



NEXT SOCIETY MEETING

Monday, October 20, 2025

Topic: The Value of the Hudson Bay Company Archives for Genealogists

Speaker: Tara Shymanski

Location: In-person and Zoom (register on our website calendar)

Time: 7 – 9:00 pm

FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday, October 27, 2025

Topic: Chit Chat Session

Hosts: Linda Murray and Kelly Southworth

Location: Zoom (register on website calendar)

Time: 7 – 8:30 pm

Monday, November 10, 2025

Topic: After the War: Stories of Those Who Served

Speaker: AFHS members

Location: In-person and Zoom (register on our website calendar)

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 with copyright-free pictures. Favourite relatives, fond family memories, research tips and tricks, new genealogy technology you love, book reviews or any related topics are accepted.

Editor: Amber Godfrey

Email: chinookarch@afhs.ab.ca

President's Message

Gordon Lane

The End-of-Summer Event was a resounding success with over forty members attending. Everyone enjoyed mingling and chatting in-person in our new and improved Resource Centre. At the event, Sharon White did an insightful presentation on what she discovered about a photograph of an Royal Canadian Air Force squadron stationed in Odiham, Hampshire, England, during World War II. It was donated to a local Calgary thrift store that passed in on to AFHS. Sharon managed to trace a living descendant of one of the officers in the photograph who is thrilled! She is planning to collect the photo and a related collection of photos and letters on her next visit to Calgary, ensuring they remain a treasured part of her family's heritage.

Important Updates:

- Ron Gilmore is preparing a media article about Sharon's story to highlight the Society's research capabilities and volunteer expertise. He also recently completed an article featuring Wilma Sorensen, a former member who rejoined after 14 years, which will appear in the *Unison News* in November.
- Wilma Sorensen told Ron about the Calgary Cottage Schools, and he will be following up on this to create either a presentation or article for the *Chinook Arch*.
- AFHS has created a Speakers Bureau of our members who are willing to do presentations on a variety of topics. You can view this on our website. Thanks to Ron Gilmore and Jim Benedict for creating this opportunity for our volunteers to do outreach in our local community and further afield.
- The Calgary Branch of the United Empire Loyalists will be meeting at the AFHS Resource Centre on October 26, and AFHS members are welcome to attend. See the Upcoming Events page in *Chinook Arch* for more information on the presentation.
- Our dedicated website volunteer, Roy Aggarwal, will be attending a full-time course on Artificial Intelligence at S.A.I.T., starting in January 2026. His expertise has been instrumental in building and maintaining our three websites, including overcoming a range of technical challenges over the past year. Roy, along with Jim Benedict and Neil Rowe, ensured that they are now stable and functioning effectively. We give him our thanks and wish Roy all the best on his educational endeavours! He has kindly agreed to help us out as time allows and to train one or more volunteers on the upkeep of the websites. If you have WordPress or coding experience and would be interested in joining the team please email webmaster@afhs.ab.ca
- I would like to take this opportunity to announce that I will not be returning to the role of President of AFHS when my term is over next year. We have an amazing team of Directors that support the President. The job, while not difficult, is an important one for our organization. The primary responsibility of the President is to help ensure the continued success of our Society's mission in the coming years. If you are thinking about putting your name forward or have any questions, please contact me at president@afhs.ab.ca

Celebrating our Veteran Ancestors

For our November meeting, we would like to invite our members to share a story about their ancestors who served in the military. It doesn't have to be a long story, 5 or 10 minutes is plenty. Pictures are great but not required. We could also help you with the technical stuff if you're not PowerPoint savvy.

If you would like to participate, please contact us at programs@afhs.ab.ca

The Sword

Ron Gilmore

I own a sword that I bought over 50 years ago at a massive flea market on the outskirts of Boston. Over the years, the sword followed our family from place to place, usually adorning a fireplace, but I have never known its provenance. I believed that it was a product of the American Civil War but had no proof of this. This August, I decided to find out more about it.

A friend recommended that I contact the Military Museum of Calgary. My network rarely fails me! A wonderful gentleman at the Military Museum, Walter Brooks, did some research for me on the sword. He quickly determined from my photographs that the sword was a ceremonial instrument of the Knights of Pythias.

Who are the Knights of Pythias? He explained that they are a fraternal organization, formed in Washington, D.C., in 1864. The society's aim was to promote peace and friendship during the traumatic American Civil War. So it did have a Civil War connection!

The group was created by Justus H. Rathbone, a composer, actor, school teacher and clerk in the United States Treasury Department. He based his society on the Greek myth of Damon and Pythias, two members of The Pythagorean Brotherhood in ancient Greece. The Brotherhood was founded by Pythagoras, the father of Greek philosophy, and its members believed in strict morality, absolute truthfulness, honour and integrity. When Damon was condemned to death for his opposition to the king of Syracuse, his fellow Pythagorean, Pythias, begged the king to stay the execution to allow his friend to say goodbye to his family and even volunteered to be executed in Damon's place if he didn't return.

The Knights of Pythias were the first American Order ever chartered by the United States Congress, and had the support of President Abraham Lincoln. President Lincoln said, "The purposes of your organization are most wonderful. If we could but bring its spirit to all our citizenry, what a wonderful thing it would be. It breathes the spirit of Friendship, Charity and Benevolence [the order's motto]. It is one of the best agencies conceived for the upholding of government, honoring the

flag, for reuniting of our brethren of the North and of the South, for teaching people to love one another, and portraying the sanctity of the home and loved ones."

The group celebrated their 160th Anniversary in 2024 and is now an international organization. In 1923, they had over 1,000,000 members but membership has declined over the years and was around 50,000 in 2003. Early members were given ceremonial swords by family, friends or business associates when they were inducted into the group. Swords owned by members of the Uniformed Rank, who participated in parades and other processions, would be marked with UR and possibly a dove or lily. As you can see in this photo, my sword has a UR inscribed along with a picture of a lily. This rank is now defunct, which may be why the sword was sold.



The UR inscription with a lily in between the letters



The sword with its scabbard

It was interesting to find out more about a unique piece of American history that has hung above our fireplaces for so long.

There is also a name inscribed on the sword and I plan to continue researching it to see if I can determine who the original owner was. I have sent a request to the Knights of Pythias brotherhood for their assistance. Who knows where it will lead? Does your family history include a mysterious family artifact? We would love to hear about it in a short article in the newsletter or as a brag at a meeting.

Special Interest Groups

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs) are a major benefit of being an AFHS member. The small-group setting is the ideal place to expand your knowledge and share your own family history challenges. SIGs provide the opportunity to ask questions, obtain help from more experienced researchers and get to know other AFHS members.

If you are an AFHS member and would like to be added to a SIG distribution list or if you would like to attend a SIG meeting as a guest before joining AFHS, please contact communications@afhs.ab.ca

SIGs are now being held in three formats: in-person only, Zoom only or a hybrid version of both. Check the calendar on our website for up-to-date information or email the SIG leader. The SIGs do not meet during July and August.

SIG GROUP	NEXT MEETING	TIME	CONTACT
BASICS	Saturday, November 29	10 am – Noon	basics@afhs.ab.ca
CELTIC (Irish/Scots)	Saturday, October 25	10 am – Noon	celticsig@afhs.ab.ca
DIGITAL GENEALOGY	Saturday, November 8	10 am – Noon	familygenes@afhs.ab.ca
DNA	Sunday, November 9	12:30 – 2:30 pm	dnasig@afhs.ab.ca
ENGLISH/WELSH	Saturday, October 18	10 am – Noon	englishwelshsig@afhs.ab.ca
FAMILY TREE MAKER	Saturday, November 1	10 am – Noon	ftmsig@afhs.ab.ca
LEGACY	Tuesday, October 28	7:00 – 9:00 pm	legacysig@afhs.ab.ca
ONTARIO	Monday, October 27	1:30 – 3:30 pm	ontariosig@afhs.ab.ca
WRITING	Friday, November 14	9:30 – 11:30 am	writing@afhs.ab.ca

The AFHS Resource Centre is located at **Suite 251S, 8500 Macleod Trail SE** and all in-person SIG meetings are held there. Members are encouraged to stay after meetings, when possible, to browse the collection!

Our collection 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 either print or digital formats. As a **FamilySearch Affiliate Library**, visitors can now view additional FamilySearch digital records at the AFHS Resource Centre that they can't see at home. We also have a subscription to the Canadian newspapers on Newspaper Archive.

SIG NEWS

Our members can watch recorded sessions of past Society and SIG meetings and view 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.

- The Family Tree Maker SIG will be focusing on the new software release, FTM 2024, over the next few months. Older versions will also be discussed as needed.

- At the English/Welsh SIG in October, Kelly Southworth will continue offering her analysis and help for photos that SIG members submitted over the summer.
- Tara Shymanski will do a presentation on using FamilySearch to find Ontario land records at the October meeting of the Ontario SIG. The video of the September presentation on Durham Region Research has been uploaded to the Resources section.

Resource Centre Highlights

Databases at the AFHS Resource Centre

Marion Peterson

While we offer several resources on the AFHS website, our Resource Centre contains some gems that you have to come in person to use.

This includes our subscription databases, and we recently added a new one!

Findmypast

AFHS has just started a one-year membership for Findmypast. Their focus is the United Kingdom and Ireland, but also includes record databases from Australia and North America. They partner with The National Archives (UK), the British Library and the Family History Federation. Our subscription includes the 1921 UK Census, the 1939 Register, the British Newspaper Archives, parish registers, immigration records, military records and much more.

This subscription can only be accessed on one AFHS computer.

Ontario Ancestors Databases

Ontario Ancestors has graciously offered a special partner membership to us. This allows us to access the databases and the research tools offered by their organization. These include their *Families* journal library, MyHeritage Library Edition access, the International Order of Oddfellows Insurance policy collection, the Huguenot collection and more. To see exactly what is included, go to their website.

<https://ogs.on.ca/research-resources>

This subscription can only be accessed on one AFHS computer, which has a sign indicating this.

NewspaperArchive (Canadian Newspapers)

Our subscription to this database includes newspapers from across Canada with the focus on older newspapers from small towns. Some of



the Alberta newspapers available are the *Medicine Hat News*, *Lethbridge Daily Herald*, *Edmonton Bulletin* and *The Vauxhall Advance*. For the complete list, see their website.

<https://newspaperarchive.com/search/location/ca>

This database can be accessed on all of our computers.

FamilySearch Affiliate Library

The AFHS Resource Centre is a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. Always make sure you are signed into your free account when you are on the FamilySearch website. If you are at home, signed in, and still run into one of those pesky cameras with an exclamation mark, that means there are restrictions on the record.

At the AFHS Resource Centre, you have access to most of those restricted records! You can sign in to FamilySearch on one of our computers or bring in your own laptop and sign in to your FamilySearch account while connected to our Wi-Fi to access the restricted records.

While you are at home, you can save any restricted records to the Source Box on your FamilySearch account, then access it when you are at the Resource Centre. This is a short YouTube video on how to do that:

<https://youtu.be/22Ujf1Y-e5c>

Our volunteers look forward to helping you, and we hope you stop by soon!

Jim Benedict

Alberta Family Histories Society (AFHS) was formed in Calgary in 1980, before the days of Ancestry, DNA, YouTube, or even the internet. Looking up family history involved visiting our library, hunting through graveyards, scrolling through microfiche and recording our findings with a pencil on paper. Do you remember those days?

We created our website in the 1990s, and it served the members well. But technology moves on. We needed a new design that could handle and deliver everything the Society now offers. By 2020, it was time to upgrade. The website team has spent the past five years doing just that!

This first article highlights the main features on our Home Page, including the **About Us**, **Calendar**, **News** and **Membership** sections.



On our main page, we are welcomed by a rural family, walking down a country road in Alberta. They personify what our Society is all about – family roots.

At the top of the page is the Menu bar, and just underneath it, our Mission Statement. On the lower right corner of the home page, a pop-up box has a reminder of upcoming AFHS events. You can click on the bottom of the box, on SEE MORE EVENTS, which will take you to the full Upcoming Events page. If you have signed into the site, the top of the pop-up box displays your membership number. Handy!

Further down the page, you will find information on the AFHS Library, a Notice Board, and information on our cemetery project on the Alberta Ancestors page, with links to more information. At the bottom of the page, we find handy AFHS contact information including our address, phone number, the Contact Us email option and links to our two other websites. You can click on the words Privacy Policy to see that,

and if you want to make a donation, there is a Donate button.

About Us on the menu bar gives you an overview of the society, a list of our board members and key volunteers, and a launching point into many of the services of the society. The About Us submenu has an introduction to AFHS, our Land Acknowledgement, Society Objectives and photo gallery of our activities. On the Board and Volunteers submenu lists you can find names and contact information on our key volunteers including SIG leaders. If you sign in to the website, the Members' Place submenu lets you access services and benefits for AFHS members. There are also Volunteer Opportunities, Donate and Contact Us submenu items.

Calendar & Events is next on the menu bar and the Calendar submenu has Society events by month. They are colour coded with the Resource Centre hours in brown, SIG meetings in green, Society meetings in yellow, Board Meetings in purple, holidays in red and the Chit Chat sessions in royal blue. Any cancelled events are changed to red. Hover over an event to read a summary or click on the event to go to the full entry. Upcoming Events submenu has Society events listed by time, with an option at the top to filter by a specific kind of meeting. Meet With Us, Society Meetings, and Special Interest Groups submenus contain more information on our various Society meetings.



News is a list of events of interest to the genealogy world from anywhere in the world. You can use the search bar to find a specific event or click on the READ MORE button to read the full article. When you open an article, a RECENT CHATTER list will appear on the right with other events.

Membership enables you to join AFHS, if you are not a member yet. If you are a member, and are signed in to the website, you can Renew your membership, update your profile with My Profile or make a donation with Donate.

Check out our new website and all of its benefits! In future articles, we will explore the **Resources** and **Research** menu options .

Upcoming Events

CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Family History Coaching

In-person at Central Library

Calgary Public Library

October 25, 2025 1:00 – 3:00 pm

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

*all times listed are in MDT

*events are free unless \$

AFHS RESOURCE CENTRE EVENT

**Fascinating Facts from Loyalist History:
What Your Teachers Might not Have
Known About Canada's Refugee Founders**

In-Person at AFHS Resource Centre
(AFHS members welcome)

UELAC Calgary Branch

October 26, 2025 12:30 pm

<https://uelac.org/calgary>

Future Event:

Calgary Association of Lifelong Learners

Sir John A. Macdonald in 1885

December 4, 2025

British Home Children

Virtual

Ontario Ancestors, Sudbury District Branch

October 21, 2025 11:00 am

<https://sudbury.ogs.on.ca/events/british-home-children>

When We Ruled: the Rise and Fall of Twelve African Queens and Warriors

Virtual

The National Archives (UK)

October 22, 2025 12:30 am

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/whats-on/events/when-we-ruled-the-rise-and-fall-of-twelve-african-queens-and-warriors>

Witch Hunts and Hidden Truths

Virtual

The National Archives (UK)

October 31, 2025 7:00 am

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/whats-on/events/witch-hunts-and-hidden-truths

Scottish Indexes Conference

Virtual

Scottish Indexes Conference

November 22, 2025

www.scottishindexes.com/conference.aspx

Genealogy and Family History with Library and Archives Canada

Virtual \$

Victoria Genealogical Society

November 29, 2025 11:00 am

www.victoriags.org/content.aspx?page_id=4091&club_id=554933&item_id=2727675

Don't forget to sign up for RootsTech 2026!
Registration is open now.

March 5-7, 2026

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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 most valuable resources - the **AFHS Resource Centre**! While our collection has an emphasis on materials pertaining to Alberta and Canada, we also have subscription databases, basic genealogy books and information from around the world. AFHS is a **FamilySearch Affiliate Library**, which gives you access to FamilySearch records you can't view at home. 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>. Our site features over 350 cemeteries and more than 260,000 memorials.

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 the **AFHS Society Meetings**, contact Marion at communications@afhs.ab.ca.

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AFHS RESOURCE CENTRE

**Suite 251S, 8500 Macleod Trail SE
Calgary, AB T2M 0J8**

Fall/Winter Hours

Thursday, 10 am – 2 pm

Friday, 10 am – 2 pm

Saturday, Noon – 4 pm

Check our website calendar for any time changes or closures.



CONTACT US

Email: info@afhs.ab.ca

Website: www.afhs.ab.ca

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 Confederacy (comprising of the Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani First Nations), the Tsúú'tínà, the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Goodstoney First Nations), the Métis Nation (Districts 5 & 6) and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.