

CHINOOK ARCH

February 2021 Volume 3 Issue 2



ALBERTA FAMILY
HISTORIES SOCIETY

1980-2020

Society Meetings

Our Next Society Meeting: Monday, February 8

LOCATION: Via Zoom

TIME: 7 to 9 pm

Topic: Finding North American Passenger Lists

Tara Shymanski gives us tips on how to discover when your ancestors came to North America using record collections that contain digitized passenger lists for arrivals in the United States and Canada. Learn where to find indexes and other useful tools to help find your ancestor on a passenger list.

Upcoming Meetings

All held virtually using Zoom until further notice. Contact SIG leaders to receive an invitation link to the meeting.

DATE	GROUP	TIME	TOPIC
Sat., Feb. 13	Digital Genealogy SIG	10 am to noon	Alberta Ancestors website & Family Genes customizing your homepage
Sat., Feb. 20	English/Welsh SIG	10 am to noon	Useful websites/photo help
Sun., Feb. 21	DNA SIG	1:30 to 3:30 pm	
Mon., Feb. 22	Board Meeting	7 to 9 pm	
Mon., Feb. 22	Ontario SIG	1:30 to 3:30 pm	Brant County museums and research
Sat., Feb. 27	Celtic SIG	10 am to noon	
Sun., Feb. 28	Legacy SIG	1:30 to 3:30 pm	How to set up reports for sharing
Sat., Mar. 6	FTM SIG	10 am to noon	FTM updates, working with media/photos

Next Society Meetings

Monday, March 8, 2021

Topic: Metis Research

Speaker: Christine Woodcock

Christine Woodcock explores resources for researching your HBC and Western Metis ancestors. Her interest in Scottish genealogy led her to research Scots who came to Canada to work for the HBC and stayed to start families, helping to create the Metis nation.

Member Benefits:

- Society events and activities
- Our member-exclusive email news bulletin *The Windsock* & newsletter *Chinook Arch*
- Full access to our Society's resources and library with lending privileges
- Opportunities to participate in our Special Interest Groups
- Gain new friends with similar research interests and have fun!

www.afhs.ab.ca/membership

AFHS Member Updates

Donate to AFHS Online

Iris Morgan, Director - Finance

AFHS members are our greatest asset, so we are asking you to invest in what you value – the Alberta Family Histories Society. To make this investment easier, a new “Donate” feature is available on our website. Online donations can be made securely, and a tax receipt issued by email.

Our organization is celebrating our 40th Anniversary this year and continues to provide research support and family history resources because of your involvement. Volunteers give many hours to help keep us going. Financial support is another key aspect in keeping AFHS running, a benefit to all our members as well as the interested public.

Memorial donations on behalf of a friend, colleague or family member can also be made using our new Donate feature. By providing a meaningful way to remember someone, as an AFHS member, you are also a beneficiary.

Please consider making a contribution as a lasting legacy in support of the Alberta Family Histories Society.

Curbside Pick Up and Drop Off Now Available

Linda Murray, Director - Library

For the next few weeks, or until COVID restrictions are lifted for libraries, the AFHS Library will be offering curbside pickup and drop-off. The dates for February are Thursday, February 11 and Thursday, February 18 from 10 am to 1 pm.

To take advantage of the pickup service:

Check the AFHS catalogue on the Library section of our website, <https://afhs.ab.ca/library>, for books you wish to order. Make a list of the titles **and the call numbers** of your choices.

- Email your list to library@afhs.ab.ca. Include your name, your telephone number, and the date you will pick up the items. Please note: the hours for pickup will be from 10 am to 1 pm only.
- Upon arrival, call the library 403-214-1447. Watch the back entrance of the library. A volunteer will place your items on a table at the back door. Your items will be signed out for 4 weeks.

If you have any library items to return, you may do so during the same hours. Please call the 403-214-1447 to let our volunteers know you have left them in the box for returns on the table at the back door.



Ancestor Anecdotes

He Plowed the Land With an Ox and an Axe Tara Shymanski

There's a song that goes "Oh, give me land, lots of land, under starry skies above. Don't fence me in." My great grandfather, James Herbert "Herb" Jerry, was a strong and determined man who worked hard to achieve his dream of owning his own land.

Herb grew up in poverty. His family was so poor that when he was only ten years old, Herb worked at a neighbour's farm to earn money for the family. His family moved around a lot, ending up in Crozier, Northwestern Ontario in the early 1900s. It is here he met his future wife, a teacher, Margaret Electa Cranston.

In the early 20th century, the only way for a poor adult to get land was to homestead. Homesteaders paid a \$10 registration fee and were given 160 acres. Ownership for this land was granted if the farmer lived on the land for three years, cultivated 30 acres, and built a house worth \$300. My great-grandfather headed to Saskatchewan, where land was available, and purchased a homestead near Hawarden. He was a strong man and he had an ox that pulled his plow. In one hand, he held the plow reins and, in his other, an ax. As he plowed, he would hit tree roots, and, "whack!" down would come the axe, splitting the roots. He then allowed the ox to continue. That is how he cleared his land.

In 1915, he journeyed by train to Margaret's hometown, Comber, Ontario, to marry her. After the wedding, Herb and Margaret traveled to his farm in Saskatchewan. All four of their children, Bethel, Josephine, Bud and Anna, were born on the farm.

Unfortunately, Margaret suffered from mental illness. In 1923, after Anna was born, her illness was so severe she was sent to the psychiatric hospital in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. Since there wasn't anyone to care for the children, with

their mother in the hospital and their father working the farm, the children were sent to their maternal relatives in Comber. They were raised by family there for several years.

Eventually, Margaret recovered enough to be released from hospital. Herb and Margaret joined their children in Comber. My great-grandfather tried working in the Leamington factory for a couple of years but he didn't like it. He wanted to farm. His mother and some of his brothers were still in Crozier, so the family decided to move. They traveled to Crozier in a big car, arriving in 1929.

While I was in university, I met an older man who remembered Herb Jerry and how he plowed his land with an ox and an axe. He eventually sold the original farm to his daughter and son-in-law and purchased a smaller piece of land not far away. We children would go with Dad to visit him. I remember my great-granddad Jerry as a man who loved his land. He was patient and could explain anything about nature.

Herb had a difficult life marked by extreme poverty as a child and, later, an unstable wife suffering from mental illness. Despite this, in his old age, he exuded peace. He didn't leave his land until the age of 88 when he finally moved into town to allow his daughter to care for him.



Herb Jerry, holding gun, his parents, Robert and Harriet Jerry, and siblings in Crozier

Special Interest Groups

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs) are the ideal place to share your family history. The small-group setting allows for the exchange of information and suggestions on further avenues to pursue.

All SIGs are being held using Zoom for now and the groups do not meet during July and August. Check our website calendar for up-to-date information or email the SIG leader.

CELTIC SIG (Irish/Scots)

Meets every month on the fourth Saturday 10 am - Noon
celticsig@afhs.ab.ca

DIGITAL GENEALOGY SIG

Meets every month on the second Saturday 10 am - Noon
familygenes@afhs.ab.ca

DNA SIG

Meets every month on the third Sunday 1:30 - 3:30 pm
dnasig@afhs.ab.ca

ENGLISH/WELSH SIG

Meets every month on the third Saturday 10 am - Noon
englishwelshsig@afhs.ab.ca

FAMILY TREE MAKER SIG

Meets every month on the first Saturday 10 am - Noon
ftmsig@afhs.ab.ca

LEGACY SIG

Meets alternate months on the last Sunday 1:30 - 3 pm
legacysig@afhs.ab.ca

ONTARIO SIG

Meets every month on the fourth Monday 1:30 - 3:30 pm
ontariosig@afhs.ab.ca

English/Welsh SIG Amber Godfrey

On January 16, the English/Welsh SIG had a wonderful presentation on *Dating 19th Century Photographs* by Kelly Southworth of the Winnipeg Chapter of the Manitoba Genealogical Society that I was lucky enough to attend.

Kelly talked about the “genealogical trinity” of NDP – name, date, and place. By identifying at least two of the three facts for your photos, you can often determine the third using some of the tips and tricks she shared in her presentation. She listed various helpful tools to identify the people in your photos, including some great reference books. Several of the ones she mentioned are available through the AFHS library and Calgary Public Library. Two of the authors she talked about were Robert Pols and Maureen Taylor (*The Photo Detective*).

Genealogists may encounter different types of photos. Kelly listed the main categories: cased images, daguerreotype, ambrotype, tin type, carte de visite (sometimes abbreviated as CDV) and cabinet cards. She included many examples of these from her extensive collection of old photos.

Identifying the time period of the photo can be extremely useful, and there are lots of ways to do this. Other than determining the category of photo you own (cabinet card, tin type, etc.), you can use other clues like the photographic studio (often stamped or printed on the photograph or its holder), the style and type of clothing worn by the people in the photo and even the props used in the photo.

This presentation was informative and offered lots of practical ideas on how to identify your relatives in old photos. I inherited an old photo album with some lovely photos, I've included two of them below, but I am still working to identify who they all are and this gave me some good tips.



Cabinet Card



Tin Type

DNA Discoveries

What Happened to Baby Sarah?

Katie Crossman

My great-great-grandfather Thomas Wilson was born in 1868 in Lisburn, just south of Belfast, Ireland. Lisburn was also the birthplace of the Irish linen industry. Thomas's father and grandfather were weavers. Weaving sounds like a fun hobby, but was a rather unpleasant job to do 12-14 hours a day. The factories were dark and crowded, and the air was damp and dust filled. As you'll see in this article, death and disease were always lurking.

Thomas's parents, Andrew Wilson and Catherine Jordan, married in June 1862. After their first son John died at birth, Francis was born less than a year later. My Thomas came along in April 1868. When he was still very young, the family moved to Bridgeton, near Glasgow, Scotland, likely in search of work. Their sister Sarah was then born in December 1870. Sadly, their mother Catherine died within days of giving birth. The official cause of death was "metritis" which is an inflammation of the uterus, probably due to unsanitary living and birthing conditions. Andrew was left to care for their three young children.

The 1871 census was three months later and shows the family already broken apart. Father Andrew is boarding with five-year-old Francis. Sarah, only three months old, is living with a wet nurse, and two-year-old Thomas is the adopted son of Francis and Sarah McKeown, maternal relatives. Francis and Sarah McKeown were childless when they adopted Thomas, but three years later, they had a daughter, Isabella. When Thomas died after falling from scaffolding at the Glasgow docks in 1911, his only living relative was "half sister Isabella McKeown" whose location was unknown. I found her in the 1901 and 1911 censuses working as a cook in the Lisburn hospital. Thomas's death orphaned his children, which led to my great-grandmother coming to Canada as a British Home Child two years later.

I had no idea what became of Thomas's siblings or father despite a lot of searching. Wilson is a common name, and I couldn't identify any of them. I especially wanted to know what happened to baby Sarah. I had earmarked a few records for various Sarah Wilsons but had no real idea. Cue the DNA part of this story.

I found a cluster of matches with the surname McWilliams. After some digging, I found they were all descended from Sarah McWilliams 1870-1917. Could this be the same person? I looked closer at the matches and indeed, they matched other known Wilson descendants. I searched for

and found Sarah's marriage record. Her father was listed as Andrew Wilson, weaver. So little baby Sarah, whose mother died at her birth, ended up back in Ireland and went on to have six children before dying at 47 of tuberculosis. She's not in the picture below, but the seated woman is her youngest daughter, Margaret, who was only seven when Sarah died. The older woman is unknown.



Sarah's daughter Margaret (holding the baby)

I believe I found their brother Francis in Belfast. There's a marriage record for a Francis, son of Andrew, in 1886. Two years later he died of gastric fever a month before his second child was born (and she only lived to be 2). As far as I can tell, his first child survived, and I'm hoping one of his descendants will appear in my matches one of these days.

90	1886	Francis Wilson	Married	24	Lisburn	Catherine Jordan
		Francis Wilson		years		certified

Death certificate for Francis Wilson

Looking closer at this cluster of matches, I found a descendant of their father Andrew's previously unknown brother, John. Because John married in Glasgow where the records are more detailed, I learned their mother's maiden name and was able to go a generation further back in my tree. I still don't know what happened to Andrew. I haven't found a death record I'm convinced is his, but he was listed as deceased on Thomas's marriage record in 1889, so he also died young.

Life was rough, but I find it comforting that baby Sarah lived and went on to have her own family. I don't think I would have ever found that out if it weren't for DNA.

Calgary Connection

Calgary Cemetery Records

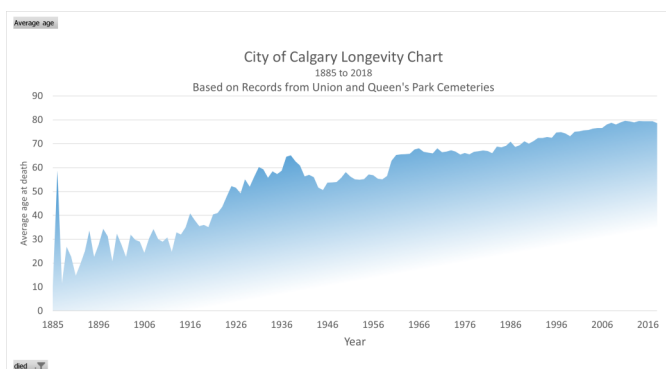
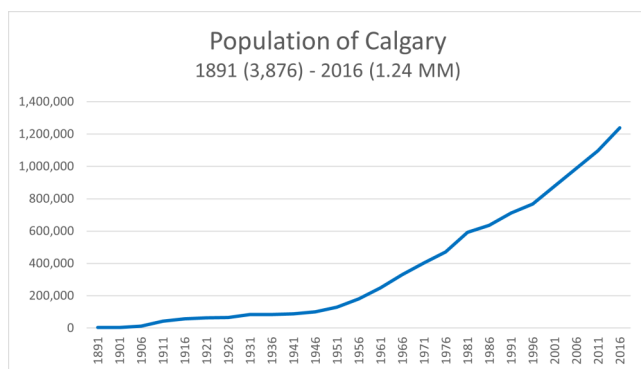
Jim Benedict

There is a treasure trove hidden in the data vault of the Society, and it is the collection of cemetery records for Calgary and area. Harvested over a couple of decades, our Projects Committee volunteers have tromped through fields of burial markers, jotting down inscriptions and snapping photos. Then they headed home to transcribe all the findings into large spreadsheets and transferred this precious information onto DVD discs.

Until recently, the DVDs were a good method for our members to find their buried Calgary ancestors. They could go to the AFHS Library and browse the discs on the computers there. Library closures, due to COVID protocols, have made this more difficult. A new way is coming this year thanks to the help and encouragement from Heather Williams, the head of the Projects Committee for many years. All that information is being transferred online to a new AFHS website. This is a different site from our main society website, but it won't be ready for public viewing for a few months. In the meantime, enjoy this small teaser.

Because the information is inside a web database, I have explored it with a few data mining tricks. The two graphs show the growth and the health of Calgary's population over the last 135 years. The first graph, Calgary Population, uses census information from the City of Calgary data. As you know, we have had an accelerating increase in population ever since the early 1950s.

The second graph, the longevity chart, comes from our cemetery records and becomes even more interesting. We are getting to live longer each decade. Ignore the jaggedness of the first ten years, as the population was too low to give useful numbers. From about 1890 to 1910, the average life span was below 30, most likely due to farming and ranching hazards, and infant mortality. We start living longer after 1910, getting up to 60 years by 1960. You might spot a dip due to the 1918 - 1920 Spanish Flu and the war years. Then we get going, into the 60s until 1990, and then touching 80 years average by 2015. Give our children another twenty years, and who knows?



As the new project progresses, we will have some more interesting history tidbits to share with you. Also, watch for the announcement when the website goes live!

Upcoming Events

CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Genealogy Basics (6 week course)
Gale Courses - Calgary Public Library

Free online with your library card!

Starts February 10, 2021

www.calgarylibrary.ca/read-learn-and-explore/digital-library/gale-courses

Calgary Herald Online Archive

Free online with your library card!

Calgary Public Library

Find articles, birth notices, obituaries, ads, and editorials published in the Calgary Herald between 1883 and 2010.

<https://calgarylibrary.ca/read-learn-and-explore/digital-library/calgary-herald-archive-online>

Researching Hudson's Bay Company and Western Metis Ancestors with Christine Woodcock

Free virtual program

Calgary Public Library/AFHS

March 8, 2021 7 - 8 pm

<https://calgarylibrary.ca/events-and-programs/researching-hudsons-bay-company-hbc-and-western-metis-ancestors>

Check for more conferences and virtual webinars at:

Conference Keeper:

www.conferencekeeper.org/virtual

Family Search:

www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Family_History_Library_Classes_and_Webinars

CONFERENCES/WEBINARS

Discovering the Stories that Bring Family History to Life

Victoria Genealogical Society

February 20, 2021

www.victoriags.org/events.php

RootsTech Connect 2021

FamilySearch

February 25 - 27, 2021

www.rootstech.org

Really Useful Family History Show

Family History Federation

April 10, 2021

www.fhf-reallyuseful.com

GenFair 2021

Wetaskiwin Branch AGS

April 24, 2021

<https://www.abgenealogy.ca/wetaskiwin-branch>

**My Roots, Your Roots, Ontario's Roots:
Virtual Conference &
Family History Show
Ontario Ancestors**

June 4 - 6, 2021

<https://ogs.on.ca>

Volunteer Opportunities

Leadership Opportunities - We Need You!

Elections for our Board of Directors occur at our Annual General Meeting. Although we are still working out how this meeting will proceed due to COVID-19, we have begun the process of finding candidates. All Director positions are elected, one-year terms, and some of our current Board members have decided not to run again. Because we are a registered society, we must fill these volunteer positions. In particular, we need candidates for **Treasurer** and **Secretary**. There are members who have previously held these roles who can provide support. To nominate either yourself or another AFHS member, please contact Peter at memberrelations@afhs.ab.ca

Bylaw Review

The Board is doing a review of the bylaws. If you would like to attend one Zoom meeting to help with this task, please contact Marion communications@afhs.ab.ca

Indexing Past Issues of our Journal

Looking for something to do on these snowy days? We are in the process of indexing the past issues of *Chinook*. If you would like to help, contact Marion communications@afhs.ab.ca

Ancestry Tree Assistance

One of our members is looking for help to untangle her online Ancestry tree. If you are an expert at deleting and merging duplicates on Ancestry, contact Marion at communications@afhs.ab.ca and she will connect you with the member.

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Library Hours & Opportunities to Connect

Library Open Hours

Closed until further notice

Curbside pickup and drop off now available! See the AFHS website for details.



Get in Touch with us!

Email: info@afhs.ab.ca

Website: www.afhs.ab.ca

Phone: 403-214-1447

Facebook: Alberta Family Histories Society

Instagram:
[abfamilyhistoriessociety](https://www.instagram.com/abfamilyhistoriessociety)



AFHS Library & Office location:

Chinook Arch

Watch for our newsletter distributed by email monthly, on the Saturday before AFHS meetings, from September to June. Paper copies are available at meetings and at the AFHS Library.

We are looking for short articles and copyright-free pictures. Favourite relatives, fond family memories, great research tips and tricks, new genealogy technology you love or any related topics are accepted.

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