

Chinook Arch

November 2023
Volume 5 Issue 9



ALBERTA FAMILY
HISTORIES SOCIETY

Supporting worldwide family history research

NEXT SOCIETY MEETING

Monday, November 13, 2023

Topic: Combining DNA with a Paper Trail
Speaker: Panel of DNA SIG members
Location: Hybrid at Bow Cliff Seniors Centre
Time: 7 - 9 pm

FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday, November 20, 2023

Topic: Chit Chat Room
Hosts: Jim Benedict and Linda Murray
Location: Zoom (link on website calendar)
Time: 7 - 9 pm

Monday, December 11, 2023

Topic: Memories of Christmas Food
Speaker: AFHS Society members
Location: Zoom only
Time: 7 - 9 pm

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NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Watch for our newsletter, *Chinook Arch*, distributed monthly by email from September to June.

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

Editor: Amber Godfrey

Email: chinookarch@afhs.ab.ca

Ron Gilmore

As usual, there is a lot going on at AFHS. I want to share the preliminary results of the Strategic Planning Session we held recently. We had ten participants who generously put forward their time and a host of initiatives in six categories. Each item was discussed and then folks were asked to think them over at home and then rank them from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most important. I gathered all the rankings and can summarize them as below:

First Tier: Highest rankings of 8, 9 or 10

1. **Find a New Casino Manager.** This was the only item that garnered a perfect 10 out of 10. No wonder! Casino revenue is our single largest source of income. Without these dollars, our organization as it functions today is simply not sustainable.
2. **SEO (Search Engine Optimization).** This is the IT work to ensure that our websites achieve high visibility. We have three great websites but if no one sees them, they won't be used.
3. **Hold a Conference.** After our last successful conference, it is clearly time to repeat such an event for our members and potential new members.

Second Tier: Rankings of 7

1. **Review Our Bank Investments.** We have a significant investment that needs tending and our GICs are due to mature soon.
2. **Find More Ways To Utilize Our Library.** The library is our largest investment and our single largest expense. It can be far better utilized if we get creative. Let's get our thinking caps on!
3. **Volunteer Appreciation Event.** Every breath of activity in our organization is generated by our volunteers. Bless you all, and let us celebrate our strength with an event designed to say "Thanks" to you.

Hence, these six items should be foremost in our minds for the coming year. As a test, I encourage each of you to measure any activity against these key strategies. Ask yourself, "Does this activity align with our strategic plan?" If it does, please give that activity your full support and encourage others to do likewise.

We will craft a summary document from the planning effort and ensure this is shared to all members. Many thanks to our planning participants for your thoughtful contributions.

Cheers from the California desert!



Gone, But Not Forgotten

Leslie Dennis

I named my son after his great-uncle, Gerard Bruce Armstrong – an impressive young man that made the ultimate sacrifice.



Gerard Bruce "Gerry" Armstrong (1923-1944)

Gerard was born in Carlisle, Cumberland, England, on February 19, 1923. Gerard's older siblings were born in India where his father William was Head of Education in the Punjab, but his mother Dorothy had returned home to England this time to ensure a safe birth. There was a push for independence in India and tensions were rising. Gerard lived in Burma and the Punjab with his parents until he was sent away to school at age 8. Many children of British parents living in India were educated in England.

From September 1936 to July 1941, Gerard was educated at The King's School, Canterbury. His Housemaster wrote: "I can see Gerry now on the first day he arrived in School, a very white faced unpromising looking little boy, with his mother. Many times later we laughed about that first meeting. The School suited him and he was always happy there. A boy with many interests, particularly keen on nature study, he later became a very good biologist. Though he looked slight in build, he was full of energy, whether as a wing forward for the School or as a half miler."

Gerard was appointed to many leadership positions in the school, played rugby, was Captain

of Shooting, was a Sergeant in the Officer Training Corps and was editor of the school magazine, *The Canturian*. He enrolled in St John's College, Cambridge, in 1941, but he did not complete his degree. Instead, he accepted a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the King's Dragoons, Royal Armoured Corps in 1943.

During a conference in January 1943, Allied forces agreed to an invasion of Italy, to draw German attention away from other fronts, eliminate Italian support for the Axis war effort and secure the Mediterranean Sea. Monte Cassino, halfway between Rome and Naples, saw some of the fiercest fighting of the Italian campaign.

Gerard's armoured car regiment landed in Italy in September 1943, where they acted as infantry. It was miserably cold and wet, and the area was carpeted with mines, with the enemy patrolling aggressively at night when the Dragoons took to their slit trenches. On January 24, 1944, Gerard and his Squadron Leader, Captain R.W. Howes, were conducting a reconnaissance of the area on foot. Howes walked into the tripwire of a booby-trapped Teller mine. The mine exploded, killing him outright, and leaving Gerard so badly wounded that he died in just a few minutes, aged only 20. His mess book is still held by the family, but is almost torn apart by shrapnel.

The Housemaster at The King's School wrote that: "...it was his character and influence which will never be forgotten in Walpole. Early in the war he became Head of House. He was its first "young" Head boy, at an age for command which, before the war, would have been thought ridiculous. But command he did, and the house flourished under him. His wisdom and common sense came to be known almost as well as his cheerful laugh. All counted themselves lucky to serve under Gerry Armstrong and he was universally beloved."

Gerard Bruce Armstrong is buried in Cassino War Cemetery, along with 4,266 other Commonwealth World War II servicemen who are commemorated there. One day, I hope to make it to the cemetery in Italy to pay my respects to a brave soldier who will never be forgotten.

Special Interest Groups

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs) are the ideal place to expand your knowledge and share your own family history challenges.

The small-group setting gives you an opportunity to ask questions and get help from more experienced researchers.

SIGs are now being held in three formats: in-person only, Zoom only or a hybrid version of in-person & Zoom. Check the calendar on our website for up-to-date information or email the SIG leader.

SIGs are an AFHS member benefit. If you would like to attend a SIG meeting to try one out before joining, ask for an invitation from:

communications@afhs.ab.ca

CELTIC SIG (Irish/Scots)

*Meets on the 4th Saturday
10 am – Noon*
celticsig@afhs.ab.ca

DIGITAL GENEALOGY SIG

*Meets on the 2nd Saturday
10 am – Noon*
familygenes@afhs.ab.ca

ENGLISH/WELSH SIG

*Meets on the 3rd Saturday
10 am – Noon*
englishwelshsig@afhs.ab.ca

FAMILY TREE MAKER SIG

*Meets on the 1st Saturday
10 am – Noon*
ftmsig@afhs.ab.ca

LEGACY SIG

*Meets on the 4th Tuesday
7:00 – 9:00 pm*
legacysig@afhs.ab.ca

ONTARIO SIG

*Meets on the 4th Monday
1:30 – 3:30 pm*
ontariosig@afhs.ab.ca

DNA SIG

*Meets on the 2nd Sunday
12:30 – 2:30 pm OR
Tuesday evening
7:00 – 9:00 pm*
dnasig@afhs.ab.ca

The SIG groups do not meet during the summer (July and August).

The AFHS Library is located at **712 - 16 Avenue NW, Calgary** and all in-person SIG group meetings are held there. Members are encouraged to stay after meetings, when possible, to browse the collection!

The Library has over twelve thousand print items and many are available to be borrowed for a one-month loan. Electronic resources include computers, a multi-function printer, scanners (flatbed and overhead) and a microfiche reader. Journals from around the world are available to view in-library in either print or digital formats. As a **FamilySearch Affiliate Library**, visitors can now view additional FamilySearch digital records at the AFHS library that they can't see at home.

SIG NEWS

- The English/Welsh SIG will be sharing stories about their ancestor's military service again at their November meeting. There were so many members with stories to share in October that they didn't get through them all!
- How and where to find historical newspapers for free will be the focus of the November meeting of the Ontario SIG, including using the Ancestor Hunt website.
- The November meeting of the Legacy SIG will see members discussing the use of citations.
- Members can watch recorded sessions of past SIG meetings and peruse handouts at the AFHS website. You must be signed in to the website to access them. Go to Resources, then click on Meeting Videos & Handouts.
- If you are thinking of planning a trip to Ireland (or any other ancestral home), check out the video of the presentations that Marion Peterson and Neil Rowe made to the Celtic SIG this past September.
- Looking for your relatives in the United Kingdom pre-1830? Watch the video of Kelly Southworth's presentation on "The Research Black Hole 1780-1830."
- Do you have ancestors in Ontario you need to research? Steve Fulton's video of "Ontario Ancestor Resources" may be able to help!

A Veteran's Story

Ron Gilmore

In April 1916, my grandfather heard the call of "King and Country" and left his young family behind in northern Saskatchewan to go to war. Thomas McCracken Gilmore joined the Royal Canadian Dragoons machine gun corps. Thomas was a teacher, born in Ireland, and not naturally suited to be a soldier, but he strongly felt the need to do his part in the "Great War."



Thomas and Agnes Gilmore

Thomas fought in and survived the great Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge where so many young men died. He also fought in the dreary, mud-filled trenches of Passchendaele where the Canadians were again successful against huge odds. Despite their success, the pitiful yards of gain were soon wiped out in the grand German offensive that followed. This was then eclipsed by the eventual German collapse.

On the other side of those same trenches, an obscure German corporal named Adolph Hitler ran back and forth under the constant bombardment as a courier with messages for the German Army officers in command. The future world would wish that this corporal had not survived the mud, blood and rats of trench warfare.

Thomas wrote letters during his ordeal, and over 60 of his letters have survived. He wrote to his wife, his family back in Ireland, and the editor of his local newspaper. He wrote poems and short stories. He describes the nightmares that shook him, including one about his wife on fire, describing it with enough detail to include the dress she was wearing. Another nightmare witnessed his eldest daughter drowning, and he was unable to rescue her. In one of his letters, he asks if his youngest son, a baby still, can stand yet? Only one letter that his wife, Agnes, wrote in reply remains.

When Thomas returned home in late 1918, he was basically an invalid. He had been gassed on three occasions, so he suffered from ill health for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, the returning soldiers also brought with them the dreaded Spanish Flu. This horrible disease claimed my grandmother Agnes's life within weeks of her husband's return, and Thomas was left a widower with four young children. Fortunately, his neighbours were able to take the children to raise.

Thomas eventually recovered sufficiently to return to teaching. He never remarried but moved from one town to the next, teaching for a year and then moving on. When he finally retired, he began teaching on a series of Indian reserves in northern Saskatchewan and served as a lay minister. When WWII arrived, he stopped teaching and worked at the YMCA in Saskatoon until the end of that war. Thomas died while traveling on a train near Turtleford, Saskatchewan, in April of 1946. He had been traveling alone, and his trunk was never found.



Why You Should Use City Directories and How To Find Them

Amber Godfrey

If you have ever wished that there were census records more often than every 10 years, you need to start using directories! These helpful guides can include information on where people lived, who else lived with them, where they worked, if they were widowed and sometimes even the deceased spouse's name, what their occupation was and more. I found one entry in Montana that included what the person's personal property was worth! Directories were published yearly so can help you fill in gaps between census dates. Useful if you have relatives like mine that like to move around.

That is not all. Directories can help you see what businesses and other institutions were active at a given time. Think photography studios, schools, social organizations, churches, and cemeteries. These are a treasure trove of information on what life was like in the town, city, or area that they cover.

An important tip is not to just flip to the page you are looking for, take a copy and leave it at that. Make sure you record the title page with the information on which areas are covered and also look for the page showing what abbreviations have been used in the entries and copy that too.

Another tip is if your ancestor had a business, check the advertising pages to see if there is an advertisement for their business. I found ads in city directories for my fourth-great-grandfather's optometry business in the mid-1800s!

To find out even more things you can find in directories to help with your research, check out these two sources:

Blog post by Lisa Lisson (U.S. focus, still useful)
<https://lialisson.com/how-to-use-city-directories-in-your-genealogy-research>

Video by Linda Yip at Past Presence (with Alberta specific examples)
<https://past-presence.com/2018/11/15/en-for-genealogy-using-en-with-hendersons-directories>

Calgary and Alberta researchers are lucky as many of the city and provincial directories are digitized or are available in print form at local repositories.

Alberta Family History Society Library has a nearly complete collection of Calgary City Directories in print form for the years 1950 through 1991. There are also a few directories from Edmonton, Lethbridge, and other locations. You can search the library on our website to see exactly which ones the AFHS Library owns.

<https://afhs.ab.ca/library>

Calgary Public Library has a larger collection of Calgary City Directories. They have print copies from 1906 to 1991, with only a few years missing. Search for "Henderson's" in the catalogue, look for the heading "Henderson's Calgary Alberta City Directory" and then click on "View location availability" to see the years they have available. They are in-library use only and some are stored in the back so you may need to speak to a staff member to access them.

<https://calgarylibrary.ca>

University of Alberta has just taken on the Peel's Prairie Provinces digital collection which has an extensive digital collection of directories from Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Go to the web link provided below and you will be directed to the Internet Archive site that hosts the directories. Scroll down the page until you see "Henderson's Directories", click on it and you can then select the province or city you want to search. To see the directories in order from oldest to newest, click on the column that defaults to "Relevance" and choose "Date Published". That shows newest to oldest but to switch to the other direction, just click on the arrows to the left of the "Date Published" column. Their Calgary collection includes editions from 1911 through to 1965 with a few missing years.

<https://library.ualberta.ca/peel>

If you are looking for directories for other areas of Canada, the Ancestor Hunt website has an index of places that hold digital copies of Canadian directories. These are organized by province and then city or town.

<https://theancestorhunt.com/blog/5345-free-online-canada-city-directories>

CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Family History Coaching

In-person at Central Library

Calgary Public Library

November 25, 2023 1:00 – 3:00 pm

<https://calgarylibrary.ca/events-and-programs/programs/family-history-coaching>

CONFERENCES/WEBINARS

*all times listed are in MDT

Proudly She Served: Canadian Women at War – 1885-1945

Virtual

Oxford Branch, Ontario Ancestors

November 13, 2023 5:00 pm

<https://oxford.ogs.on.ca/events/branch-meeting-presentation-7>

Quebec Records from Afar with Coral Harkies

Virtual

Lambton County Branch, Ontario Ancestors

November 14, 2023 5:00 pm

<https://lambton.ogs.on.ca/calendar/lambton-county-branch-zoom-meeting-2>

Going on an adventure: Quebec's military immigration under the French regime 1534-1760

Virtual

Québec Genealogical eSociety

November 14, 2023 11:30 am

<https://genquebec.com/en/webinars-0>

Can mtDNA and XDNA Help Topple Geoff's Brick Wall?

Virtual

Legacy Family Tree Webinars

November 15, 2023 12:00 pm

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/can-mtdna-and-xdna-help-topple-geoffs-brickwall>

U.S. Military Pension Files (1776-1916): A Gold Mine for Family History Research

Virtual

FamilySearch

November 16, 2023 10:00 am

https://familysearch.org/en/wiki/FamilySearch_Library_Classes_and_Webinars

The REALLY USEFUL Family History Show

Virtual

Family History Federation

November 17-18, 2023

www.fhf-reallyuseful.com

Scottish Indexes Conference

Virtual

Scottish Indexes

November 25, 2023

www.scottishindexes.com

5 Tips for Deciphering Handwritten Documents

Virtual

Legacy Family Tree Webinars

December 6, 2023 12:00 pm

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/5-tips-for-deciphering-handwritten-documents>

About Our Society

Alberta Family Histories Society is a registered non-profit organization that welcomes anyone interested in genealogy and family history! For over 40 years, we've helped people grow their family trees and discover the stories of their roots. We have substantial resources about Calgary and southern Alberta but can help you research your roots worldwide. Our website is <https://afhs.ab.ca>.

We learn from each other in a variety of settings – Society meetings, Special Interest Group meetings, workshops and biannual conferences. For up-to-date meeting information, see our website calendar at <https://afhs.ab.ca/calendar>.

Visit one of our best resources - our library! Our collection is broad with an emphasis on materials pertaining to Alberta and Canada. We are a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. Our volunteers look forward to showing you what we have to offer for your genealogy research. You can view a catalogue of our holdings at <https://afhs.ab.ca/library>.

Documenting local historical records is part of our mission. Alberta Ancestors is a special project to showcase cemetery records at <https://albertaancestors.ca>. With 100 cemeteries and nearly 150,000 photographs, it is a priceless resource.

Members have a wealth of opportunities to share strategies, struggles, successes and stories with others who appreciate the challenges of this hobby. One option is for members to share family tree projects and to post stories online as part of our Family Genes website at <https://www.familygenes.ca>.

We welcome visitors, so please drop in at a meeting and introduce yourself. Come see how our services and programs can fit your needs. We hope you will join us either in-person or virtually! To receive a guest Zoom invitation to one of our Society meetings, contact Marion at communications@afhs.ab.ca.

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AFHS LIBRARY & OFFICE

ADDRESS:

712 - 16 Avenue NW

Library Open Hours

Fall/Winter Hours

Thursday, 10 am - 2 pm

Saturday, Noon - 4 pm

*Check our website calendar
for any time changes or closures.*



CONTACT US

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Phone: 403-214-1447

Facebook: Alberta Family Histories Society

Instagram: abfamilyhistoriessociety



Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of reconciliation, we would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather and where we work to preserve the records and family history of those who came before us are on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot (Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani), the Tsúut'ínà, the Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3) and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.