charlie, and he also participated in the Pony Race with Prince. Peter Jr. was in the race for boys under 12, Alberta was in the girl's race, and Jessie (Barbara) was in the race for girls under 10. "Peter Gunn, esq., J.P. was master of ceremonies, and under his able and genial care the day passed without a hitch, and a dance in the evening brought a really jolly day to a close".¹²⁶

The Gunns attracted more than their fair share of attention in the local newspapers in the early 1900's – I suspect this was so because they were community leaders in a very small community (Lac Ste. Anne was a town of only a couple hundred and Edmonton was at that time barely 10,000 strong). One would wonder why the birthday party for the fifteen year old daughter of the manager of a trading post would receive mention in a newspaper, but it did. Just a few weeks after the Victoria Day celebrations, the *Edmonton Daily* mentions that the Fort at Lac Ste Anne "was the scene of a very merry dance on Wednesday evening in honor of Miss.

Bessie Gunn's birthday. In spite of the severity of the weather, guests arrived from as far away as Onoway, and the music rendered by Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin (organ and violin), made even the oldest old timers "shake their boots like three year olds." A delicious supper was served, and the evening was just the great success as might be expected with such a genial host and charming hostess as Mr. and Mrs. P. Gunn".¹²⁷

Although Peter and family resided at Lac Ste. Anne from 1900 to 1915, Peter maintained his roots in Spirit River (south of Dunvegan), also the home of his friend and partner Charles Bremner. As mentioned previously, Peter and Charles had acquired the Spirit River Ranch from the HBC in 1894, and although Peter sold his interest, Charles continued to live there with his wife Marie Tustawits. By 1907, the population had increased quite significantly, when, due to the declining fur trade "most of the former residents of Dunvegan had moved to Spirit River, as, indeed, had Father Le Treste himself to open St. Joseph's Mission". According to Leonard, "Those occupying land in the Settlement in 1907 included....the Revillon Freres (Lot 2)...Charles Bremner (Lot 9)...Father Joseph Le Treste (Lot 11)...Jean-Baptiste Tustawits (Lot 14), Marie Tustawits (Lot 15), John Tustawits (Lot 16), James Tustawits (Lot 17), St. Pierre Ferguson (Lot 22) [...] the Roman Catholic Diocese of Athabasca (Lot 42), Peter Gunn (Lot 43), the HBC (Lot 45)[...]" Peter Gunn's, Charles Bremner's and the HBC lots were side by side. Later, in 1914, Peter's twenty year old son John Alexander acquired a homestead at Spirit River as well, although he left for the war before proving up his land.¹²⁸

While at Lac Ste. Anne, Peter Gunn became a Member of the Provincial Parliament (MPP) of the Alberta Legislature. This was perhaps the most notable of his accomplishments. Alexander C. Rutherford's Liberal party had won the first election for the new Province of Alberta in 1905. At that time the Alberta, Athabasca, Saskatchewan and Assiniboia Districts of the Northwest Territories were converted into the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. For the 1909 election, the electoral District of Lac Ste. Anne was added. Peter Gunn received the Liberal party nomination for this district and ran for and won the election on March 22nd, 1909.

Upon his election it appears that Peter Gunn resigned his position of post master at Lac Ste. Anne and Mrs. M. Gunn was appointed in his stead.¹²⁹ Perhaps due to a potential conflict as an MPP, he also later vacated his position as federal fisheries inspector for the districts of Victoria, Edmonton and Strathcona (at a salary of \$1,200 per year).¹³⁰

Peter was a popular man. As reported in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, the first Liberal convention for the new electoral district, held March 4th in Lac Ste. Anne, was apparently quite pleasant and harmonious and “Peter Gunn was unanimously chosen as the standard bearer of the Liberal party for this district in the coming campaign. [...] There was no opposition to Mr. Gunn, as he was generally conceded to be the strongest man in the district, owing to his well-known marked ability and his long residence in and acquaintance with every part of the district making him conversant with the needs of the people”.¹³¹

As MPP for Lac Ste Anne, Peter Gunn represented the interests of his constituency quite effectively. His main focus throughout his eight year tenure was on roads and railways. And as far as roads were concerned he got off to a running start. As quoted in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, he confirms that there “is now a first rate road from Edmonton right through to the Pembina River” and, “three bridges have been built this summer on the road northwest from Lac Ste. Anne across the Paddle River and heading for the Grand Prairie country. The projection of this road has been the scheme of J.K. Cornwall, M.P.P. for Peace River”.¹³² Although this road was a boon to the residents of his district, Peter’s doubt as to the wisdom of extending such a road to the Peace Country is evident.

Peter’s personal, political and financial ties to the Peace Country continued throughout his life, and his opinion on the area was frequently sought. In 1910, for example, during discussions over the best way for settlers to access the Peace Country via trail, Peter Gunn’s advice was provided on a proposed expedition to Grande Prairie via Whitecourt. “He assured the audience there was no doubt about the worth of the country”, but he “advised the long way round as the shortest way there”,¹³³ even though, as noted by Leonard (2005), “this would redirect them away from his own electoral riding”. According to Leonard, Peter Gunn advised against “a road north from Entwistle”. The long way round, of course, was via the Athabasca Landing Trail to Athabasca and then north and west along the northern coast of Lesser Slave Lake. He cautioned them: “I know what it is to live on rabbit tracks, though I may not look like it now [...] There was not a single habitation between Whitecourt and Grand Prairie”.¹³⁴ MPPs Allie Brick (Peace River) and Jean Cote (Athabasca) were of a similar mind. Although in this instance, the long way around was taken, Leonard (2005) says “The idea of a western route did not die, and, indeed, it would evolve into the actuality of the Edson Trail in April, 1911”. This trail headed north from

the rail near Edson. It was a particularly brutal trail and was essentially useless for settlers. Therefore, the ‘long way around’ would remain the best way to get to the Peace Country until the rail arrived, which would in fact take quite some time.¹³⁵

According to David Leonard (2005), “The CNor had reached Edmonton at the end of 1905, and grading had begun on three lines out of the City. One pointed north towards Athabasca Landing, another west towards Lake Wabumun, and a third, which seemed a genuine possibility for the Peace, was directed northwest towards Lac Ste. Anne”. Leonard adds that “the CNor line intended for the Grande Prairie was held in abeyance in 1910 near the present site of Onoway, at a place then known as Peace River Junction. Though the government strongly urged the CNor to build it further, and had promised the public that this would be done, its hands were tied, for no legal obligation required the CNor to complete the project”.¹³⁶ The line would eventually reach Robinsons Crossing (present day Sangudo) in 1913, where it would be stalled until 1921.

The Rutherford Government’s campaign slogan for the 1909 election was “Rutherford, Reliability and Railways”. During the campaign Rutherford “continually hammered home, “Alberta’s progress would depend on railways””. This “policy was an immediate hit with the people of Alberta. In the provincial election held on 22 March 1909, Rutherford swept the polls, taking 36 of 41 ridings, nine of them by acclamation”.¹³⁷ As mentioned previously, Peter Gunn, the first MPP for the District of Lac Ste. Anne, was one of those acclaimed.¹³⁸

The most significant political event during Peter Gunn’s tenure was likely the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway Scandal. The *Edmonton Bulletin* considered this “The most sensational legislative debate in the history of the province of Alberta”.¹³⁹ The Rutherford government’s policy involved guaranteeing bonds for railway developers. In early 1910, however, a cloud of suspicion hovered over the “extra favourable terms” provided to the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway. Leonard explains that “On February 14, after several days of speculation, the provincial Minister of Public Works, W. H. Cushing, resigned his position, citing serious differences with the Premier with respect to the financing of the A & GW. When the Liberal MPP for Sturgeon, J. R. Boyle, provided the first official denunciation of the plan in the Legislative Assembly the next day, Rutherford pointed to “a nest of traitors” in the Liberal camp. The weeks that followed saw a constant wave of finger pointing and mud slinging, as the Liberals divided into two factions, pro- and anti-Rutherford”.¹⁴⁰

According to Leonard, “...when the government was finally tested with a vote of no confidence on 3 March, it managed to survive by a margin of 23 to 15, meaning that 10 Liberals had voted against it”.¹⁴¹ The Government was sustained by a majority of eight, with Peter Gunn supporting the Rutherford side.¹⁴² A week later a “Want of Confidence Motion” was defeated by a vote of 20 to 17.¹⁴³ This was a closer vote, with more Liberals losing confidence in their government. Peter once again voted on the side of his Premier. A few days later things settled down a bit when “on 14 March, Rutherford announced that a Royal Commission would be appointed to look into the matter”.¹⁴⁴ Although the Royal Commission exonerated Rutherford and others, including Jim Cornwall, the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway scandal led to the resignation of Alberta’s first Premier.

Prior to this scandal, in 1909, Peter and family had suffered through significant family tragedies. On May 5, 1909, only a month and a half after Peter’s election, his wife Mary died. Her death was reported in the May 5, 1909 *Edmonton Bulletin*:

DEATH OF MRS. PETER GUNN

Word reached the city last evening of the death at Lac Ste. Anne yesterday of Mrs. Gunn, wife of Peter Gunn, M.P.P., after an illness of eight months. The deceased lady underwent treatment in the General Hospital in Edmonton last October but it was then apparent that the disease from which she was suffering was incurable. The end came Tuesday. The late Mrs. Gunn leaves to mourn a husband and a large family, the eldest of whom is about sixteen years of age. The deceased was a native of the Orkney Islands and was one of the oldest settlers in the Lac Ste. Anne district.¹⁴⁵

Upon the death of her mother, Bess, being the eldest daughter at almost 17 years old became the primary care giver for her eight siblings, who ranged in age from 3 to 15.

Just four months after the death of wife and mother Mary, the Gunn family suffered another loss. On September 15, 1909, son Peter was accidentally shot and killed. The announcement was published in the September 23, 1909 *Edmonton Bulletin*: “The funeral of Peter Gunn, the 13 year-old son of Peter Gunn, M.P.P., took place on Sunday, the 19th inst. Numerous friends of the family were present and great sympathy was shown to Mr. Gunn and

family in their sad bereavement, coming so soon after the death of Mrs. Gunn only four months ago”.¹⁴⁶

From the perspective of Peter’s daughter Bess, the summer of 1910 was likely one of the highlights of her life when she became involved in the race to climb Mount Robson. That summer she became a member of John Yate’s pack train that had been commissioned by mountaineer Norman Collie.¹⁴⁷ John Yates and his brothers owned a homestead about four or so miles southwest of Lac Ste Anne. He delivered mail for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad and he was also a Rocky Mountain trail guide.¹⁴⁸ Apparently, John had a crush on Bess, who became Postmistress at Lac Ste. Anne after the death of her mother. She was an excellent addition to the team, for she spoke Cree fluently, she was good with horses (known to ‘break’ a few in her day), and she was an excellent cook.

Bess would have left her home in Lac Ste. Anne in early July with John and his pack train, and they would have met up with Norman Collie and his team at Wolf Creek on July 17th. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that “Professor Collie, Vice-President of English Alpine Club, and A.L. Mumm” were in the City on July 14th and that “Both gentlemen will leave for the Yellow Head pass next Saturday, for the purpose of exploring the Rockies”.¹⁴⁹ They arrived at the foot of Mount Robson on August 9th, where they waited for better weather. Then on August 22nd, after almost three very poor days of weather and a foot of snow, they gave up and headed home, arriving back in late September. On their way home, to the north of Mount Robson, by a creek that fed the head waters of the Smoky River, they “spotted a splendid snow mountain that Yates named Mount Bess”.¹⁵⁰

Next year, Collie would return to the Rockies, and with Yates as his trail guide, they would be the first to ascend Mount Bess. Upon its summit Collie left a note in a jar, proving to those who followed that he was the first to climb it, and giving him the right to name it Mount Bess. On one side of the note he wrote his name and on the other he wrote ‘St. Andrews Golf Course’, humorously indicating his intent to retire from mountain climbing.¹⁵¹ The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported the return of mountaineer Norman Collie from his mountain climbing excursion in the Rockies: “An ascent of Mt. Bess, 12,000 feet, was made. From this peak and from every height reached by the mountaineers, Mt. Robson could be seen”.¹⁵²

Less than five months after Bess's return from the Rockies, tragedy would once again strike the Gunn family. In mid February, 1911, thirteen year old Barbara Jessie died from dropsy, apparently a complication from her first period. Jean Phillips, daughter to Hughina Swanson, Peter's half sister, remembers when Peter "brought his young daughter, Jessie, who was in poor health, to live with us [...] in Edmonton. She died in our home"¹⁵³ Jessie's death was reported in the *Edmonton Bulletin*: "The funeral took place at Lac Ste. Anne last Sunday, of Jessie Gunn, the thirteen-year-old daughter of Peter Gunn, M.P.P. for Lac Ste. Anne. The young girl had been in poor health for some time and in spite of the best medical attention, died on Friday last. Much sympathy is felt for Mr. Gunn, this being the third death in his family within two years"¹⁵⁴.

I had visited the old Lac Ste. Anne settlement in the summer of 2010. Nothing of the old town remained, but I found the old family cemetery hidden in the woods to the west of the new Roman Catholic Church. There I managed to find my ancestor's grave marker. It is a square, three-foot-tall, marble obelisk. The engraving on one side reads "Mother. Mary Ritch – Beloved Wife of Peter Gunn, who died at Lac Ste Anne May 5, 1909. Aged 43 years. A tender mother and a faithful friend." Written on another side is, "Peter Gunn. Accidentally shot, Sept. 15, 1909. Aged 13 years. No pains, no griefs, no anxious fear can reach our loved one sleeping here", and below this: "Jessie Gunn. Died March 5, 1911. Aged 13 Years. Just as the morning of her life was opening into day, her young and lovely spirit passed from earth and grief away"¹⁵⁵.

As I mentioned previously, Peter Gunn represented the interests of his constituents quite well. By 1913, I suspect partially as result of his political influence, and also because of his direct involvement, the Canadian Northern Railway had reached Robinson's Crossing (present day Sangudo), smack dab in the middle of his constituency. He likely had other Peace River Country supporters backing him up, but he also had the contract for clearing the right of way for this section of the rail. According to the *Edmonton Bulletin*, White and Tobin, of Montana, were "awarded a 30-mile contract on the Peace River line of the C.N.R. The section in question runs from Onoway, on the Lac Ste. Anne branch, to a point 40 miles northwest. Peter Gunn, M.L.A., has the contract for clearing the right of way, and it will be ready for the grades by June"¹⁵⁶. This was the line to Sangudo extending from Peace River Junction near Onoway. This was as far as the line to Peace River would go for quite some time. A recession had hit in 1913-1914, ceasing most major construction projects, and then World War I began. The rail would not reach

Rochfort Bridge until 1921.¹⁵⁷ As far as the Gunn family was concerned, however, the rail to Robinson's Crossing was far enough. Bess and Charles McKeen, Peter Gunn, Alberta and Hector MacLean, and Mac Gunn all had homesteads near Roydale, only about four miles from Robinson's Crossing.

Also of note was the fact that the C.N.R's transcontinental line headed to Entwistle from Peace River Junction south of Lac Ste. Anne and through Darwell, only four miles from the Lac Ste Anne Settlement. Construction commenced from St. Albert in August, 1910 and the rail to Peace River Junction was opened for traffic on October 8, 1913. Due to competing interests, two continental rails were built, basically side by side, to the Yellowhead.¹⁵⁸ This was considered by many to be an extraordinary waste of money.

In 1982, I attended a Gunn Clan reunion at the Rich Valley Community Hall, a few miles north of the town that bears Peter Gunn's name. The *Edmonton Journal* ran an article written by Robert Colling on this reunion, and although some of the 'facts' are incorrect, it does contain some interesting information about Peter and the family history. Above the caption "Peter's clan gathers at Gunn", is a picture of an older Peter, with a descriptor saying "Peter Gunn, supposedly the first person off the train at Gunn in the 1920s".¹⁵⁹ The year quoted is of course an error. The rail first arrived at the station named Gunn in 1913, and although the family believed the station and new town was named after Peter because he was the first to step off the train (which is likely true), he was chosen as the first to step off the train because the rail had made it that far because of his efforts. The town of Gunn sits on the north shore of Lac Ste. Anne, and Peter and family lived on the shores of this lake from 1900 to at least 1915. Therefore, the naming of the Town of Gunn was a deliberate and apt recognition of Peter's service to the area.

I believe Peter Gunn's influence regarding railway development, although subtle and much behind the scenes, was significant. The C.N.R. heading west to the Rockies skirted past Lac Ste. Anne, where he resided and his family held several interests. The C.N.R. heading north-west to the Peace River Country made it to Robinson's Crossing, a point only four miles from his family's homesteads, and the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway, which ran north to Sawridge (present day Slave Lake and west to Smoky River (end of steel from 1915-1916) and Spirit River (January, 1916), before heading south to Grande Prairie (March, 1916), ran by the Spirit River Settlement in which he, his son John and Charles Bremner held

property.¹⁶⁰ For me, it is an astonishing coincidence that a rail made its way to, or near, all properties owned by Peter Gunn, especially when numerous prospectors and real estate developers at that time lost their fortunes trying to predict where the rail might be built.

It is understandable that Peter was also an advocate for the medical needs of his constituents. While living in Fort St. John, he and his family had no access to medical care, and with the deaths of his wife and two children while living at Lac Ste. Anne, one can sympathize with his plea to the Government in 1912 to aid Doctors in this district. As reported in the *Edmonton Bulletin*: “P. Gunn M.P.P. Urges Government Aid to Doctors.” A young German homesteader had died from a gunshot wound, and the Doctor had to travel 28 miles to treat him. It was the third fatal accident occurring in Lac Ste Ann since July of that year. Peter raised the issue in the legislature, where he “pointed out that the appropriation for hospitals in the cities and towns of the province amounted to some \$90,000 annually and he contended that some of that money should go towards supporting doctors in remote districts”. He advocated for “a government subsidy for doctors locating in sparsely settled regions and while the amount of money required for this purpose would not be large the result might be the saving of a number of human lives every year”.¹⁶¹

Peter continued to remain loyal to Premier Rutherford even after his resignation. In 1911, Rutherford made a failed attempt to run for the Edmonton federal seat held by Frank Oliver. The *Edmonton Bulletin*, owned by Frank Oliver, considered a gathering of Rutherford supporters to be a “Bogus Convention”. Several liberal MPP’s were in attendance, including Rutherford loyalist Peter Gunn. Charles Milton McKeen seconded the motion to nominate Rutherford to represent the Liberals in the seat currently occupied by the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Frank Oliver.¹⁶²

Although the Gunn family faced its share of tragedy, it also shared in the joy of marriage and birth. On October 18th, 1911, Charles Milton McKeen married Elizabeth Ann Gunn, in June, 1913 Alberta Gunn married Hector MacLean, and on April 7th, 1921 Mack Gunn married Nora Barr.¹⁶³ On April 20, 1915, Peter Gunn married Katherine Nichol.¹⁶⁴ A few days prior to the wedding Peter was honoured by “his fellow-members of the legislature [...] with a purse of one hundred and fifty dollars in gold in celebration of the happy event. [...] The presentation was made by the Speaker, Hon. C.W. Fisher”, who offered sincere congratulations and added “We

have known you for some years, and have felt the benefit of your assistance in committees and other work. We have known you in social life, and have felt the kindly touch of your generous nature”.¹⁶⁵

Edmonton

From mid 1915 on, Peter’s main home was in Edmonton, at 10709 Saskatchewan Drive. The banks of the North Saskatchewan River were across the road from his home, and from the porch he would have seen the High Level Bridge, built in 1913, sprawling across the North Saskatchewan River, where he could also see the new Alberta Legislature and the old Fort spread out on the slopes beneath it. He likely would have walked across the High Level Bridge to work, or on some days he may have rode the Trolley. Today, the house is long gone and Capital View Tower, an apartment condominium, now stands there. U of A researcher, Professor Paul A.W. Wallace, interviewed Peter Gunn at his home in July, 1921 to seek information on any French Canadians who might have travelled through the Peace Country. He “called on Peter Gunn (Sheriff) in his pretty little home in the trees overlooking the river valley”. He wrote that Peter had “a round, pleasant face, white hair, moustache. He wore overalls, an undershirt and a straw hat”.¹⁶⁶

On April 14, 1916, before the end of his second four year term as MPP for Lac Ste. Anne, Peter “was appointed sheriff of the Peace River and Athabasca districts [...] an appointment he held until his death”.¹⁶⁷ As Sheriff of the Athabasca (1916 to 1920) and Peace River (1920 to 1927) Districts, Peter travelled to the region quite often, and he was mentioned a few times in the newspapers. One of the more interesting things about Peter is that he was a story teller. When he was interviewed he almost always included a nostalgic look into his past, giving us more insights into Alberta and Canadian History. While on a tour of inspection in October, 1916, for example, Peter was interviewed while visiting Lac La Biche. The *Edmonton Bulletin* said Peter was “an old timer in the northland and voiced his surprise at the thriving community and the beautiful McArthur hotel. He said years ago he camped at the very place where now the hotel stands, and had his rabbit snares on the identical place where now the lawn tennis court is. He agrees that in rapid, wonderful development, Lac La Biche takes the prize of any town in Alberta that he knows”.¹⁶⁸ I worked for Portage College in Lac La Biche in 1997-98, and my boss at the time informed me that its landmark hotel had burned to the ground ten years before. The College there

is aptly named, for it sits smack dab in the middle of the portage between Beaver Lake and Lac La Biche. It is this portage, according to Greg Johnson, that caught the interest of Bishop Tache in 1854, when he “immediately recognized the area’s strategic importance due to its location between the Churchill and MacKenzie River basins and resolved to utilize this mission as a source of supply and point of transshipment for the MacKenzie missions”. Lac La Biche “was located between the difficult Methye Portage to the north and the Saskatchewan River to the south and it could be reached both by water and by cart road from the east”. One of his motives to establish this site as a portage was to “reduce the Oblate dependency on the Hudson’s Bay Company transport”. In 1867, with the assistance of Louison Fosseneuve, Bishop Tache proved that the Athabasca River could be navigated – “In little more than an afternoon Fosseneuve single handedly “altered the freight route” of the North by “driving a nail” into the coffin of the Methye Portage and making Athabasca the “gateway” to the North”. Almost ten years later, in 1876, Athabasca Landing Trail was completed and the HBC’s virtual monopoly over transportation to northern Alberta was at an end.¹⁶⁹

Although Sheriff Peter Gunn had deep roots in the Peace Country, the fact that his main home was in Edmonton, however, caused some consternation for residents of the Peace River District. David Mattelstadt writes:

As had been the case with their Territorial forebears, the state of the court system became an increasing source of irritation among the residents of the Peace River. One concession to local feelings was the appointment of Sheriff Peter Gunn in 1916: he had been a Grande Prairie pioneer, coming as a Hudson’s Bay Company employee in 1886. But it didn’t change the fact there were no permanent officials in the area, not even deputies. Gunn lived in Edmonton, the headquarters of the district remained there as well, and court officials were seldom seen in the Peace River. Thus in 1918, the local paper commented: “Sheriff Gunn of Edmonton paid Grande Prairie a flying visit...This was the Sheriff’s first visit here for some months...”¹⁷⁰

Although the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported in 1920 that Peter had removed to Peace River, due to a “Re-Arrangement of Judicial Districts” (the Athabasca District was abolished, with the southern portion thrown in with Edmonton and the district of Peace River was made a judicial

district itself),¹⁷¹ I doubt the veracity of this statement. His main residence was most certainly on Saskatchewan Drive in Edmonton from 1915 until his death.

On July 28, 1914 World War I commenced. Peter's son John Alexander enlisted on July 14, 1915.¹⁷² John was wounded twice while fighting in northern France. On April 4, 1917, at Vimy Ridge while serving with the 72nd Highlanders he was "wounded by a gun shot in the right shoulder" and he recovered at "a military hospital at Etaples France", and then he "was wounded again on August 8th, 1918, and was in hospital at Rouen, France".¹⁷³ The *Edmonton Bulletin* says Pte. Gunn was "a North-Country boy" and that he "was the first white boy born at Fort St. John". Previous to enlisting "young Gunn was a backwoodsman and pack train driver in the mountains in the Peace River and Yellowhead region. At the time he enlisted he had taken up a homestead at Spirit River." He left his ranch, "in the care of Charles Bremner, his father's partner." To get to Edmonton, he first walked sixty miles east from Spirit River through muskeg and swamps to the end of the steel, which in the spring of 1915 was west of the Smoky River near McLennan.¹⁷⁴

On September 19, 1918 the *Edmonton Bulletin* announced: "SON OF SHERIFF PETER GUNN IS AMONG KILLED – Lance-Corporal John Alexander Gunn Fell in Action on September 6". By 1918, four of Peter's ten children had died.

The war affected everybody. Charles Mckeen also enlisted in 1915, but he returned home safely in February, 1919. Ewen MacDonald enlisted near the end of the war joining "up with the Strathcona Horse"¹⁷⁵ and likely never left Canadian soil. However, Mary Ritch's sister Betsy's first born son, John G. Robb, died at the age of twenty two on October 23, 1916 while fighting in World War I, and John William Omand, first born son to Isabella (nee Bremner), was killed in action on March 21, 1918 in Flanders, France.

Peter's career as Sherriff continued until his death in 1927. Although Peter survived his first wife by eighteen years, he died in 1927 at the young age of 63. According to his obituary: "Sheriff Peter Gunn died at his residence, 10709 Saskatchewan Drive at 6 p.m., Tuesday June 21, 1927 after a lingering illness. Members of his family and a few intimate friends were with him when he died although at the last he lapsed into a state of coma and recognized no one." The obituary says Peter Gunn was often called to court to act as an interpreter for the Cree. It

also says Mack lived in Roydale, Buster in Fort Saskatchewan, Thomas in Wainwright, Bess and Alberta in Rochfort, and Grace at home with her father.¹⁷⁶

Conclusion

Before conducting the research for this paper I knew very little of Peter Gunn, and absolutely nothing about his personality. At Peter's Liberal Party nomination meeting, Dr. Steele of Pembina (now Entwistle) said he knew Peter for some years and he said "Peter Gunn has ever been the foremost for the welfare of others, and hundreds of settlers will tell you today that they had their first advice and help from his hands and heart. When schools were wanted in his town, or the district, Peter Gunn was always in the front. In all my dealings with Mr. Gunn I have always found him right". He added that "Mr. Gunn is no grafter. If he had been, he would now be a rich man—which he is not". Mr. White, who seconded the motion to nominate Peter, "stated that he had known Mr. Gunn since he came into the country and had always found him the poor man's friend".¹⁷⁷ At a campaign meeting at Wabamun an *Edmonton Bulletin* reporter wrote, "Mr. Gunn has long been a faithful and successful worker in the best interests of the district, and is endowed with a genial, whole-souled personality which makes and keeps all his acquaintances warm friends and ardent supporters".¹⁷⁸

While reading his journals I caught a glimpse of a man with a slightly satirical sense of humour. Peter most certainly had a jaded opinion regarding the religious gentry, and he expressed this opinion quite subtly and humorously. On Sunday, June 29, 1890 he writes: "Peace and rest is the time of day as there is no black robed gentry around to disturb our peace of mind", and then on Sunday, October 4, 1891 he writes: "Rev. Father La Treste of the RC Mission arrived on his way to Hudson Hope to give consolation to the erring ones in that quarter". Like most descendents of Covenanters, Peter and family were Presbyterians, but I don't believe Peter was a staunchly religious man – the visit by MacDonald in 1907 indicates a certain tolerance for the imbibing of others, and he was known to host a good party every now and again, both at Fort St. John and at Lac Ste. Anne.

Peter was a trusted friend, supporter and advocate for the First Nations peoples throughout his life. As the in-charge at the HBC Post at Fort St. John, he provided food and shelter to them when it was desperately needed; sometimes more than permitted as per HBC

policy. Peter befriended these neighbours, and his children befriended their children (Bess was fluent in the Beaver language at the age of 6). He was a trusted man and because he was trusted he was selected as an interpreter for two adhesions to Treaty #8. Then, when he and his family moved to Lac Ste. Anne, the centre of a large Cree and Metis settlement, he once again established solid relationships; Cree in the area attended his liberal party nomination that would launch his political career, and Peter Gunn ensured an interpreter was there for them.¹⁷⁹

In July, 1923, according to the *Edmonton Bulletin*, he was a spokesman for Chief Jones, representing three Chipewyan bands, who was at the MacDonald hotel to ask the then Minister of the Interior, the Hon. Charles Stewart, for “the protection of the government in the formation of hunting reserves on the delta, from which the white men would be excluded”. It was a successful meeting, resulting in a promise from the Minister that a Reserve would be provided.¹⁸⁰

Peter’s niece, Jean Phillips, says he had a healthy respect for Indians and that Peter believed that “any dishonesty among the Indians was because of what they learned from the white man”. I can’t be certain, but this could be a veiled attempt by Peter to provide his opinion about the failure of the ‘white man’ to honour his promises. In the same *Edmonton Journal* article, Reporter Colling added: “Newspaper records of a speech made in 1914 to the first meeting of the Edmonton Old-Timers Association quote Gunn as saying: “When our recollectors go back to our painted girls of the tom-tom days, we have something to be thankful for. Think of all they did and how they did it; and are we better for the fine ladies now in this country? Will they do as much for it as their sisters who were here before them?””¹⁸¹

Peter’s respect for the First Nations people, I believe, was reciprocated. “A front-page *Journal* obituary in 1927 described him as “one of the most popular of oldtimers”, and “among the large number of mourners at his funeral were three Indian chiefs from Hobemma.”¹⁸²

Peter Gunn stepped onto the banks of the North Saskatchewan River at Fort Edmonton in 1883 when its population was approaching 300. In 1891, when Mary Ritch passed through on her way to Athabasca Landing, Fort Edmonton’s population had more than doubled to just under 700. When the Gunn family arrived in Edmonton on their way to Lac Ste Anne in 1900, Fort Edmonton’s population had grown to an astonishing 2,500, and when the Province of Alberta was born, the city’s population was 8,350. By the time Peter died, the population of Edmonton

had reached 67,083.¹⁸³ Peter and family had witnessed the birth of a city and a province. Peter watched the building of the Hotel MacDonald and in 1912 he was likely one of the first to enter its doors. He witnessed the building of the High Level Bridge in 1913 and as a member of parliament he was one of the first to enter the doors of the new Alberta Legislature Building in 1913.

Peter's surviving children would of course go on to have children of their own. My family tree alone, branching off from great-grandmother Bess, through my grandmother Evalyn, includes at least 83 descendants. A conservative extrapolation would peg the number of Peter and Mary's descendents to be 600 or more.

In the end the rail would define rural Alberta. If I were to drive down almost any Alberta highway, there would be a town about every 6 miles or so. These towns were spaced out to provide farmers with reasonable access to a railway station. A few decades ago, the rural landscape was dotted with large grain elevators, 'used-to-be' symbolic beacons on the prairie landscape. Without a railway running to and through it, most towns existing in the early 1900's basically died. Lesser Slave Lake (modern day Grouard), Sawridge, Dunvegan and Lac Ste. Anne were just a few of these. And if a town was lucky enough to have the rail built to and through it, its name was likely to be changed to honour some railway magnate or famous politician of the day. Heatherton would become Edson, Prairie Creek would become Hinton, and Pembina would become Entwistle (Wikipedia).

Today, it is very difficult to picture Grouard as the gateway to the north, but in 1905 it most certainly was. Unless one took the long way around by river to Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermillion, the trail to Lesser Slave Lake Post was the only reasonable way into the Peace Country. In 1913, "Grouard, Alberta, was a bustling prairie metropolis of over one thousand residents", but a year later when the Edmonton and British Columbia Railway bypassed it 12 miles to the south, it became a ghost town virtually overnight.¹⁸⁴

Peter continued to manage the Hudson's Bay Trading Post at Lac Ste. Anne until at least 1911. From 1900 to 1911 his 'business' would have gradually changed from trading post to something akin to a retail store. When surveyors, prospectors, and settlers began arriving, trading posts, once focused solely on providing supplies and goods to Native and Metis trappers and

hunters in exchange for fur, began selling goods and supplies to this new source of customers. We get a bird's eye view of what this HBC Post was like in the midst of this change from MacDonald when he visited Lac Ste. Anne in 1907. The HBC would continue to compete in the fur trade in northern Alberta, but as competition increased, profits continued to decline. Bredin and Cornwall started setting up shop in 1900, and by 1906 they would have a post in close proximity to most major HBC posts in the Peace Country. In 1906, Revillon Freres would buy out Bredin and Cornwall and it would expand the competing operations even more. The profitability of the fur trade continued to decline, and in 1918, Fort Dunvegan was closed.¹⁸⁵ But, the HBC began converting to 'retail', and with the massive population growth in Edmonton, its post there became a cornerstone for this move. In 1912 the HBC "began an aggressive modernization program. The resulting 'original six' Hudson's Bay Company department stores, in Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, are the living legacy of this period".¹⁸⁶

Strangely enough, or perhaps with the aid of a little bit of synchronicity, I was at Lac La Biche when I began dabbling into the family history. I was there when I learned of Isabella Gunn and wondered if she might be related to my great-great grandfather. And as I canoed up and down the Churchill River that summer I wondered if Peter Gunn might have canoed up and down this river as well. I was at Portage College when I mentioned the 'Gunn' name to a historian there, and although he had not heard of Peter Gunn, he did say he thought a mountain might have been named after a Bess Gunn. And, perhaps due to little more synchronicity, I have thought about and written much of this paper while residing on the banks of the Athabasca River in the Town of Athabasca. I work at the University there, where historians Donald Wetherell and Greg Johnson also work, who have provided useful information along my journey. It is also through Athabasca University that I am pursuing my Master of Arts in Integrated Studies, for which this paper will be my final project. Last year, in 2011, the Town of Athabasca celebrated its 100th birthday. To honour this achievement the local Rotary Club will build a brick path along the river. I purchased one of the bricks for \$300 and on it will be written "For Mary Ritch Gunn, who walked this path in 1891".

Reflections on Northern Skies

With this project I explored the connections between my ancestors, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Northwest. One of my objectives was to demonstrate how we are all connected to 'history' and that through this connection we can build a stronger sense of identity and self authority. It is through connecting the fragile, seemingly inconsequential, threads of our lives that we become the colours that shape the tapestry of human history and bring it to life. By locating ancestors in a 'time and place' we can connect them to the events of the day, and by so doing, despite their 'seeming' anonymity, we learn that each of them had a role to play in setting the course of history, and that we too play such a role.

The idea for this project germinated from a number of previous Master of Arts and Integrated Studies (MAIS) courses I had taken. My first course, 'Making Sense of Theory in the Arts and Social Sciences', (MAIS 601), introduced me to the concepts of historical relativity, enlightenment and the search for authority. For one of my assignments I delved into the influence of the Vikings, William the Conqueror, and Normandy on human history based on the assumption that he was a distant relative (although I later discovered that the distant relative was actually William of Orange). This connection birthed a passion for historical connection. Through a project for 'Narrative Possibilities' (MAIS 621) I was able to make a sideways connection between my ancestors and the race to climb Mount Robson – and it was this connection that brought history alive for me. Then, during my research on global capitalism for 'Excavating Ground Zero' (MAIS 655) I made the direct connection between an obscure reference to the birthplace of a great-great-great-great grandfather and the Kildonan Clearances (which was for me quite an astonishing revelation). This 'clue' eventually led to my discovery of the long history of connection between the Hudson's Bay Company and my ancestors, and directly connected me and my family to important Canadian historical events. The connections to 'identity' are obvious, and my explorations of the roots of identity through 'Gender and Sexuality', 'Writing the Self', 'Critical Perspectives in Cultural Studies', 'The Evolution of Psychotherapy', and 'Mourning and Trauma' brought an awareness of the broad range of influences on our identity and set the stage for this exploration of the cultural and historical forces that shape our choices and define who we and our descendents will be.

As I learned in MAIS 601, the search for authority starts with enlightenment. It is only through ‘enlightenment’ that we can become aware of the forces that influence us and thereby achieve a modicum of self-authority to enable us to consciously affect the world around us – without enlightenment we are merely players on the world stage – simple pawns of natural and hegemonic cultural forces. Although we are all minor players in the universal infinitude of history, we are there when history plays out, and although we are enormously affected by it, we can also affect it, and sometimes quite consequentially. I have discovered that through learning from the past I can more consciously consider my actions of the present and perhaps alter the trajectory of human history and the ways that the particular can become the general.

Although the history of humankind is infinitesimal compared to the age of our Universe (if all the words in the Christian Bible represented time, the word ‘Amen’ at the end of the Bible would be the span of humanity’s existence), humanity did not simply spring into existence – we are a link in a chain of events that spans infinitely backward and forward. Simply put, by virtue of our existence, we are connected to infinity. Therefore, by making conscious connections to history, we are in fact confirming this connection. In previous MAIS courses I explained that Psychologist Otto Rank believes that we have an ‘urge to immortality’ (his term for our survival instinct) that is expressed by making such connections. Ira Progoff (1956/1973) summarized this urge as “man’s inherent need to live in the light of eternity” (p. 262). I call this urge the ‘will to create’. Rank defines it as “...man’s inexorable drive to feel *connected to life* in terms of his individual will with a sense of inner assurance that that connection will not be broken or pass away” (p. 211).¹⁸⁷ Creative writing, building a bridge to our ancestors, creating descendents, connecting to nature, and connecting to religion and/or spirituality are all means of providing us with a sense of continuity and with a hope or feeling that despite our physical end we are part of a much larger story.

Where I focus most of my creative energy these days is on this ‘urge to immortality’. It is perhaps the closest I can come to a fully inclusive and pragmatic definition of the source of our creative function. My ‘purposeful’ spiritual beliefs, my personal experience with poetry, and quite a few MAIS courses inspired a search for this source. Through the first two thirds of the MAIS program I focussed on the ‘energie’ theories related to this ‘will to create’, and to

integrate and consolidate my insights, I wrote a paper that was selected for publication in the MAIS Journal of Integrated Studies.¹⁸⁸

The teachings of our philosophers, psychologists and poets eventually directed my search for the source of creativity toward the core of ‘self’. I discovered the source of creativity in the ‘Real’ of Laçan, the ‘void’, and his ‘objet petit ‘a’’. I learned of ‘creative’ birth in the safety of Freud’s personal father of individual pre-history or Kristeva’s ‘imaginary father’, and in the holding space of transference. I found creativity in Kristeva’s semiotic and freedom in the gaps between words. I found life in death and rebirth: Thanatos and Eros. I found insight in Carl Jung’s archetypes and synchronicity. I discovered intention in Kierkegaard’s personal freedom, Carl Jung’s teleological ‘higher self’, William James’ ‘will to believe’, and Maslow’s self actualization. And I discovered creative spirit in Nietzsche’s Dionysian ‘will to power’, Freud’s libido, Henri Bergson’s élan vital, Jung’s ‘energy of the processes of life’, Otto Rank’s ‘urge to immortality’, and Laçan’s ‘jouissance’.

I believe that the MAIS Program was developed with creative transformation as one of its primary purposes. For me, this process of learning was nothing less than a self-actualizing search for meaning. Through this search I found my passion, my purpose, and my ‘self’. And I realized that whatever the source of creativity was, or whatever ‘god’ was, it would be found within. And therefore, through the MAIS program, I have not simply learned that the only real authority is one’s authority within and over ‘self’, but I have also learned why this is so very important – for me, the ‘self’, purpose, ‘god’ and creativity are synonymous.

So, in effect, through creative writing and connection, and by building a bridge between human history and the history of my ancestors, this project is an illustration of how we all “live in the light of eternity”.

Building Connection

Assessing information from a personal family perspective and connecting it to ancestral history required careful attention – sometimes connections were not obvious and insights only came when certain information was related to other information. For example, I learned of the Kildonan Clearances through ‘Excavating Ground Zero’ (MAIS 655), but I did not make the

connection to my family until I accidentally re-read the ‘death certificate’ for Peter Gunn’s grandfather, noting his place of birth as Kildonan.

Cross referencing historical ‘facts’ with other information was extremely important, not only for making connections, but also for improving accuracy. For example, I cross referenced names of relatives living in Rackwick in the 1800’s as noted by John Bremner¹⁸⁹ with official census data and Robert Whitton’s website on the Ritch family tree.¹⁹⁰ I determined that all three sources contained inaccuracies and that only by cross referencing the data was I able to acquire a reasonable level of assurance that the information in my report was accurate.

The importance of the connection I made to the Kildonan Clearances was solidified and extended quite significantly through my review of Professor T.M. Devine’s *To the Ends of the Earth – Scotland’s Global Diaspora* (2011). A re-review of Karl Marx’s assessment of the Clearances and the link to capitalism was also quite useful (I covered this topic in my term paper for ‘Excavating Ground Zero’). His coincidental, and in my mind somewhat synchronistic, choice to use the Kildonan Clearances as an example illustrating that a major aim of capitalism is to drive people from their lands thereby making them dependent on the ‘capitalist’ for income and survival, was fortuitous – for the Strath of Kildonan was the homeland of the Gunn Clan and it was this connection that led me to all others.

Because the Strath of Kildonan was the homeland of the Gunn Clan, I believe most of its residences would be related to Peter’s ancestors in some way (although I as yet do not have specific evidence). Therefore, the discovery that the Kildonan Clearances played a major role in Canadian and Hudson’s Bay Company history was hugely significant to me. It was one of the more remarkable connections I made and it fostered a keen interest in this history. As a result, I spent a lot of time researching the Red River Colony, and I learned a lot about the origins of our country. Most of this research is not included in this paper, but it will be included in future work. The Kildonan Clearances of 1813 and 1814 played an important role in the colonization of the Red River Settlement in Rupert’s Land (in the present day Province of Manitoba, Canada). Events in and around this colony also played a key role in the 1821 merger of the North West and Hudson Bay companies. With its primary rival out of the way, the HBC would have virtual dominion over the Athabasca District of the North West Territories where Peter and Mary first

lived. In addition, I learned of a Donald Gunn (relation yet unknown), living about 20 miles from Kildonan, who joined the Hudson's Bay Company in 1813. He laboured in the Red River area for the HBC during the years leading up to the merger of the two companies, and he later became a member of parliament for the first Manitoba Legislature. His book, *The History of Manitoba*, although quite biased against the HBC's Lord Selkirk, provides excellent, eyewitness and detailed accounts of conflicts between the HBC and NWC, and the trials and tribulations of the Kildonan settlers (two different groups of settlers from the Kildonan area emigrated to the Red River Colony – the first in 1813 and the second in 1814). Although a segue from the main focus of my project, it provided an interesting connection between family history, important Canadian history, and the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, and it provided another excellent example of how connections like these can bring history to life.

I also discovered that the Red River Colony would later play an important role when Rupert's Land was acquired (via Britain) from the HBC by the Canadian Government in 1870. The Province of Manitoba rose from the ashes of the Red River Resistance led by Louis Riel. The fiercely independent Metis from this area would move west and north as Canada moved west and north, and as indicated by Donald Wetherell, in *Alberta's North*, many settled in the Athabasca District of the Northwest Territories, "By the late 1900's Red River Metis and their descendants were widely distributed in northern Alberta, especially in the Athabasca, Lesser Slave Lake, Wabasca, and Grande Prairie areas, while others moved as far north as Fort Smith. This was the first major movement of settlers to northern Alberta in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries".¹⁹¹

David Leonard's *The Last Great West*, *Delayed Frontier*, and *The Lure of the Peace River Country* provided excellent descriptions of the culture, economics, and events in the area in which Peter Gunn, Mary Ritch and family lived. His work was the primary source of information for this project. Leonard also provided an excellent history of the railways of northern Alberta, the development of which Peter Gunn played an important role, sometimes quite obviously as a supporter of the Rutherford Government during the Alberta Great and Waterways Scandal, but also as the contractor engaged to grade the extension of the rail from Peace River Junction (Onoway) to Sangudo. Peter Gunn's involvement with railway development was not without a possible conflict of interest. He and Charles Bremner owned land

in Spirit River (the first rail to the Peace River Country was built through here), and he and his children owned land near Roydale, only a few miles from Robinson's Crossing, at present day Sangudo. Perhaps these are coincidences, but the fact that he was an MPP during the time major decisions on railway development were made, gives rise to the possibility that there was some political influence here.

Leonard also provided excellent information on the rise of competition in the fur trade with the arrival of free traders in the Peace Country. With the Klondike gold rush came Jim Cornwall, and his decision to stay in the Peace Country and establish, with partner Fletcher Bredin, a competing chain of trading posts called 'Bredin and Cornwall'. Both Cornwall and Bredin would become MPPs sitting alongside Peter Gunn in the Alberta Legislature. They were all supporters of the Peace Country (although also with personal and financial interests), but after the resignation of Rutherford and the appointment of Sifton as the new Alberta Premier, Peter Gunn remained loyal to the Liberal party, but Bredin and Cornwall did not.

The Lantern Era – A History of Cherhill, Rochfort Bridge, Sangudo and Surrounding School Districts (compiled by the Sangudo and District History Society, ed. Vera E. Holt) was an excellent source of the history of Peter and Mary's family after their arrival in Lac Ste. Anne. However, most of the family 'memory' related to Peter and Mary as recorded in this history is vague and often factually incorrect, and I caution all new historians to verify and crosscheck all facts, regardless of source. Nevertheless, it led to other sources of information and also helped me make some useful assumptions. For example, granddaughters claimed that Peter and Mary's children, Alberta (1895) and Peter (1896) were born in Fort Dunvegan. This was an anomaly I couldn't reconcile (Peter and Mary and family lived in Fort St. John until 1898) until I noted that Peter and Mary had taken a seven week vacation downriver in the summer of 1893. This indicated to me that the family may have regularly vacationed at Fort Dunvegan and that Mary may have purposely travelled to Fort Dunvegan to give birth to her children in 'relative' comfort.

Near the end of the literature review phase of my research, I discovered a searchable digital source for all issues of the *Edmonton Bulletin* from 1880 to 1923 online at 'Peel's Prairie Provinces, University of Alberta Libraries': <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/newspapers/EDB/>. This provided numerous references to Peter Gunn and family, and was one of the primary

sources for this paper, and it would be an excellent source for anyone researching Edmonton and Alberta history for that period.

John Bremner's *Hoy, the Dark Enchanted Isle* (1997) provided an excellent perspective of life in late 18th Century Rackwick. It was a nostalgic narrative reliving the days of his childhood and reflecting on the lives of other Rackwick residents. He provided wonderful examples of customs, folklore, and myths and beautifully described the geography and landscapes of this 'emerald' valley. He also provided an invaluable description of the character of some of the people living in Rackwick in the 1800's, and most fortunately one of these characters happened to be John Ritch, Mary's father and my great-great-great grandfather. Besides the potential for this to become a treasured family heirloom, this novel was extremely useful in determining and/or surmising the circumstances that led to Mary's decision to leave her homeland, and it provided me a real appreciation for the sacrifice she actually made.

This novel was also quite helpful as a cross reference to Rackwick's official census data, and as a confirmation of the accuracy of Robert Whitton's website that details the Rackwick-Ritch family genealogy. In fact, with these three sources I was able to determine that 80% of the 140 residents of Rackwick in 1881 were related to Mary Ritch, and thereby were related to me. I also discovered that the author, John Bremner, was related to Mary directly through three of her grandparents, making him a distant triple cousin to me. Rackwick was in fact Mary Ritch's family town for a number of generations. It is the discovery of this connection that had the most profound effect on me. When I discovered my family's roots in Rackwick, an unfamiliar sense of attachment and belonging began to sprout. The roots of Rackwick are deep – it is possible that its residents descend from ancestors who may have resided there 10,000 years ago. It is because of this sense of attachment and belonging and the discovery of very deep roots that I spent several months researching the Rackwick family genealogy.

In his novel, Bremner also made several references indicating that the people of this small community were descendents of 'Covenantors' – a very useful link to the Jacobite Uprisings – a critically important Scottish historical event – and although only a brief endnote was included in this paper, it was another vital link in the chain of events that connected my family to world history.

Conclusion

Interdisciplinary research helps us make connections and by so doing increases our conscious awareness. Sometimes these connections are relatively simple – like connecting an ancestor to the Hudson’s Bay Company. But sometimes, these connections are astonishing – like connecting ancestors to the Highland Clearances of Scotland and the effects of global capitalism, or connecting ancestors to a treaty that has had social ramifications that still affect us today. A personal connection to historical events that still impact us today brings conscious awareness, and for some of us it brings a sense of responsibility. Through understanding why our ancestors acted as they did, and then knowing the consequences of these actions, we can become more consciously aware of our own thoughts and actions – and perhaps consider the cultural and historical influences upon us – and possibly act differently than we otherwise would have. With this sense of responsibility comes the realization that each and every one of us affects the world, and sometimes quite consequentially. Everything we do will affect the future – infinitely – and knowing this – understanding that our actions are consequential and infinite – we acquire a greater sense of responsibility, purpose, and self authority.

With this project I deliberately fastened my family ancestry to important historical and cultural events in order to demonstrate the tremendous effect such a connection can make on one’s identity and sense of purpose. I have written previously that I believe interdisciplinary studies has the capacity to create new and sometimes epiphanic knowledge.¹⁹² The process of preparing for this paper in itself was most certainly epiphanic for me. The connections I have made are nothing short of astonishing. Documenting history and culture through the perspective of my ancestors has most certainly created new knowledge which is quite consequential to me and to my now very extended family. This knowledge may perhaps even be consequential to some historians. The more admirable objective, however, is that others might follow my lead and by doing so also acquire a stronger sense of identity and purpose and thereby experience the tremendous personal growth that I have.

Through my research I have made many connections – connections between families, connections between countries, connections through time, and connections to significant historical events. Although sometimes vague, and in the bigger picture of world history sometimes seemingly inconsequential, the connections I made were significant to me. Before

this research, I was an Albertan without roots, but through this research, my roots have taken hold of the entire breadth and depth of human history. Through making these connections, history has come alive. I now feel connected to an astonishing and vibrant tapestry that spreads across this planet and stretches thousands of years into our human past. It is nothing less than a connection to immortality – for just as William the Conqueror, Queen Elizabeth or Siddhārtha Gautama are weaved into the tapestry of human history, I have discovered that so too am I.

Epilogue - “when Rackwick weeps”¹⁹³

The writing of this paper, and the necessary research, was an excellent lesson on the powerful motivation that a ‘nostalgic’ search for roots can provide. Finding Rackwick, a home in the ‘gem’ of a township, residing on a gem of an island in the middle of nowhere was an enlightening and heart warming experience. I admit that the impact on my ‘identity’ was enormous. I might even say, while still basking in the nostalgic glow of this family history, that if I belong anywhere, it is to this isolated Rock Bay on the Pentland Firth.

I will be forever grateful to distant cousin John Bremner for putting his memories of Rackwick on paper. *Hoy – The Dark Enchanted Isle* is a treasure. With his help, I was able to pull the lives of distant ancestors into the present and hopefully into the future as a permanent record on the internet. By naming a few of them, and providing a hint of who they might have been, I hope I have appropriately honoured his work. Unfortunately, however, John Bremner was not aware of the enormity of his gift:

I must apologize for this book. It falls short of what I would have wished! But I hope my readers will bear with me for all the short-comings it contains. There are few – very few – alive today of those who would have read the book; those for whom, and of whom, it was begun. I am well aware that there are none, save a mere handful – who are interested in this obscure spot in the far-off island of Hoy. But to the few who are left, if this little volume can bring back a memory of the old thatched home in Rackwick, I shall be very happy. (Introduction, p. 3)

Cousin John was mistaken when he thought this book would only be of interest to a few. Today, the descendents of Rackwick likely number in the hundreds of thousands, and many of

them will find his heart warming book to be as much of a treasure as I have. And also like me, we will wax nostalgic about it, and mourn a long lost way of life. And because of him, perhaps a hundred or even two hundred years from now, my sisters' children's descendents might also discover eternity in a small valley on a small island in the North Sea.

Through this narrative, I ascertained and provided some possible reasons as to why Mary Ann Ritch decided to venture to the Canadian Norwest. Although these reasons were derived quite logically, they did not provide the complete story. As I mentioned previously, those who live or lived in Rackwick live beside Ward Hill (close to which lies the Dwarfie Stane). It is pretty short for a mountain, but it happens to be the highest point in the Orkneys. It likely casts its shadow on Rackwick on late summer evenings, when the sun eventually settles in the northwest. Upon its summit a spring surges forth, and these waters feed Rackwick Burn (creek). The law of gravity, according to John Bremner (p. 7), says water can only rise as high as the level of its source. He concludes therefore that the source of this spring is either the mountains of Caithness or distant Norway. This is a myth of course: We now know that there is a great lake beneath the mountain of Ward Hill, upon the shores of which long lived dwarves have built a giant water wheel which they have turned for eons to ensure the spring continues to flow. The Hubble Space Telescope is now equipped with X-ray technology that enables it to see very distant objects and into our universe's very distant past. Astrophysicists recently turned this telescope toward Ward Hill, confirming the existence of these dwarves and their giant wheel. One of the dwarves was interviewed and asked why they built the wheel. The dwarf said that they had created an elixir that makes humans brave and curious, and they mixed this elixir with the water of the lake. He said there were far too many people living above them, and after a few centuries the people who drank of the water would leave, driven by an almost uncontrollable urge to explore other parts of the world.

And so it is.

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Endnotes

¹ The Jacobite Uprisings were a response to the passage of the English and Scottish throne to the protestant Dutchman, William of Orange. Roman Catholic King James VII of Scotland and II of England, considered by some to be the last Stuart King, was deposed by Parliament in 1688, and his daughter Mary, married to William of Orange, took his place. The Roman Catholics of the Scottish Highlands were especially displeased, but other Highland Clans were also concerned about encroaching English political dominance. So with the help of the French, many in the Highlands (excluding the Presbyterian 'Covenanters' who were quite alright with a protestant King, foreign or otherwise) participated and/or instigated 'uprisings', with the objective to re-store the throne to the rightful Stuart monarch, comfortably exiled in France. The Jacobites suffered a final defeat in 1746. (Most of this information was obtained online from Wikipedia).

² See *Highland Clearances, Undiscovered Scotland: The Ultimate Online Guide* (p. 1).

³ See *The Highland Clearances, A Brief History of the Clan System in the Highlands* (p. 4).

⁴ Oliver, Neil. *The history of Scotland* (p.364).

⁵ *Badbea Families (p.1)*.

⁶ In the 1841 Census, Margaret names her place of birth in 1786 as Gills, Caithness.

⁷ Gunn, D. *History of Manitoba (pp. 89-91)*.

⁸ See Napier Commission in Scotland – Sutherland and Caithness. *Helmsdale, Sutherland, 6 October 1883 - Angus Sutherland*.

⁹ Censuses indicate that daughter Janet was born in Reay in 1849 and son Peter was born in Thurso in 1851.

¹⁰ Devine, T.M. *To the ends of the Earth – Scotland’s global diaspora (p. 107)*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 107, 110, 113-115.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹³ Bremner, John. *The dark enchanted isle (p. 18)*.

¹⁴ “The 5,000-year-old monument known as the Dwarfie Stane lies in a steep sided valley between Quoys and Rackwick on the island of Hoy”. It is about three miles north of Rackwick. See Orkneyjar – The Heritage of the Orkney Islands. *The Dwarfie Stane, Hoy*.

¹⁵ “The old way was small-scale, labour-intensive, subsistence farming, increasingly fragmented by inevitable sub-division as population grew”. See Blackshouse, *Before Crofting*.

¹⁶ Based on Udal Law - “Udallers have absolute ownership of their land, with no superior, gained by holding the land over a number of generations, normally originally by settlement. This land was held in (unwritten) freehold, with no obligation except a duty to pay tax or skat to the king. The eldest son inherited the father's main residence, while the rest of the property was shared among siblings, daughters inheriting half as much as sons. Over the years this led to an extreme fragmentation of land ownership and, despite reform, left Orkney wide open to exploitation. See Tait, Charles. *Orkney Guide Book: Udal Law*.

¹⁷ Information in Scottish censuses from 1841 to 1911 was compiled into charts and cross referenced to information on the Whitton Ritch Genealogy Website.

¹⁸ Bremner, John. *The dark enchanted isle (p. 107, 157)*; See endnote #17.

¹⁹ See Mackintosh, W.R. 1889.

²⁰ See endnote #17.

²¹ Bremner, John. *The dark enchanted isle (p. 45)*.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

²³ Mary’s sister Betsy had an illegitimate child who was raised by her grandparents. Peter and Isabella’s illegitimate child was also raised by her grandparents.

²⁴ Bremner, John. *The dark enchanted isle (p. 64)*.

²⁵ See Peter Gunn’s full biographical sheet at Archives of Manitoba. *Hudson’s Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheets – Peter Gunn*.

²⁶ From Orkneyjar – The Heritage of the Orkney Islands. *Stromness, the Haven Bay*.

²⁷ By cross referencing census data from Ancestry.ca with Robert Whitton’s ‘Whitton-Ritch Genealogy’ website, I determined that Charles Bremner was the brother of Isabella Bremner. I found Isabella Bremner on the Whitton-Ritch Genealogy website when I was looking for information on Mary Ritch. There was a lot of information about Mary and her family on this website, which also had a link to her husband Peter Gunn. When I followed this link I came upon a reference to a daughter of Peter’s born to an Isabella Bremner. This daughter, Mary Ann Bremner, was born in Toofea, Hoy on December 23, 1883 (near Quoys, about three miles north of Rackwick). I also confirmed this with documented evidence I had purchased from the Scottish ancestry service - ‘Scots Family’. Peter (in absentia) and Isabella were compeared and admonished for ‘antinuptual’ fornication by the Kirk Session of Hoy in February, 1884, when daughter Mary was presented for baptism (the admonition was a prerequisite for baptism - a common and accepted form of religious blackmail in those days). I also later confirmed Isabella’s parentage when I made an inquiry for information on Peter Gunn to a member on Ancestry.ca. This member happened to be a granddaughter to Mary Ann Bremner and a third cousin to me.

²⁸ See Charles Bremner’s full biographical sheet at Archives of Manitoba. *Hudson’s Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheets – Charles Bremner*. In an online article (see ExploreNorth) memorialising Francis Worth Beaton, it is noted that “Colleagues who accompanied him from Scotland were Peter Gunn, from whom he took over the post at Fort St. John; John Sutherland and Charles Bremner”.

²⁹ Holt, Vera E. (Ed.). *The lantern era* (p. 506).

³⁰ I have made the assumption that Peter Gunn was on the Ocean Nymph and not the Prince of Wales. It makes sense that Peter and company, with the Athabasca District of the Northwest Territories as their destination, would land at York Factory, rather than Moose Factory. York Factory was at the mouth of the Hayes River, which originates from Lake Winnipeg, from which there is a relatively straightforward journey to Fort Edmonton, while the Moose Factory was at the mouth of the Missinaibi River, which could be a circuitous and improbable route to Lake Winnipeg through several portages via Michipicoten River, Lake Superior, Kaministiquia River, the Rainy River system, Lake of the Woods, and Winnipeg River (until the Canadian Pacific Rail was completed in 1885, the portion of the route from Lake Superior was the primary route for the ‘Canadian Voyageurs’ to the North West). Had Peter Gunn been on the Prince of Wales, a journey to Fort Edmonton from Moose Factory beginning at the end of September would be incomprehensible. The first “through railway train” from Montreal arrived in Winnipeg July 1st, 1886 (see Winnipeg). Before this (from 1878) the rail from St. Paul in the United States to Winnipeg was used. Despite the existence of this possible mode of transportation to Winnipeg, I have made the assumption that new HBC labourers followed the traditional HBC route down the Hayes River to Lake Winnipeg.

³¹ See John Sutherland’s and Francis Worth Beaton’s full biographical sheets at Archives of Manitoba. *Hudson’s Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheets*.

³² The HBC’s Ocean Nymph began its regular annual journey to York Factory on the Hudson Bay in 1874 (p. 75). It typically set sail from Stromness during the first week of July, usually with the Prince of Wales, which had Moose Factory as its destination. The Prince of Wales set sail from Stromness on July 1, 1883. See ‘Journals of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, (1884), 2nd Session of 5th Parliament, Volume 18. Appendix (No.2)’.

³³ Cotter. H.M.S. *Some famous Hudson’s Bay captains and ships* (p. 2, 3-4, 4).

³⁴ The Hayes River was preferred for travel by HBC and associates over the ‘rougher’ Nelson River.

³⁵ The Saskatchewan River drops 75 feet via the Grand Rapids before entering Lake Winnipeg. In 1877, a “3-mile long narrow-gage railway using horse-drawn tramcars was built around the rapids” by the HBC (Wikipedia).

³⁶ The Athabasca Landing Trail was completed in 1876 (Wetherell and Kmet, p. 14).

³⁷ They would have travelled either by trail or by water via Athabasca River, Lesser Slave River, and Lesser Slave Lake to Slave Lake Post.

³⁸ Peter and friends had arrived in Canada when transportation systems were on the verge of a long transition from rivers to rails. From the 1870's, until the rail arrived, steamers were the main form of transportation of goods and passengers. Wetherell explains that in the 1870s and 1880s, in order to increase efficiency and lower labour costs the HBC upgraded its transportation system with steamboat service, the construction of wagon roads and the upgrading of portages (p. 13). Before 1876, the Methye Portage, located in northwestern Saskatchewan, was the main route into the Peace Country - it was 'owned' and controlled by the HBC, and therefore helped it to maintain a virtual monopoly over the fur trade in the Northwest. Gregory states that once steamboats became the major mode of transportation for the HBC, the Athabasca Trail, built in 1876, and Athabasca River became the main route to the Peace Country (Gregory, pp. 24-25).

The Methye Portage was eventually abandoned by the HBC in 1887. In 1876 "the Hudson's Bay Company began shipping its goods by steamer on the North Saskatchewan to Fort Edmonton. From here, they were taken north about 160 kilometers over the newly built Athabasca Trail to the banks of the Athabasca River where a small settlement called Athabasca Landing (now the town of Athabasca) was created" (Wetherell and Kmet, p. 14). It was this decision by the HBC that eventually led to the economic concentration of the fur trade in Edmonton, and to its eventual status as Gateway to the North, and the Capital City of Alberta.

The new route gave the HBC's competitors easier access to the region. Also, with the advent of the steamboat, the building of the 'bridge' at the Grande Rapids (Lake Winnipeg-Saskatchewan River), and the more cost effective bulk transport it brought with it, the land route from Fort Edmonton to Athabasca Landing made more economic sense. The main route into the Peace Country then shifted quite quickly from the Methye Portage, Clearwater, Athabasca, and Peace River route, to a combination land and water route from Lake Winnipeg up the Saskatchewan and North Saskatchewan Rivers to Fort Edmonton, and from there by trail to Athabasca Landing, by river or trail to Mirror Landing, across a portage to Lesser Slave Lake and then by barge, canoe or steamer to Lesser Slave Post at Buffalo point on the north west corner of Lesser Slave Lake. Then from Lesser Slave Post via trail to Peace River Landing. And from there the rest of the Peace Country was accessible by water, trail or a combination thereof. This would remain the main route to the Peace Country from 1876 until the railway arrived in 1914.

Despite the focus on steamboat service and trails in the northwest, the focus in the south in the 1880's was on the railway. The rail between Winnipeg and Fort Calgary was completed in 1883. This provided a continuous rail link from eastern Canada via a line from St. Paul in the United States to Winnipeg. Although this route may have been available to Peter and company, and it would have perhaps made more sense that they would have taken the "standard migrant route" via ship to Montreal and then via rail to Calgary, as HBC labourers they had to take the more cost effective, less convenient and much longer traditional route. In 1885 the Canadian Pacific Railway was officially completed linking Canadians from coast to coast, but the first 'through' trip to Winnipeg didn't occur until July 1st, 1886.

³⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*. May 27, 1920, p. 5

⁴⁰ Wetherell and Kmet clarify that the North-West Territories District of Athabaska was created in 1882, and it included "all of the territory in Alberta north of 55 degrees". This was also "the approximate edge of the Hudson's Bay and Mackenzie watersheds in Alberta" (p. XIX). This boundary basically cut the current day Province of Alberta in half, just below Lesser Slave Lake, with the District of Athabaska to the North and the District of Alberta to the south.

⁴¹ Until 1870, the Peace River Country was always part of the Northwestern Territories belonging to the United Kingdom; it was not part of Rupert's Land (the Hudson Bay drainage basin) which until then belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company. It is because of this piece of land that the HBC had competition (it only had a monopoly over Rupert's Land).

Ongoing competition in the fur trade against the HBC in the Athabasca, Peace, Slave, and Mackenzie River basins through to 1870 and beyond established a subtly different economy in the region, and a strong incentive to the HBC to outmaneuver and out compete its rivals, resulting in cost-effective economic decisions and improvements in the region to transportation and major changes in transportation routes (Wetherell and Kmet).

The Mackenzie River drainage basin, including the Peace River Country, and its rich supply of furs also became the *raison d'être* for Fort Edmonton. Until the early part of the 20th Century, the only trade for Edmonton was the fur trade. As regional headquarters for the HBC, Edmonton eventually grew into the economic centre for the District of Athabasca and the northern portion of the District of Alberta. In 1905, the boundaries of the newly formed provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were drawn north-south instead of east-west because of the Liberal support in the northern realm (Leonard), and as the gateway to the vast resources of the north, Edmonton was crowned Alberta's Capital City in 1905, instead of the larger City of Calgary.

⁴² Francis & Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (p. 165).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 27, 30.

⁴⁴ See Albright papers, Glenbow Museum.

⁴⁵ Francis and Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (p. 50, 52, 71 & 74).

⁴⁶ Copy obtained from Ancestry.ca

⁴⁷ Francis and Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (p. 64 & 65).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51 & 71-72.

⁴⁹ According to Leonard the "Dominion Telegraph line reached Peace River Crossing in the fall of 1910" (p. 654, Last Great West).

⁵⁰ See Hudson's Bay Company. *Fort St. John Journals*.

⁵¹ Pike, Warburton. *A winter ordeal* (pp. 176-177).

⁵² I have made an assumption that Mary was escorted to Lesser Slave Lake Post by Tomas Mason, a plumber by trade. He was on the Peruvian's list of passengers directly following Mary's name. Both had their destination listed as CPR, Winnipeg. I found Tomas on Ancestry.ca and noted that he had made a number of trips to North America. He returned from one such trip in April of 1891. I also discovered that Tomas Mason lived by Dunnet, at Castlehill, when young Peter was working there in 1881. In 1891, the census records place Tomas at Thurso on Durness Street, the same street where Peter's mother had died the previous year. I made the assumption that Tomas was likely a friend of the Gunn family and was on the Peruvian as Mary's escort based on these coincidences. His wife's name was Elizabeth, so it is also possible that he was the husband to Barbara Gunn's younger sister.

⁵³ *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 27, 1920, p. 5

⁵⁴ Holt, Vera. *The lantern era* (p. 506).

⁵⁵ See Hudson's Bay Company. *Fort St. John Journals*.

⁵⁶ Davies, Ventress and Kylo. *The peacemakers of the north* (p. 10).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 42-43); Wark, Robert. *The northern journey of Bruce H. Wark: November 20, 1897 to September 22, 1900* (p.29).

⁵⁹ Hudson's Bay Company. *Fort St. John Journal*.

⁶⁰ Both were likely born in Fort St. John, although it is possible they were born at Fort Dunvegan - Joan Caithness claims that her mother, Alberta, and Peter Jr. were born at Dunvegan (Holt, p. 507). Evidence suggests the Gunn

family spent long periods of time away from Fort St. John in the summer, so this could be a legitimate claim.

⁶¹ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 61).

⁶² Fumoleau, Rene. *As long as this land shall last. A history of treaty 8 and treaty 11, 1870-1939* (p. 425).

⁶³ In 1883, Edmonton's future as the gateway to the north was perhaps already assured. Wetherell and Kmet say that the growing use of the Athabasca Landing Trail "foretold Edmonton's role as the metropolitan centre for northern Alberta, which was entrenched when the Hudson's Bay Company abandoned Portage La Loche in 1887" (pp. 14-15).

⁶⁴ City of Edmonton. *Population History*.

⁶⁵ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 33).

⁶⁶ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 1).

⁶⁷ Francis & Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (p. 143).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31, & 71; Fumoleau, Rene. *As long as this land shall last. A history of treaty 8 and treaty 11, 1870-1939* (p. 19).

⁶⁹ See Hudson's Bay Company. *Post Reports – Hudson Hope, 1897. B293e2* (p. 9).

⁷⁰ See Hudson's Bay Company. *Post Reports – St. John, Fort, 1897. B189e4* (p. 8).

⁷¹ Francis & Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (pp. 24-25).

⁷² Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 155).

⁷³ Fumoleau, Rene. *As long as this land shall last. A history of treaty 8 and treaty 11, 1870-1939* (p. 11, 12); Francis & Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (pp. 21-22, 82).

⁷⁴ See Hudson's Bay Company. *Fort St. John Journal, 1889-1892, B189a4, and 1892-1895, B189a5*. Entries on June 2, 1891, June 2, 1892, June 30, 1892, June 3, 1893 and June 4, 1894.

⁷⁵ Wetherell & Kmet. *Alberta's north: A history, 1890-1950* (pp. 33-34).

⁷⁶ Hudson's Bay Company. *Post reports – St. John, Fort, 1897. B189e4* (p. 5).

⁷⁷ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 236).

⁷⁸ Fumoleau, Rene. *As long as this land shall last. A history of treaty 8 and treaty 11, 1870-1939* (p. 19).

⁷⁹ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 40).

⁸⁰ Fumoleau, Rene. *As long as this land shall last. A history of treaty 8 and treaty 11, 1870-1939* (p. xxvi).

⁸¹ Wetherell & Kmet. *Alberta's north: A history, 1890-1950* (p. 44).

⁸² Francis & Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (p. 95).

⁸³ See endnote #64.

⁸⁴ This is an estimate. Leonard says that excluding the area north of Peace River Crossing, “385 natives were represented in the Treaty while 171 others opted for scrip” (1995/2000, p. 33) and later on “In a special prairie Census for 1906, 977 Treaty and 987 non-Treaty people were then determined to be living in the Alberta portion of the region” (2005, p. 95).

⁸⁵ Hudson’s Bay Company. *Post reports – Hudson Hope, 1897. B293e2* (p. 9); Hudson’s Bay Company. *Post reports – St. John, Fort, 1897. B189e4* (p. 1b).

⁸⁶ Wark, Robert. *The northern journey of Bruce H. Wark: November 20, 1897 to September 22, 1900* (p.1).

⁸⁷ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 40).

⁸⁸ Wark, Robert. *The northern journey of Bruce H. Wark: November 20, 1897 to September 22, 1900* (p. 2, 8, 10, 14, 17-18, 20, 23).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29, 30, 31, 74, 76.

⁹⁰ Francis & Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (p. 95).

⁹¹ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 161).

⁹² Wetherell & Kmet. *Alberta’s north: A history, 1890-1950* (p. 46).

⁹³ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (pp. 241-242).

⁹⁴ The most significant of these occurred in 1823, when, “as part of its program to rationalize the trade” (Francis & Payne, p. 11) the Company decided to close Fort St. John. “The Indians at Fort St John weren’t given much warning and were told to “take their furs down to Fort Dunvegan [...] In the fall of 1823 when the move began, a group of Indians reacted violently. Finding Hughes, the Company clerk “alone at the post, the Indians shot and killed him, then killed four more company men who passed down the river to Dunvegan the next day. Afterwards they ransacked the post, then fled” (p. 11). After some other incidents in the region, in response, the HBC closed Fort Dunvegan in the summer of 1825. It was reopened in 1828 (p. 12). The memory of this ‘abandonment’ would have likely held firm.

⁹⁵ Documents obtained from Province of Alberta Archives.

⁹⁶ See ExploreNorth – Explore the Circumpolar North. *The History of Fort St. John, British Columbia*.

⁹⁷ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 162).

⁹⁸ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (pp. 229-230).

⁹⁹ Wetherell & Kmet. *Alberta’s north: A history, 1890-1950* (p.44, 46); Fumoleau, Rene. *As long as this land shall last. A history of treaty 8 and treaty 11, 1870-1939* (p. xxvi, 96); Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (pp. 24-25).

¹⁰⁰ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 16); Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 26).

¹⁰¹ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 28); Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 60, 61).

¹⁰² In his HBC journals, Peter mentions taking ‘Old Margaret’ with him and his family down the river on the ‘bear hunt’ on July 24, 1894 (when the raft capsized). If this is Jean-Baptiste’s mother, then she was with the Gunn’s for quite some time.

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- ¹⁰³ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 60).
- ¹⁰⁴ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (pp. 28-31).
- ¹⁰⁵ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 231). When a commission returned in the summer of 1900, 46, or, about one-third of them, accepted it, with other adhesions to follow”.
- ¹⁰⁶ Wetherell & Kmet. *Alberta’s north: A history, 1890-1950* (p.57).
- ¹⁰⁷ Leonard, David. *Delayed frontier: The Peace River Country to 1909* (p. 31).
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- ¹⁰⁹ Fumoleau, Rene. *As long as this land shall last. A history of treaty 8 and treaty 11, 1870-1939* (p. 60).
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*,p. 74.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 413-414.
- ¹¹³ Davies, Ventress and Kylo. *The peacemakers of the north* (p. 10).
- ¹¹⁴ Joan Caithness in Holt, Vera. *The lantern era* (p. 507).
- ¹¹⁵ Factor Ewen MacDonald would retire from the Company in 1906 and he would later die in Victoria on September 4, 1909 – see Ewen MacDonald’s Biographical Record at Archives of Manitoba. *Hudson’s Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheets*.
- ¹¹⁶ *Edmonton Bulletin*, October, 5, 1900, p. 3
- ¹¹⁷ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 28, 1906, p. 6
- ¹¹⁸ Holt, Vera. *The lantern era* (pp. 15-17, 745-748).
- ¹¹⁹ Macdonald, Ervin Austin. *The rainbow chasers* (pp. 105-108).
- ¹²⁰ Coleman, A.P. *The Canadian rockies: New and old trails* (p. 160).
- ¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- ¹²² Holt, Vera. *The lantern era* (p. 748).
- ¹²³ Coleman, A.P. *The Canadian rockies: New and old trails* (p. 162).
- ¹²⁴ Copy of document provided by Donna Babiy, granddaughter of Bess - original source unknown.
- ¹²⁵ Copy of Edmonton Journal article provided by Donna Babiy, granddaughter to Bess. Written by Robert Colling. Article covers the Gunn family reunion held in the summer of 1982 at Rich Valley, just north of the Town of Gunn.
- ¹²⁶ *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 30, 1907, p. 7
- ¹²⁷ *Edmonton Daily*, June 19th, 1907, p. 1

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- ¹²⁸ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 105, 106, 466).
- ¹²⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 30, 1909, p. 10
- ¹³⁰ *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 18, 1910, p. 1
- ¹³¹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 13, 1909, p. 5
- ¹³² *Edmonton Bulletin*, August 26, 1909, p. 8
- ¹³³ *Edmonton Bulletin*, January 25, 1910, p. 1
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹³⁵ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 192, 193).
- ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127, 136.
- ¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- ¹³⁸ Also in this election, Jim Cornwall won the seat in Peace River (Allie Brick, former free trader and resident of Fort St. John, had apparently retired from politics), and Jean Cote took the riding from William Bredin in Athabasca.
- ¹³⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 4, 1910, p. 2
- ¹⁴⁰ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 137, 138).
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- ¹⁴² *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 4, 1910, p. 2
- ¹⁴³ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 11, 1910, p. 1
- ¹⁴⁴ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 139).
- ¹⁴⁵ *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 5, 1909, p.8
- ¹⁴⁶ *Edmonton Bulletin*, September 23, 1909, p.3
- ¹⁴⁷ Bowles, Laurilla & Putnam. *Canadian mountain placenames – The Rockies and Columbia mountains.*
- ¹⁴⁸ Walford, M. *Naming time – Mountains, trails, rivers, rails and ours* (p. 4).
- ¹⁴⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, July 14, 1910, p.1
- ¹⁵⁰ Collie, J. *Exploration in the Canadian Rockies north of the Yellowhead Pass* (p. 225, 226).
- ¹⁵¹ Williams, Chris. *That boundless ocean of mountains* (p. 80).
- ¹⁵² *Edmonton Bulletin*, September 19, 1911, p. 9; Collie describes reaching the summit: “On August 24 we reached the pass, and on the 26th in most brilliant weather we ascended Mount Bess. On the summit there was not a breath of wind, and the atmosphere was magnificently clear. We could see mountains for 100 miles in every direction, and, for the first time, I saw through a break in the hills to the east the level pine woods stretching away to the prairie. The Caribou Mountains were as usual splendid, two peaks being especially fine. Far away to the south was a grand mountain somewhere in the Selwyn range. Robson and his satellites seemed quite near. Mount Geikie towered up,

showing his grim precipices plainly through the clear air; and far away in the dim distance at the head of the Athabasca was a shapely snow pyramid that was almost certainly Mount Columbia. Never have I been on the summit of any peak in more favourable conditions, and as we gazed in every direction over peaks, glaciers, snowfields, and valleys, we recognized how much remained still to be done in this new land; as far as we were aware, out of the innumerable peaks that we could see spread out before us only two, Mount Columbia and Mount Robson, had ever been climbed by any one except by ourselves” (Collie, p. 231).

¹⁵³ See endnote #125.

¹⁵⁴ *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 17, 1911, p. 8. A few years later, on January 18, 1913 in Edinburgh Scotland, Peter’s eldest child, Mary Bremner (Dodd) died from tuberculosis at the age of 29. She left to mourn her husband and three children.

¹⁵⁵ Walford, M. *Naming time – Mountains, trails, rivers, rails and ours* (p.14-15).

¹⁵⁶ *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 12, 1911, p.1

¹⁵⁷ Holt, Vera. *The lantern era* (p. 151).

¹⁵⁸ See *Atlas of Alberta Railways*. Canadian Northern Alberta Railway. University of Alberta Library.

¹⁵⁹ See endnote #125.

¹⁶⁰ Leonard, David. *The last great west: The agricultural settlement of the Peace River* (p. 290, 430, 431).

¹⁶¹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, November 15, 1912, p.8

¹⁶² *Edmonton Bulletin*, August 17, 1911, p. 2

¹⁶³ *Edmonton Bulletin*, October 19, 1911, p. 1, June 26, 1913, p. 10, and April 16th, 1921, p. 25, respectively.

¹⁶⁴ *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 21, 1915, p. 5

¹⁶⁵ *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 16, 1915, p. 10

¹⁶⁶ From Paul Wallace Diary - Wallace, Paul A. W. July 9, 1920.

¹⁶⁷ From ArchivesCanada.ca.

¹⁶⁸ *Edmonton Bulletin*, October 19, 1916, p. 2

¹⁶⁹ Johnson, Greg. *Why Athabasca? A brief history of the origins of Athabasca Landing* (pp. 16-18).

¹⁷⁰ Mattelstadt, David. *Foundations of justice: Alberta’s historic courthouses* (p. 255).

¹⁷¹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 27, 1920, p. 5

¹⁷² As per John Alexander Attestation Paper, Ancestry.ca

¹⁷³ *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 16, 1917, p. 3 and September 19, 1918, p. 3, respectively.

¹⁷⁴ *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 17, 1917, p. 3

¹⁷⁵ *Edmonton Bulletin*, September 19, 1918, p. 3

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- ¹⁷⁶ *Edmonton Bulletin*, June 22, 1927 - copy of obituary obtained from granddaughter, Donna Babiy.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 13, 1909, p. 5
- ¹⁷⁸ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 19, 1909, p. 3
- ¹⁷⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 13, 1909, p. 5
- ¹⁸⁰ *Edmonton Bulletin*, July 24, 1923, p. 1
- ¹⁸¹ See endnote #125.
- ¹⁸² Copy of *Edmonton Journal* article provided by granddaughter, Donna Babiy. Article is about the 1982 Gunn family reunion – “Pioneer’s relatives hold reunion.” Date and author of article unknown.
- ¹⁸³ See endnote #64
- ¹⁸⁴ See *Library and Archives Canada*.
- ¹⁸⁵ Francis & Payne. *A narrative history of Fort Dunvegan* (p. 150).
- ¹⁸⁶ See *Hudson’s Bay Company. Our History*.
- ¹⁸⁷ Progoff, I. (1953). *Jung’s psychology and its social meaning*. New York: Grove Press.
- ¹⁸⁸ The article is an integration of creative writing and several ideas and excerpts from essays I have written for Athabasca University’s Master of Arts and Integrated Studies (MAIS) Program. It is also a journey of one person’s search for meaning toward the core of self and the source of creativity – a journey that weaves together the concepts of enlightenment, the ‘energy of the processes of life’, and purpose through an integration of philosophy, spirituality, astronomy, physics and psychology. In the end it is a challenge to all to discover and cultivate their creative talents and thereby foster their own connection to the world. See *Journal of Integrated Studies* (Athabasca University) Vol 1, No 1 (2010), online at <http://jis.athabascau.ca/index.php/jis/article/view/26/15>
- ¹⁸⁹ Bremner, John (1997). *Hoy – The dark enchanted isle*. Kirkwall: Bellavista Publications.
- ¹⁹⁰ Whitton, Robert (2012). *Whitton and Ritch Genealogy from Scotland*. Retrieved various dates 2011-2012 from <http://www.robertwhitton.eu/main.php>
- ¹⁹¹ Wetherell, Donald & Kmet, Irene. (2000). *Alberta’s north: A history, 1890- 195*, p. 6. Edmonton, University of Alberta Press.
- ¹⁹² See endnote #188.
- ¹⁹³ Words of George MacKay Brown, see (see [‘The Rough Guide to Scotland’ by Rob Humphreys here](#) - http://books.google.ca/books?id=cN-t1Jsc5QsC&pg=PT1135&lpg=PT1135&dq=Crofting+in+Rackwick&source=bl&ots=dSE6OUyd-C&sig=Y6D2zS3NJr1UtUKdoX56Oe_acZw&hl=en&ei=a9CZTuWnEqfliAKgwq3CDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CCYQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Crofting%20in%20Rackwick&f=false)