

YESTERDAY'S FOOTPRINTS
Alberta Genealogical Society
Lethbridge and District Branch
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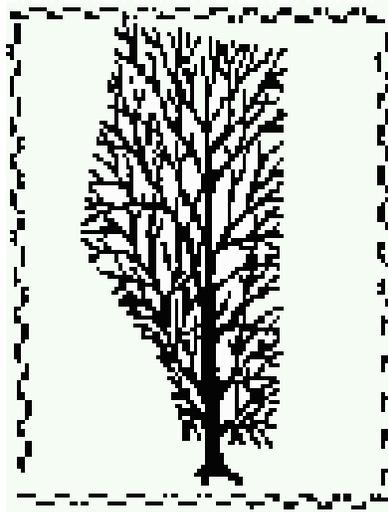


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Editor's Corner



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: Tuesday, Wednesday & 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 Dec. 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

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President's Message

I have often pondered about what should be the most important role of our monthly programs and of our newsletter (or the programs and newsletters of any genealogical organization). **Educate? Entertain?** Sometimes we may hear a comment that a certain presentation or article was "very educational". I think that for some people that may be code for: "not very entertaining".

I was recently reading a paper on peer teaching in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes which, in part, delved into this very question: Are education and entertaining mutually exclusive? The paper's conclusion was that in many educational settings the goals of education and entertainment are compatible and even complementary.

I believe that can be our goal too: To never stop learning and developing our family history research skills (for our benefit and the benefit of others), while at the same time continuing to have fun doing it.

At this time I would like to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for a wonderful holiday season.

Nestor Martinez

Monthly Meetings

On Thursday, October 18th at 7:00 p.m. Helene Paquin a new member who moved from Medicine Hat a year ago, gave a presentation on the North American Paquin Family History. On Saturday, November 17th our annual (potluck) International Dinner will be held at 6:00 p.m. at ParkBridge Estates Clubhouse and Laureen Tetzloff will be our hostess. Come and socialize at 5:00 p.m.

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)

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 lethags@theboss.net I will include them in the next newsletter. They can be short pieces of information or articles of greater length.

Lethbridge Family History Center Hours

Fall/Winter Hours: Family History Center will be open Mon. 9:00-5:00 p.m., Tues.-Thurs. 9:00-9:00 p.m., closed Friday, and open Sat. 9:00-1:00 p.m. Classes: On Thursday, November 8th and Thursday, November 15th both on the Introduction to Family Tree will be held at 7 p.m. Phone the Lethbridge Family History Center at 403-328-0206 to book.

Interesting Websites

Stephen Morse's One Step Search Portals <http://stevermorse.org>. This site is free of charge and gives a guide to make it easier to search websites and databases. Provided are some tools to search the following: Immigration and ship arrivals, Census, Vital Records, Calendars and Maps (including French, Jewish & Muslim calendars), Characters (some translating) in foreign alphabets, Holocaust & Eastern Europe & DNA Genealogy.

Meta-Catalogs—Archival and Library

Organizations have created meta-catalogs, which enable you to search all the catalogs of their member's archives. Explore these sites for links to many other sites. For example Library and Archives Canada at www.collectionscanada.gc.ca has a link under Libraries to Amicus catalogue which will search many Canadian libraries for titles etc. Search for similar sites. Canadian www.archivescanada.ca, English & Welsh <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a>, American <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>. The Archival Research Catalog (ARC) is the online catalog of NARA's nationwide holdings in the Washington, DC area, Regional Archives and Presidential Libraries.

Google Searches

Date Search

Google gives us so much information that it can be difficult to find what we are looking for. Limit the search with years. Enter the name followed by the years of birth and date "name 1760...1805".

Google Alerts

If you search for the same terms over and over just in case something new might show up then sign up for "Google Alerts". You receive an e-mail notification when a new listing for your search terms is posted with a link to that site.

Google Cache

A Google search comes with a list of matches. Under the main link and mini description you will find a link to a cached version of the site. If you click on this link you will find a text version of the site with your search terms highlighted which

makes it much easier to scan for the data you are looking for.

Google Book Search <http://books.google.com>

This tool checks the text of books (old and new) and tells you which books include your search terms. Depending on the book you may be able to read part of the book online. It will include links to booksellers or libraries where the book can be found.

Google Earth

A tool that allows you to see satellite images of any place on earth by typing in an address or the name of a town. Images are only a couple of years old but it can be exciting to see where your ancestor lived and it may help you plot the route they took to church or to school.

Government Websites

Most governments will have a site for their official archives, libraries and record offices with lots of "how-to-guides and information about what is available and how to access it. Many provide indexes, databases and sometimes images of records for free. Remember these are government sites so be prepared to explore.

Parish Locator

Is a free downloadable program which finds parishes in the British Isles, it can tell you the distance between two parishes, gives you a grid and a list of surrounding parishes and you can print it out. (Download ParLoc26.exe from <http://www.parloc.pwp.bluevonder.co.uk/parlocdl.html>)

Library 24-hour Reference Query

Some libraries have an online 24 hour reference query and may do lookups for you. Often you have to be a resident of the state or province. Here are a few examples – look for more:

Maryland www.askusnow.info

New Jersey www.gandani.org

Ohio www.knowitnow.org

California www.asknow.org

Access Paid Databases through Libraries

Most "pay for" databases sell subscriptions to libraries as well as individuals like Ancestry.com. For example at the Lethbridge Family History Center you can access the LDS Family History Portal which includes HeritageQuestOnline (Census Records, Books, Persi), World Vital Records, Godfrey Memorial Library, Genline.com (Swedish records), Footnote.com and FamilyLink (program where pedigrees have been submitted). These are all pay for sites, which are free at the Lethbridge FHC. Check and see what programs you can access at your local library and FHC.

Fototagger www.fototagger.com

This is free software that helps you label (tag) individuals and items in a digital (or scanned) picture. It can also add descriptions of items make comments or include links to relevant sites in a tag.

PERSI—Allan County's Public Library Personal Source Index (PERSI) is a great way to find helpful articles which have been published in genealogical or historical journals, newsletters or magazines. Search by surname, locality or methodology. It is available on HeritageQuestOnline or Ancestry.com. If you find an article that you are interested in and you can't obtain it locally, you can order a copy from the Allan County Library.

One Name Studies <http://one-name.org/>

If your surname is rare check with the Guild of One Name Studies. You may be lucky and find a whole group already tracing families with your surname. (Monta Salmon—101 Genealogy Research Tips—Lethbridge Family History Center—Sept. 2008)

Where Did They Work? Your Ancestor's Occupations

Genealogy is more than dates and locations. Part of what makes it interesting is the opportunity to learn about those who are now departed. Employment has always been a big part of people's lives, and it helps us better understand them. It is not always easy to ferret out details of what people did to support their families. Here are some clues about how you might learn more about sources of income.

Where to Start Looking

First, let's talk a little about professions. Many things people did in the past are no longer types of work done today. Further, the names for professions change over time, making it unclear, even when using a current dictionary, to look up a term found in an old directory or other source. It might be necessary to use Google or some other source to sort out the details.

Documents with legal standing or related to the prospect of income would be carefully filled out.

Others, such as a census might be less so. The enumerator was in a hurry and the person providing the information might not have been the most knowledgeable.

Apprenticeships

An apprentice is a good place to begin. A common arrangement was for the master to provide room and board, while the apprentice worked at the trade, learning as he went. As a result, the apprentice would be enumerated with the family of the master, not his own. It was often set up as a

result of an arrangement between the father of the apprentice and the master. If the master had a daughter of the right age, he might have provided a wife as well as having taught a trade. Thus, by investigating the apprentice carefully, we might learn about the wife's maiden name, as well as family friends. Again, Google can provide details about apprenticeship programs. When a son ceases to show up in a census recording, it might be prudent to look for his name with nearby tradesmen.

City Directories & Maps

One of the most useful sources of information about employment is a city directory. Some can be found online. Many directories were updated annually and those frequent updates make it possible to follow the progression of employment. Directories often had separate listings of local firms. These might include officers, size of the business, location, and date of incorporation. In the UK, marriage certificates often listed the professions of the fathers. There are directories from many cities available online, perhaps using a service at the library.

Insurance maps, as published by Sanborn, are a good next step after finding the location of the business. They will show the type of building, neighbors, fire protection and materials used in the business. These might be found online or in the local history section of the library. The maps were published to help property insurers determine rates, but they also provide details of the business. There will be a page that explains the codes and symbols on the map.

There are many older maps available online, some with great details. A modern map like Google can help locate an address, but a period map will show what was extant.

Agricultural Jobs

There are several sources of information about farmers and the details of their lives. Some places, like Norfolk, England, for example, published directories that covered every small village or hamlet within the county. Farmers, being landowners, were considered prominent members of the community and were featured. Further, the typical crops of the community were listed. Markets, blacksmiths, merchants, & transportation were also noted. Thus, it is possible not only to know what the farmer grew, but who his business associates were. Again, these could provide clues to the families of his or daughters. Norfolk is particularly easy to search because there are old directories accessible online.

In America, many states had occasional farm censuses. Pennsylvania is a typical example. The census provides details and dates not in the Federal

census. Not only was the acreage and crop information noted, but electricity, tractors and other conveniences as well. Not every state was as detailed as Pennsylvania, but there were many farm censuses.

Military Draft Records

Draft records from either World War might also help. The registrant was warned to be truthful. Some records include both employer and profession. Further, the employer might be listed as a contact, in addition to a home address. Men far older than normal draft age also had to register, as they might have been called on to be home guards or for some special skill.

Parish Records

I found the baptism of Mary Cox in London's East End in 1791 in a parish register. Her Pa was listed as a rope maker, although I could not be certain as the writing was indistinct. When I looked at a map from the time, I saw several structures called ropewalks. Google explained that ropes were made in thousand-foot lengths and required a long narrow place to accommodate the hemp as it was being twisted. The location was not only close to where Mary Cox was baptized, but it was also close to the India Docks, a supplier of the hemp as well as a customer for the rope.

Your Ancestors' Documents

We have talked about records that require trips to the library, a Family History Center, or a state archive. Do not forget to look close to home. Go through old documents. There might be employee or pay records. Perhaps some document has a letterhead or other company designation. Even tools in the cellar could be labeled with the company insignia. My father had a screwdriver that was stamped Bell Telephone, where his sister worked. Similarly, there could be something made by your grandfather or his father. There might be employee magazines or newsletters. People tended to save publications in which they were mentioned. Look for clothes, uniforms, badges, buttons and the like. There could be a watch or clock, given at retirement that has an inscription on it.

Photographs

Check your collection of old family photos. People might have photos of where they worked, perhaps next to a wagon or truck with the company name. Even if it's a family group photo, your ancestor might still be wearing his work clothes.

Patent Records

Millions of US patents have been granted. Each patent record often has one or more inventors, witnesses and attorneys listed. An invention would

have been either related to what the employer did, or to a special skill or interest the inventor had. Either way, there is good insight into the skills of the ancestor. Patents are easily searched on Google Patents.

Consider Geography

Even geography can help with professions. St. Mary's, PA had a concentration of companies making ferrite components. When a business with a specialized process and good prospects starts up some employees might break away to start their own factory. Since they already have access to raw material sources, suppliers and a trained work force to hire from, they choose to stay in the same community.

Charles Sink went to work in Glassboro, New Jersey, in a glass bottle plant. The reason why he chose that town, or industry, are unknown, but I was able to learn more about his work life from the town's historical records. As with many other locations, there were local history records that filled in the details of the factories and how the bottles were made.

Marriage Documents

In Great Britain, there was a great deal of status consciousness. Marriage documents often listed the rank or profession of the fathers. Occupation was also listed on birth and death certificates. Since 1837, there has been a form that had a place for the entry. Even before then, however, the rector of the church would record the information. While brief, the entries provide a contemporary account.

Licensed Professionals

A final area to explore relates to licensed professionals. Teachers, nurses, and hairdressers all required state documentation for their profession. State archives may contain the application, including dates, and renewals. The application often includes where, and when, the profession was learned, any special tests required, and where the applicant lived. Like other official documents, it is safe to expect the information to be accurate. In Canada's Maritime Provinces, fishermen, or lobstermen, would also have been registered or licensed.

We have gone through a dozen or more potential sources of employment clues. Not all apply to everyone, but a couple should apply to most everyone. Each might only provide a small clue but, when several sources might apply to the same person over his work life, it is possible to gain a fair understanding of your ancestor's work life. (Ed Storey—Sept./Oct. 2012—Family Chronicle).

It's Amazing What You Can Learn From School Censuses!

I have a long history with school census records. I'll bet that my name is listed in a school census of 1955-56 for the Orting School District in Pierce County, Washington. That was my kindergarten year, and I began my education year, and I began my education under the tutelage of the venerable Mrs. Saxton—the first teacher to give a few well deserved swats on my posterior. I later attended parochial schools, which may or may not have been required to file a school census with the state.

The first 18 years of my life were spent living in a remodeled schoolhouse. My parents bought the converted Arline School property in 1943, but the building itself was built as a school in 1912 and functioned as such until 1918. It was later used as a rural community dance hall, and then remodeled for use as a home.

The bachelors that owned the farm pretty much gave me free reign of the house. While exploring a closet in an unused upstairs bedroom, I ran across a bulky satchel. In the satchel were all kinds of records, many in envelopes held together in packets with rubber bands. Others were in book form. They didn't look interesting and they went back in the closet.

About 20 years later, Patty and I bought this house and the satchel surfaced again. It seems to me that the records now in a tiny building across the driveway. This little "house" was called the "teacherage". According to the folks we bought the farm from, the teacherage was where the teacher lived while the Arline School District #117 was in operation. The satchel contained the records of the school. These records included receipt books, board meeting notes, loose papers and copies of the school census records taken each year. At some point, we passed most of these records on to the Washington State Archives in Olympia, but kept copies of the school census records, as well as a few of the records which the Archives did not want (mainly receipts). I'm now posting the digitized school census records at GenealogyBlog.com (see the category: Arline Mills).

Allocation of Funds

The school census is an important tool for any school district. The information compiled from the school census was used to determine the amount of money that the State would allocate to the school districts. Dependent upon time and place, it was required that children between specific ages be enumerated.

Age Requirements

According to the form, in 1913, Washington State Law required that children between the ages

of five and 21 residing in the school district be enumerated. Note that they didn't necessarily have to be going to school. They just had to be eligible. I've come across school census records from other states that required children as young as four years old to be enumerated. I've also seen the upper age as 18, and as "fewer than 20." The ages vary as these are arbitrarily set by the state legislature, and are sometimes actually written into the constitution of the state.

Information Found on a School Census

Some or all of the following is typically found:

Names of the Parents (or Parent) or Guardian of the Child

- Post Office Address – this may be as simple as the town where mail is picked up, or as detailed as a specific house number.
- Names of the Children
- Date of Birth of the Child
- Number of Weeks the Child Attended School
- Gender
- White or Colored
- Nationality
- Distance of the School from Home
- Name & Address of the Employer of Any Child
- Tribe (if any)
- Disabilities
- Public School Only – Yes or No
- Both Public & Parochial School—Yes or No
- Private or Parochial School Only – Yes or No
- Signature of the Parent or Guardian

Where to Locate School Census Records

The Superintendent of Schools

Keeping in mind that the Superintendent of Schools in each county has typically been responsible for the school census, this is one of the first places that the researcher might check when looking for historic school census records. Their files will often go back for many years, and the records may be accessible there – at the county level.

The State Archives

Then again, these records could very well have been passed on to the State Archives, where I know that many of them reside today. I recommend starting out with an online search of the State Archives website, then moving on to making a phone call, and hopefully speaking with an archivist that might be able to tell you what's available.

Genealogical Societies, Historical Societies and Museums

School census records could very well have been passed on to a state or local historical society or museum. The vast majority of these facilities now have websites, and at the very least, contact information can almost always be found online for even the smallest of these institutions.

As an example of the great work being done by societies, the Oklahoma Genealogical Society recently published a book titled Oklahoma School Census Locator Index. This book identifies the location where thousands of school district census records can be found for all 77 Oklahoma counties. It even includes color maps of each county's current school district location. The 341-page book sells for \$55 (shipping and tax included). A CD version is available for \$23. Order from the Oklahoma Genealogical Society, Attn: Sales Manager Heavener, PO Box 12986, Oklahoma City, OK 73157-2986

The School

Most schools kept a copy of their census records. With a little luck, you might find that the documents are available right where they were created.

The Internet

An amazing number of school census records—both transcriptions as well as digitized records—can now be found online. Numerous records have been posted at USGenWeb county sites, on RootsWeb sites, and on private as well as society and museum websites. You can use Google to search for school censuses, starting out with something like “Arline School Census” for which I got eight results. You might also search using www.mocavo.com, which searches genealogy-related sites, with seven results. Using Mocavo.com to search for “School Census”, I got 50,870 results giving you some idea of the number of these records available online. I also recommend going directly to the county USGenWeb sites, RootsWeb, and the society and museum sites themselves, where you might find documents and transcriptions that didn't have the same words within them that you used as keywords when using the search engines.

How Can School Census Records Be Used For Genealogy?

The thing that's really cool about school census records is that they were taken annually. They provide the genealogist with another snapshot of family members separate from the Federal and/or State census records that we collect. In this way,

they fall into the same category as tax records, only better, as they name not only the parents, but contain a listing of all the kids of school age living in the family. Besides that, they often give dates of birth for the children. Keep in mind that this is what we call a secondary source for the birth date. It may or may not be correct, but it's certainly better than none at all! And the records nearly always list a post office address, maybe not exactly matching the house number, but enough to place this family in a specific place at a specific time. Those three items alone make school census records some of the best genealogical documents available. Now go and find the docs for your family. (Leland Meitzler—Nov/Dec 2011—Family Chronicle)

Top Sites for Railway Research

Railway transportation transformed our ancestor's lives. For the first time in history, overland routes became preferred to water routes and new communities sprung up almost overnight everywhere the railroad went. Wherever there was a railroad station, there were new opportunities for manufacturing, trade, shipping, hospitality and tourism. The rails also brought tragedy and conflict. Train wrecks dominated the news just as shipwrecks had been doing for generations.

Aboriginal communities were turned upside down as their lands were overrun, first by railroad workers laying the tracks, and later by white settlers moving in to lands previously occupied by indigenous people.

Whatever your reason for researching railways, you will find lots of helpful information and like-minded people online. Here are my top ten websites for railway research.

Railroad Records, Holly Hansen

www.familychronicle.com/RailroadRecords.html

This article provides a great introduction to railroad-related records, including maps, journals, timetables, watch files, train sheets, personnel and pension files, passenger lists, and telegraphy records. Hansen explains what you're likely to find, and how you can use them to enhance your family history research. While the online information she provides is limited due to the fact that the article was published ten years ago, the advice is absolutely current and is not limited to the records of any particular country, although she does mention a few specific resources for Canadian and American railroads.

Riding the Rails up Paper Mountain: Researching Railroad Records in the National Archives. David A. Pfeiffer

www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/spring/railroad-records-1.html

This excellent article aims to help a wide range of researchers, from railroad hobbyists to legal researchers and genealogists, discover the vast resources of the U.S. National Archives for railroad research. Topics include railroad valuation records (with maps, engineering field notes, drawings, photographs and inspection reports), railroad accident reports, annual reports of railroad companies, patent application files, U.S. Army Historical Program Files (including reports on foreign railroads during WWII) and much more.

Thomas J. Dodd Research Center—Railroad History Archive

<http://railroads.uconn.edu/>

This site serves two purposes. First, it provides information about the Railroad History Archive collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut. Second it collects together a huge number of links to other websites with historical information about railroads in the United States.

The Railroad History Archive collections include administrative records, photographs, maps, timetables, ephemera and many other types of archival materials with a special focus on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. A small amount of material is available in digital form online. These include photographs of New Haven railroad equipment, photographs of railroad stations in southern New England and a special tribute to the Canaan (CT) Union Station.

The links section provides links to railroad-related sites at archives, libraries, museums, and voluntary societies. The links are organized by region, including federal institutions, the New England, the Northeast/Midatlantic, the South, the Midwest, the West and General sites. This is a great place to start your research if you're interested in American railroads.

Mike's Railway History

<http://mikes.railhistory.railfan.net/home.html>

This British site looks at railway history around the world with wonderful articles about the building of railways across Africa, engineering feats in Switzerland, luxury train holidaying in Britain and much more. Most of the articles focus on the 1930s, the "heyday" of rail transportation, but many treat earlier periods as well. If you're interested in railways outside North America, this is a great place to start.

United States Railroad Retirement Board

www.rrb.gov/mep/genealogy.asp

If your ancestors or relatives worked for an American railroad company since 1936, you'll want to check out this page, which offers information

about applying for genealogy searches in the records of the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board.

Railways Staff Database

www.cheshirewestlandchester.gov.uk/council_services/record_office/catalogues_and_indexes/railways_staff_database.aspx

Genealogists tracing ancestors who worked in the administration or stations for the Cambrian Railway, Great Western Railway, London and Northwestern Railway or the London and Northwestern and Great Western Joint Railway, will find this an extremely useful resource. The railways staff database contains staff registers for these four companies covering the period 1869 to 1950, with often detailed information about an employee's career. Information about 25,000 employees is included in this database. Please note that employees who worked on the trains, such as firemen and engineers, are not included in these registers.

Erie Railroad Internet Employee Archives

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~sponholz/erie.html>

This RootsWeb site is a clearing house for information about Erie railroad employees. The core is a database of employee names from the Erie Railroad Magazine, a publication and about railroad employees in the Erie area. Published information includes tables of retiring employees (with years of service and other career details), news about new appointments and transfers, and personal stories about employees, such as weddings, births and deaths. The database includes only the names of the employees mentioned in the magazine, their position, location, a short description (obituary, retirement, etc.) and a citation to the particular issue in which the item is found. The site manager, James Sponholz, is also adding references to Erie railroad employees found in other records, such as local newspapers.

Other resources on the site include: (1) abstracts of published company rosters, (2) a transcription of a book of personnel record summaries for trainmen on the Chicago & Erie from the 1880s-1910, (3) a database of information pertaining to Erie railroad employees involved in rail accidents investigated by the Interstate Commerce Commission between 1911 and 1941, and (4) links to related websites, including railroad related message boards hosted by RootsWeb.

Pullman Porters

www.aphiliprandolphmuseum.com

The A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum is dedicated to celebrating the lives and contributions of African-Americans to the labor movement, with a special focus on the Brotherhood

of Sleeping Car Porters. As the site informs us, "During the heyday of {American} railroad travel, the Pullman Porters were the workers aboard the trains. They provided service to and attended to the needs of the passengers. In the beginning, the Pullman Company hired only African-American men for the job of porter. The Pullman porters and the excellent service they provided were integral and indispensable to the rise and success of the passenger railroad industry." Tens of thousands of African-Americans worked as Pullman Porters and train personnel. It was the single most common occupation for an American in the 1920s.

The museum recently published the first edition of the Anthology of Respect: The Pullman Porters National Historic Registry. This wonderful publication contains information on more than 3,000 African-American railroad employees who worked for the railroad from the late 1800s to the 1960s, as well as historical background on the history of the Pullman Porters and their labor union (founded in 1925 by A. Philip Randolph).

GenDisasters—Train Wrecks

www.gendisasters.com/trains/

Do you have a family tradition involving a train crash? Check out this site! Here you'll find links to articles and casualty lists for train wrecks, rail-related accidents (and all sorts of other disasters) across the United States).

The American-Rails.com www.american-rails.com

Bob Kitchen's site is loaded with historical and contemporary information about railroads, rail stations and trains in the United States. A wide range of articles, all fascinating and informative this site provides a history of the railways in America. If you're a rail fan, you won't get bored waiting for the next post.

While this site offers little in the way of explicitly genealogical content (no information about railway employee records, for example), it will be very useful to anyone seeking to understand the rail system for which their ancestors worked, or on which their ancestors traveled.

A Few Last Words

Many smaller sites will help you with your research on specific railroads, stations and companies. If you don't find what you're looking for in the sites I've profiled here, try checking www.CyndisList.com under railroads and genealogical society websites for the location of interest. You'll be amazed by how much excellent information is available and how addictive railroad research can be! (Janice Nickerson—Internet Genealogy—February/March 2011)

Top 10 Places to Find Maiden Names

Discovering the maiden name of a female ancestor can sometimes be difficult, but can lead to a whole new branch of your family tree. There are new surnames, new families, and new connections. Here are ten of the records and resources where you commonly find a mention of a female's maiden name.

1. Marriage Records

The best place to locate a woman's maiden name is on her marriage record. These can include not only the marriage license, but also the marriage certificate, marriage announcements, marriage banns, and marriage bonds. You will need to know the spouse's name, marriage location and approximate marriage date to find these records.

2. Cemetery Records

The cemetery may be the only place where you will find proof of the existence of a female ancestor. Tombstones may list women under their maiden names, with "wife of so and so" as the record of their married name, or may include the wife's maiden name as a middle name or initial. For those with no mention of the female's maiden name, check nearby plots for possible family members.

3. Census Records

Check every census year available for your female ancestor, up until the year that she died. Young couples may be found living with the wife's parents; an elderly parent may have been added to the household; or brothers, sisters, or other family members may be found living with your ancestors' family. Clues may also be found in the names of families living nearby.

4. Land Records

Land was important, and often passed down from father to daughter. Examine deeds for your ancestor and/or her husband which include the Latin phrases "et ux." (and wife) and "et al." (and others). They may provide the names of females, or names of siblings or children. Also keep your eye out for a man or a couple selling land to your ancestors for a dollar, or other small amount. The ones selling the land are more than likely the parents or relatives of your female ancestor.

5. Church Records

Churches are a good source for birth or christening records which usually include the names of both parents, including the maiden name of the mother. Church marriage records will usually include the spouse's maiden name, and are an alternate source for marriage information for periods where civil registration was not in effect.

6. Probate Records and Wills

If you have a possible set of parents for your female ancestor, search for their probate record or will. Surnames of female children, along with the names of their spouses, are often listed. Since estates often involved the division of land, deed indexes for your female ancestor may be able to lead you to probate proceedings.

7. Newspaper Records

Check newspapers for the locality where your ancestors lived for birth or marriage announcements or obituaries. Even if you can't locate an obituary for your female ancestor, you may find notices for siblings or other family members that provide helpful clues. Combining a list of your ancestor's siblings with census research can help determine potential families.

8. Death Records

If your female ancestor died recently enough to leave a death certificate, this is potentially one of the few places where her maiden name may appear. Since death certificates can often include inaccurate information, check the certificate for the name of the informant. The closeness of the relationship between informant and the deceased can help you assess the likely accuracy of the provided information.

9. Military Records

Was your ancestor's spouse or children in the military? Pension applications and military service records often include good biographical information. Family members also often signed as witnesses.

10. Naming Patterns

It is only a clue, but the maiden name of a mother can sometimes be found buried somewhere among the names of her children. Unusual middle names, among boys or girls, might be the maiden name of a mother or grandmother. Or the eldest daughter might be named for her maternal grandmother. (Kimberley Powell—About.com Guide)

Getting Kids Hooked on Family History

Short of dragging children kicking and screaming to the Family History Library, to a library in your own area, or to a local historical society or museum, how can we get the younger generations interested in family history, let alone genealogy?

As a small child, participating in family gatherings is natural. Children are inquisitive. They are usually fascinated by stories of times gone by and what life was like for grandma and grandpa or some other elderly person when they were the same age. They enjoy participating in community events

that celebrate different ethnicities or nationalities, such as Oktoberfest for Germans, St. Patrick's Day for the Irish and Native American Pow Wows.

However, interest fades as children grow into their teen years, unless it is cultivated at a young age. Boy Scouts offer a merit badge in genealogy. Scrapbooking gives youth a chance to document their lives or the lives of others in a fun and creative way. School assignments sometimes relate to personal family history.

Perhaps the enticement of a cash reward or a scholarship might be the incentive needed to get children interested in family history. The opportunity to earn prizes happens annually at a local, regional, state and national level through school history competitions.

History fairs are open to students in elementary school through high school. In Utah, and perhaps other states, grades 4-5 (primary division) can compete at the local level. Regional, state and national competitions include two divisions: Junior (grades 6-8) and Senior (grades 9-12).

Students first compete at the local level. Awards offered at the local level might include medals, ribbons, certificates, pins, books and gift certificates. The top winners go on to the regional contest.

Additional prizes are given at the regional level. The top winners at the regional contest advance to the state competition. Prizes at the state level include cash, college scholarships and often other awards.

Prizes at the national level also include cash and college scholarships. The History Channel also gives cash awards to the gold medal winning projects in the senior division, individual and group documentary categories.

Special prizes are also offered by various sponsors at the national level. Among the many awards are ones for history projects related to the Civil War, agriculture and rural life, immigration, Irish or Irish-American ancestry, Colonial America or Revolutionary and women.

Potential themes for the National History Day (subject to change) are chosen well in advance. The theme for 2009 was The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies. In the article about the theme, Cathy Gorm, the Executive Director of the National History Day, wrote:

"Many individuals in history were not famous—or infamous—and their names are lost to history. But often, such individuals played significant roles in the course of human events; a foot soldier in the Battle of Normandy on D-Day during World War II; a pioneer woman on the Oregon Trail; or a voter registration activist in Mississippi during Freedom Summer 1964. How did each contribute to a larger event or movement

that changed history?”

This theme as well as future themes, lend themselves to family history research, even if it is someone else’s ancestor.

There are five categories for project submissions to the history fair.

Historical papers

Documentary entries (media based presentations)

Exhibit entries

Performance entries

Website entries

According to information posted on the Utah History Fair website, “the National History Day program turns kids into historians. It gets them involved in primary historical research and provides a series of competitions where they can present their findings. Students learn that history is fun, and they are recognized for their academic achievements.”

Haley Parker, from San Juan High School in Utah, summed up her experience with the state History Fair and National History Day:

“As I spoke with local historians, read through county journals, searched through newspaper archives, and read through county books and interview transcriptions for this project I truly began to enjoy history. For me, my project became something beyond dates, numbers, and facts. It was real, full of actual people with their own personal triumphs and losses.”

For more information about the National History Day, go to www.nhd.org or www.nationalhistoryday.org. To find out about your state’s History Fair, try googling the words “history fair” and the name of your state (prov.), or contact your local school or school district for information. (Judith Eccles Wight, AG—Family Chronicle—March/April 2011)

Avoid These Hometown Pitfalls!

The biggest barrier to tracing our European immigrant ancestors is often the step of tracing them across the ocean—of finding that immigrant ancestor in a European record. You need to have a European hometown in order to access the records and continue tracing your family back in time. But sometimes finding the town name isn’t the magic solution it might at first appear to be.

When you try to find the records for this town, you might find that you are still stuck. It might be that you find records for the town, but your ancestor wasn’t really born there. Or it could be that you find the town, but can’t seem to find any existing records for that place. Or finally, you might not find any evidence that a town with that name really exists at all.

In many cases that town name that you are starting to suspect might be worthless is actually leading you in the right direction. But in order to

achieve what you want—European records with your ancestors in them—you have to make sure to avoid a few pitfalls. Here are some of the major hometown pitfalls that catch researchers, and what you can do to ensure you don’t fall into them.

1) The hometown given is actually the nearest largest town.

If you find a large city listed on a record as a place of origin for your ancestor, you should always be a little suspicious. Sometimes our ancestors rounded up when asked where they were from. The same thing happens today. Someone from a suburb of Chicago might simply say he is from Chicago.

Similarly, our ancestors who list big cities as their town of origin might be making an over-generalization. The ancestor who claims to be from Hamburg or London may have lived there—but may also have only lived near there (or in these cases, might have only emigrated from there).

Unfortunately, this pitfall is one of the most difficult to escape. If regional or state (prov.) records exist, you could try looking for your ancestor there—hoping that you have pinpointed the right area at least. Otherwise, if searches in the big city (which can be frustrating) don’t prove fruitful, you may have to return to your search in the records for a more specific town name.

2) The hometown is the most recent residence

When someone asked our ancestors where they were from, they might not have always given their towns of birth as their answers. Instead, our ancestors might have provided the names of the towns in which they had mostly recently lived.

Usually, this piece of information will still help you achieve your goal of finding your ancestor in a European record. Be sure to look for any sign of an ancestral family in the hometown—not just for your immediate ancestor’s birth record. Search the parish records for signs of family members marrying, dying, or having children there. If census or civil registration records are available, try these as well.

Once you anchor the family to a place in the country of origin, you have accomplished something important—even if it wasn’t locating the birth town. For one thing, records in that town might give clues that can help you trace the family back further. There might be a note recording where the family lived before moving there. Or a marriage record might indicate the name of the town in which the person was born.

Also, keep in mind that our ancestors rarely moved far. So chances are you are still in the right area—even if you aren’t in the right town.

3) The name of the hometown has changed.

Sometimes you might find a name for a town that appears not to exist at all. This might be because, while there was a town by that name when your ancestor lived in that town, there isn’t a town with that name anymore. The name has changed.

A town's name might have changed because the jurisdictions have changed. Many European countries have undergone boundary changes in the last few centuries. Towns that were once in Germany might be found in Poland, France, or Denmark now. Most likely the town's name changed when the boundary changed. Read a little about the history of the area you believe your ancestor is from to see what the jurisdictional changes might have affected it. Make sure to consult a historical gazetteer or map when looking for a town.

4) The town is too small to have records of its own.

Sometimes a person locates a town name, can find a place with this name on a map, but can't seem to locate any records for this place. If this is your situation, first you have to realize that you have already completed the hardest part of tracing immigrant ancestors across the ocean. What remains is just a little stumbling block—but one that seems to trip up a lot of people.

Perhaps what has happened is that your ancestors lived in a place too small to have records of its own. Many small villages, for example, didn't have their own church. There weren't enough people to support it. Instead people from several villages came together to attend church in one village. You need to figure out not only where your ancestors lived, but where they went to church (since parish records are the most important records available in most European countries). Country or state gazetteers can help with this.

A similar problem is that a town name you have found in a document might not be a town at all. It could be a very small cluster of houses or rural area. Again, consult a detailed historical gazetteer as these small places will often be included.

Finally, remember that you might not be able to locate records simply because the records only exist in that locality itself. Maybe they have not been filmed, indexed, published, or even archived. In other unfortunate circumstances, the records could have burned or been destroyed in some other way. Sometimes the only way to know for sure is to contact the local church or local record holder yourself.

5) The name of the town has been translated or Americanized

If it appears that there is no town with the name you found in the record, consider that you might just have a different "version" of the town name—a name that has metamorphosed in the records. Just as with our family surnames, town names can become shortened or have unfamiliar letter clusters replaced with something more "American". This links together closely with the last pitfall.

6) The town name is misspelled

Perhaps the most common problem of all is that the name of the town is misspelled. Sometimes, there might be small spelling errors that you can easily untangle. Other times, town names might be slaughtered so badly that it is nearly impossible to determine what town the writer really meant.

What can you do? First, be flexible. Think of other ways to spell the name you have—remembering that many of our ancestors spelled phonetically and just weren't that concerned about spelling things "correctly". Become familiar with some basic pronunciation rules for the country of origin. For example, German town names might interchange "V" and "W" at the beginning of town names while Spanish towns could easily interchange "B" and "V" because these letters sound very similar in those languages.

Also, try a historical gazetteer—skimming down to see what towns exist that are similar. If you know the general area your ancestor lived, you might study a map (preferably a map from that time period) to see if you recognize a name similar to the one you found.

Although many seemingly "incorrect" town names often fall into one of these categories, there is of course, another option. In a minority of cases, the hard truth may be that the town name you found is simply incorrect. Anyone who has done genealogy research for a while knows that errors can slip into even the most reliable records. Maybe the record keeper wasn't paying attention, maybe the information got recorded with the wrong person, or maybe your ancestor didn't really know (or had mistaken information about) where he or she was born. If you have taken precautions to avoid these pitfalls, and it still appears that the town name is just plain wrong, then it's time to turn back to the drawing board—or the microfilms in this case. Another record may have the town name—the real one. (Leslie Albrecht Huber—Family Chronicle—March/April 2011)

*There's one sad truth in life I've found
While journeying east and west.
The only folks we really wound
Are those we love the best.
We flatter those we scarcely know.
We please the fleeting guest.
And deal full many a thoughtless blow.
To those who love us best
--Ella Wheeler Wilcox
(Taken from www.familytreequotes.com)*