

Community, Past, Present & Future



January 2024

The Family History Newsletter is a publication of the Maple Ridge Historical Society

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ISSN 2564-0895 (Print)

ISSN 2564-0909 (Online)

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The Family History group supports members in researching their family history research.

Members have ancestors from around the globe. We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which we live, work, and play is the traditional and unceded territory of the Katzie First Nation and the Kwantlen First Nation Peoples.

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

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Family History Newsletter

Happy New Year—My Family History Resolutions

By Brenda L. Smith



Resolutions are promises to ourselves. Traditionally, we make promises to be better people in the New Year. I usually frame my resolutions as goals that I can achieve in the coming calendar year. Join me in taking the time to shape some achievable commitments to ourselves for 2024. Here are some plans for my family history realm.

- Write a summary of my family as they appear in the 1931 Canada Census in a way that engages the generations that completed the last full Canada census of 2021.
- Complete my cluster research project that examines the relationship between my maternal grandfather's grain milling family and the family that owned the mills.
- Subscribe to one blog that supports achieving my research goals.
- Write two personal memories to add to my collection of *Brenda's Stories*.

Making Cold Calls in Genealogy

By Gunter Rebele

The internet and genealogy websites are great for finding information on family history. However, some facts are very difficult or impossible to find in that way, and this is when you need a personal exchange of data.

But how to exchange information if you don't know the people whom you want to ask? That is when the technique of cold calling comes into play.

A 'Cold Call' (or unexpected contact with someone you don't know) is a very useful tool to get that extra information. I never liked to make such calls, but if I made them, I usually was successful.

First, one has to find the name, address, phone number or email of the person one wishes to call.

Use one of these sites to find the contact information:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| • Google.com | • Facebook.com |
| • Online phone and address books | • Anywho.com |
| • pipl.com | • LinkedIn.com |
| • Whitepages.com | • Whowhere.com |

Do not get discouraged by receiving no or negative replies, as salespersons make 50 to 100 cold calls for one sale or referral. Many people are not interested in genealogy or suspect you are a scammer, phishing and trying to get personal information, or worse, that you are a 'Legacy Hunter', someone who claims to be a close relative, hoping to get into some inheritance.

A kind elderly woman, who somewhat helped me with my research, eventually confessed that she initially had her doubts about me being a 'Legacy Hunter'. However, her skepticism vanished once I presented her with the results of my research, and she began to trust me.

There are three types of cold calls. In the first case, you know the person's name, but you are not acquainted with them personally. Find the address, phone number or email address and make your cold call.

In the second scenario, you are not familiar with the individual. In this case, I employ the idea of 'Six Degrees of Separation'. You will call any person, municipality, school; sports club etc. who you believe might have potentially be able to help me. This method worked several times.

Another type of cold call is when you show up unannounced. This approach I used successfully multiple times during my travels in Europe, I had the address but didn't know the person. That worked every time I used that method.

Example 1: I showed up at the Municipality of the small town, Türkenfeld, in Bavaria, where my great-grandfather, Thomas Silbernagl, lived. I inquired about any Silbernags residing in the town, but the clerk informed me that there were no longer any Silbernagls living there. However, he provided me with the contact information of a woman who was born a Silbernagl. Despite my attempts to reach out to her, I did not receive a response. I was also given the name of an elderly man who had previously served as the town's mayor. I sought him out and discovered that he still remembered my great-grandfather and his sons. He shared a few anecdotes about them. Additionally, I received the address of a possible Silbernagl relative in a nearby village. Upon visiting, I discovered that the woman was indeed a Silbernagl by birth. She showed me her extensive family tree, which did not include my great-grandfather, and she indicated that we were not related. However, she kindly provided me with a copy of the family tree.

From this tree, I reached out to two potential cousins, and one of them responded. We established a connection and confirmed that we are indeed related. That is the power of serendipity and the six degrees of separation.

Example 2: A month ago, while doing research for our Cenotaph project, I was looking for a photograph of the soldier Basil Hertslet. Searching the internet, the Maple Ridge Museum and Library and Archives Canada websites showed no results. By jumping several hurdles, I found the email address of his great-grandson in Mission. I 'cold-mailed' him and explained our project and asked for photos and other information. He promptly responded by sharing two photos of his great-grandfather, one depicting him in his uniform and the other him alongside his wife. In addition, he added a brief biography of Basil Hertslet.

Example 3: Some years ago, I looked for my maternal great-grandmother's ancestors. I knew they came from the little town of Büchlberg near Passau, Bavaria. Then, I found on the internet a brief excerpt of an online discussion mentioning the name Gastinger in connection with Passau. The sender of the information was Klaus S. from Frankfurt, which is ca.500 km away from Passau. I cold-mailed him and to my surprise; he replied that his wife was a born Gastinger from Büchlberg. Through our exchange of data, I could extend a whole branch of my family tree.

To start the call

Always go into a cold call knowing something about your common ancestor.

Provide your full name, including your first and last names, along with the name of your place of residence.

Additionally, mention any familial connections you may have. Furthermore, inform them how you found them or who recommended you to them. Before discussing the purpose of your call or your specific request, it is important to go over these fundamentals.

Before finishing the call: Provide your address and contact information (phone and email). Request their email and postal addresses. Restate your wish to share the knowledge you possess. Emphasize that if they find any more details, images, etc., you would love to hear from them. It's important to note that if you receive photos or other information, you will reciprocate.

Births, Marriages and Deaths at Sea

By Annette Fulford

UK, Registers and Indexes of Births, Marriages and Deaths of Passengers and Seamen at Sea, 1891-1922

<https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/62598/>

In August 2023, Ancestry added a new database that solved a decades-long question I've had about the death of a young child who was buried at sea. While doing research in passenger lists recently, this database was among the search results. Intrigued, I went on a deep dive down the rabbit hole on a quest for answers.

Back in 1992, I inherited the letter my grandmother wrote while on her journey to Canada as a war bride in 1919. She was travelling on the RMS *Melita* in September that year. One event she wrote about that caught my attention was the burial at sea of an infant who was only three months old. My grandmother never mentioned the family by name but she explained that the parents were at the burial and that it was much sadder because the father, an officer on board, was blind.

When additional passenger lists were released in 1998, I was finally able to view the passenger list for the September sailing of the *Melita* and learned that the couple was the HITCHON family from Brantford, Ontario. Wilton Wallace Hitchon, his wife Edna Verity, and their infant son John Dunstan Hitchon. The one question I've had for the past 20 years has been, what did their son die from?

The couple married in July 1916 and Wilton Wallace Hitchon enlisted as an officer in the 204th Battalion in August 1916 at Camp Bordon and later went overseas to France with the 54th Battalion in September 1917. During the course of the war, he was injured and left blind. He suffered gunshot wounds to the legs, hands and face including both eyes.

He was sent to St. Dunstan's Hostel for Blinded Military Personnel to recover and learn new life skills. His wife Edna requested permission from the Canadian government to travel overseas and join her husband in England to aid in his recovery. Their son John D Hitchon was born in London in June 1919.

I searched for the child in the database, but no results were found so I revised the information to include only the first name of the child and the ship he was travelling on in 1919. I found his name; it was listed backwards as Hitchon John Dunstan.

I learned that the cause of death was mucous colitis, a gastrointestinal disorder, with a secondary cause of marasmus, which is severe undernutrition. He lacked the necessary fuel to maintain normal body functions. I had been expecting his death to be from influenza. His death was a sad ending to his very short life.

So, if you have a question about an event that happened on the ship your ancestor travelled on, the answer might be found in these records.

Down the Research Rabbit Hole

Ed. Brenda L. Smith



Share the stories of your discoveries off the beaten track.

def. a rabbit hole currently connotes “a time-consuming distraction of one’s attention as happens when clicking through online links, following social media posts, or pursuing information.”

dictionary.com

You are invited to share your rabbit hole experiences. This is a safe space for you to confess your whims, because we have all been lost in the rabbit warren. And we especially welcome hearing about the amazing finds you make on these journeys.

For my journey into the Maple Ridge machine gun rabbit hole, I had company. Thank you to Gina Leigh, Andrea Lister, Director Shea Henry and Archivist Gordana Dimovska at Maple Ridge Museum and Community Archives, and Jeff Davis via David and Julie Koehn.

The trip started when Gina found a newspaper article (*The British Columbian*, 01 September 1914, p. 31) listing the Maple Ridge men who signed a petition during the first month of the First World War. They petitioned the federal Minister of Militia requesting preparation support for those who were not enlisted in the first Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). About 60 men signed the petition asking the federal government to provide training and equipment for those who had not been enlisted in the first CEF contingent.

Those signing were politicians, businessmen, farmers, and their sons. Enlistment in the Home Guard for many was a precursor to active service in the CEF. Two months later a subsequent article (*The Abbotsford*

Post, 13 November 1913, p. 3) announced that “60 strapping sons of Maple Ridge, 32 from Whonnock... comprise a strong company of highly patriotic men of enviable physique which has been attached as a unit to the 104th, New Westminster Regiment.” The Maple Ridge Home Guard had been officially recognized and paraded before their Colonel after being measured for their uniforms.

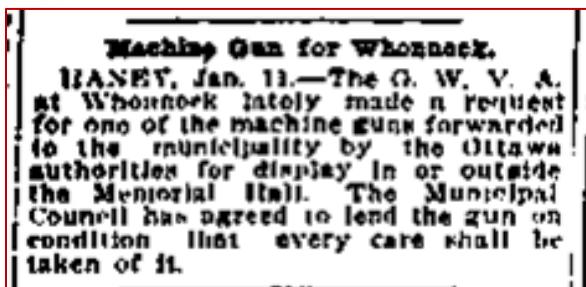
No local reports have so far been discovered regarding equipment. However, this post-war entry, in the Council Minutes of 04 September 1920, seem to confirm that equipment was received:

From D. Donaldson re War Trophies for Maple Ridge. Moved by Councillors Best and Dale that we make application to the proper Dominion Authorities for two machine Guns and a Trench Mortar.”

On 03 January 1921: “Moved by Councillor Blois and seconded by Councillor Best that the Machine Gun sent us by the Authorities at Ottawa be sent to Whonnock, same to remain the property of the Municipality, but to be given into the care of the Great War Veterans Association of that place for the time being.”

On 05 March 21: “Moved by Councillor Martyn and seconded by Councillor Brooks that the Guns donated to this Municipality be placed on a platform in front of the Hall and that the Hall Committee be instructed to have this work done.” (Maple Ridge Historic Records and Research, Council Minutes 1920 to 1931, www.mapleridge.ca/2038/Historic-Records-and-Research).

And so it seems that at least one gun was placed in front of Maple Ridge Municipal Hall. A report at the same time seems to suggest that there was a second machine gun in the municipality, and that the Great War Veterans Association of Whonnock was requesting just one of the machine guns. (*Vancouver Daily Province*, 11 January 1921, page 2.).



THE VANCOUVER DAILY PROVINCE, 11 JANUARY 1921, PAGE 2

A search of the Maple Ridge Community Archives yielded this photo which seems to be the only one so

far to illustrate the machine gun mounted on a concrete pad in front of the first Maple Ridge Municipal Hall. The grainy 1920s panorama shows the Hall and adjacent police station somewhere in the grounds of Memorial Peace Park. There seems to be a suggestion of the wheels and tongue of a gun carriage at the street.



First municipal hall and several houses, circa 1920s.

MAPLE RIDGE COMMUNITY ARCHIVES P2814

By the mid-1930s maintenance was needed. The minutes of 09 August 1934 contain the motion: “Moved by Councillors Gunn and Fairweather that. W.E. Beckett be asked to paint the Gun Carriage and shed at front of Hall and to have the place cleaned up generally and the chickens be kept out.”

Although for the time being, I have other rabbit holes to explore, questions remain. What equipment was supplied to the Maple Ridge Militia/Home Guard? The Maxim Machine Gun was patented in England in 1883 and came to prominence during the second Anglo-Boer War, possibly the field pieces provided to the Maple Ridge Militia for training.

What became of the Home Guard’s weaponry after the First World War? Further reading of Municipal Council minutes may speak directly to this question. A viable suggestion is that they were melted down for munitions in the Second World War.

Abbotsford FamilySearch Centre

www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Abbotsford_British_Columbia_FamilySearch_Centre

The Abbotsford FamilySearch Centre welcomed its new director Tanner Cervo in the fall. He has served as a volunteer in the centre since moving to Abbotsford five years ago. Since 2015 he has operated a real estate marketing and graphic design company. Tanner is joined by a skilled cadre of volunteers who operate the centre for visitors several days a week.

Check the wiki for open hours and arrange to use the databases and receive experienced research support.

Research News

Delpher

www.delpher.nl

Search historical Dutch newspapers, books, and magazines. Search millions of historical texts for free. They come from the collections of the Royal Library of the Netherlands (Koninklijke Bibliotheek or KB) and almost 200 other research institutions.

Newtown School Waterford Digital Archive

<https://newtownschool.ie/setu/>

People can now easily dive into the rich 225-year history of Newtown School Waterford, as a digital outreach project between the independent school and South East Technological University (SETU) hosts the freely available artefacts.

Artefacts available on the digital archive include a rare text published in 1898 marking the school's centenary, as well as a list of scholars who attended Newtown from 1798 to 1891. A launch event is set to take place at SETU Waterford campus' Luke Wadding Library in spring 2024.

FamilySearch Catalogs

www.familysearch.org/en/library/our-catalogs

FamilySearch has changed their Catalog system — they now have two catalogs: FamilySearch Library Catalog and FamilySearch Catalog. According to their website:

- **FamilySearch Library Catalog** lists physical items available at their Library, as well as links to items in the FamilySearch Digital Library. You can search for books, microfilm, maps and more.
- **FamilySearch Catalog** gives access to the vast collection of pedigree charts, databases, books, microfilm, maps, etc.

Irish National School Teachers

www.nationalarchives.ie/article/list-of-teachers-employed-by-the-commissioners-of-national-education-on-31-march-1905/

This List of Teachers Employed by the Commissioners of National Education on 31 March 1905 was compiled by the National Education Office "showing the ages and length of service of National School Teachers in the service of the Commissioners of National Education on 31st March, 1905 and, where furnished, their places of education."

Please note that no further lists of this kind have been created. This list is arranged in alphabetical order by surname and can be viewed as a PDF.

Home Children Canada

www.britishhomechildren.com/researchbhb

Home Children Canada, is a proactive charity established in 2012, has been dedicated to elevating the profile of the Home Children and preserving their memory. The website provides links to places where you can search for home children.

Historic Directories of Ireland

www.swilson.info/m/dirdb.php

Database of nearly 850 links to Historic Directories of Ireland, available on free and subscription websites.

Finding Your Roots Season 10 Begins in January

www.pbs.org

In addition to exploring the family mysteries of three members of the viewing public, chosen for the series following a casting call, season 10 of *Finding Your Roots* dives into the ancestral backgrounds and stories of Valerie Bertinelli, Danielle Brooks, LeVar Burton, Ciara, Michael Douglas, Lena Dunham, Brendan Fraser, Sammy Hagar, Sunny Hostin, Tracy Morgan, Alanis Morissette and more.

The first episode of Season 10 will air on Tuesday, January 2nd on PBS stations.

Maple Ridge Historical Society Membership Renewal Reminder

<https://mapleridgemuseum.org/contact-2/join-us/>



It's that time of year again where we remind our readers that the Family History Group is a standing committee of the Maple Ridge Historical Society and we encourage our members join the society.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

- Individual: \$20/year
- Family: \$25/year

The Maple Ridge Museum & Community Archives support the Family History Group in their work on community history projects and provide us with space on their website. None of their work would be possible without the support of their members. Memberships can be renewed by filling out the Membership Renewal Form under the memberships tab on their website, or by mail.

Make cheques payable to "Maple Ridge Historical Society" 22520 116 Ave Maple Ridge, B.C. V2X 0S4

Family History Events

BCGS

www.bcgs.ca/bcgs-events

- **Delving Deep: The Power of Place**, with Karen Inkster Vance, (Zoom) January 10, 2024, 7:00 to 9:00 PM (PST).
- **The Canadian Letters and Images Project**, with Dr. Stephen Davies, (Zoom) February 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM (PST).

Campbell River Genealogy Society

www.crgenealogysociety.ca

- **Here Comes The Brides**, with Candy-Lea Chickite, January 4, 2024, 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM, Hybrid via Zoom. Free.

Kelowna and District Genealogical Society

<https://kdgs.ca/>

- **FamilySearch: Be a Power User** with Jeannie Vance, Monday, January 8, 2024. 7:00 PM (PST) on Zoom. Free. Registration required and membership encouraged.
- **Finding Family at the BC Archives** with Trevor Dyck of the BC Archives, Victoria, Tuesday, January 23, 2024, 6:30 to 8:00 PM (PST) on Zoom (log on from 6:15 PM), Free, registration through Okanagan Regional Library.

Maple Ridge Community Heritage Commission

www.mapleridge.ca/240/Heritage-Awards

- **Heritage Awards Night** The evening to celebrate Heritage Award winners and nominees will take place on Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at the Albion Community Centre. The Albion Community Centre is located at 24165 104 Avenue,

Maple Ridge. The doors will open at 6:30 PM and the event will start at 7:00 PM.

RootsTech 2024

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

- World's largest genealogy conference in person in Salt Lake City with 250+ sessions only available in Salt Lake City or online worldwide with 200+ new online sessions in over 26 languages February 29–March 2, 2024. Fee for in-person: \$109 US 3-Day Pass, \$69 US 1-Day Pass. Fee for online: free.

Scottish Indexes Conference XXIII

www.scottishindexes.com/conference.aspx

- **January 2024 Conference:** Several presentations including: Moving DNA to the Next Level; Finding Births, Marriages and Deaths in Scotland before 1855; and Perth & Kinross Archives. Saturday January 13, 2024. Start at 7 am UK time and keep going until 11 pm UK time. Each presentation is shown twice. Via Zoom. Free.

Surrey Libraries

www.surreylibraries.ca/services/family-history

Free. Registration required. Email or call to register.

- **Genealogy Orientation**, Saturdays, February 17, 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM. Cloverdale.
- **Monthly Family History DNA Chat and Fun Family History Friday Chats**. Fridays, January 12, February 9, 2:30 to 3:30 PM. Cloverdale.
- **Genealogy and Eastern Europe Border Changes** with Edie Adam. Thursday, February 8, 2024, 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM (PST). Online.

- **Historical Photo Detective: Roadshow!** with The Photo Detective Maureen Taylor Friday February 23, 2024, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM (PST). Online.
- **Publishing Your Memoirs or Family History** with Andrea Lister, Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM, Ocean Park Branch.
- **Prison and Court Records** with Andrea Lister, Thursday, March 14, 2024, 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM, Cloverdale.

The Family History Group is a standing committee of the Maple Ridge Historical Society and we encourage, but do not require, that our members join the society.

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, 7:00 PM (PST) on Zoom until further notice. Email us at: mrfamilyhistory@gmail.com for information on how to join the meeting.

January 6, 2024: The 2024 New Year's Challenge: Challenge details revealed! Just a reminder that the focus of these annual challenges is to establish an interesting aspect of the life of one of your ancestors. The outcome – an interesting family history story.

February 7, 2024: Short Program Planning Session: An opportunity for member input. We need your suggestions – research guides, shared topics, guest presenters, challenges, or simply more time for answering your questions. Share your thoughts.

Have something to share? There's always time to hear about an exciting new find or an interesting family story.