

Chinook Arch

December 2025
Volume 7 Issue 10



ALBERTA FAMILY
HISTORIES SOCIETY

Supporting worldwide family history research

NEXT SOCIETY MEETING

Monday, December 8, 2025

Topic: Christmas Catalogues: What Do You Want for Christmas?

Speaker: Christine Hayes & AFHS members

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

Time: 7 – 9 pm

FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday, January 12, 2026

Topic: Start, Search, Discover: Genealogy Essentials

Speaker: Christine Hayes

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

Time: 7 – 9 pm

Monday, January 19, 2026

Topic: Chit Chat Session

Hosts: Linda Murray and Kelly Southworth

Location: Zoom (register on website calendar)

Time: 7 – 8:30 pm

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message	2
A Genealogy Angel: The Unexpected Gift	3
Special Interest Groups	4
Resource Centre Highlights	5
For Evermore: Stories of the Fallen	6
Upcoming Events	7
About Our Society	8

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

Gordon Lane

Seasons Greetings to Alberta Family Histories Society members. 2026 is shaping up to be a great year for us! Here are some updates on what has happened recently.

- A meeting was held on November 23 to plan the Society's goals for the future. This strategy session was well attended, and we received good input on what the Society should focus on in the next year. We reviewed the goals from the 2023 and 2024 strategic planning meetings and agreed that many of the objectives had been completed. For example, AFHS's three websites have been significantly improved. We moved to a larger and better laid out Resource Centre that allows us to host more in-person events. More successful outreach endeavours have occurred.
- Thanks to the herculean efforts of Ron Gilmore and Sharon White, we are gaining traction with local news outlets. If you missed Sharon's interview about the thrift store box on CBC Calgary's Eyeopener show, here is the link to the episode:
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-thrift-store-mystery-box-9.6990709>
- A recent visitor to our Resource Centre (who was visiting the dentist in a nearby office) is now assisting with data entry. She isn't particularly interested in genealogy but was looking for something to do. Thanks to Wendy and Jim, she is now carrying out data entry for a few of our projects. This led to an interesting discussion at the December Board meeting. We have not had a non-member volunteer take shifts at our Resource Centre in recent memory. AFHS welcomes and appreciates non-members as volunteers in several ways (like the casino, cemetery and data-entry projects), but non-member Resource Centre volunteers must be accompanied by an AFHS member for insurance purposes.
- Heritage Square, the location of our Resource Centre, has a new owner. They are committed to making many improvements to the building over the next few years. There should be some significant improvements to the whole building, which will make it more modern and welcoming. The first project is an upgrade to the second floor corridors and washrooms. There are two washrooms on the second floor, so they will close one at a time. If you are planning to visit during the renovations, there is the option to use the washroom on the ground floor near Roy's Korean Restaurant.
- Our bi-annual conference is scheduled for Saturday, October 17, 2026. Sharon White has reserved the Blackfoot Inn for that date and will need other volunteers to help organize the event. This will be another great opportunity to promote AFHS!
- In the new year, we also need volunteers for the Nominating Committee. This is an important part of Society business as it determines who will be steering the Society for the next two years.



A Genealogy Angel: The Unexpected Gift

Linda Murray

I have been working on my family tree for over forty years. In all that time, I think one of the most important things has been collaboration with other family members and researchers. I always share whatever I find with whoever wants the information, but sometimes all the sharing seems very one-sided. Then one day in 2023, I got a wonderful surprise.

A teenager named Verity in British Columbia sent me a message. It read in part: "I recently bought a collection of photos at an auction, and I believe you're the closest family member I found on Ancestry." She included a photo of my grandparents, John Edwin Marris and Lily Livingston, with my aunt Greta as a baby. When I confirmed that the photo was of my grandparents, she agreed to send me the whole collection of photos. She had built a tree on Ancestry and then used it to search the database to find living relatives – which led her to me! Verity had put a lot of effort into tracking down a family member who might be interested in the photograph collection of people she didn't even know.



Robert and Charlotte (Stafford) Marris

As happens to all of us, life got busy for Verity. She graduated from high school and went on to her first year of university. But, in July 2024, I received a large box with an album and many precious photos. She would not even let me pay for the postage! I know that the photos belonged to my mother's first cousin on her paternal Marris side, who lived in BC. Their shared grandparents were Robert William Marris and Charlotte Catherine Stafford.

Robert and Charlotte were both born in Ontario, Robert in 1856 and Charlotte in 1864. They married in 1889 in Bruce County, Ontario. Their first three children, including my grandfather, John Edwin, were born in Bruce County. Then they moved to Manitoba where their youngest two children were born. The collection Verity sent to me included several photos of Robert and Charlotte that I had never seen before. It was a real treasure trove!



L to R: John Edwin and Lily (Livingston) Marris and son Bill, Ed's nephew and niece Jack and Helen Marris with their mother Esther (Cain) Marris behind, daughter Greta Marris and Ed's mother Charlotte (Stafford) Marris

I am grateful that a young person, only 17 at the time, realized the importance of family photos and worked so hard to track me down. Now I have a project to get all these photos scanned and shared with other family members.

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, January 31	10 am – Noon	basics@afhs.ab.ca
CELTIC (Irish/Scots)	Saturday, January 24	10 am – Noon	celticsig@afhs.ab.ca
DIGITAL GENEALOGY	Saturday, December 13	10 am – Noon	familygenes@afhs.ab.ca
DNA	Sunday, January 11	12:30 – 2:30 pm	dnasig@afhs.ab.ca
ENGLISH/WELSH	Saturday, January 17	10 am – Noon	englishwelshsig@afhs.ab.ca
FAMILY TREE MAKER	Saturday, December 6	10 am – Noon	ftmsig@afhs.ab.ca
LEGACY	Tuesday, January 27	7:00 – 9:00 pm	legacysig@afhs.ab.ca
ONTARIO	Monday, January 26	1:30 – 3:30 pm	ontariosig@afhs.ab.ca
WRITING	Friday, December 12	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.

- Several of the SIGs are not meeting in December. The Family Tree Maker SIG, Digital Genealogy SIG and Writing SIG are still meeting in December.
- Most SIGs will hold Zoom-only meetings during the winter months.

- If you are thinking of possibly joining a SIG, you can try out a meeting to see if you like it. Just contact communications@afhs.ab.ca to receive an invitation. You are welcome to attend a meeting before committing to joining. SIG attendance is a free benefit of membership in AFHS, so why not try one? Leaders and members are great resources and welcome questions.

Resource Centre Highlights

Linda Murray

Our Resource Centre continues to add more features and to upgrade our equipment, thanks to fundraising efforts and donations of time and money by our volunteers. Come try out the databases available in-library or look at a FamilySearch record that isn't viewable at home.

The databases include:

- FamilySearch Affiliate Library (access restricted records)
- NewspaperArchive (Canadian newspapers only)
- Findmypast subscription (one computer only)
- Resources available via a membership with Ontario Ancestors (Ontario *Families* journal library, access to MyHeritage Library Edition, International Order of Oddfellows Insurance Policy collection, Huguenot collection, and more) (one computer only)

The Centre is open three days a week, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on Thursday and Friday, and from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm on Saturday. We are open until December 19th. We will close for a two week break over the holidays and reopen on January 3, 2026.

Stock up on some reading material for over the break! You can view our library catalogue online on the Resource Centre page of our website to find material that can help with your research. Society members can borrow magazines and books for a one-month loan period.

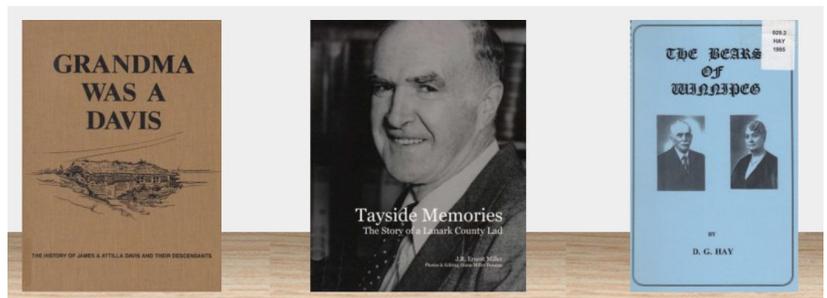
<https://afhs.ab.ca/library>

If you are looking for ideas on what to read, check out the Featured Topics sections on the Resource Centre page of the website. These highlight some of the books we have in our collection.

Current topics are:

- Books About Alberta
- DNA Books
- How-To Genealogy Books
- Books Published By AFHS Members

Coming soon: Home Child books



AFHS members can also read some of the journals we get from other Societies around the world. To access them, log in to the AFHS website, then go to Resources > Resource Centre and scroll down the page to the Exchange Journals section to see the list of available issues. Click on any issues you are interested in and read them on your own computer. Please respect the copyright of these periodicals.

<https://afhs.ab.ca/exchange-journals>

Make sure you are using all the wonderful free benefits available to our members!

For Evermore: Stories of the Fallen

Amber Godfrey

The For Evermore website was created by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and contains stories about men and women who served their countries during the First and Second World Wars. The CWGC is made up of six main Commonwealth countries: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India but the site does include a section for Non-Commonwealth participants too.

Stories can be searched by conflict (First or Second World War), by nationality, by cemetery or by theme. Themes include Victoria Cross holders, Women at War, VE Day, Battle of the Somme, Prisoners of War and more. Anyone can submit stories, so it is worth searching the site to see if any of your ancestors are there. Even if you don't find your own family members, the stories can help you learn more about the experiences of people who lived, and died, during these conflicts.

Use the filters to search for more specific things, like Canadian soldiers who fought at the Battle of the Somme. Included in the filter results is Private Adam Williamson, who moved to Canada from Scotland for work and fought with the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles. He died during the Battle of Courcellette. His family in Scotland received a letter ten years after his death that told them his original grave had been found, and he was reburied in Tincourt British Cemetery in the Somme. The entry includes a scan of the letter and a picture of the Death Penny sent to his brother in Scotland.

Another fascinating set of articles is the Women at War section. Many women served as nurses in both conflicts, but they also served as ambulance drivers, worked as mechanics or in munitions factories, piloted airplanes, or served with the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to decode enemy messages, assist rebel fighters and move information and supplies in and out of occupied territories. Violette Szabo, a British woman who spoke French fluently, worked as a driver and interpreter with the ATS in the Second World War. She met and married a French Foreign Legion officer, who sadly was killed shortly after their daughter was born. Violette was recruited by the SOE and sent on two missions to occupied France. During the second mission, she was captured and tortured by the Gestapo but never gave them any information. She was executed in the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany in 1945, at age 23.

To check out the articles that have been submitted already, go to the CWGC website.

<https://www.cwgc.org/stories>

Do you have family members who gave their lives while serving their countries during the World Wars? Help ensure their stories are not forgotten by submitting them to the For Evermore website. Visit the site for instructions, including a video tutorial and examples of submitted stories.

<https://www.cwgc.org/stories/create-a-story>

If you need to make changes to your submission later, or you have any questions, contact the CWGC at forevermore@cwgc.org

We Will Remember Them...

CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Family History Coaching

In-person at Central Library

Calgary Public Library

January 31, 2026 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 \$

Radical Cartography: How Changing Our Maps Can Change our World

Virtual

American Ancestors

December 3, 2025 4:00 pm

<https://www.americanancestors.org/events/radical-cartography-how-changing-our-maps-can-change-our-world-william-rankin>

How to Get Children Involved in Family Research, with Becky Villareal

Virtual

Ontario Ancestors

December 4, 2025 5:00 pm

<https://ogs.on.ca/december-webinar-how-to-get-children-involved-in-family-research-becky-villareal>

FamilySearch for Everyone: Editing All Indexed Records with Ada Nelson

Virtual

BYU Library

December 17, 2025 5:00 pm

<https://familyhistory.lib.byu.edu/an-update-of-the-now-seventeen-rules-of%20genealogy-2025-12-17>

Scattered Leaves: Reconnecting Family Branches with DNA

Virtual

Legacy Family Tree Webinars

December 10, 2025 6:00 pm

<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/scattered-leaves-reconnecting-family-branches-with-dna>

Weaving Private Lives into Public History

Virtual

Victoria Genealogical Society

January 8, 2026 8:00 pm

https://www.victoriags.org/content.aspx?page_id=4091&club_id=554933&item_id=2689903

Heritage Park: It's History and Role in Preserving Our Heritage! by Bob Pearson

In-Person

Chinook Country Historical Society

January 17, 2026 2:00 pm

For more information on this event, email info@chinookhistory.ca

Scottish Indexes Conference

Virtual

Scottish Indexes

January 31, 2026

<https://www.scottishindexes.com/conference.aspx>

RootsTech 2026

Hybrid

FamilySearch

March 5 – 7, 2026

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech>

AFHS does not exercise any control over the content of external website links in this Chinook Arch newsletter and is not responsible for the content or quality. AFHS does not endorse any companies or products mentioned in the newsletter. Copyright © 2025 Alberta Family Histories Society. All rights reserved.

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 370 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.

All rights reserved. The articles, stories and other information in CHINOOK ARCH are the property of the Alberta Family Histories Society and the authors. Reproduction of any part of CHINOOK ARCH is not permitted without the permission of the editor. To reprint an article, please contact the editor at chinookarch@afhs.ab.ca.

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

**Closed for holidays after December 19.
Reopens on January 3, 2026**

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.