

BEZANSON'S BLUEBERRY PATCH



BROOKBANK'S FLAT WAS KNOWN TO PRODUCE
THE BEST WILD BLUEBERRIES IN THE DISTRICT



If your ancestors lived in the Bezanson District once the area became settled, they more than likely picked blueberries at Brookbank's Flat that was located close to the Smoky River near the homestead of A.M. Bezanson and in close proximity to the Bezanson Townsite. Neighbours would pack lunches for their families and meet at the "blueberry patch" for a day of berry picking and visiting. For the children, it was a time to have fun with your friends and relatives; chasing each other, chasing butterflies - simply enjoying the great outdoors. Once picked and cleaned, the juicy berries were canned,

made into delicious pies, muffins, jams and jellies. As the area was known far and wide as being the best blueberry patch for miles, those who lived a considerable distance away would make the trip as evidenced by the picture to the left where the ladies were from Grande Prairie, Glen Leslie, Crystal Creek and Kleskun Hills.



Blueberry pickers at lunch, Brookbank's, Big Smoky River, September 1917: May Grant; Mrs. Jack Shortreed; Mrs. William Boyd; Mrs. Allan Boyd; Beth Cochrane; Anne Cochrane; Rita Carveth; Mrs. Thomas Leslie and Mrs. Arthur Carveth.

The "flat" was named after James Brookbank who had filed a homestead application on SE 32-71-2-W6. In 1912, James and his wife Annie decided to leave Ontario and move west after hearing about the glowing reports of land ownership in the Peace District. James and Annie were accompanied by their daughter, Grace, son-in-law Fred Parker and granddaughter, Isabele. Fred filed on the W ½ 33-71-2-W6 and also purchased one of the business lots at the Bezanson Townsite where he opened a jewelry store. Unfortunately Grace passed away in April 1914 after a 14 month illness and was the first to be

buried at the Glen Leslie Cemetery. In 2017, a large stone to mark the first burial site was donated to the Cemetery by Gerald and Liz Fritsma. The stone was also engraved with a biography of Grace's short life.

The Brookbank's were very community minded and held the first of the annual Bezanson Community Picnics at their property in 1914. Annie and James Brookbank eventually sold their land in Bezanson and moved to Bartlesville, Oklahoma where they raised their granddaughter, Isabele. Fred eventually sold his land and moved to Edmonton.

Although all that remains of the "Blueberry Patch" that was located on the homesteads of James Brookbank and Fred Parker is a gravel pit, the memories of glorious berry picking days will last forever.

Written by Wanda Zenner



Reference

Newspaper Articles & County of Grande Prairie Map
Smoky River to Grande Prairie History Book
Glen Leslie Church Centennial Celebration History Book
South Peace Regional Archives

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