



GEOTOURISM CANADA

Site Page GP12: Version 01 / 20070707

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GRAVESITES OF THE PEACE

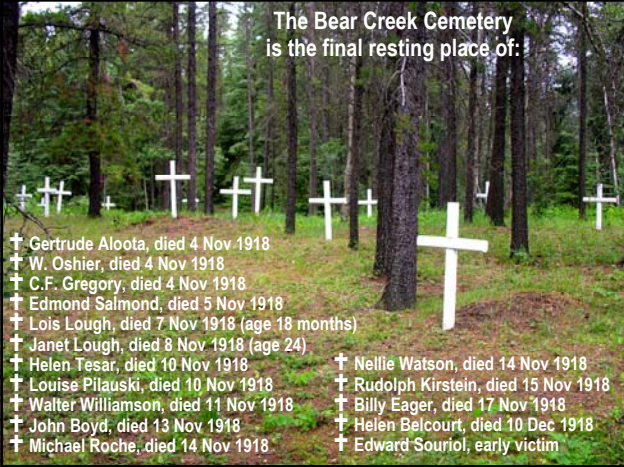
BEAR CREEK CEMETERY

Purpose of Cemetery: Burial of influenza victims 1918
Earliest Internment: November 1918
Last internment: December 1918
Site ownership: County of Grande Prairie No. 1
Access: The public has 24 hour access to the site.

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Geotourism Canada No. GP12

Nearest Community: Grande Prairie T8V 2Z7
Cemetery location: N 55° 07.567' W 118° 46.000'
Geocache location: N 55° 07.557' W 118° 46.096'
Accuracy: 5 meters
Letterbox clues: Box is attached to the leg of the interpretive sign
Legal Address: T071 R06 W6M
NTS Map No.: 083M02
UTM: Easting 387247 Northing 6110234 11U
Geocache altitude: 653 meters
Geocaching No.: Letterboxing No.:
Site maintained by: Grande Prairie Elks Lodge
Overall difficulty (1=easiest; 5=hardest): 1
Overall terrain difficulty: 1
Comments: This location was chosen for the influenza graveyard because the soil is sandy, which made for easier digging. During the epidemic there was a need to quickly inter a large number of fatalities.



The Bear Creek Cemetery is the final resting place of:

- † Gertrude Aloota, died 4 Nov 1918
- † W. Oshier, died 4 Nov 1918
- † C.F. Gregory, died 4 Nov 1918
- † Edmond Salmond, died 5 Nov 1918
- † Lois Lough, died 7 Nov 1918 (age 18 months)
- † Janet Lough, died 8 Nov 1918 (age 24)
- † Helen Tesar, died 10 Nov 1918
- † Louise Pilauski, died 10 Nov 1918
- † Walter Williamson, died 11 Nov 1918
- † John Boyd, died 13 Nov 1918
- † Michael Roche, died 14 Nov 1918
- † Nellie Watson, died 14 Nov 1918
- † Rudolph Kirstein, died 15 Nov 1918
- † Billy Eager, died 17 Nov 1918
- † Helen Belcourt, died 10 Dec 1918
- † Edward Souriol, early victim

Bear Creek Cemetery is located in a quiet and peaceful pine forest on the outskirts of Grande Prairie. The cemetery contains the graves of 16 people who died during the 37 days between Nov. 4th and Dec. 10th, 1918. (Not all victims were buried here as the newspaper reported at least 34 deaths over that period.) This was the worst period of the Spanish influenza epidemic on the Grande Prairie. This was a high mortality rate because in 1918 the Village of Grande Prairie had a population of fewer than 1,000 souls. The Alberta government ordered the wearing of face masks in public during the most virulent periods of the epidemic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

- The Grande Prairie Herald, October to December 1918

BEAR CREEK CEMETERY

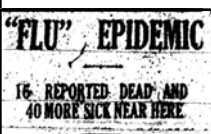
Diary of the Great Influenza Epidemic around the Grande Prairie Excerpts from the Grande Prairie Herald (a weekly newspaper)

20 Oct 1918 The Grande Prairie Herald runs its first article on influenza ('flu'). Its opening sentence notes its appearance in Canada. "Influenza, which is now sweeping over Canada from one end to the other..."

5 Nov 1918 "Owing to ... two thirds of the Herald's staff including the editor, being on the sick list, we are only able to give our readers half the issue this week.

The Board of Health here has taken over the Immigration Hall and are using it as a Hospital for influenza cases, they have secured the services of a competent nurse who is in charge, and anyone having cause to go there can rest assured that they will be well taken care of. \$50.00 fine, first offense for person not wearing face masks.

Quite a number of people in and around Grande Prairie are reported being on the sick list. There are no serious cases in the city at present and the Board of Health urges everyone to take every precaution to keep the epidemic down. It has been estimated that nearly 1,000 cases of influenza are prevalent in Edmonton at present. The disease shows no signs of abating and the compulsory face mask protection is being enforced in every part of Alberta. Winnipeg health authorities, as a result of the alarming spread of influenza since Saturday, admit that the malady has got beyond their control....There are four hundred unburied bodies and the city laborers have been drafted to prepare graves."



12 Nov 1918 Front page headline "Flu Epidemic - 16 Reported Dead and 40 More Sick Near Here - 23 cases have been on hand continuously in the local Immigration Hall since the first day of its opening as a hospital. All who have been brought in in time have been well taken care of, and as a result no deaths have occurred to any patients who have been in the hall after a few hours.... A new temporary hospital has been established in Lake Saskatoon for the convenience of patients afflicted with the rampant epidemic." [edition includes 12 influenza obituaries]

19 Nov 1918 Front page headline: "Ten More People Succumb to Attacks of Influenza". Follow up article: "Grande Prairie Subscribes Liberally - Over \$200,000 has been subscribed without any solicitation by different parties in Grande Prairie and adja-

cent parts for the purpose of assisting in the stopping of the present epidemic. Surely no more worthy object for the expenditure of a few paltry dollars could be suggested. May the good work continue and the 'flu' be given its knockout licks in the near future." [plus 10 influenza obituaries]

26 Nov 1918 "More Victims of Influenza" - This week a number of other deaths are reported in this district especially in the outlying parts. In nearly every case which has proven fatal, a setback has been the direct cause coming as the result of too sudden exposure after the first recovery was well on the way. After this dangerous feature of the disease is thoroughly understood it is likely that the fatalities will cease; but this fact must be realized and enforced on the patient either by force or otherwise, or his life will be seriously endangered.... **Edmonton:** 18 new cases of the flu and one death up to noon last Thursday caused decision for again making compulsory the order for wearing masks. For that portion of the Province north of the line between townships 25 and 26. Board of Health ordered and confirmed by order in council states that all masks henceforth must be used in all buildings, except a person's own house." [plus 6 influenza obituaries]

3 Dec 1918 "The rapid cessation of the activities of the influenza epidemic gives hope for a new condition to again be ushered into being, when the schools, public gatherings, picture shows, etc. will be reopened." [plus 2 influenza obituaries]

10 Dec 1918 "Church Open Sunday Next" - Church of England services will be resumed.... As soon as practicable it is intended to hold a united service of thanksgiving to God for His mercy in restoring peace and giving victory to the cause of the Allies [the British Empire and its Allies had achieved victory the month before, ending World War One], and also for the abatement of the epidemic that has been raging throughout the land."

TEN MORE PEOPLE SUCCUMB TO ATTACKS OF INFLUENZA

Apply sticker from geocache/letterbox here. Number GP12

