

Family History Newsletter



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The Family History group supports members in researching their family history research. Members have ancestors from around the globe.

They meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm virtually until further notice.

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While We Are Apart...

By Brenda L. Smith

As we negotiate our COVID-altered lives many family historians are developing new appreciations and technical literacy to research and report our findings.

The Maple Ridge Family History Group has maintained its meeting schedule while we have mastered holding our meetings via Zoom. We have also continued with our current community history project, continuing our file sharing as usual in Dropbox, and moving the work forward in online meetings. We have also published a couple of extra newsletters to keep members in touch.

I have heard from researchers who are engaged in online learning through the wealth of webinars and podcasts offered in place of in person events. My own work has moved in interesting directions since March when all live events were cancelled. Through May and June, I facilitated weekly online classes with Sheila McClelland of the West Vancouver Memorial Library. I learned a lot about my own presentation style and about constraints particular to online programming. A couple of my re-constructed presentations are ready for learners to critique. I have also incorporated new case studies into programs that deserved updating.

With unexpected time to work on my own family research, I am delighted to say welcome to a new-

found cousin Karen who, happily, has joined the project of sharing the story of our Shropshire family. The other cousins, Jean and Kathie and I share great-great-grandparents William Nock (b. 1840) and Ann Prudent (b. 1842). Karen joins us on the level of three times great grandparents William Nock (b. 1800) and Elizabeth Jenks (b. 1803). Jean and I live in Canada while Karen and Kathie live in England. What a treat that we can communicate almost instantly when we have questions and ah-hah moments.

In the absence of meeting my family and colleagues in person, I have been calling—yes, on the telephone—to learn how they are and what’s new in their lives. As ever, sometimes the news is nail-biting, but I am also hearing stories of joy and discovery.

I invited some of the folks whom I seldom see because they live farther away than my neighbour across the street, to tell us about how their family research has been progressing in the past six months. Here are their inspirational stories.

Al Calder is a dedicated patron of the Cloverdale Genealogy Collection. He told me about the preparation of a family donation to a local museum collection.

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I recently retired and with all this time I could really delve into my genealogy research without anyone getting on my case. Last fall an elderly aunt of mine wanted to donate a lot of family photos in Rhone, in the Kettle Valley River area to the Kettle Valley Museum in Midway BC.

I offered to assist and to do some more research, gather photos, documents and whatever I could find.

This was a big project as the family arrived from France in 1908 and settled in that area. I had been putting it off for years as it would involve French and I skipped out of those classes in school.

Fortunately, I found a genealogy website called Geneanet.. <https://en.geneanet.org>...where someone had posted part of the family. I contacted them and they sent me links to the Savoie Archives. Over the past 5–6 months I have found close to 650 birth, baptism, marriage, death and census records for the family going back to 1739.

It turned out very well once I got past the learning curve. By the end of July I had everything together. Unfortunately, we wanted to deliver it all in person but the museum was closed till 2021. I downloaded all the digital info onto a memory stick, included a printed family tree, photos, many newspaper articles and sent it all off by snail mail.

Lynne Currie grew up and has lived much of her life in Maple Ridge. Without realizing it, our lives intersected when we both lived in the Cariboo, and Lynne has been my friend and colleague since I moved to the Lower Mainland. Her story reflects the challenges of adoption and DNA as a research tool.

When I was asked recently how much time I am spending on genealogy, I had to admit that I was averaging ten hours a day. Had he been a family history person, I suspect my questioner would not have been as shocked as he was. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially the past four months, I have found so many opportunities to immerse myself in all things genealogy: learning, planning, researching, and my favourite — sharing.

Through my DNA, I am connecting with my birth family and facilitating reunions between distant cousins and siblings. I have even discovered which distant cousin has the family Bible. I am also chipping away at the brick wall of my husband's missing paternal 2x great grandparents by sorting through his distant ancestry DNA matches. For now, I have focused on those with less than 8cM (centimorgans) so that I do not lose those contacts when Ancestry does their up-coming purge And I am studying best practices for descendancy research in order to use those matches.

I listened to the sage advice of my genealogical “Obi-Wan Kenobi” and purchased a findmypast.com subscription. I have also downloaded our raw DNA results to places such as Family Tree DNA familytreedna.com. These two things have helped give me a different perspective on the family trees I

am working on, and opened up many more research opportunities.

But, the most exciting thing I have done during this pandemic, is to finally give myself a room dedicated to my genealogy. A place where I can organize and continue my research and get to the important task of writing my ancestors' stories. Hopefully, my new-found cousins will continue to have good health and they will continue to have the time to help tell the stories of our ancestors who were unknown to me before the lock down of 2020. Especially the stories of those ancestors who survived the Great Pandemics of their times.

Maureen Cruise is a member of the Richmond Retrievers. A repeating participant in the *Start Writing Your Family History Workshop*, she has produced intriguing stories about her ancestors and brings a wonderful sense of humour to her research.

Several years ago, I wrote a story about my husband Eric's mother, Hilda Jayne Handley, who hated the name Hilda, and insisted upon being called Jayne. She was born in England, married at 16 and moved with her husband to the United States. She had a son, left that son and her husband, and worked her way (bigamously) through four more husbands, five more sons in the US, moved to Canada, 'married' husband six, back to the US, then England, and ended up In Australia with 'husband' six. He returned to Canada. Jayne died in 1994 while married to her seventh husband.

Later, I researched what I thought was Eric's putative paternal line. The basis for that research was a scribbled note that Eric's mother, Jayne (Handley) Lincoln White Sanford Johnson Hardesty Romanuk Williams, gave to Eric when they met in England in 1988, after not having seen each other for 16 years. Jayne was 58 years of age, Eric was 37. Jayne informed Eric that Merrill B... was the man she had had a fling with which resulted in her giving birth to Eric in July 1951. Merrill B... would have been listed between White and Sanford, except that Jayne didn't "marry" or live with him.

When I started hunting online for Eric's putative father, I found a Merrill P... B... and traced his family for several generations back and sideways, revealing Civil War soldiers and widows applying for pensions, farmers moving west until they ended

up in Texas, and some old photos. An interesting family.

Until Eric's DNA was tested in 2019. One of the 2nd-3rd cousin matches had B... ancestors citing a Charles N... B...who had lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where Eric was born. But I couldn't connect Merrill P... B... to Charles N... B....

Then COVID-19 and self-isolation sent me back to researching, and bingo! 'Merril' showed up, one of Charles N...'s sons, E... Merrill B.... I abandoned the Texan family and started all over again. I am not obtaining birth, marriage, or death certificates, unless they are available online. Now we have DNA matches that cannot be refuted. But, really, Eric and I are still shocked that Jayne told him something that was true.

The Michigan family has a few distantly related online photos, draft registrations for WW I and WW II, a divorce on the grounds of cruelty, occupations connected with the pulp mills of Kalamazoo and the State mental hospital, several gravestones, and some houses still standing. I'm still working on that story.

Laurie Cooke, for some years Cloverdale Genealogy Department Head, now lives on Mayne Island. She continues her family research, works in the community centre, and manages websites. Her technical expertise is extensive and her cautionary tale is one we can all learn from.

The digital focus started decades ago and took hold for me. I began routinely backing up hundreds of family history documents and photos that I'd amassed over time, thinking of preservation and distribution to family members. I had created a most excellent virtual collection!

Then in one awful, unexpected moment, I experienced what I now call a "series of unfortunate events" following an unusually vicious malware attack. I nearly fainted when I realized what had happened. Hours of adrenaline filled panic ensued. But wait! After I was done reeling from the shock it occurred to me, I had real, original hard copies stashed away. Better yet, there were so many intriguing items in those buried tote boxes I had long forgotten about. All was not lost, and I actually found myself in a place of discovery once again!

Family history continually rises from the past to enrich us, whether from recovered experiences, or from digital ashes. Thank you all for these tales. I hope everyone is inspired to explore today's tools and newly revealed records to dig deeper into your family's wealth of stories.

Library Updates

Fraser Valley Regional Library

www.fvrl.bc.ca

All 25 FVRL locations are open to customers. Customers can count on finding friendly staff and access to much of the library's public space and services including:

- Access to the physical collection
- Computer access upon request
- Microfilm reader is available and appointments are not needed
- Limited physically distanced seating
- Touchless self-serve checkout stations

Wearing a mask during your visit is not required but strongly encouraged.

Abbotsford Genealogical Society

www.abbygs.ca

The Archives and Resource Centre at The REACH will reopen (with some RESTRICTIONS) on Friday, September 11th. The Archives and Resource Centre is in The Reach Gallery Museum located near South Fraser Way and Trethewey Street in Abbotsford, BC.

Surrey Libraries

www.surreylibraries.ca

Surrey Libraries branches are opening for limited access starting Wednesday, September 9.

- You are encouraged to wear a mask
- You are encouraged to keep your visit short, up to a maximum of one hour
- Branches will have occupancy limits and not all services will be available

Services Available:

- Limited browsing of shelves to self-select material
- Computer access (45-minute time limit)
- Wi-Fi (45-minute time limit)
- Printing and photocopying

Online Resources

Home Access to Ancestry Library Edition

www.fvrl.bc.ca

ProQuest and Ancestry.com have extended temporary from-home access to Ancestry Library Edition through September 30, 2020 for library card holders. Remember, you can apply for an e-card online.

To access Ancestry from the FVRL website, from the menu bar select digital content, databases, then Ancestry Library edition.

FindMyPast

www.findmypast.co.uk

- Wales Probate Records 1544-1858
- Caernarvonshire Parish Registers
- Denbighshire Burials
- Scotland, Burgess & Guild Brethren Index
- Scotland, Banffshire & Moray Life Events

Ancestry

www.ancestry.com

New and Updated

- Thuringia, Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1557-1940
- Pennsylvania, U.S., Births, 1852-1854
- Pennsylvania, U.S., Deaths, 1852-1854
- New York State, U.S., Death Index, 1957-1969
- 1860 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules
- Maryland State Archives, Index to Deaths and Burials, 1697-1800
- Fulton and Campbell Counties, Georgia, Cemetery Records, 1857-1933

- Web: Western States Marriage Index, 1809-2016
- U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999
- New York, Clinton Prison Admission Ledgers, 1851-1866, 1923-1939
- New York, Great Meadow Correctional Facility Records, 1911-1933
- New York, Auburn Prison Records, 1816-1942
- U.S., Chinese Immigration Case Files, 1883-1923

Ancestry Arolsen Archives Collection

<https://www.ancestry.com/cs/alwaysremember>

Search now more than 19 million Holocaust records for free and in perpetuity as part of the Arolsen Archives Collection. Examples of what is available:

- Lists of displaced persons, in most cases traveling from a resettlement camp to a final destination, often the US.
- Registers of people living in Germany who were persecuted by public institutions and corporations.
- Records relating to information from Holocaust survivor audiovisual interviews collected and preserved within the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive®.

Family History Events

Canadian Genealogical Virtual Research Institute (CGVRI)

<https://virtualgenealogy.org/>

- **Virtual Genealogical Association 2020 Conference**, All sessions will be recorded, and closed captioning will be added. November 13 to 15, 2020. Cost – \$59 USD for VGA

members, \$79 USD for non-members.

Skagit Valley Genealogy Society

<https://skagitvalleygenealogy.org/zoom-on-line-classes/>

Zoom on-line classes with the theme “Defining Moments in History.” Each class will be on a Thursday morning from 10:30 to noon. You need to register and submit payment at least one week before each individual class date and by October 10th if you plan to attend all three classes. Fees: \$10 USD per class or all three classes for \$25 USD.

- **Basics of U.S. Genealogy Research** by Mary Kircher-Roddy, October 15, 2020.
- **Becoming America – The Story of Immigration** by Janice Lovelace, PhD, October 22, 2020.
- **Write Your Family History** by Dave Obee, October 29, 2020.

Quebec Genealogical eSociety

www.genquebec.com/en/2021-conference

- **The Art and Science of Quebec Genealogy**, from January 15 to 17, 2021, virtual. Details to be announced.

Maple Ridge Family History Group, first Wednesday of the month, 7pm on Zoom until further notice. Email us at: mrfamilyhistory@gmail.com for information on how to join the meeting.

September 2, 2020:

Ancestry’s ThruLines with Susan Sullivan

October 7, 2020

November 4, 2020