



Probus Club of Central Edmonton Newsletter

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Presentation: April 16 – Gordon Fuerst, Probus member

Gordon Fuerst spoke to us about his “obsession” over a mystery. To set up the stories that were the focus of his interests, he shared his family history. His family and their community originated in Poland but were unique in that it was Lutheran and spoke German. His Grandfather’s polish roots would prove important. During the 1800’s, members of his family and members of their community moved from Poland to Volhynia, Russia and ultimately Alberta. They settled in an area south of Wetaskiwin called Dewach Flats.

Key to the story is that they built a Lutheran Church for their Community. In the late 1930’s. Pastor Wolfram arrived at the church to minister to the congregation. He had recently emigrated from Germany to support the growing Lutheran population. WWII started in the fall of 1939 and Canada passed the War Measures Act. The Act included the idea that Canada had to deal with enemy aliens, these included people of German, Japanese, and Italian heritage. The Government required these people to register. Since his family came from Poland, they did not get targeted. However, in late 1939, the RCMP removed Pastor Wolfram. Gordon’s mystery is what happened to the Pastor. The answer to this question required a multiyear investigation, with answers coming in from unanticipated sources. It also led to another Albertan who homesteaded north of Peace River in the bush, Gunther Pankow. Gunther emigrated to Canada from Germany earlier in the 1930’s. The RCMP also collected him in 1939.

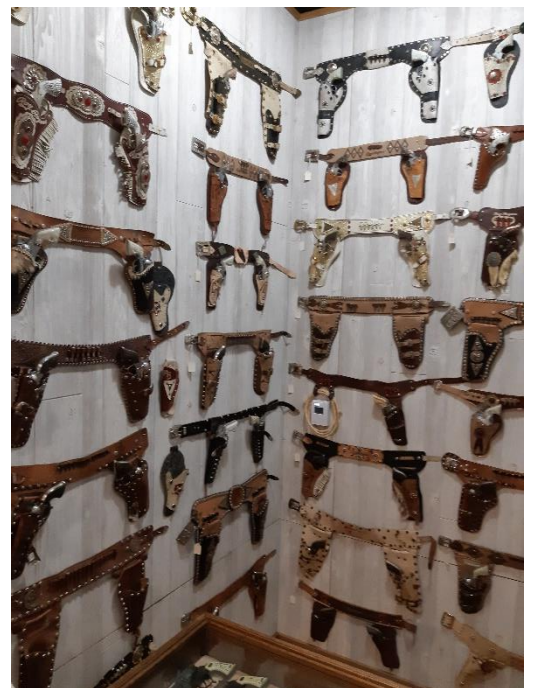
So, what did he learn? Both, people followed the same path, in that they were taken to an Internment Camp in the Kananaskis area. About 600 people of German heritage occupied this camp. In the following years they were moved to Ontario and then New Brunswick. They were finally released in 1942. He also was able to flesh out other details. Finally, he was told that the Pastor passed away in 1948. His source for much of the information was his Cousin’s wife who turned out to be Wolfram’s niece.

A very interesting story and a spotlight on a poorly understood part of Canada’s history.

Tour: April 25 – Bodnar Museum

On April 23 we visited the Bodner Museum, a private museum (not opened to the public) owned by Ron, Danin and Conrad Bodnar. For this visit, we teamed-up with the Probus Club of South Edmonton. It holds a massive vintage collection of antique cars, muscle cars, a malt shop, general store, juke box room, vintage wedding gowns,

dresses and clothing dating back to the late 1800's.



A small subset of the numerous children's cap guns and holsters.



Rifles from the American War of Independence



The Meccano room