YESTERDAY'S FOOTPRINTS
Alberta Genealogical Society
Lethbridge and District Branch
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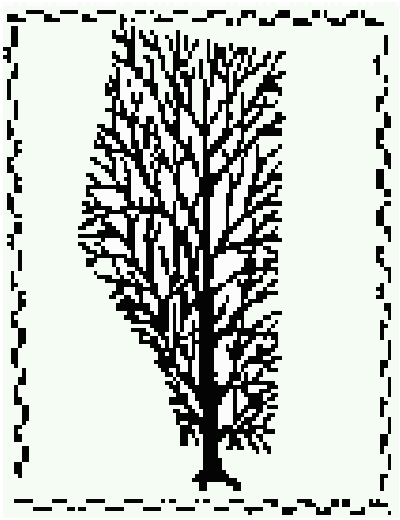

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Editor's Corner

If you want to submit articles, genealogy humor, interesting web sites or have any queries you want us to print feel free to contact us. You can drop off your submissions to our library or phone (403) 328-9564 or send an e-mail to lethags@theboss.net Susan Haga, Newsletter Editor.

Lethbridge A.G.S. Branch Hours

Library Hours: Tues., Wed. & Friday 1:30–4:30 p.m. Meetings are 3rd Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. September through June. Visitors Welcome! Our library will be closed July and August and December but can be open on request. See our web site at:
http://lethbridgeags.theboss.net/Exec.htm
Address: 1:28; 909 – 3rd Avenue North.
Phone: (403) 328-9564

Membership Dues

Regular individual or family (Includes 1 Branch)--$50.00, seniors (65+) individual or family (Includes 1 Branch)--$45.00

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Nestor Martinez
Vice President	Susan Haga
Treasurer	Pat Barry
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Computer	Phyllis Burnett & Doug McLeod
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Web Master	Doug McLeod
Programs	Susan Haga
Past Presidents Advisory Group	Doug McLeod, E. McMurchy, Pat Barry, Phyllis Burnett & Win Evans

President's Message

It is with pleasure that I prepare my first President's message for our newsletter. While, in the short time I have been president, I have not yet been involved in the branch's various efforts to promote genealogical research in the Lethbridge area, I have nevertheless been impressed by the dedication of our branch members. I specially want to recognize the present and past branch officers who have been so helpful and supportive to me as I attempt to become an effective president. I look forward to our future endeavours and projects and hope that I will be worthy of your support.

Just as every generation that has lived before us, we, the present generation, are the link between all future and past generations. So it is now our turn to ensure that these links are not broken that no lives are ever forgotten. There are many things we can do to make sure that no future generation is ignorant of their past family ties, to make sure that none of our descendants are left to wonder who their ancestors were. We have seen marvellous changes to the way we do family research and it is likely that future generation may not enjoy the thrill of new discoveries, sometimes after years of efforts, like we have, but the attachment that we all feel to our heritage will be the same for them as it has been for us.

Again, thanks for the privilege of been your branch president. President, Nestor L Martinez

Genealogical Finds!

This is a new section I've decided to add to our newsletter. If any of you have had any genealogical finds that you would like to submit e-mail them to me at footprints14@gmail.com and I will include them in the next newsletter. They can be short pieces of information or articles of greater length.

I have a cousin who has done a lot of research in Sweden and awhile back he sent me a lot of information that he had found on my father's line on Genline. Now that Genline is available for free at the Family History Centers I've been able to find a lot more information with his help.

Monthly Meetings

On Thursday, May 19th at 7:00 p.m. we held our monthly meeting with Ritchie Whitehead, past Director of the Lethbridge Family History Center, who came and gave us a presentation on Digitizing 35 mm Slides. It was well attended with about 25 people in attendance. On June 16th at 7:00 p.m. we will have a presentation with Bea Crawford on 'Creating a Family History Book. '

Local History Books, Henderson Directories, Other Genealogical Books

Attention members if you have any local history books, directories or other genealogical books you no longer need, please consider donating them to our Lethbridge Branch. If we already have the book we will offer it for sale to generate funds to purchase more books and other genealogical materials for our Resource Centre. Conversely, if you are looking to purchase a local history book check our Used Book Collection. (Eleanor McMurchy)

Lethbridge Family History Center Hours

Summer Hours: will begin June 7. The Family History Center will be open Tues-9-5 p.m. and Wednesday 1-9 p.m. No family history classes will be taught now till the fall.

Lethbridge Family History Centre CDs

Many of the CD resources are loaded onto the computers; others require the use of disks located on top of the film filing cabinets. On the desktop click on the icon "CD Databases" and then click on the program you want.

TIPS: On each program—check out the function of each of the symbols in the toolbar. When searching through a database—use Ctrl-F to search for specific names.

1. **Acadian Cajun Family Tree**—an area, started in 1604, in what is now known as Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and part of Maine, was called Acadia. This was a French settlement. When the English took over this area, many of the people would not support the English and they were deported to the southern states. Mostly to Louisiana. Some of these people did move back. Those who stayed became known as Cajuns.
2. **Ancestry View contains:**
   Ancestry Ref Library 2000—has 15 well-known resource books
   Persi 2000—an index to periodicals
   Wurttemberg Emigration Index Vol 1-7 from the late 18th century to the beginning of the 20th, more than 800,000 people emigrated from the Wurttemberg area of southern Germany and eventually went to the U.S.
   The Great Migration Begins—Immigrations to New England from 1620-1633. A database that includes place of origin, resident locations, and church membership, birth, marriage & death details a longer time period is covered on the New England Ancestry web site.
3. **Australia Vital Records Index—**This is an index of 4.8 million births, christenings, marriages and death records from new South Wales 1788-1888, Tasmania 1803-1899, Victoria 1837-1888 and Western Australia 1841-1905. This provides the information necessary to order copies of original certificates from Australia.
4. **1851 British Census**—covers Devon, Norfolk and Warwick. Information gives name, age, gender, and relationship to head of house, marital status, census place, occupation and place of birth. Complete census now on Ancestry.com
5. **Family Archive Viewer**—these are CDs from Family Tree Maker. CD disks for the following are opened through this program. The disks are on top of the film filing cabinets.
   Family Finder Index—it is a master index to all Family Tree Maker Archives and identifies more than 248 individuals. The Family Finder Index consists of surnames indexed on 4 CDs
      1. A-C. 2. D-I. 3. J-P. 4. Q-Z.

   When you find a name in the Family Finder Index, the listing will include reference to an important event and location in that person's life. The references can help you find the original records. Some of the reference CDs at the Lethbridge FHC includes:
   Canadian General Index 1600s – 1900s— over 2 million records of individuals from all regions of Canada as well as early Alaska.
   Early Texas Settlers—1700s–1800s
   Early Settlers N. Y. State—1760-1942
   Ontario Marriage Index- 1858-1869— database of previously scattered Ontario marriage records. Includes information on nearly 158,000 individuals.
   Selected US/International Marriage Records—1340-1980
   Birth Records—US/Europe—900-1880
   Local and Family Histories--New England-1600s-1900s.
   Land Records (US) AL, AR, FL, LA, MI, MN, OH, WI, - 1790-1907
   Family History-Southern Biographies & Genealogies—1500-1940
   Military Recs (US soldiers) 1784-1811
   World Family Tree European Origins Volume E1
   Passenger & Immigration Lists-Boston 1821-1850
   Family History Mid-Atlantic Genealogies—1340-1940—limited number of families

World Family Tree—Vol. 1--1. Index 2. Scroll to name. 3. Highlight name of interest. 4. Click on the # tab on the right which brings up 5. Family Group record.

6. Family History Resource Files

Mormon Immigration Index—contains information about LDS Immigration voyages to the U.S. for the years 1840-1890. The information is taken from personal voyage accounts, the European Emigration Card Index, European Mission Registers and LDS publications and custom files. There are four tabs to search under—1. Individual 2. Passenger lists 3. Personal accounts 4.Voyages The Individual search will give you the date of departure/port of departure/ #LDS Immigrant/the church leader of the group/date of arrival/port of arrival/sources cited. You can also search by the name of the ship and get a list of all the passengers on the same voyage and personal accounts relating to that voyage, its passengers and leaders.

Vital Records Index—each of the Vital Record Indexes works very much the same. The search screen allows you to search for births/christenings or marriages. These are not complete indexes. An ancestor may not appear even though they lived in the time and place covered by the index. The records may not appear even though they lived in the time and place covered by the index. The records are:

Scandinavia—(Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden.) 3.6 million birth/christenings, 1 million marriages

Western Europe (Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, French, German, Italy, Spain.) 1599-1905 **12½ million birth/christenings and marriage records**

British Vital Recs—(England, Ireland, Scotland & Wales)—1838-1888 from selected parishes. Some extracted more than others

North America-1620-1888
Birth/christening and marriage records from some States & Provinces

Mexico 1659-1905 1.9 million birth/ christenings & 300,000 marriage records.

7. Freedman's Bank Records—The Freedman's Savings and Trust Company was established in 1865 as a banking institution for the benefit of freed slaves and African American Military personnel. The registers of this bank contain the records of 29 branches of this bank.

8. Grandma's Genealogical History & Database of Mennonite Ancestors—the disk is needed for this and is located on top of the film filing cabinets.

9**. Herefordshire Monumental Inscriptions**—over 50,000 burial records in Herefordshire, England

10. National Burial Index for England and Wales – 2 volumes 1st edition has 4441 places & 5,416,000 entries. The 2nd edition has 8020 places and 13,215,000 entries.

11. New England Marriages Prior to 1700—"Torrey's Marriage Index" is a compilation of approximately 3700 known or presumed marriages before 1700, arranged alphabetically by the groom's name. It is estimated 99% of all marriages are included and it has become one of the principle resources for 17th century New England genealogy. Source citations are included.

13. Archive CD Books—there are 13 CDs of Ontario & Maritime Provinces and 2 CDs of Kent, England

Rural Directory for the Electoral District of Lincoln, Ontario—1929, a rare and valuable directory to the rural households.

Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Lambton—1906—over 1000 entries of Prominent and Representative Citizens and many early settled families.

The Parish Register of Kingston Upper Canada 1785-1811—contains a transcript of the first church records kept in Upper Canada and it recorded in large numbers the names of inhabitants of the Province other than those whose domicile was in Kingston.

History of the County of Middlesex, Canada—1889 A comprehensive area history book with approximately 460 biographies and some records of marriages from about 1833-1839.

History of Nova Scotia, Vol. 111-1916— Biographical Sketches of Representative Citizens and Genealogical Records of the Older families. They include native Nova Scotians as well as those born outside of the province that had adopted Nova Scotia as their home. Almost 750 biographies with an 8-page index.

Pioneer Papers No. 1 through No. 6—A collection of the first 6 publications of the Simcoe County Historical Society. The publication dates range from 1908-1917 but the subjects date back as far as 1618. Many of the articles were authored by the children of the early pioneers and claim to be first hand accounts.

Anson Gard's "Ottawa Valley" Historical and genealogical information about the Ottawa/Hull area including a lot of the surrounding area "up" the river Ottawa's valley.

The Annual Reports of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ontario between 1905-1039. Gives names of over 1200 parishioners and their children. Reports of 1918, 1925 & 1032 are missing.

The Ottawa City Directory 1861-62—the directory's listings identify boarders as well as householders and business proprietors.

The Pioneers of Old Ontario—1923—Includes stories and first hand accounts of the very beginning of the settlement of Ontario. Indexed

Ottawa & Kingston City Directory—1875—covers most of the significant communities in Ontario lying North and East of Kingston.

A History of the Eastern Townships—1869—an early history of Canada and more specifically of that important area of Quebec just to the South East of Montreal known as the Eastern townships.

The Winslow Papers ad.—1776-1826—one of the richest collections of loyalist materials known to exist it contains some of the largest and most important collection of public and private papers relative to the early history of the Maritimes.

The Visitation of Kent—1530, 1574, 1592—during the 1500s & 1600s the Heralds visited each county in England and recorded the pedigrees of families. In many cases the pedigrees date back to the Norman times of the 11th century.

Pigot's Directory of Kent 1726-1827—one of the earliest directories that covers the whole of the county. (Faye French—Lethbridge Family History Conference—October 2009)

Irish Civil Registration on FamilySearch.org

Part I (Feb 4/11) FamilySearch.org is a great resource for Irish research. The web site includes four databases that index civil registration.

- Ireland Births and Baptisms, 1620-1881
- Ireland Deaths 1864-1870
- Ireland Marriages 1619-1898
- Ireland Civil Reg. Indexes, 1845-1958

It is helpful to understand a little bit about the source of each database.

The first three databases were created from actual civil registration (and a few church records that FamilySearch.org has in its microfilm collection.)

The last database was created from microfilm copies of the civil registration indexes only, not the complete records as in the case of the first three.

This means that the first three databases can be searched using family relationships, but the last only contains the individuals name with no family relationships. There is significant overlap between the last database and the first three, because the last database is the full index and includes most everything the first three include—only with less information because it is only an index, not the full record.

Plac

To access these databases, go to FamilySearch.org. Then, in the "Browse by Location" section on the home page, click Europe and then click Ireland. Or, to go directly to the databases now, you can click this link: Irish databases.

Irish Civil Registration—Part 2

There are four Irish Civil Registration databases available on FamilySearch.org. Here are some tips on how to search these databases to find your ancestors.

Names—Names have many variations, and the search on FamilySearch.org does not always pick them up. Go to a site like www.irishtimes.com/ancestor and fill in your surname. This web site will give you some common spelling variations of your surname that you should use when searching on FamilySearch.org (or any site for that matter). Also note that O' and Mc' prefixes can be added or dropped, so try both ways.

Dates—There are several reasons why it pays to be flexible with dates. Even when you think you know how old someone was because you have a record that gives the age, such as a U.S. census record, people often did not know how old they were. This is particularly true of the Irish. I have found the average Irish man or woman thought they were two years younger than they really were.

One out of three Irish parents changed their child's birth date in order to avoid paying a fine for late registration, so don't go by the exact birth date. If the names and relationships match, that is more important than the date or place matching.

A challenge peculiar to these databases on FamilySearch.org is that usually the exact town land was not indexed, only the registration district or the registration sub-district, which most people are not familiar with. A registration district incorporated a number of parishes and was called by the name of the largest town in the district. Therefore, you may not recognize the name of the registration district as being correct because it is not the name of the place you are familiar with.

Registration districts crossed county boundaries as well. You can go to a site such as www.seanruad.com to ascertain which registration district (also called Poor Law Union) your town land or parish belonged to. However, it is often best to begin your search with just the name of the county. The fourth database is an exception: search on the name of the registration district.

Sometimes the name of the county has been abbreviated on FamilySearch.org, other times the name of the county was not indexed at all (the place recorded for the event as just "Ireland"). That is why it is important to look beyond the first page of results, to try searching with just names and no

place at all, and to try different combinations of search terms.

FamilySearch.org offers free online classes on a variety of research topics, including one on Irish civil registration. You can view these classes on FamilySearch.org by clicking on "Learn" and then, under "Research Courses," clicking on "View the Courses."

So, take the names of your 19th and 20th century Irish ancestors and give them a whirl on FamilySearch.org. Just make sure you know enough about them so that you know they are your ancestor and not someone else.

Genealogy in Time newsletter 23Apr2011 Genealogy Tip of the Week

If you asked us what the number one thing people wrote to us about, we would have to say font size. People often complain to us because they struggle to read the small fonts on many genealogy web sites.

To increase the size of any web page simply hold down the Ctrl key and press the + key. Pressing the + key several times while holding down the Ctrl key will make the web page even larger.

You can also do the reverse. Hold down the Ctrl key and press the - key to make the web page smaller.

This simple solution works on all browsers and all operating systems.

Wales – Here is an interesting new site for anyone with Welsh ancestors. Called the ***People's Collection Wales*** (Casgliady Werin Cymru), it is "a place to discover and learn, contribute your own content and share the story of your Wales with the world." The web site is a new online archive where you can do a variety of things of interest to genealogists such as exploring historic maps of Wales, creating and sharing family trees join special interest groups, learn about Welsh history and more. The web site already has over 28,000 items in its collection. Access is free. You need to register if you want to contribute content. http://www.peoplescollectionwales.com/

U.S. – **The *Daughters of the American Revolution* (DAR)** has been expanding their free online databases. DAR is a group that focuses on patriots of the American Revolutionary War (1774 to 1783) and their descendants. About 4,500 names are added to the database daily and the total database now contains some 7.1 million names. The database is a good place to check for anyone with ancestors from the New England states in the 1700s and in the 1800s. Access is free. http://www.dar.org/library/online_research.cfm

U.S. – FamilySearch.org has added an additional 222,000 historic Oklahoma marriage records spanning the years 1891 to 1959. Access is free. [Historic Oklahoma Marriage Record] https://www.familysearch.org/

Scotland – The 1911 Scottish census is now online at *ScotlandsPeople*. The actual forms filled out by the households (known as household schedules) were destroyed soon after the census was completed once the data had been copied into the enumeration books. You will therefore not be able to see the actual handwritten answers of your ancestors. Also, one of the questions asked on the 1911 census was place of birth. If the person was born anywhere in the United Kingdom, it should list the name of the county and the town/parish. This is valuable information for anyone trying to track their ancestors. However, if the person was born in a foreign country, it just lists the name of the country, unless the country was then part of the British Empire, in which case the province is also listed. The 1911 census also had some additional questions compared to the previous 1901 census. Of particular interest it asked the number of people in the household; marital status (single, married, widower, widow); duration of marriage; children born alive; children still living; industry employed in and nationality if born outside of Scotland. Remember access is given by subscription. http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/Content/Help/index.aspx?r=546&2066

Canada – The University of Manitoba has begun the process of digitizing some 300 local history books about pioneers from various rural parts of Manitoba. The first book to be digitized will be on Rosser called "The First Hundred Years: 1893-1993". As the rural history books are digitized, they will be put on the web site *Manitobia*. Access is free. [Rural Manitoba Pioneer History Books]http://www.manitobia.ca/cocoon/launch/en/themesSelectionPage

U.S.--Just in time for the 150th year anniversary of the Civil War, Ancestry has seriously beefed up their Civil War collection. The basis for the new collection are some 275,000 records from the National Archives known as the *Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registration Records, 1863-1865*. Ancestry has also included records from some 20+ historic military cemeteries as well as Union and Confederate soldier service records 1861-1865. Access is by subscription. [Historic Civil War Soldier Records] (Submitted by Eleanor McMurchy)

How to Attract Young People to Genealogy

Watch closely during almost any CSI-type television show and you'll notice one character that stands out but serves the same purpose: the geeky, nerdy, quirky but hip forensic investigator. *NCIS's* Abby Sciuto with her tattoos and piercing which give her goth creed, is a nerd at heart and often provides the one-liners and zingers that a show often needs. On *CSI NY* the character Danny Messer serves a similar purpose.

One only need look to Elyse Luray of The History Detectives on PBS to see how America's image of a historian has been forced to change. And librarians no longer live up to the image of their namesake Marian with her cat-eye glasses, sweater over the shoulders, tissue stuffed in one sleeve. Nowadays a librarian is just as likely to have been an ex-punk rocker who runs her own blog about Jane Austen and attends mixers and meet-ups geared towards the information resources industry.

More than just serving as characters whose dialog helps the story line, these same television roles have made the under-30 set stand up and notice. They see that it isn't boring or nerdy to be an analyst in a crime lab. They notice that working as a forensic investigator can be fun and rewarding. They watch as the guy or gal behind the screen and keyboard very often provides the missing clue to solve the mystery.

So what does it take to move a field like genealogy in its perception by the public from being boring to being 'cool'! Here are some ideas:

Create an "Under 30" Club at Your Local Genealogical Society. Many non-profits especially opera and symphony societies have experienced tremendous growth by allowing younger patrons access to the same benefits of membership as others but only at a lower membership price and with special events geared towards their interests.

Use Younger Genealogists as Role Models and Spoke Persons. In your organization's materials, including printed versions as well as on-line, making sure to include a balance of young and the old.

Go to the Schools Where the Younger Set Rules. Along with exposing school-aged children to various professional fields, make sure your local district includes genealogists and family historians in such outreach efforts.

Focus On Ancestors When They Were in Their Teens and 20s. When writing narratives or blog posts, try to highlight ancestors at a time in their lives which young people can relate to. Did Grandpa go off to college or have trouble adjusting when he moved away from home? Did Grandma leave a diary with thoughts on dating?

Don't Be Afraid to Let the Young Lead the Way. Those "whippersnappers" with solid genealogical research and scholarship skills should be allowed to lead and not relegated to just following. Doing so is probably the best way to create a win/win situation for all of us in the genealogy field.

Genealogy can only continue to expand by attracting new participants. And the exchange of information techniques and methodologies between old and young will help keep genealogy a vibrant and engaging pursuit. (Gwen Goth—goth-genealogy.com—Feb 15, 2010)

Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan Reconstructs Records at Detroit Cemetery

Thousands of missing burial records at Sacred Heart of St. Mary's Cemetery in Detroit is nearing its end. The Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan tackled the mystery 20 years ago after it found out that burial records were gone. The effort was set to draw closer to a finishing point on Saturday, when the society's members, assisted by a Boy Scout troop, are to uncover 1,000 buried gravestones.

Early burial records were destroyed by a flood of the church basement and a fire at the cemetery office. The genealogical group filled the void by scouring death certificates and monument company sales records and collecting information from each gravestone in the three-block-long cemetery.
(Eastman's Genealogy Newsletter—May 25/11)

Complete 1930 Mexico Census Now Available Online for Free (May 23, 2011)

25 Million New Records and Images for 19 U.S. States and 16 Countries

The FamilySearch.org volunteers did it! With the completion of the state of Veracruz, they indexed the entire 1930 Mexico Census—almost 13 million records. Add the census to the millions of Mexico church records FamilySearch.org also has online for free, and FamilySearch.org patrons now have a phenomenal, fundamental asset for their Mexico ancestral research. There were 59 collections updated in this release, comprising 25 million new images and records for 19 U.S. states and 16 countries. See information below.

Austria, Vienna, Population Cards, 1850-1895
Brazil Catholic Church Records
Canada, Lower Canada Census 1831
Canada, New Brunswick Prov. Deaths, 1815-1938
Canada, Quebec Notarial Records, 1800-1900
Chinese Genealogies
Czech Republic Church Books, 1552-1935

Germany Church Records 1544-1945
Germany, Baden, Church Bk Duplicates 1810-1869
Germany, Mecklenburg-Schwerin Census 1867
Germany, Miscellaneous City Records
Guatemala Civil Registration, 1877-1934
Italy, Civil Registration, 1806-1940
Mexico Census, 1930
Mexico, Jalisco, Catholic Church Records
Mexico, Morelos, Catholic Church Rec, 1598-1969
Mexico, State of Mexico, Catholic Church Records
Mexico, Tabasco, Catholic Church Records
Netherlands, Passenger Lists Holland-America Line 1900-1974
New Zealand, Immigr Passenger Lists, 1855-1973
Peru, Civil Registration, 1874-1978
Philippines Civil Registration 1945-1996
Poland, Roman Catholic Church Books, 1600-1950
Portugal, Braga Catholic Church Rec, 1530-1890
Puerto Rico Civil Registration 1836-2001
Russia, Samaria Church Books, 1869-1917
Spain, Cadiz, Passports, 1810-1866
Spain Municipal Records and many other records

Millions of people use FamilySearch.org records, resources, and services to learn more about their family history. FamilySearch.org has been actively gathering, preserving, and sharing genealogical records worldwide for over 100 years. Patrons may access FamilySearch.org services and resources free online at FamilySearch.org or through 4600 family history centers in 132 countries, including the main Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. (Eastman Online Genealogy Newsletter May 25/11)

10 Reasons to Love Local Histories

In genealogical circles, much emphasis is placed on original records created by, or about, our ancestors. We like to find official documents with our ancestors' signatures on them and other tangible proof of their activities. Often, we are warned not to trust "secondary" or "compiled" sources, as most weren't written when our ancestors were alive, and they often rely on unsourced contributions from volunteer researchers. It would seem that they are exactly the kind of unreliable source we need to avoid. Nonetheless, I say you'd have to be a masochistic genealogist to deliberately pass up the wonderful opportunity they provide.

Why do I love local histories? Here are my top 10 reasons.

Pioneer Settlement History

Local histories almost always devote many pages to the early founding of the community, the pioneer settlers and their origins. Even if your ancestors weren't among the founding group, it can help to know something about where the early arrivals came from, as they often kept in touch with their relatives "back home", encouraging later migrations to the same area.

Church Histories and Profiles

Having short histories of all the churches in the community can be a great help in guiding your research. You're likely to learn when each church was founded, who the early members were and whether or not the congregation is still active. You may even learn about rivalries between congregations and splits within their ranks—this information can come in handy when you're trying to determine where to look for records of your ancestors' baptisms, marriages and burials (not to mention other religious activities).

School Histories and Profiles

We often forget about our ancestors' school days. These histories can help us determine which school our ancestors might have attended, who their fellow students and teachers were, and where we might look for further records. We may also find class photographs and pictures of the school itself.

Clubs and Other Organizations

How else are we likely to learn about our ancestors' membership in the ladies gardening club, their political affiliations or their sports involvement? Many of these small local organizations kept records of their activities in their members' homes—where we would never think to look for them!

Family Biographies

Often comprising the "core", sometimes printed as appendices, family biographies are a common feature in community histories. These are often solicited from descendants still living, in the community, so families with long histories in the area are more likely to be represented, and have more written about them, than those whose members lived in the community only briefly.

However, even if you think your family left the area a long time ago, you may be surprised to learn that there are still descendants of other branches of the family, or their in-laws, living there. Information in these biographies can be suspect, especially the early history, but more recent information is likely to be very reliable. Thus, I find these biographies especially helpful for locating living descendants.

Maps

Large scale maps found in local histories can be helpful in pinpointing an ancestor's farm, street address or business. If all the landowners, residents or businesses are represented, you will get a nice quick view of your ancestors' neighbors. They can also show the locations of churches, schools and other features of interest, such as waterways and railroads.

Photographs

Local histories are wonderful sources of photographs and other illustrations. They can show you what the community looked like in the past, give you a glimpse of your ancestor's church or school, and capture entire school classes or sports teams. You might even get lucky and find that a distant cousin has contributed a photograph of your common ancestor.

Transcribed Records

Town council minutes, tax assessment records and voter's rolls can be tedious to search. The search might be made much easier if transcriptions or abstracts of these records are included (as they sometimes are) in a community history. Here, you'll often find lists of local office holders (mayors, councilmen, fence viewers, pound keepers and such) from the beginning 100 years, or even to the present. Sometimes, tax assessment or voter's lists are used to provide a (nearly) complete roster of the adult male population of the community at given points in time.

Bibliographies, Notes or Source Credits

Not all local histories provide information about the sources of their information, but when they do, these bibliographies, notes or source credits can be invaluable for your research. They can alert you to the existence of records and repositories that you might never have found on your own.

Indexes

Finally, most local histories are name-indexed. This means that you can quickly determine whether or not your ancestor is mentioned by name in the publication. While I still recommend reading the entire book regardless of whether your ancestor is directly mentioned, finding your ancestor's name in the index will surely inspire you.

Conclusion

In sum, local histories, whether they focus on a community, township, village, town, county or parish, bring together a wide range of information in one convenient, easy-to-read package. By focusing on the small-scale events and institutions that were so important in the lives of our ancestors, they help us to envision their lives. If we are cautious on how we use them, local histories can provide much-needed social and historical context for our studies of our ancestors, bring their world to life through maps, illustrations and photographs, help us discover unique local resources, and sometimes even glean very specific information about our ancestors that we aren't likely to find elsewhere. (Janice Nickerson-Internet Genealogy—December-January 2010)

Finding Immigrants Online

We've scoured the Internet for the best web sites with information on immigrants from passenger records, naturalization records and other sources. Finding an immigrant ancestor's hometown is a difficult challenge—and one you must overcome before extending your family history research overseas, but the growing body of online resources makes the job easier every day.

Immigration Megasites

American Family Immigration History Center
www.ellisislandrecords.org
One of the most popular web sites for genealogists, the Ellis Island site, provides details on more than 22 million immigrant's passengers and crew members who came through Ellis Island and the Port of New York between 1892 and 1924.

Castle Garden www.castlegarden.org
Castle Garden, America's first official immigration center, processed passengers landing in New York City before Ellis Island opened. This new site has information on 10 million passengers arriving from 1830-1892. Another two million records dating back to 1820 will be added later.

Genealogy.com International and Passenger Records www.genealogy.com
One of several online data collections from Genealogy.com, International and Passenger Records includes lists of passengers arriving in Boston, New Orleans and New York (1820-50), Philadelphia (1800-50) and Baltimore (1820-72), as well as immigrants from Germany (1850-88), Ireland (1803-86), Italy (1880-93), Russia (1850-96) and Scotland (1600s-1800s).

Ethnic and Country Sites

Denmark
The Danish Emigration Database
www.emiarch.dk/info.php3?l=en
The Copenhagen police recorded the names of these 394,000 emigrants leaving Denmark from 1869 to 1908.

Eastern Europe
Federation of Eastern European Family History Societies www.feefhs.org
If your ancestors hailed from Central or Eastern Europe, be sure to check this site. Among about 30 databases are lists of immigrants from Moravia (now part of the Czech Republic), Slovakia, Slovenia and the Palatine region of Germany. You'll also find a list of foreign-born voters in California in 1872 and 18th-century vital records from the San Francisco Call newspaper. Many of the city's residents were natives of Central and Eastern Europe.

Finland

Finnish Institute of Migration Emigrant Register

www.migrationinstitute.fi

You can search this index to over 550,000 names in Finnish passport and passenger records from 1850 to 1960 for free. Registration for about $12 US a year gives you full access to the databases.

Germans from Russia

Janet's Germans from Russia Research

www.angelfire.com/ks/gerrus

If your German ancestors made a detour to Russia before coming to North America, you just might find them mentioned on this site. You'll find passenger arrival lists for New York from 1891 to 1922. Baltimore from 1907 to 1912, Galveston from 1909-1913 and Philadelphia from 1909-1912.

Odessa Digital Library: Ship and Immigration Records www.odessa3.org

An indispensable resource for anyone researching genealogy of Germans from Russia, this extensive site brings together cemetery, census, church and land records, as well as family histories, village histories and more. You'll also find declarations of intent from Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota, lists of German emigrants and passenger arrival lists for several American and Canadian ports.

Germany

Auswanderung aus Wurttemberg

www.auswanderer.lad-bw.de/cgi-bin/main.pl

This database of emigrants from Wurttemberg contains valuable information, but navigating the site is a challenge if you don't read German.

To do a search, click on Recherche. Then click on the map of North America to search emigrants to the U.S. and Canada and click on Weiter. Click on the appropriate time period and on Weiter.

Hamburg: Link to Your Roots

www.ltyr.hamburge.de

The Hamburg State Archives compiled this database of 2.2 million passengers leaving Hamburg, Germany, a key port of departure for European immigrants to North America. Lists for 1890 to 1910 are complete. Eventually this site will list more than 5 million names from 1850-1934.

The Palatine Project: Reconstructed Passenger Lists, 1683-1819

www.progenealogists.com/palproject/

This impressive site uses sources from both colonial America and German-speaking countries to reconstruct passenger lists in the first large wave of German immigration. Be sure to read the site's excellent articles on tracing German immigrant ancestors.

Pennsylvania German Pioneers

www.freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~pagermanpioneers

Most of Strassburger and Hinke's book, Pennsylvania German Pioneers, a list of German immigrants arriving in Philadelphia between 1727 and 1808, has been transcribed online, but on sites scattered across the web. This site is a directory of those transcriptions. There's no index to names, so you'll have to browse.

Iceland

The Emigration from Iceland to North America

www.halfdan.is/vestur/vestur.htm

In addition to lists of Icelandic immigrants to the US and Canada, this site has helpful guides to Icelandic genealogy, the Icelandic alphabet and Icelandic names.

Ireland

Boston College: Information Wanted

www.bc.edu/centers/irish/studies

Friends and relatives wishing to make contact with lost relatives placed newspaper advertisements. On this site you can search 31,711 ads for Irish immigrants published in the Boston Pilot between 1831 and 1921.

Boston Passenger Manifest 1848-1891

www.sec.state.ma.us/ArchivesSearch/passengermanifestSearch.asp

The Massachusetts Archives created this index to immigrants arriving by ship at the port of Boston between January 1848 and July 1891. Eventually the database will have over a million names.

Famine Irish Data Files

www.archives.gov/aad

Part of the National Archives' Access to Archival Databases, this database has information on 604,596 people who arrived in the U.S. from 1846 to 1851. About 70 percent listed their native country as Ireland, but others came from Canada, Brazil, Saint Croix, Russia, Morocco, the US and countries throughout Europe.

Norway

Digitalarkivet www.digitalarkivet.uib.no

This tremendous resource for tracing Norwegian ancestry includes emigration and passenger lists, church records, U.S. and Norwegian census records.

To search for Norwegian natives in the U.S. censuses from 1850 to 1880, select English, Database selector, Censuses from the Source category pull-down menu and "All categories" from the Subcategory pull-down menu.

To search emigration and passenger lists and passport registers from 1842 to 1930, select

English, Database selector, Emigrants. Then select a database.

Norway Heritage Emigrant Search 1825-1873 www.norwayheritage.com/pasquest.asp
This growing database has more than 61,000 names of Norwegian passengers transcribed from over 424 passenger lists dating from 1825 to 1873.

STATE AND LOCAL IMMIGRATION INDEXES
Minnesota's Iron Range Research Center
www.ironrangeresearchcenter.org
If your immigrant ancestors settled in the "land of 10,000 lakes", check out this index to Minnesota Naturalizations and 1918 Alien Registrations records. It covers over 865,000 records in all of Minnesota's 87 counties.
You can also search this database on Ancestry.com where the database is called the Minnesota Naturalization records Index, 1854-1957. See www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/immigration/mnri/main.htm

North Dakota Naturalization Rec Index www.lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndirs/databases/naturalrec.php
A cooperative effort of the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, this database contains over 212,000 names. You can request copies of naturalization records for just $5 U.S. per person.

Online Searchable Naturalization Indexes & Records www.home.att.net/~wee-monster/naturalization.html
These links lead to online naturalization records and indexes from across the United States.

Canadian Immigration
ArchiviaNet: Immigration Rec (1925-1935)
The National Archives of Canada has passenger lists with information on immigrants arriving from 1865 to 1935. The records for the last 10 years are indexed in this database.

Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (CMBoC) Data Extraction Project
www.mennonites.ca'mhsa/projects/cmboc
Over 20,000 German Mennonites emigrated from the USSR to Canada between 1923 and 1930, and you'll find their names on this site.

Tables Turned
"When I was younger I hated going to weddings. It seemed that all of my aunts and the grandmotherly types used to come up to me, poking me in the ribs and cackling, "You're next." They stopped that after I started doing the same thing to them at funerals." (Missing Links April 4, 2001)

Home Children (1869-1930)
www.archives.ca/02/020110_e.html
Over 100,000 children were sent to Canada from Britain during the child emigration movement from 1869 to the early 1930's. This index lists names in passenger lists at the National Archives of Canada.
(Rick Crume—Family Chronicle—Jan/Feb 2006)

We the Undersigned: Your Ancestors' Petitions

If you want to learn more about your ancestors, what they cared about and the community in which they lived, you might want to start looking for collections of petitions.
Petitions can be found in many places, including the correspondence of federal, provincial and state civil servants, district, county and township clerks' records, county and town council papers and the private papers of lawyers and other prominent people who helped illiterate and unconnected locals get the attention of government officials (especially the papers and correspondence of officials concerned with land grants and licensing of various kinds).

To whet your appetite, let me show you just a few of the types of petitions I've found while researching. These examples are all from pre 1850 Canada.

Petitions for Licenses

Many types of businesses are licensed by local authorities. These include: People who make, store or sell alcohol (innkeepers, taverns, shopkeepers, hoteliers); shopkeepers; ferrymen; steamboat owners; hawkers and peddlers; medical doctors, midwives and land surveyors.

If you find your ancestor's name on a petition for an innkeeper's license, not only will you then know more about his livelihood, but you could proceed to investigate the rules and regulations pertaining to the keeping of inns. For example, in 1818 in Newcastle, Upper Canada, innkeepers could not sell liquor on Sundays, or after 10 o'clock at night (except to travellers); they could not allow gaming, profane swearing, immodest or disloyal songs; they were required to provide at least three decent beds for the accommodation of travellers; and had to look after travellers' horses and baggage.

Petitions Regarding Public Works

Next to land petitions, the most common reason for petitioning was to request or complain about some aspect of public works, such as roads, bridges, court houses and jails.

In one petition in 1845, the inhabitants of a street in the Town of Niagara petitioned the town council for a plank sidewalk in front of their homes. It was signed by eight men.

Petitions Regarding Taxes, Duties and Prices

Another common complaint was, of course, taxes (and the related issues of duties and fixed prices).

Let me give you a few examples from the 1840s.

In 1845, the price of bread was fixed by the Board of Police in the Town of Niagara. This caused a local baker great hardship as the price of flour had risen so much that he could no longer make a profit by selling his bread at the fixed price. So he petitioned the Board of Police to adjust the price.

Civil Service Petitions

In olden days, as now, positions with the civil service were coveted and usually reserved for "connected" men. Many jobs involved appointment, including that of magistrate (low-level judge), coroner, jailer, customs officer, land surveyor and military officers.

I found, in the private papers of a justice of the peace, a list of people in Niagara Falls in 1842 who signed a petition in support of the local ferryman, who had been accused of intemperance (drinking too much) and general incompetence.

School Petitions

Local governments play a significant role in overseeing public schools throughout North America. Sometimes, their decisions displease the residents and petitions are resorted to. In one case in 1841, 25 residents of two concession roads in an eastern Ontario township signed a petition to the Court of Quarter Sessions for the district requesting that the proposed location of the public school be moved so that it would be more convenient for them. As it stood, some of the residents would have to walk 7 miles to get to the school. Not only is the petition interesting in general, but the 25 signatures would be very helpful to anyone researching these individuals, as there are many common names in the region (there are numerous John Kennedys on the list) and the signatures might help differentiate them, especially since several of the men put their addresses (lot and concession number) beside their names.

Land Petitions

When the government allocated Crown land to settlers, it usually set out certain categories of applicants who would receive free grants of various sizes or reduced fees.

One of the categories of special grants is usually for those who have served in the military.

In addition to straightforward requests for land grants, I've also found petitions from people who'd run into some kind of problem such as difficulty in paying the requisite fees, poor quality land and heirs of original applicants who had died before they received their patent.

Most land petitions are sent by individuals, but sometimes groups of settlers got together for a common purpose.

In one case, residents in the Township of Ernesttown requested a grant of land on which to build a school for 36 students (they stated that they'd already hired a teacher).

Another petition by the Trustees of the Presbyterian Congregation in Whitchurch Township asked for a grant of land to help support a Presbyterian minister as there wasn't one nearby. Seven members of the congregation signed the petition.

Petitions for Government Relief

Sometimes various kinds of misfortune led our ancestors to request help from the government. I've found petitions asking for government rations for 60 families following a poor harvest year in 1816, recompense for crops and buildings destroyed during the War of 1812 and for remuneration for assistance given to the poor or the sick.

Petitions for Clemency and Pardons

Some petitions were sent in on behalf of others, such as those requesting the release of political prisoners (there were many of these following the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837), clemency for youths convicted of serious offences and pardons for people who had served their sentences or who had been banished from the province (usually these were for prominent citizens).

In one case, I found a petition on behalf of a 16-year-old boy who had been sentenced to be hanged for stealing a horse. His sentence was commuted to banishment.

Conclusion

All in all, petitions are a wellspring of information about our ancestors and their communities. But remember, as petitions were frequently signed by many people, don't just look for your own ancestor's name in indexes (they're often only indexed by the lead petitioner), look for any petition referring to your ancestor's community. You might discover that your ancestor was a more active citizen than you thought! (Janice Nickerson, Family Chronicle—July/Aug—2007)

This Week in History

In 1858, the federal cabinet recommended that Ottawa be named Canada's capital. Queen Victoria gave her approval on December 31 of that year. In 1871, the first Dominion census put Canada's population at 3,689,257.

In 1918, prohibition was declared in Alberta. (Lethbridge Sun Times—March 30, 2011—Page 6)