

The background of the entire page is a collage of various newspaper clippings, including headlines and text columns, rendered in a light gray, semi-transparent style. The clippings are scattered across the page, with some showing the word 'Editorial' and others showing 'The Daily Herald-Tribune'.

**KATHERINE O'TOOLE**

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Mentions in [The Daily Herald-Tribune](#), Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada

# A Titanic struggle to get here

Bob Binks still lives on his grandfather's land in Kleskun Hills area

Laura Tester  
Herald-Tribune staff

It was 1912 and Alfred Binks and his family were ready to set sail on Titanic's maiden voyage.

But it wasn't meant to be. Thankfully.

As a result of overbooking, Binks and his wife Ellen and five-year-old daughter Beatrice never climbed aboard the luxury liner that resulted in one of history's worst disasters at sea.

Instead, the three travelled on another ship and landed on Canadian soil safely. Their dreams of a new life would take them out west and to the Edson Trail.

Over the years, the family from England settled into a life that's now being remembered by their descendants as an embodiment of determination and strength in the harsh, unsettled lands of northwestern Alberta.

"They wanted to own their own land and that was impossible to do in England," recalls grandson Bob Binks.

On Sunday at 1:30 p.m., friends and family will gather inside the Mel Rodacker Gallery of the Grande Prairie Museum to open the Binks' exhibit. The Binks' clan is being recognized as the Pioneer Family of the Month.

"It would mean a lot to (Alfred). It was an accomplishment – all those hardships," Bob said.

Undoubtedly, it would have been a difficult move for Binks, newly retired from the navy, to move his family to Canada. In the beginning, Binks had to do it alone.

His wife and child stayed behind in Ontario with his brother Charles while he made the journey west in search of work and a homestead.

Eventually, the entire clan from Ontario made its way to Edson where the women and children lived in a small tar-paper shack. While Alfred and Charles worked in Grande Prairie, the women earned enough money in Edson to buy out-



Harvey Oatway (bottom left), Muriel McRae, Phyllis Foster, Katherine O'Toole, Lawrence O'Toole (top left), Dorene and Bob Binks, and Dorothy and Alfred VanSchaick will gather with friends and family on Sunday at 1:30 p.m. to celebrate the opening of the Binks' family display in the Grande Prairie Museum's Mel Rodacker Gallery.

Photo by Laura Tester

meal, sugar, and other food staples.

The men returned to Edson and helped load the women up for the two-week trek north over the Edson Trail.

On March 8, 1914 during a blinding snow storm, they arrived at their new home in the Kleskun Hills, about 13.5 kilometres northeast of Highways 2 and 43 (Four-Mile Corner). The land was plowed with oxen.

Alfred's brother Jack joined the family for a while.

"They only had two oxen, but there was a herd of horses that lived down at Kleskun Lake and they caught them," said Alfred VanSchaick, whose mother was Beatrice. "They roped them and used them for domestic use."

VanSchaick believes it would have been tough for the Binks family to get accustomed to the land.

"I think it took a lot of adjusting to because they had the wide open spaces and sewer and water in England. And then they came out here where you build a little biffy out back and you gather water to wash your clothes."

Alfred's homestead grew and so did his family. On June 1, 1916, Alfred and Ellen had a son, Cyril. And eventually, a school was built at Kleskun Hill four kilomet-



1) Alfred and Ellen Binks and baby Beatrice in England in 1907. 2) Alfred and Ellen Binks' youngest daughter Pearl in an undated picture. She plans to be in Grande Prairie for Sunday's exhibit opening. 3) Pearl Watson (Binks) as a young girl cleans up the barn on the family homestead along the Edson Trail. 4) Ellen Binks at her home from the 1930s that still sits on the land today 13 kilometres east of Four-Mile Corner along Highway 43.

tres away where both Beatrice and Cyril walked to.

Oldest child Beatrice used to walk to the Kleskun Lake school, a distance of eight kilometres. Sometimes, she was lucky to have another mode of transportation.

"Mother had a colt that was six months old and she raised it and rode it to school," VanSchaick said.

Alfred and Ellen had two other children, Marjorie and Pearl. On Dec. 17, 1928, Beatrice married Glen Van

Schaick and left to set up her own home. They raised four children – Raymond, Alfred, Grace, and Ruth.

In 1929, Alfred and his wife moved not far away from the original homestead and three years later, moved again to a nearby quarter parcel. There were no buildings to speak of on this quarter, only a small sod-roof cabin. They moved into a new house just before Christmas sometime in the early '30s. Alfred was interested in gardening and had a special desire to grow fruit.

"He loved nature, he loved gardening," said grandson Harvey Oatway fondly.

Eventually, Cyril and Marjorie got married and moved on. Alfred farmed with horses right up to the time he decided to retire.

In the early spring of 1944, he sold his machinery and most of his livestock. Then he bought another car, and drove to Ontario for a two-month holiday. After returning home he decided to sell out and move to Ontario permanently. He sold his furniture and remaining livestock and he, Ellen, and Pearl left. But all three had returned to Grande Prairie by the end of the next year.

He then bought a house and moved into Grande Prairie.

Pearl got married. Son Cyril died in a sawmill accident in 1955 and then following a short illness, Alfred died on Feb. 1, 1956. Wife Ellen died in 1964.

Bob Binks continues to live on his grandfather's land next to Highway 43 and just south of the original homestead.

"The homestead where they settled is not there, but the house from 1931 is still there," he said.

And he hopes the land will continue on in the Binks' name. Evan, one of his five sons lives on the quarter that Bob was born on.

The family is looking forward to Sunday's gathering and Alfred and Ellen's youngest child Pearl will be attending. A number of photos and other precious items will be on display, including an old bike believed to have been built in 1920.