

The Wolf family saga continues - Matheson fire

By John Sommer

Last week I started to tell you about Waldemar Wolf, a German who went to Denmark 100 years ago. He married in Denmark and became a butcher. In 1906 he came with his wife, Christina and two sons to Canada and settled in Hamilton. He was on the way to a comfortable life when he grew restless again and moved his family to 160 acres of bush country near Timmins in 1913.

In the meantime, Anna Wolf (later Mrs. Bingham), who told me all this a good year ago when she lived at the Bennett Centre, had been born the year her family arrived in Canada, and a year later, a third son joined his older siblings and completed the Wolf family. Let me continue with their story.

The most frightening event of her childhood, as remembered by Mrs. Bingham, was a great bushfire that swept past her family's farm in 1916 and destroyed the little town of Matheson six miles away.

Waldemar Wolf and his wife Christina were on their way to Matheson with their horse and a "sloop" on a rough and narrow road, to get some needed supplies, when they spotted, from a lookout, a huge mountain of dark smoke piling up into the sky over the distant bush country. To the Wolfs it looked as if the fire causing the smoke was moving in the same direction they were moving - towards Matheson.

Waldemar Wolf gave a flick of his whip, urging on his horse to a faster trot. When they reached Matheson, the town's inhabitants seemed to be unaware that their settlement was in danger. The Wolfs quickly did their shopping and talked wherever they went about the wall of smoke they had observed while on their way to town. The result was that the newly installed telegraph was put to use to get more information about the fire.

Yes, the fire was moving in the direction of Matheson, was the answer they got. They were also told that a train was on the way to

evacuate the people of the town. The Wolfs, meanwhile, hurried home to their farm and their children. They hoped their land would be spared, but they were not so sure when they watched the wall of smoke that had moved much closer and had become a lot more threatening since they had spotted it first.

The family watched with horror the devastating force of nature devouring acres and acres of bush not far from where they lived. In the end they were lucky. A slight change of the wind turned the fire past their farm.

The people of Matheson were not so fortunate. The train arrived in time to get most of them to safety. Some people stayed behind however because they had decided to fight the fire and save their houses and belongings. But these brave attempts were in vain.

Long before the fire reached the town the air got hotter and hotter and suddenly the trees exploded from the heat and the fire was upon them. The few that had stayed behind lost all their bravery when they realized what was happening around them. They jumped into the river that flowed past their settlement and immersed themselves in the still cool water. There they held on to rocks and waterlogged tree stumps while the fire raged all around them, destroying everything they had created for themselves in

Ideas & the Arts

years of hard labor.

One young woman died. Escaping toward the river, she had fallen while trying to jump over the hot rails of the railway tracks and was burned to death.

Not all days, thank God, brought terror and heartbreak of this kind: Most days, months and seasons went through the slow, ritualistic circle of the year, from the long, long winter that lasted from November until March or even April, to the short and overwhelmingly beautiful burst of spring, to the hot, fly-ridden summer and colorful but melancholic autumn.

Waldemar Wolf and his sons raised animals for slaughter on the farm. Once the roads got better the men started a regular meat route from farm to farm, to provide the settlers with fresh meat. The young Anna Wolf stayed with her mother, after she finished school at 16, to help her with the many chores that never seemed to come to an end.

She was a strong woman and often helped the men at their tasks. When father Wolf decided to replace the log house with a fine frame farmhouse, she helped the men to put down all the hardwood floors. But secretly Anna longed for a life that was different.

She never understood why her

father had moved them all from Hamilton to this harsh and lonely country. One day, she vowed to herself, she would go back there to find the conviviality she was missing so much.

When Anna was about 20 years old, her mother went to Denmark for a long visit with the relations she had been parted from since leaving for Canada in 1906. Anna took over her chores until her mother returned. Eventually Anna Wolf managed to return to Hamilton, but more about that next week.

John Sommer has been the direc-

tor of Gallery House Sol, located on Charles St. in Georgetown since 1962.

What's black and white, and read all over?

THIS WEEK
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~ TUESDAY NIGHT LADIES ~

Unpredictables	118
Should Have Beens	100
The Zeros	100
Pinheads	96
Bowling Stones	84
Shady Ladies	69

~ TRIANO MIXED ~

King Pins	59.5
Lawnbowlers	52
Hi-Rollers	49.5
Dustbusters	47

HIGH ROLLERS

~ SMURFS ~		~ SMURFETS ~	
Cody Wilson	134	Whitney Carroll	141
Greg Pokocky	119	Ashley Uiterwyk	97
Josh Beaton	114	Emily Stirtzinger	86

~ MEN ~		~ LADIES ~	
Singles		Singles	
Andrew McCauley	125	Adrianna Burton	136
Adam Burgess	114	Balie Horder	123
Raymond Peterson	104		

Doubles		Doubles	
Andrew McCauley	248	Balie Horder	239
Adam Burgess	213	Adrianna Burton	223
Raymond Peterson	170	Sarah Kobsa	217

Singles		Singles	
Brock Spears	143	Amanda Williams	104
Kyle Harding	133	Holly Wescombe	101
Ryan Waller	111	Kylie Kruk	91

Doubles		Doubles	
Brock Spear	268	Holly Wescombe	200
Kyle Harding	233	Amanda Williams	176
Kurt McArthur	212	Kylie Kruk	91

Singles		Singles	
David Albano	179	Laura Kobsa	184
Trevor Walker	167	Meagan McGrath	182
Daniel Newell	166	Sara Kruk	145

Triples		Triples	
David Albano	500	Meagan McGrath	467
Trevor Walker	474	Laura Kobsa	431
Daniel Newell	464	Sarah Kruk	381

Singles		Singles	
Brandon McGrath	189	Angie Ahearn	209
Adam Ahearn	166	Janette Jensen	184
Joey Price	138	Sarah Perkins	162

Triples		Triples	
Brandon McGrath	476	Angie Ahearn	540
Adam Ahearn	452	Janette Jensen	502
Joey Price	387	Sarah Perkins	464

Singles		Singles	
Wes Fountain	222	Grace Robertson	257
Ross Smart	221	Anna Arnold	241
George Lee	203	Pat Giguere	233
Oro Brown	181	Kathleen Tulk	226

Triples		Triples	
Ross Smart	579	Grace Robertson	577
George Lee	528	Pat Giguere	552
Wes Fountain	499	Elma Braida	539
Oro Brown	452	Anna Arnold	531


Singles		Triples	
T. Uiterwyk	274	T. Uiterwyk	818
A. Mowat	257	S. Walton	688
J. Wray	254	A. Mowat	688
		J. Knott	675

Singles		Singles	
Bill Cripps	277	Nancy White	246
André Conway	261	Sherry Wilson	244
Sheldon Stuckless	258	Donna Brownlee	221

Triples		Triples	
André Conway	677	Nancy White	634
Bill Cripps	663	Mardie Phillipps	596
Ryan Wilson	658	Donna Brownlee	576

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