

Alberta bound

THIS TRADITIONAL AND even staid heraldic bookplate has a fascinating connection to a famous Canadian historical figure as well as to a tale of adventure and adversity on the Canadian Prairies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The bookplate's owner, Arthur Richard Springett, was the son-in-law of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt.

Galt's third daughter, Evelyn Cartier Galt, married Arthur Springett in spring 1893. *For My Children's Children*, a memoir Evelyn wrote in 1938, describes the Springetts as "a good old family" distantly related to the wife of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania. According to his wife, Springett was "a tall, good-looking Englishman who had been educated at Shrewsbury School and Christ Church, Oxford, and had then come out to Canada to fare for himself."

After his immigration to Canada, Springett was employed as a clerk in the Indian Commissioner's office in Regina and later appointed an Indian agent on the Peigan reserve at Brockett, near Fort Macleod, Alberta, in 1887. Edward Brado, in *Cattle Kingdom: Early Ranching in Alberta* (2004), describes Springett as "a tall, thin man with fine, blond hair" who could "speak with the Indians in their own language (they called him Ab-see-cum, meaning white crane)."

Springett resigned as Indian agent in 1891 and was appointed manager of the New Oxley (or Lazy H) Ranch north of Lethbridge, a town his father-in-law had co-founded, from 1893 to 1903. He then managed the Canadian Land and Ranch Company (76 Ranch) in Saskatchewan from 1904 to 1907.

Although life on the Prairies offered its fair share of hardships, including bitter winters, spring floods, coyotes, and a lack of human companionship, Evelyn Springett describes life on the ranch charmingly in her memoir: "All around us there was the never-ending roll of the hills, like huge sea waves, some of them mountains high. In the spring they were a lovely vivid green with drifts of flowers everywhere, but in the winter, a waste of snow, dazzling white in the brilliant sunshine."



She notes that Springett, however, was "temperamentally . . . quite unsuited to ranche life and he was never really happy on the prairie." She describes him as "never very strong but determined not to give in," saying "he fought a long and losing fight against failing health and strength."

The couple moved to Victoria in 1909, hoping British Columbia's climate would restore Springett's health. Soon they moved once more, to England, with Springett, according to his wife, "still hoping that there, in the land of his birth, he might find health and strength again." Springett and his wife eventually returned to Cheltenham, England, where he died on April 2, 1914.

Springett lived in Canada for at least 20 years but it isn't known if his bookplate was produced in Canada or England. It features his family's crest, recalling his English heritage and venerable family history, and the Latin motto "Memor et Fidelis" ("Mindful and Faithful").

.....
 ~ Chelsea Shriver is in her first year of the Master of Library and Information Studies program in the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia.

The Rare Books and Special Collections Bookplate Collection can be accessed from the UBC Library Digital Collections and Services site, <http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca>.