



# SAAMIS SEEKER

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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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Note from the editor: *As promised, here is the second half of Ferdinand Schwab's article. The first half was published in the September 1999 issue of Saamis Seeker. Ferdinand found the story in a 1963 Heimat Kalendar. It was originally in German and makes no mention of the author. The story is very interesting and describes some of the Bessarabian customs. Ferdinand translated it into English but some of the German words do not translate well. He notes that there are also several slang words which have no meaning in English. Again, we must say a special thank you to Ferdinand for this article.*

## AS EGON TOOK ADINE - PART TWO

Both children had been along to church many times. They knew how to behave. Now it was safe to let them go alone. After the second bell ringing they left, not without another warning to behave. Erich and his sister went right up to the front of the church. Erich sat on a bench at the right side and Berta on the left. Only the men and the boys sat on the right side. Girls and women sat on the left side of the church. In front sat the young children. Behind them sat the students. Next were the married men and, at the back, sat the older men. The same was at the women's side. It was forbidden to look back in church. As Erich became older, he kept moving back further. They sat down immediately as they came in. The single young people and confirmed members said a quiet prayer before they sat down. Then they nodded a greeting to their neighbour on the right and a nod to the female on the left. Nobody spoke. Everybody was deep in their own thoughts. Before the service began, two young men would ring the bells once more. Then they sat on a small bench beside the stove. It was their duty to ring the bell during the Lord's Prayer. The church elders then came in. One sat near the back with the other men. The other sat near the front. They helped the sexton when needed. The sexton now stepped behind the pulpit. The elders also set an example when the congregation was to stand and when to sit down. When the service was over, the people stood up as the sexton went down the church aisle. Then they started to leave. The women in the back bench first. Then alternately row after row, they left the church.

Erich was always interested in the church bells. Every morning at 7:30 a.m., the small bell called him to school. He was always yearning to pull on the rope, but the larger boys would not allow it. One evening, he had to do an errand for his father. His errand led him past the bell tower. It was just near the time of the evening bell. An older student went into the bell tower. Erich followed him in with his heart pounding. The student saw the yearning in Erich's eyes. He let Erich pull the rope. Erich soon realized it was not that simple. He had too short a grip on the rope so the bell could not make a full swing and the bell slowed down. The older boy helped pull the rope. Meanwhile, other boys came along to try as well. The bell was not quiet for some time. Now that Erich had tried it once, he was more eager than ever to try again. It was especially of interest to him when one Saturday night, he saw a youth ring both bells at once. Erich was a very attentive boy. He learned a lot just by watching his parents and other people. He always tried to do the same.

One evening, the teacher unexpectedly came in their kitchen. Erich immediately pulled up a chair for him. It was just supper time. It was natural for Erich's parents to ask their guest to join them. Whatever brought the teacher there could be discussed after supper. Even Berta knew that you addressed a teacher as "sir". The children addressed the grandparents and all older people as "ihr" (a show of respect). Even Erich's grandfather, who was much older than the teacher, addressed the teacher as "sir". Once Erich went along with his Uncle George on an errand to a neighbour. He heard his uncle say "Father Schmauder and Mother Schmauder, next Sunday you are invited to come to my parents".

Erich spent a lot of time with their neighbour's son. One Sunday, the neighbours had visitors from out of town. They came driving with a team of horses. As soon as they stopped, the neighbour's son ran to tell his parents. The husband and wife came out to greet the visitors. The hired man unhitched and unharnessed the horses. He tied them to a manger and gave them feed. In the meantime, the guests were invited into the house. They were immediately offered a glass of whisky. Soon after, the housewife excused herself and went into the kitchen to prepare a meal. Soon, the visiting lady went into the kitchen to talk to her sister-in-law. She also helped her with

preparing a meal. The men went out to inspect the yard, barn and garden. The farmer also checked to make sure the visitor's horses were well cared for.

After dinner, the dishes were left for the maid. The farmers and the guests went to church. After church, they sat out on the street bench to visit. Erich's parents also joined them to greet them and ask how their crops were. Soon more people joined them. More benches were needed. Everybody knew each other well and had a lively conversation. Adine invited everybody for coffee. Adine and Egon knew the visitors. They were invited to return the visit sometime in Albota.

Erich was of the age where he could ride. He rode a horse when they were cultivating the "*popsche*" (corn) and during the harvest. Erich had often heard the bells, announcing that it was dinner time. Today he heard the bells particularly well because Erich and his father were near the village. Today it was a different sound. Egon quickly unhitched the horses from the machinery and hitched them on the wagon. Then they drove at a gallop to the village. He explained to his son that the bells were sounding an alarm. Probably there was a fire. All the people in the village rushed to help fight the fire. People brought pails and formed a chain from the nearest well. They passed the water from one to the other. Luckily, the cattle were out in the pasture. Thanks to all the help, the fire was soon brought under control. The barns, however, had burned down. With the help of the neighbours, they were soon rebuilt. Now Erich realized why it was also important to have night watchmen. The watchmen carried an iron rod. When the neighbour brought over the rod, it meant that now it was Erich's father's turn to keep watch. These watchmen were under strict control. Punishment was handed out if someone did not do his duty.

One morning, Erich saw that his mother had been crying. He knew that grandmother had been very sick. Now Erich's father brought the news that the doctor could no longer help grandmother and she had passed away. The sexton announced this to the villagers. The big bell rang three times and then both bells sounded together. By this, all the villagers knew that some adult had died. Hand written notices were passed around from house to house announcing who had died and when the funeral would take place. During this time, no work was done regardless how urgent it was.

The bells were ringing while the sexton and two church elders made their way to the bereaved house. The bells quit when they arrived at the house. There were people set up to signal when the bells were to ring and when they were to be still. While the funeral procession was moving, the bells would ring. When they stopped to rest, the bells were quiet. It could not be expected for the pallbearers to keep going straight through without resting. During these rest periods, a few verses of hymns were sung. Then the bells kept ringing until they arrived at the grave. The grave had been dug on the right side of the cemetery because this was reserved for adults. The children were buried on the left. The last to leave the cemetery were the pallbearers. They went to the mourners home. Here they had a lunch of coffee and sweet breads.

The years passed by. Erich had reached his last school year. Next year, on Palm Sunday, he was to be confirmed. Together with his comrades, they were prepared by the sexton for confirmation. The last two weeks were spent in Albota. Here the Pastor gave them the final instructions. At home, preparations were made for the big day of their first born son. The house was thoroughly cleaned inside and outside. There was a lot of baking and butchering. The tailor sewed Erich's first suit and a white shirt with a tie. A hat and shoes were ready. Also, mother had a white dress sewed. The Sunday before the confirmation, Erich and the others came home. That evening, Erich and his comrades visited their teacher. They thanked him for his service and gave him a present. They also thanked their sexton similarly.

Early on the Palm Sunday morning, many wagons and horses left for Albota, carrying the confirmands, parents and godparents. After confirmation, they took pictures of the confirmands, teacher and pastor to remember this special occasion. Arriving at home, a suitable celebration was held. Erich was not completely free. He still had to attend Sunday school and occasionally help teach the children with their lessons. This made Erich feel grown up. It seemed that the new suit gave him adult strength and stature. He associated with youths with similar ideas.

After dark, the streets belonged to the street youths. They did not want him to move so easily into a new generation. Through some gifts of wine, the new age group were left unmolested.

During the summer, Erich set up a bed out in the open. He liked the fresh air. Some of his friends wanted to play a trick on him. They wanted to carry him away with his bed one night as he went to bed early. He expected them and gave them such a scare that the joke was on them.

Harvest time was a busy time. Load after load of grain was hauled home to be threshed out on the thresh place. Erich had put a small flag on his "herb" grain wagon. His load could be identified from a distance.

Next it came time to gather in the grapes. There were people in the village who did not have a vineyard. Erich was always glad to bring them some for food. Then the sunflowers were brought in. The seeds had to be pounded out of the heads. Next the corn was brought in. The husks had to be taken off. This was always an enjoyable occupation for the youth. They would gather in a group in the evening. There was much singing while they worked. Some new wine was passed around. When some boy found a red corn cob, he claimed the right to kiss a girl! Around ten or eleven o'clock, they quit working. They had a lunch of bread, cheese, sausage and wine.

During the winter when the horses were kept in the barn, they were frequently taken out for exercise. Sometimes they were ridden. Erich preferred mostly to hitch up his brown team on a sleigh. He invited some girls to go for a drive along the street. Soon there were other with the same idea. Some showed off and turned too fast. They upset and dumped the passengers in the snow. Erich did not believe in those kind of tricks.

Berta and Erich were not the only children in the family. There soon were another three siblings. There was not enough land for all of them. Erich went as an apprentice to a carpenter. Life went on as usual in the village. Every year, there were peddlers going through to sell or buy goods. They would sell flax oil, tar, etc. They bought fruit, eggs, pig bristles, feathers and hides.

Erich and several others of his age were called up for training in the army. They had to go to Baimaklia for inspection. Soon after they came back, Erich was called up. The family seldom heard from him. He did not like writing letters. When his sister Berta got married, Erich was given a few days leave. His younger sister confessed to Erich that she was happy her sister was getting married. She, too, was engaged. However, the oldest girl had to get married first before she was allowed. Erich decided to ask his Hulda something quite personal!

Now that Erich was away from home, he realized how much he missed it. He missed the sound of the crickets, the sharp sound of the grasshoppers, and the croaking of the frogs. He missed the folk songs of the field workers returning home after a hard days work. He missed the rattle of the wagons and the sound of trotting horses. He wondered what his Hulda was doing now. He decided to write her a letter. Certainly after his soldier training was over, there would be a wedding.

### DID YOU KNOW ABOUT MISTLETOE??

The "kissing plant" is really a parasite. The mistletoe that we know as a symbol of peace and goodwill actually is a parasite which attaches itself to a host tree and sometimes saps the life out of a healthy, sturdy tree. Mistletoe is commonly found on oak trees.

## HOW I MET MY COUSIN - OUR GILDER CONNECTION

by Ruby Engler

After looking at [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) for the name *Gilder*, there was information that was familiar. I looked to see who submitted it and saw it was a Myra Anderson. The name was familiar as there is a Myra Anderson in our Medicine Hat Genealogy group. I phoned her, and we confirmed that we have the same ancestors! Myra is descended from Sarah Gilder and I (Ruby) am descended from Charles Gilder, Sarah's brother.

The father and mother of Sarah and Charles was Joseph Gelder, born in 1800 in Yorkshire, England. He died December 14, 1877. He married Ellen Weldrake (born April 28, 1808, and died 1844) on June 1, 1825, in Yorkshire.

Charles married Maria Garton in 1853. In 1868, they came to Canada, settling in West Luther Twp., Ontario. Charles and Maria Gilder had six children. One daughter, MaryAnn, married William Green in 1879. They had 13 children. Their son, Alfred, married Margaret Johnston in 1902, and there were four children. One daughter, Margaret, married Elmer Dickson - my parents. They had five children: Joy, Bill, Ruby, Russell and Jean. Ruby married J. Gordon Engler and we have four children: Cheryl, Kurtis, Natalie and Rommel.

Sarah (born July 5, 1828, dies September 1, 1883) married Ware Oliver on July 23, 1852, in Yorkshire and they immigrated to Ontario in 1859 to McGillvary Twp. Four of their children were born in Yorkshire and six were born in Ontario. Sarah had a son when she married Ware Oliver, named George Williamson, who is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery near Aisla Craig, Ontario. After he came to Canada, he took the name of Oliver. Sarah and Ware Oliver's daughter, Eliza, married Thomas Ibbitson on April 9, 1875, and their son, Stanley, married Mary Miltimore in 1919. Their daughter, Myra, married Leonard Anderson. They have two sons. Myra joined our Genealogy group in 1996.

And that is how Ruby and Myra met!

### FAMILY HISTORY CENTER HOURS

The Family History Center will be closed from December 17, 1999, to January 3, 2000. Regular hours will resume Tuesday, January 4, 2000.

Regular hours are:	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 OUR MEDICINE HAT & DISTRICT GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY WILL BE CLOSED DECEMBER 15, DECEMBER 22, AND DECEMBER 29, 1999. REGULAR HOURS WILL COMMENCE AGAIN JANUARY 6, 2000. Regularly, our library is open from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month, 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.

*Alice Kanewischer is a local author. She has been a guest at our Medicine Hat meetings, speaking on her book "I, Alice". The following is one of three short stories that she has given permission to publish in Saamis Seeker. The following story is a thought-provoking story which should make us all think before we "throw that old thing away".* Editor

## THE KEEPSAKE

by Alice Kanewischer

Mama's treasure tumbled helter-skelter from a battered old shoe box onto my soft green carpet. One particular keepsake reminded me of a Mother's Day gift I gave Mama so long ago. As I sat there, memories of a hot, dusty afternoon floated back to me.

During the Depression, our family of ten lived on a farm near Schuler, Alberta. Papa was a dirt farmer, breaking the virgin prairie. Yet the more land that was cultivated, the more soil was ready to blow. I recalled again the familiar hopeless feeling we shared after each dust storm that whirled in uninvited and swept our grain fields bare.

Despite the hardships, Mama's account at the grocery store was always in good standing, so credit was available whenever Mama sent me to pick up a much-needed article. Mr. Schuler, knowing each of us personally, would write out the bill and remind us to take it along home for Mama. Later, Mama sometimes paid the bill with farm products instead of money.

It was May 6, 1938, when I entered the store on such an errand. I immediately became aware that the place had a new aroma. Usually the place reeked from the pungent oil used on the floorboards. The oil kept the dust from billowing around when it was swept with the long-bristled corn broom. How I loved this new sweet scent!

I soon realized that it drifted from a box on the counter, filled to the brim with pink carnations. The flowers had arrived just in time for Mother's Day the coming Sunday. How nice that kind Mr. Schuler must want each of the surrounding farm mothers to have one, to hopefully bring some cheer during these discouraging times. Made of crepe paper, the carnations looked so real I had to touch one to be sure. And they would last forever and ever.

Optimistic with the thought of making Mama happy, I asked the merchant, "How much would one corsage cost me?" "They are only one dime each, Alice," Mr. Schuler replied with his usual friendly smile. My breath sucked in as in a whisper I repeated the price. "Wow! Only ten cents." Then I came to my senses. A dime was far more than I had to spend.

Head down, I trudged home. Puffs of dust sprang up with each step I made in the deep, dust-filled wagon trail. A hopeless feeling surrounded my young heart. Where would I ever get ten cents?

From out of nowhere the idea came. If Mama can trade eggs, butter and cream with Mr. Schuler on a regular basis for the special foods that we were unable to grow or make on the farm, then why couldn't I do this wheeling and dealing also?

It pleased Mama that I so eagerly volunteered to go to the hen house to collect eggs in the round wicker basket. Each time I'd hide three eggs in my soft woollen toque, which I kept under a wooden apple box. Friday came and I had my dozen eggs saved for the trade I would make on my way to school.

I took my lunch pail (a half-gallon syrup pail) to my hiding place and gently laid each snow white egg into it. Unfortunately there was no paper available for me to lay between the layers of eggs to protect them. The dozen eggs filled up the entire space, leaving no room for my lunch. I hid my sandwiches in my pockets so Mama wouldn't ask questions.



I began the two and a half mile walk to Schuler, walking very carefully so that I wouldn't jar the eggs. As I finally made it to the last ditch on the north side of the store, a rush of excitement spurred me on to run up the steep embankment. My left leg became caught in the thick weeds. I fell heavily to the hard ground, face first in the dried thistles that lined the embankment. I heard a sickening loud crunch as the eggs crashed against the side of the tin pail. My dream of giving Mama some happiness also crashed with my fall.

Mr. Schuler must have heard my wails of anger and dismay. He ran from the store, his face pale with concern. "Alice! Are you hurt?"

Tears streaming down my face, I stopped bawling long enough to make out what he was saying. Looking up into his sympathetic face, I blubbered, "No, I'm not hurt. I had wanted to make a trade with you. A dozen eggs for one of your pretty flowers for Mama."

"Well," he said, "let me see what we have here." He pried open the tight lid with his fingernails. I followed him into the store and couldn't bring myself to look at the mess inside my lunch pail. All I could think about was the carnations on the counter . . . and that there would be no pretty carnation for Mama.

Mr. Schuler looked inside the pail. "Well, I do believe Flora can put these eggs to good use." With this he left me standing alone as he took my pail to the kitchen attached to the store.

Not sure I'd understood him right, I gazed after him while my heart fluttered with hope, imagining the happiness the carnation would bring to our over-worked Mama.

SNAP! Startled out of my daydream, I saw Mr. Schuler finish snapping down the lid with the palm of his hand. With a cheerful smile, he handed me the pail. It looked sparkling clean again. It also felt empty and light. Searching his face, I wondered if he had forgotten to put a flower inside it for me.

"Here you are. It's an even trade. I do hope your Mama will have a lovely Mother's Day."

I thought school would never end that day. I grabbed my lunch pail and dashed out the door. Running and skipping the long familiar road home, I soon came to the last hill which overlooked our busy farmyard. Unable to wait another second, I rested on the big rock by the fence, removed the thin wire handle from the pail sockets and yanked off the lid. A waft of sweet-smelling carnation sent me leaping to my feet and running down the long lane in search of Mama. This was so exciting, I simply couldn't wait until Sunday.

"Mama, oh Mama!" I dashed into the stifling hot kitchen. Beads of sweat glistened on Mama's worn face as she rushed about preparing supper for all of us.

"You're home early, Alice."

"Mama," I said, bubbling with excitement. "Look what I have for you in my lunch pail."

Mama cautiously pried at the lid. "I can't begin to guess what you picked up again on the way home. Another frog?"

"No," I giggled.

"Perhaps some wiggly worms?"

My laugh rang high with excitement. "No!" I squeaked.

Mama lifted the lid and a sweet aroma floated from the warm pail. Mama's tired face took on a radiance that I hadn't

seen in a long, long time. She sniffed the sweet scent again and again. Then Mama reached out and embraced me close to her sweat-dampened bosom. No words of love were spoken, but Mama's radiant smile spoke volumes.

Today, I sit on the floor so many, many years later, amongst the few treasures Mama kept in her shoe box. I gaze at the paper carnation nestled in my hand. My gift has faded to a pale pink, with no sweet aroma escaping from the papery petals. I caress the stem in which a rusty pin is still embedded. Tears blur my vision and drip onto my hand as once again I feel Mama's warm embrace.

Once again I see how proudly Mama wore the fresh pink carnation, pinned high on her left shoulder to enhance the black crepe dress which was only worn on special occasions.

And in the air lingers the soft sweet scent of love.

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BOOK REVIEW  
GOING TO SALT LAKE CITY TO DO FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH  
by J. Carlyle Parker

This book guides you through what to do before you go to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Beginning with the "Introduction", the book carefully tells you how to prepare so that your time at the Family History Library is most productive. It emphasizes the work that can be done in advance at your local Family History Center so you can outline exactly what information you are going to look for in Salt Lake City. Be sure to read "How to Use This Guide" at the beginning of the book, as well as Chapters 10, 11 & 12. The second section of the book tells you what to do while you are at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Taking the book with you to the Family History Library is strongly recommended. There is much worthwhile information in this book.

submitted by Ruby Engler

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SILVER TINSEL - MYSTICAL SYMBOL

*There is an old and appealing legend about Christmas tinsel. A poor peasant woman with many children was able to trim her tree with only the humblest things . . . nuts and berries and whatever else she was able to hoard through the year. She worked late into the night making her tree as lovely as possible. Then while she was asleep spiders crawled from branch to branch leaving a trail of lacy webs over them all.*

*As a reward for her devotion, the Christ Child blessed her tree and all the spider webs turned into glistening silver!*

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

As another year draws to a close, many people look back and take to reflect on their accomplishments. I took on the job of newsletter editor this year, with the goal of increasing my computer skills. It has been a challenge but, with the help of Eileen Stahl, the past newsletter editor, I am becoming more confident with the position. Much thanks should also go to the members of our group who are regular contributors. Without their input, the past year would have been much more difficult. Now here is the challenge for all of you: *An article from each one of our members!* It doesn't need to be long and it certainly doesn't need to be professional. The article I will write is the story of my grandparent's marriage, with its very short (for that time) engagement period, and their subsequent boat journey to their first home in Indonesian. I have a couple of lovely pictures to go with it. So what do you have? A black sheep or a skeleton in your family tree? A tidbit of trivia about war medals? Some hints on pitfalls of researching in Poland or England or, closer to home, Ontario? A recipe handed down through the generations? It could be a book review or an interesting Internet site. Everyone loves a challenge so let's see just how successful our newsletter can be with **everyone** contributing an article! We can look back on our past accomplishments but, together, we can look forward to a more interesting newsletter.

*HAPPY CHRISTMAS and a  
MERRY MILLENNIUM to you and yours*

### FAMOUS RHYME FEATURES MINCE PIE

*Little Jack Horner  
Sat in a corner  
Eating a Christmas pie;  
He put in his thumb  
And pulled out a plum  
And said, "What a good boy am I!"*

History relates that mincemeat pies have something to do with the nursery rhyme about *Little Jack Horner*. It is said that the real Jack Horner was Thomas Horner, a servant of church official Richard Whiting in the time of Henry VIII. The king was seizing as much church land as he could get away with, so to appease the monarch, Richard Whiting decided to send him a most unusual Christmas present. He entrusted his servant Thomas Horner with the job of delivering his gift of a mince pie with the deeds of twelve rich estates hidden inside it. Whiting hoped that Henry VIII would be satisfied and not take any more church land. On the way to deliver the unusual Christmas gift, Thomas Horner opened the mince pie and stole one of the deeds for himself. With this "plum" he made his fortune. You can share this bit of history with your children the next time you read *Little Jack Horner* to a child.