



# SAAMIS SEEKER

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# 1999 EXECUTIVE & COMMITTEE HEADS

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The purpose of the Saamis Seeker is to inform members of A.G.S. and Medicine Hat & District Branch affairs, to print material to further member's research, and to publish local resource and research materials.

Final authority regarding the acceptance of material rests with the editor. Neither the editor nor the Branch accept any responsibility for the opinions or errors on the part of the contributors.

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## ONE OF MEDICINE HAT'S STATELY HOMES

### THE EWART-DUGGAN RESIDENCE



*Special thanks to Jim Marshall for permission to reprint this picture.*

Built in 1887, on what was then the western outskirts of Medicine Hat, the Ewart-Duggan residence has been surrounded by a century's worth of change. The city has grown all around it and yet, ironically, it still stands relatively alone and virtually unchanged. Jackie Duggan, daughter of John Ewart, lives in the home at 443 First Street South East.

Mr. Ewart started a tradition of gracious homes along First Street when he built this house for himself and his bride-to-be, Jessie Herald (daughter of our first Presbyterian minister, Rev. James Herald). He announced at the time that his was to be "one of the finest residences in Medicine Hat". This was no idle boast. Built with brick and containing a carved staircase and marble fireplace, both imported from Montreal, the

house was outstanding when compared with the small frame or sod homes that were prevalent on the prairies at that time. The red brick, unique in the Territories to this location, was produced by Ben McCord & Co. from their brickyard on the Seven Person's Creek near the present I-XL Industries.

The fact that the house is still in such fine condition after ninety-eight years is testament to the care given it by the family, who have continually lived in it over the years. And it's proof also of the quality of materials and labor found in Medicine Hat in those early years.

John Ewart must have been blessed with a considerable amount of business sense and foresight. He and his partner, Thomas Tweed, were the first merchants to arrive in Medicine Hat in the spring of 1883. (They came from Swift Current by horse and buggy - the railroad had not reached Medicine Hat.) This was to be the site of the CPR's supply depot as it pushed through from Maple Creek that summer. But rather than follow the CPR as it continued on its journey toward the mountains, Tweed and Ewart remained in the fledgling community. In 1886, they built the town's first brick warehouse - a long term investment that contributed greatly to the appearance of the town. A year later, when John Ewart built his substantial 1 ½ storey brick home, he was making this most telling commitment. Here he would raise his family and commit his future. Unfortunately, his time was not to be long. By 1892, he was diagnosed as having consumption (tuberculosis) and by January of 1893, at the age of 31, he died, leaving his wife, Jessie, with two small children.

In the ten years John Ewart lived in Medicine Hat he made his mark not only as a very successful businessman but also as a public-minded citizen. He was actively involved with community efforts and worked hard as a member of the School Board and the Board of Trade.

Next time you're down by the Library or Court House, look across the street at a part of Medicine Hat's history - and a legacy of one of our city's earliest entrepreneur.

Reprinted from *The Medicine Hat Mirror*, Wednesday, October 30, 1985, with permission of the writer, Janice Andreas.

*Jacqueline Duggan resided in the original brick home constructed by her father until 1982. She passed away in October 1987 at the age of 94. In 1991, Gary and Anita Stimson purchased the residence with the main purpose and intent of preserving it. With the support of the Medicine Hat Historical Society, they received Provincial status on May 13, 1993, and thus the work of refinishing took place. The roof was re-shingled, the brickwork repaired, wooden balconies and porch restored, and the interior refurbished. In December of 1991, Landmark Realty (Med. Hat) Ltd. moved into the restored residence and is proud to be home of one of Medicine Hat's historical resources. Editor*

## FAMILY HISTORY CENTER

### HOURS

Starting September 14, 1999, the Family History Center hours will be:

Tuesday: 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Thursday: 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

*Please note that they will no longer be open on Sundays.*

## THE FAMILY TREE

I think that I shall never see  
The finish of a Family Tree  
As it forever seems to grow  
From roots that started very low;  
'Way back in ancient history time,  
In foreign lands and distant climes.  
From them grew trunk and branching limb,  
That dated back to time so dim,  
One seldom knows exactly when  
The parents met and married then.  
Nor when the twigs began to grow  
With odd named children, row on row.  
Though a verse like this is made by me,  
And the end's in sight as you can see;  
'Tis not the same with Family Trees  
That grow and grow through centuries.

*Source unknown*

## MEDICINE HAT & DISTRICT GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

### LIBRARY HOURS

The first Wednesday of the month, our library is open from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at which time our regular monthly meeting starts. All other Wednesdays of the month, the library is open from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Other arrangements can be made by phoning Betty Padfield at 526-8677.

*Note from the editor: The following article is long, but quite fascinating. It will be published in two parts. Look for the second half in the December issue.*

I found the following story in a 1963 Heimat Kalendar. It was originally in German. It does not mention the author. I find it very interesting. It describes some of the Bessarabian customs. I will try to translate it into English as well as I can. Some of the German words are hard to translate. There are also several slang words which have no meaning in English. I hope you will enjoy it.

Ferdinand Schwab

## AS EGON TOOK ADINE

For stories to be interesting, you need a suitable format. For this story, the following format was chosen. It is necessary to point out that some of the names mentioned appear in the village of Eichendorf. However, this story is not meant for any particular family. These names are only used to make a better story.

Quietly, Adine had long wanted Egon. However, she did not dare to let him notice it. She had to wait and hope. Egon also liked Adine very much. He had chances to watch her during field work. He noticed that she was diligent, efficient and skilful. Besides, it suited him also that at her marriage, she would receive several hectares of land. It would have been easier for him had he known that her parents liked him. They would like to have him for a son-in-law.

As he finally noticed that Adine liked him, they started to meet at her parents garden gate. This was usually in the evening or on holidays. When she heard a certain whistle from the yard wall, Adine knew that Egon was waiting for her. Naturally these meetings did not long go unnoticed. Soon the news spread that they were "going together". Soon the parents agreed to have Egon come into the house. Every Sunday, he visited his Adine and the lovers spent time undisturbed in the living room. It was always a surprise to Egon how Adine kept up with all the news in the village. She always told him of new events going on in the district. Even though he knew much of it before, it still have him pleasure to hear her tell it. She told him of her brother George's engagement. George had ordered a golden ring with a stone from Galatz. This ring was now worn by Frieda. Her brother had told her that Frieda has received the ring from him. He had placed the ring on her finger months ago. However, Frieda hesitated to wear it in public. Even though Frieda was proud of the ring, Adine said she was not jealous. She felt proud even without a ring and knew that Egon loved her. She kissed Egon to prove she meant what she said.

That Alma and David were "promised" was well known. David was from a neighbouring village. This made it very difficult for him to visit his Alma whenever he wished. Egon believed that Herbert talked his friends into working against the "outsider". The street boys talked David into buying them drinks to keep him out of difficulties and a fight was avoided. Before Alma's parents gave their blessing, they decided to visit David's parents in Albota. They inquired about their prospective son-in-law's property. As they found everything in order, they discussed time, preparations, and wedding plans.

Teasingly, Egon asked Adine when they would have their inspection. Adine answered she was not asked yet. Egon said he meant it only as a joke. He said with them it would not be necessary because they are both from the same village. Their parents knew what each could expect in the future.

Adine told Egon she heard that last Sunday there was a sand trail spread from between the houses of Else and Konrad. Somebody saw their school chums spread the sand during the night. They said it was Richard that did it. It would have been easier for him to use straw.

Soon thereafter, a spring wagon with a team of horses drove down the road toward Albota. Behind the driver sitting on a spring seat were the young farmer Egon and his Adine. They drove for a hearing. They wanted to get married. The Pastor questioned them to find how well they knew the Catechism and the Bible. Then they decided on where and when the wedding was to take place. The last three Sundays before the wedding, the banns would be read as follows: Today the first announcement of the engagement is made between Egon D., son of Karl C. and Martha nee Z. with Adine G., single daughter of August G. and Anna nee W. Even though the bridal pair had good courage, they still had a strange feeling when the banns were read.

Adine thought of a distant cousin whose banns read "no longer single, daughter." This meant that she could not wear a veil or wreath in front of the church altar. That was very embarrassing. She could have tried to hide her condition with her wedding gown. However, she would have had to pay the church a penalty. It probably would have come out later anyway. It could also have happened that someone who knew her condition could have removed her wreath and veil before she entered the church. That would have been worse. That had never been done in Eichendorf but the possibility was there. For a widow, it was natural to enter the church without a veil or wreath.

There was a lot of planning and organizing to do before the wedding. Most interesting was the assessment. The church law made this demand. The Mayor was in charge, along with two appraisers and a secretary. All the property that was brought into the marriage was assessed and recorded. This would help later in deciding inheritance for the family. Egon and Adine had this assessment eight days before the wedding. Even though Adine had land of her own, Egon signed over five hectares of his land to her. He wanted to make sure that she had enough support in case he predeceased her. For as long as she was a widow, she could farm this land. However, she could never sell it.

As a rule, the weddings were held in the bride's home. However, Egon's parents had a larger house. They decided to have the wedding there. The most difficult was the decision whom to invite to the wedding. Both families had a large relationship. Besides both the bride and groom had many single friends. It was difficult to choose the attendants. Some of the groomsmen were not well liked by the bridesmaids. Finally, it was decided which would become pairs. Another difficulty was that Christian would not attend the wedding if his girlfriend from "B" was not invited. The couple did not want to cause hard feelings so they invited her also. As she had relatives in the village, she would stay with them. Under no circumstances would she be allowed to sleep under the same roof as Christian.

Then also had to be decided who would be the servers and waitresses. Also they had to choose the women who would help in the kitchen. The invitations to the guests from the village were presented personally by a young friend. He had to make the rounds to the homes. He presented the invitation with a long recitation

concluding with the invitation. The out of town guests received written invitations.

Besides their own dishes and chairs, more were borrowed from neighbours and guests. Everybody was willing to help out. The day before the wedding, you could see the bridesmaids going down the street with white aprons and a basket in their hand. They visited the prospective guests to borrow cups, plates, silverware, etc.. This all was carefully marked down so it could be returned to the right place.

In the meantime, the groomsmen also were busy. They had polished up their wagon. Two nice horses were hitched up. The horses were well groomed, with ribbons in the manes and tails. They also went from house to house, collecting tables, chairs and benches. Proudly, they drove their horses, swinging their caps, shouting and whistling.

A few days before the wedding the youth had a party with games and dancing. The groomsmen were not supposed to know who their partner was until the wedding day. On the wedding day, the bridesmaids went to their partner and pinned a bouquet on their suit. Then they were a bridal pair.

At breakfast, the helpers and close relatives and outside guests took part. Before the meal, the sexton spoke a brief message. Now it was time to get ready to go to church. Egon and Adine's wedding was classed as a large wedding. They had ten bridal pairs. There also were many guests. There were at least nine horse drawn vehicles that drove off toward Albota. The bride and groom were in the front wagon followed by their attendants and then the guests.

After the marriage, they took many pictures to remember the happy occasion. When they returned from the marriage, the guests lined up in front of the house to congratulate the couple. Then they went in the house to enjoy a festive meal. The bride and groom sat at the head of the table and on either side sat their parents. Next the other guests were seated. There was not enough room for all the guests at one table. Some were seated in an adjoining room with wide open doors. Whisky and biscuits were served.

Meanwhile, the women in the kitchen had the meal ready. The servers were busy bringing the food. There was chicken soup, cook and fried poultry meat, potatoes, salads and dessert. There was plenty of homemade wine. At 5 p.m. coffee and kuchen were served. Then at 8 p.m. was supper time. They had roast and fried meat and steamed rice. Then again at 11 p.m., they served "cold cuts", sausage, sardines and tea. Meanwhile, there were always sweets and wine available. The cooks and waitresses and servers were kept busy. They proudly wore their white aprons with a wide ribbon across the chest.

After dinner, the bridal party drove through town to show themselves to the rest of the village. There was a lot of shouting and noise. Many shot their cork pistols. Others shot in the air with shotguns. This was to indicate good luck to the marriage couple. After this, the youth gathered at the "thresh place". Here different games were played. They sang several songs. After this, everybody returned to the house. Now it was the turn of the children to do their thing. They had memorized different verses for this special occasion. Someone started a song and soon all the guests joined in. They sang many old familiar folk songs. Everybody was happy. There was plenty to eat and plenty of good wine. Through all this, the poor and sick were not forgotten. Food was collected and delivered. Adine's uncle went around with his hat to collect money for the orphanage.

A left over cake was auctioned off "American style". When there were no more bids, the auctioneer would say, for the first, the second, the third and last time, SOLD! Uncle Henry had put in the last bid. This money also went to the poor. Someone called out "Egon and Adine *horca*". This meant that there were to kiss each other. Egon and Adine did not need to be coaxed long. However, there were more shouts of "*horca*" for others. Not all the bridesmaids allowed themselves to be kissed.

Now the dancing started. Young and old joined in. There were waltzes, polkas and marches. They also had

some Russian dances such as "*saratzki*" and "*krakowiak*". The bride would also have liked to dance but she could not because one shoe was "missing". It was the groomsmen's duty to watch that the bride's shoe was not stolen. They were asked for a ransom to retrieve the shoe. If not, the shoe would be auctioned off. This could become expensive for the groomsmen so they chipped together to pay the ransom. They gave this money to the bridal pair as a gift. Then there followed the "hurrah tossing" of the bride's wreath to the bridesmaids and the groom's bouquet to the best men. Whoever caught these was to be the next lucky person.

The day after the wedding, all the borrowed dishes, chairs and tables were returned. The young married couple moved into their home. Here all the presents from the family and friends were brought. Also the best men and bridesmaids went together for a nice gift. The Sunday after the wedding "the wedding was buried". That is to say, the leftover lunch and drinks were consumed by the closest relatives.

Now the newly married couple settled in to work. Adine looked after the meals and Egon took care of the farm machinery and horses. Day after day, it was the same routine.

One year went by when Egon went to the school to visit the sexton. He made arrangements for their first son to be baptized. His name was to be Erich. The custom was that each picked two relatives as godparents. The baptism took place the next Sunday before the regular church service. The baptism was done by the sexton. However, this had to be verified by the next visit of a pastor. After the baptism, the godparents and the grandparents were invited to a meal. One year later, the same process was gone through for Erich's new sister, Berta.

As both children grew up, they played in their large yard and large house. In one corner of the yard, Erich had a small barn where he kept his "bone horses". He handled these toys exactly like his father did with his live horses. Meanwhile Berta played with her stuffed doll that she received from her godparents and a small cradle that her father had made. Berta did not know this however, because she got both for Christmas. At that time, the Christ Child came along with the "*Weinachtsmann*" - Santa Claus - into the room. Erich was not shy. He said his recitation without hesitation. He got a small wheelbarrow, loaded with candy, cookies and nuts. Berta kept tight hold of her mother. She kept her eyes on the Christ Child. She did not realize that under the white sheet was the head of her Aunt Olga. And the "*Weinachtsmann*", wearing a sheepskin coat inside out, was their well known neighbour, Emil F. Erich heard that the "*Weinachtsmann*" or "*Pelzamaerte*" appeared also at the neighbour's house. He was carrying a cowbell and was led with a heavy chain.

Erich had another exciting experience on New Year's morning. He was awakened by strange noises. He rushed into the kitchen to ask his mother what was going on. He saw strange men in the kitchen. They were dressed like their Russian hired men that they had in the summertime. They were barely gone, then others came in. They said something that Erich did not understand and scattered some grain kernels around the kitchen. When they were through speaking, Erich's mother gave them a few bagels. She told Erich they were people from a neighbouring village. They were wishing them good luck for the New Year. People would also come on Easter morning and announce "Christ is alive, Christ is risen".

On New Year's morning, mother told Erich to get dressed. After breakfast you have to go to "*Dota*" and "*Döte*" (uncle and aunt) and the grandparents "*Ahna*" and "*Ehne*" (grandmother and grandfather). You must wish them good luck for the New Year. Erich put his arms around his mother and she kissed him. It had snowed the night before but the sidewalks were shovelled. Erich rushed to his relatives. From *Döte* (aunt), he got cookies and candies. From his uncle he got a cork pistol along with a box of corks. His uncle showed him how to use it. Then he rushed to his grandparent's house. On the way, he met his Uncle Karl, who was also on his way to the grandparents. Uncle Karl inspected Erich's present and told Erich to try it out at his grandparents. Uncle Karl also had his shotgun with him. Before they reached the house, they both loaded their guns. Arriving at the house, Uncle Karl said, "Much luck and blessings, a long life, thereafter smoke and fire!" Then there was a bang from his shotgun. Erich's gun did not go off. Uncle Karl fixed it by pushing in the cork tighter, then it banged as



it went off. With this mishap, Erich forgot his greeting that he had prepared. Grandma held her ears shut, and Grandpa said "Now we have a double New Year's wish!"

Before Easter, Erich's mother had to go help her sister. It was said that a "stork" had left them a baby. Erich and Berta stayed at their grandmother's place. They did not want to go to bed at night. Grandma told them if they did not listen, the "*nachtkrab*" (night crow) would get them! They did not know what the "*nachtkrab*" was, even grandmother had never seen him, but it worked.

On Ash Wednesday, the yard was cleaned up and swept. Also the sidewalk outside the yard was swept. Easter holiday started on Thursday. Adine had taken the time to clean up the back part of the house. This had been built with (batzen) mud bricks. She gave it a new coat of mud plaster. Then she whitewashed it with calcimine. It was usually quiet on Sundays. On Good Friday, it was exceptionally quiet. Erich remembered that, at one time, his grandfather had warned him that on this day he was not to do any hammering. Grandfather was a strong Christian. As many others, grandfather would fast on Good Friday.

Erich's mother cooked milk rice, which his father did not like very much. The neighbours usually had fish on Good Friday. That Saturday, the children were sent to the grandparents with some excuse. Adine wanted to color eggs. Her sister-in-law helped her. She still had the children to believe that the Easter rabbit brought the colored eggs. Adine remembered how much fun it was for her as she grew older to help color eggs with a variety of colors. They would draw pictures on the eggs with beeswax. Some eggs were completely polished with beeswax. She still wanted to keep those old traditions for her children. Several weeks before, Adine had planted some barley in a container filled with soil. By Easter time, the grain was two or three inches tall. This made a nice nest for some of the colored eggs. She had to rush to get everything done before suppertime.

Next morning, they got up early to attend church service out at the cemetery. They were barely home when the horse herder came along. He was soon followed by the cow herder, then the calf herder. They all received gifts. Also the sheep herder and the milkman did not leave empty handed. The well wishers now made their rounds as previously mentioned. The children were barely dressed when they rushed outside to see what the Easter rabbit had left for them. Naturally, they had to try out whose eggs were the strongest by "picking" them. Already two of Berta's eggs were broken. She had tears in her eyes. She had not learned yet how to hold the eggs so the hardest part was to the front. Berta was comforted when she was told that later that day she could go to her relatives to get her "Easter rabbit".

Erich's Uncle George belonged to a club. The youth of the club wanted to have a game on Easter Monday. It was a game played with eggs. The place had been picked and cleaned up. The necessary eggs had been gathered. A flag pole was set up in the middle of the playground. A circle was cleared of about ten metres in diameter around the pole. There were four rows of eggs laid out toward the center. There were always nine white eggs followed by a colored egg. These were laid on a piece of sod. The rows were marked with colored flags. Involved were four runners and eight girls. One runner and two girls made a team. The runner would pick up an egg and run around his flag and, while running, toss the egg in his girl's apron. The second girl would then take the egg and put it in a basket. When all nine white eggs had been gathered, the runner picked up the colored egg and threw it over the flag pole. Erich's uncle was one of the runners. Then there was a pause to give the runner a chance to rest. During the pause, the runners danced around the flag pole. At a signal, the runners went for the last egg. Erich's uncle got his egg over first so he was declared the winner. He was tossed "hurrah" and had an honor dance around the flag pole. Then the rest of the people joined in the dance. Erich heard his Uncle George say that they sold the eggs and put the money in their club treasury.

Now it was September. This was a special day for Erich. It was his first school day. He knew the way to school because during the summer he had gone to kindergarten. This summer again they had a teacher for kindergarten during the holidays. They had a closing celebration where they had opportunity to show off what they had learned. At seven years of age, Erich was a big boy and could go to the regular school. Mother

showed him how to carry the slate and the A B C book. Also, he had a box of "griffel" (graphite chalk). Now he could leave with best wishes from his mother. On the way, he met other students. He noticed that the girls carried their school stuff in nicely decorated bags. All the boys carried theirs in their hands like his mother had taught him.

One day Erich came home happily swinging a paper. He had given a recitation with his name on it. He was also to bring a little bag along to school. Seldom was the school so full as on the day after Christmas. On this evening, the scholars had to say their recitations. This was an exciting new experience for Erich. The students were crowded into a small side room. Now Erich understood that "over a hundred" meant a lot of students. Then came the teacher led them in singing "*Ihr Kinderlein kommet*". (Come all ye children!) While singing this song, they marched into the church. First the girls were lined up on the left side of the pulpit. The boys lined up on the right side where the Christmas tree was standing. In spite of being crowded, everything went off smoothly. At the end of the program, the children got their little bags returned. They were filled with dates, nuts, dried apples, figs, candies, and bagels.

On December 28, the hired man packed his stuff and left the family. George's father had already ordered another hired man who came on the same day. December 28 was called the "*wanderstag*". This day the hired help had opportunity to look for other employment. Erich did not like this at all. He liked their Russian servant. He had another problem. He did not feel good. This could have been caused by too much sweets, but he also had a bad cold. Mother put him in bed and brought him some hot tea. This made him perspire. He slept restlessly during the night. Suddenly, he was wide awake. The church bells were loudly ringing. It was still night. He could not understand that. His mother tried to explain to him that the old year was over and the New Year had started. A few minutes before midnight, the bells had started to ring to say goodbye to the old year. Then the men gave a pause for the bells. Then the bells started ringing again to greet the New Year. The Mayor himself was there to make sure everything was done properly. This was followed by shots in the air from cork pistols and shotguns. Erich would have liked to go out, too, but he had to stay in bed.

Next morning, Erich still could not swallow very well. Mother decided that he had to stay in bed. His sister, Berta, came to him with roasted sunflower seeds. She still could not eat them very well. Erich was a master at it. Now, however, he was not in the mood to teach her. "Oh, well" Berta said, "Popcorn is a lot simpler." Erich agreed. He said, "It is also simpler eating "*plachinta*" made of pumpkin or the corn cooked or roasted on a fire." He said, "When I can swallow better again, I will show you how to eat sunflower seeds. You have to use the tongue and the teeth."

..... to be continued



Ferdinand Schwab is a regular contributor to the Saamis Seeker.  
We all wish him a speedy recovery from his recent surgery.

