



This is part two of a two part series on researching our Canadian ancestors.

Seek
Out
Your
Roots and You will find your
Life.

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December 2011



Christmas in Canada



Canada is a very large country and people of many different cultural backgrounds live there. Because of this, there are a lot of different Christmas traditions in Canada. Many of the traditions and celebrations come from France, English, Irish, Scottish, German and Indigenous influences.

The eastern Canadian province of Nova Scotia is known all over the world for its fir and pine Christmas trees, so most families in Canada have a fir or pine Christmas tree. One Canadian tradition is to send the largest, best fir tree that is grown in Nova Scotia to Boston, U.S.A. each year at Christmas time. This tradition started as a result of the Halifax Explosion Disaster when on Dec. 6, 1917, a French munitions ship collided with a Norwegian freighter in Halifax Harbor killing over 1,900 people and injuring 9,000 more in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The people of Boston sent help in the form of doctors, nurses, food, and supplies. This is known as the Boston Christmas Tree Tradition, which is a special token of thanks to the Boston people for their help.

Murrmering is a tradition in the provinces of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, more commonly in village and small towns. It is held between Dec. 26 and Jan. 6, when people dress up in costumes to disguise their identity, go to someone's house and knock on their door and in a disguised voice ask, "Are there any Murrmers in the night?" or "Are murrmers allowed in the house?" They sing and dance and are served biscuits and drinks by the host.

In Northern Canada, some people plan a Taffy Pull. This is held in honor of Saint Catherine, the patron saint of single women. This party provides an opportunity for single women to meet eligible single men.

Many Canadians open their gifts on Christmas Eve. Some only open their stockings on Christmas Eve. Others choose one gift to open, then save the rest for Christmas Day.

Canadian children also believe in Santa Claus. Canadians are especially proud to say that their

country is the home of Santa Claus. (The people of Finland may disagree with this.)

The indigenous people of Canada, the First Nations, hold their Winter Celebration, which is different for each Band. Winter Celebration includes gift giving, feasts, singing, dancing, drumming and games. The Inuit, who are separate from the First Nations Bands, hold a festival called "Sinck Tuck", which consists of dancing and gift giving.

Labrador City in Newfoundland holds a Christmas Light-up Contest each year. People dress up the outside of their house with lights and may have ice sculptures in their front yards.

Many Canadian families have cookie-baking parties. They bring a recipe for Christmas cookies, bake them and then exchange them with the members of their family. Each family, at the end of the party goes home with a variety of different cookies to enjoy over the Christmas season.

Many families of French descent have a huge feast on Christmas Eve that lasts well into the early hours of Christmas morning after taking part in Christmas Eve Mass.

At the end of the Christmas season, January 6th, people in the province of Quebec have a celebration called "La Fete du Roi", They bake a cake and place a bean in the middle. Whoever discovers the bean gets to be king or queen, according to tradition.

In Southwest Nova Scotia, many families eat lobster, caught off the coast of Nova Scotia, for their Christmas dinner instead of the traditional turkey or ham.

At Christmas Canadians eat sweets called Barley Candy and Chicken Bones! They are sweets my by local candy companies. Barley is usually on a stick and is shaped like Santa, reindeer, snowmen, a tree and other symbols of Christmas. Chicken Bones are a pink candy that tastes like cinnamon. You melt them in your mouth and once melted, they reveal a creamy milk chocolate center.

From "Christmas Around the World" Web, 7 December 2011,

<http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/canada.shtml>

MESA DWELLERS

Renewal Reminder for 2012

It is almost that time of year again! How time flies when we are having fun researching! 2012 renewals are due by March 1, 2012. Single membership is \$10.00, Family membership is \$12.00. You can send payment to the Mesa County Genealogical Society, PO Box 1506, Grand Junction, CO, 81502-1506. A renewal form will also be sent out via email in January 2012.

From the Editor

I hope you have enjoyed the stories and also found the information in the last two Issues of the Mesa Dwellers newsletter to be of help in your Canadian research.

Thank you to all who contributed.

My idea for the next newsletter is going to be on German research. I would greatly appreciate any information and or help in this area, such as websites, genealogical societies, sayings, stories, pictures, German recipes, etc. Any and all ideas will be appreciated.

Karen and I, wish you all a Merry Christmas and a fun filled New Year in doing family research!

May the year 2012 be the year when those brick walls come tumbling down and those elusive ancestors are discovered!

Kathie Vlahos, Editor and Karen Grew-Ellison, Assistant Editor

The Mesa County Genealogical Society, established in 1980, is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization.

Objectives:

1. To promote an interest in genealogy, to encourage and instruct members in the art and practice of genealogical research.
2. To maintain and elevate genealogical standards, to stress the importance of accuracy in research through careful documentation.
3. To locate, preserve and index public and private genealogical records and make such records available to members and the general public.
4. To assist and support any genealogical library in Colorado, which is open to the public.

Society meetings are held the 2nd Thursday of each month in the Cross Orchards – Orchards View Room, 3073 F Road, 7:00 pm. The monthly Sack Lunch meeting is held in the 2nd floor Museum conference room of the C. D Smith Building at 5th & Ute Streets at 12 noon on the 4th Wednesday of each month. A Board of Directors meeting will often follow the Sack Lunch meeting from 1pm - 2pm.

Society Officers

President	Dennis Jenkins
Vice President	Iris Krogh
Secretary	Donna Jackson
Treasurer	Jill Berthod

Board Members

Jan Wilson	3 year Term
Karen Grew-Ellison	2011-2012-2013
Ron Knapp	2010-2011-2012
	2009-2010-2011

Standing Committee Chairpersons

Historian/Archivist	Jan Wilson
Co-Genealogist/Librarian	Kay Oxer
Co-Genealogist/Librarian	Linda Garey
Newsletter Editor	Kathie Vlahos
Assistant Editor	Karen Grew-Ellison
Society Webmaster	Caley Gredig
Parliamentarian	Vacant
Program Director	Dennis Jenkins
Research Director	Bob Cress
Membership	Donna Jackson

Membership year: March 1 - February 28/29
Annual Dues: \$10 Single - \$12 Family (2 voting family members).
Those with unpaid dues after April 30th of the membership year will not receive the newsletter.

Contributions to the *Mesa Dwellers* are encouraged and appreciated and should be neatly typed or written stories, queries, articles and/or other information applicable to genealogy research. Contribution (deadlines): March issue (Feb 15), June issue (May 15), September issue (August 15), December issue (November 15).

Send to: Kathie Vlahos at [redacted] or telephone: [redacted]

HO! HO! HO!



MERRY CHRISTMAS

December 2011 – March 2012 ~ Upcoming Programs and Events

- 6 January 2012 Friday Help Session: 1-4 p.m. at the Mesa County Public Library (We will notify you of which branch when that is determined).
- 12 January 2012 Thursday Evening at Cross Orchards: 7 p.m. – Mike Menard will present a program on “*Preservation of Photographs and Document’s*.”
- 25 January 2012 Wednesday Noon at Museum: We will discuss on the online classes from Familysearch.org.
- 3 February 2012 Friday Help Session: 1-4 p.m. at the Mesa County Public Library (We will notify you of which branch when that is determined).
- 9 February 2012 Thursday Evening at Cross Orchards: 7 p.m. – Our program will be one of two members presenting their genealogy, describing the surnames and places they are researching and some of the information they have discovered. The business meeting will include election of officers, meetings, and annual reports.
- 22 February 2012 Wednesday Noon at Museum: Topic to be determined.
- 2 March 2012 Friday Help Session: 1-4 p.m. at the Mesa County Public Library (We will notify you of which branch when that is determined).
- 8 March 2012 Thursday Evening at Cross Orchards: 7 p.m. – Tentative program: Kathy Jordan to talk about how she conducts research for her Daily Sentinel column, “History Here and Now”.
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President’s Message

I want to thank all the members who have contributed to the society as officers, committee members and working on projects throughout the year. We have members entering obituaries into the Marmot database and offering research help to members and non members at the Mesa County Public Library. A new project is under way to create a Mesa County Resource Book that will list all the resources in Mesa County available to family history researchers. Anyone interested in helping with this resource book, please contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Also, you should check out our Mesa County Genealogical Society Library housed in the Lloyd Files Research Library at the Museum of Western Colorado as Kay Oxer and Linda Garry have done a lot of work getting it into great shape.

I hope everyone is taking full advantage of all the new online databases (many of them indexed) that are being added to the FamilySearch.org website. Every time I go to the website, I find newly added information that is helping me in my research. Note that subscription sites such as Ancestry.com can be accessed for free at the Mesa County Public Library, Museum, and the Family History Center. Additionally Fold3.com (formerly Footnote.com), World Vital Records and other subscription databases are also available free at the Family History Center.

I feel we all need to take full advantage of these online databases, but as thorough researchers we should also be making the attempt to go to the actual places where the original records are housed. That might include the county records archives, county and city libraries, state archives, churches, cemeteries etc. Note that many of these records will not show up on the internet. If you are unable to go to the actual places, there are ways to get help from the people who live in the

areas you are interested in. Use county and city libraries by calling or emailing them and using their "Ask a Librarian" services. Check online for local genealogical societies that may offer help for free or for a very reasonable fee. Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness has been a great source of asking someone to find information in a far away location for years. Unfortunately that website is currently inactive, but expected to be up and running in the near future.

Another site that is getting a lot of use these days is FindAGrave.com where volunteers add gravestone photos plus information about the person and his or her family. You can volunteer to add information to this great database by going to the website and registering to be able to add gravestones. You can also sign up to fulfill gravestone photo requests near where you live.

Soon we will get a chance to see the 1940 U. S. Census. On April 2, 2012 the images of the census will be showing up online at many websites. However the indexes for the census will not be available until later. In fact, you can volunteer to index the 1940 census by going to <https://familysearch.org/1940Census> and signing up for the state you would like to help index.

I want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a successful new year of family history research in 2012.

Dennis Jenkins, MCGS President

Learning about Canadian Cemetery Records

By Sherry Irvine

I came to this topic in a roundabout way, a result of our moving to a new house. The change brings plenty of adjustments and new experiences particularly when you move, as we did from a mid-sized city (300,000) to a town less than 10 percent the size. A real delight in my new location has been getting to know the members of the local genealogical society, the Comox Valley Family History Research Group, a small but active organization. Members' enthusiasm is reflected in many ways, including projects, and the sharing of news.

The Comox Valley Group has published three volumes of cemetery transcriptions, all of which can be ordered. (For more information see the website, www.familyhistory.iscon.ca. The titles are Courtenay Civic Cemetery, and Cemeteries of Denman Island and Hornby Island.

Cemeteries reveal a lot about a community: the names and inscriptions tell something of origins; ages, occupations, even the history of the cemetery, reveal details of social and population history.

Leafing through these three books made me realize how little I know about Canadian cemetery records, and I went looking for information. My explorations online indicate countless numbers of cemeteries in every province and territory have been recorded or are being recorded.

My search fanned out from home, so I first checked out British Columbia and then beyond, across Canada. In the process I turned up several special projects as well as information on a wonderful idea, cemetery galleries. Taking you through the steps of my search may give some new research ideas.

I began with search engines. I make a habit of avoiding the favorite, so, for this search, I tried one different and one I use regularly. The new ones are Teoma, www.teoma.com and the familiar one, Yahoo, www.yahoo.com. At the province level my key words were: British Columbia cemeteries. Among items in the first few pages or two of results I visited sites:

- British Columbia Cemetery Finding Aid: www.islandnet.com/bccfa/
- Ontario Cemetery Finding Aid: www.islandnet.com/ocfa/, 350,000 entries in the index.
- Alberta Family History Society: www.afhs.ab.ca/
- BC Municipal Cemetery Network: www.bcmcn.ca, this site leads to all municipally owned cemeteries across B.C.

- Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver:
www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/NONMARKETOPERATIONS/MOUNTAINVIEWindex.htm, an excellent site which includes finding aids to those buried there, as well as special lists for war graves in the cemetery, and members of fraternal organizations.
- Northwest Ontario Canada Gravemarker Gallery: <http://nocgg.maddoc.net/>, areas of Northeastern Ontario, the search tool leads you to a photograph and also has historic photo galleries.

There is a lot out there, I suggest you use a combination of online research and direct contact to find important information, local cemeteries in existence when your ancestors were buried; cemeteries still open today; and availability of records, transcriptions and indexes. Also use maps and read about the history of the cemeteries.

This article may be about Canadian cemetery records, but the techniques used here can be adapted to other countries. In addition, include the special section on cemeteries and finding aids at Cyndi's List to get you started; I suggest you find this within the No-frills category index: www.cyndieslist.com/nofrills.htm

Irvine, Sherry, CGRS, FSA Scot, copyright 2005, MyFamily.com, ancestry.com learning page, Dec. 6, 2011, Web, <http://learn.ancestry.com/LearnMore/Article.aspx?id=9790>

Additional Cemetery Information

Canadian Headstone Photo Project – The mission of the Canadian Headstones Photo Project at www.CanadianHeadstones.com is to capture digital images of headstones, the transcriptions of the text on these headstones, of our ancestors. By archiving the images, they can help save these important records and also assist researchers using this valuable resource. There are 321,000 gravestone photos as of this time in all of the Provinces.

Beechwood Cemetery Registers - The years 1873–1990 can be accessed through www.ancestry.com. This is a paid site. In total the Beechwood Cemetery Registers, 1873-1990 include five burial ledgers with fully indexed names from 66,649 interment records. The ledgers also include cremations from 1981 onward, as well as the names for some individuals who died before 1873 whose remains were later moved to Beechwood.

Greenwood Cemetery - Owen Sound, Ontario, www.owensound.ca/cemetery/indx.pho

Saskatchewan Cemeteries Project - there are over 3,300 cemetery and burial sites located in Saskatchewan, 1004 cemeteries are transcribed or photographed and indexed on this site as of December 4, 2011.
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cansacem/index.html>

CanadaGenWeb Cemetery Project – Their goal is to find and list all known Canadian cemeteries. The data base is built as people submit information. They now have a list of over 16,000 known cemeteries located in Canada.
<http://cemetery.canadagenweb.org/>

French Genealogy Records Online – Along the theme of accessing digitized records online, some of the French Archives are scanning and placing civil and church online, for free. Check out the Bas-Rhin archives at <http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/> and the Haut-Rhin archives at http://www.archives.cg68.fr/Services_Actes_Civils.aspx. They each have different interfaces you have to learn to drive, but it's pretty neat and no need to order and wait for a film at the FHC.

Posted by Dick Eastman on 13 October 2010

This article is from Eastman's online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyright 2109 by Richard W. Eastman. It is re-published here with the permission of the author. Information about the newsletter is available at <http://blog.eogn.com>

Canadian Weather – If you are interested in what the weather may be like in the area that your ancestors lived; you can visit the NOAA site for current weather conditions. http://weather.noaa.gov/weather/CA_cc.html

Submitted by Kathie Vlahos, 6 December 2011

Migration of Canadians to the United States

There has been a great deal of interest among family history researchers about the emigration of Europeans to North America but it is important not to ignore the massive movement of British North Americans or Canadians to the United States. Many Americans having ancestors who originally settled in Canada are interested in locating lost parts of their family tree. This article will discuss migration patterns from Canada to the United States during the nineteenth century to the First World War and some unique records for locating Canadian ancestors.

There is a long tradition of Canadians crossing the border into the United State from the War of 1812 to WWI. It is important to emphasize the importance of Border States in emigration. Thousands of Canadians simply crossed the border and established a new life in a border state, especially Michigan, New York, and in New England. There was a large number of Canadians living in the United States at the turn of the century. A report by George Johnson, Dominion Statistician of Canada the number of Canadians residing in the U.S. in 1900 was 1,181,778. With respect to the geographic distribution of Canadians living in the U.S. there was an attraction to the Border States. Therefore, New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington were popular states.

Canadians were able to cross the border without any impediment, obtain land, and earn a living while being close enough to visit family members and friends. It appears that economic opportunity and family connections were main reason which motivated Canadians to leave for the U.S. Unlike other emigrants, English speaking Canadians did not have to worry about language problems and easily integrated into American society. Religious prosecution was not a factor in Canadians moving to the U.S. The only incident of Canadians immigrating to the United States during this period for religious reasons were Mormon converts who left Ontario in the 1830's to settle in Utah.

It is important to stress the important factor of family relationships in emigration since family members and neighbors often moved together to the same destination. Emigration appears to have been encouraged by letters back home and newspaper accounts which prompted people to join their friends and family.

The Canadian migration movement during the period from after War of 1812-1815 to the start of the First World War was as follows:

Ontario – Quebec to Michigan 1820-1950

One of the earliest mass migrations of Canadians was a large influx of people into Michigan starting in the 1820's. In Upper Canada (Ontario) most of the best quality land was settled or very expensive during this period. Michigan provided available and inexpensive land as well as opportunities in lumbering, mining, and other industries.

Quebec to New England 1840-1930

Another important emigration was the movement of French Canadian from Quebec and Canada to New England from 1840 to 1930. Because of an increase in the population and lack of good farming land French Canadians initially went to New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine to obtain work on farms, lumber camps and small industries. However, the main influx was to the textile towns of Massachusetts, notably Fall River, Holyoke, and Lovell as well as Connecticut and Rhode Island. Many French-Canadian names became anglicized during this period but their roots can be traced back to Quebec.

Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes to the northern United States during the Civil War 1861-1865

It is estimated that 40,000 to 50,000 British North Americans served in the Civil War largely in the Union Armies. The reasons for volunteering were similar to their American brethren including patriotism, a desire to end slavery, collection of a bounty for enlistment and for the sake of adventure. Thousands of former slaves who had fled to Canada through the underground railway returned to the United States to join black regiments during the conflict and did not return to Canada.

Mass Emigration from all parts of Canada to the United States from 1885-1914

Many Canadians were searching for the same economic opportunities in the United States in the nineteenth century with other emigrants. Canadians were members of the California Gold Rush starting in 1849, farmers who were motivated to cross the border by the Homestead Act of 1862 which provided 160 acres of free land, laborers, factory workers and office workers who

were employed in major American cities, loggers in camps in Wisconsin, mining in Nevada and Colorado and in female jobs such as nursing and teaching.

Emigration from Ontario and Quebec to New York State 1885-1914

During the period of 1885 to 1914 thousands of people from the eastern Ontario counties of Prince Edward County, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry crossed the border into New York State to Jefferson County and St. Lawrence County.

There are many possibilities to consider when searching for an ancestor who originally came from Canada. There are only a limited number of emigration records of Canadians crossing the border into the United States. The most well known is the St. Alban's (Vermont) Lists which are a list of immigrants who crossed the border from Canada into the United States between 1885-1954. This material includes records from the St. Alban's border crossing and other points from Canada and the northern U. S. including Washington, Michigan, New York, North Dakota, Minnesota, and other border points. The Soundex Index consists of individual card manifests derived from the Soundex Code with each card representing an abstract of information found in the original passenger manifest.

*Article by Schechter, Jack "Migration of Canadians to the United States" Everton's Genealogical Helper, March/April 2006, copyright 2006
Submitted by Jan Wilson, December 2011*

Other Sites for information of Immigration & Emigration for Canadians are:

www.ancestry.com, provides border crossing information, Border Crossings: From Canada to U.S. 1895-1956, Border Crossing: From U.S. to Canada 1908-1935

http://genealogy.about.com/od/canada_immigration/Canadian_Immigration_Emigration_and_Naturalization.htm, has several websites to choose from for Canadian Immigration and Emigration research.

The Library and Archives of Canada, http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/020118_e.html

American-French Genealogical Society, <http://www.afgs.org/genepges.html>

Canadiana Discovery Portal

The Canadiana Discovery Portal is a search engine for discovering Canadian history and genealogy. The Canadiana Discovery Portal connects Canadians to over 60 million pages of Canadian content from various archive collections and includes information from multiple libraries, museums, universities and government agencies. There are multiple ways to search; name, city or subjects such as hockey. The website is: <http://www.canadiana.ca/en/home>.

A Short Story about the Canadiana Discovery Portal

By Kathie Vlahos

I can tell you right now, I really like the Canadiana Discovery Portal site. I guess it has to do with the fact that it helped me unravel a mystery I had concerning my grandfather, Louis Hickory and his first wife, Agnes (St. Pierre) Hickory. My grandfather (I will refer to him as Louis) had applied for a homestead in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. The Application for Entry for a homestead was dated, 7 January 1909, (which I found through the Library and Archives Canada). One day I was searching through the Canadiana Discovery Portal photographs about Red Deer, and what I found there solved my mystery.

I have a picture postcard passed down to me that has always interested and confused me. It is post marked "Red Deer, 7 Sept. 1907", was sent from Agnes (who is in Red Deer) to Louis (who is in Illinois) and the picture on the front is of an elderly couple holding a baby, (Stanley, Louis and Agnes's son, 1 year old), the writing on the bottom of the card says, "How do you like little Stanley with Grandpa Piper. Stanley sends Papa a kiss". One may think these were the grandparents right? The thing is, Agnes's maiden name was St. Pierre. Was it a miss spelling, abbreviation or nickname? Louis's family name was Hickory (Americanization) or De Noyer, (French pronunciation) he was known to go by both. I had pictures of Louis's parents and they did not match, but no pictures of Agnes's parents. So the postcard sat in a box for further investigation.



Image No: NA-3628-10

Title: William Piper's brickyard house. Red Deer. Alberta

Date: [ca. 1903-1919]

Remarks: New verandah was added in 1902. Mr. Piper later glassed in this area and used it as a summer office.

Subject(s): Red Deer, Alberta - Personalities / Red Deer, Alberta - Dwellings

As I panned through the pictures of Red Deer on the Canadiana Discovery Portal, I ran across a house which the architecture struck me as familiar. A light bulb went off in my head! I pulled up the picture of the postcard and compared the corner of the porch that the elderly couple was standing in front of with the corner of the porch of the house in the other photo, a tree was also in the background and with it, I had a match! It was the same house! The picture had a caption which read "William Piper's brickyard House, Red Deer, Alberta, 1912-1919. Now I had a name, and it matched the last name on my photo "Grandpa Piper." Looking further through the photos, I found a picture of Mr.

William Piper himself. He matched the elderly gentleman in my photo. Bingo! I think we all know the feelings we get when we discover something like this, elation, almost giddiness.

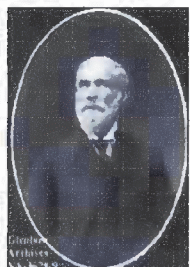


Image No: NA-3628-9

Title: William Piper, founder of brick plant. Red Deer. Alberta

Date: [ca. 1913-1919]

Remarks: Mr. Piper came west from Ontario in 1891 and chose for the site of brick plant. In 1892 he brought out machinery and workers from Perry Sound, Ontario. The brickyard was operated by Mr. Piper until 1910, when he retired; his son, Frank, and E. R. Hill took the business over but it closed down from 1914-1920. The plant opened up again in 1920 but ceased operations later that year because of competition from Redcliff which used gas for fuel.

Subject(s): Red Deer, Alberta - Personalities / Red Deer, Alberta - Commerce

Now, the question was, why and how were Louis and Agnes associated with William Piper? The caption states he owned a brick yard in Red Deer, I did more research on Mr. Piper and his wife, found they were a large presence in Red Deer, being very involved in the community and welfare of its people.

What was the link between William Piper and Louis and Agnes Hickory? It turns out that William Piper's brickyard was the first real industry in Red Deer, employing as many as sixty men. It also was the only place where people coming into the country could get work while they were getting established on their homesteads. They also loved the company of young people, and often opened their home to them. Seems no matter what entertainment there was, picnics, skating parties, sleigh ride parties, they would always finish at the Piper's home where Mrs. Piper would offer food and entertainment. (1)

Louis may have worked in Wm. Piper's brickyard until their homestead came though, I don't know that for certain. Perhaps Agnes even stayed with them while Louis was back in Illinois, that is still all a mystery.

Louis and Agnes did get their homestead, unfortunately, Agnes died sometime between January 7, 1909 and March 15, 1910. Louis filed a Declaration of Abandonment on March 15, 1910 and left Red Deer to go back to Illinois with his son, Stanley. I can find nothing on Agnes's death or burial. That will be another mystery to solve.

(1) Taken from Ancestry.com, "William Piper in Alberta", 1891-1916, Red Deer, Alberta

Understanding Dit Names

By Kimberly Powell

Found Primarily in France, New France, (French-Canada, Louisiana, etc.) and Scotland, dit names are essentially an alias tacked on to a family name or surname. *Dit* in French is a form of the word *dire*, which means “to say,” and in the case of dit names is translated loosely as “that is to say,” or “called.” Therefore, the first name is the family’s original surname, passed down to them by an ancestor, while the “dit” name is the name the person/family is actually called or known as. Dit names are used by families, not specific individuals, and are usually passed down to future generations, either in place of the original surname, or in addition to it.

Why a dit name? Dit names were often adopted by families to distinguish them from another branch of the same family. Interestingly, many dit names derived from military service, (See below for explanation of military dit names) where early French military rules required a *nom de guerre*, or nickname, for all regular soldiers. The specific dit name may have been chosen for many of the same reasons as the original surname – as a nickname based on trade or physical characteristics, to identify the ancestral place of origin (Andre Jarret de Beauregard refers to the ancestral home in the French province of Dauphine), etc.

A dit name can be legally used to replace the family’s original surname, so you may find an individual listed with a dit name, or under either the original surname or the dit name. Dit names may also be found reversed with the original surname, or as hyphenated surnames.

- Hudon dit Beaulieu
- Beaulieu dit Hudon
- Hudon Beaulieu
- Beaulieu Hudon
- Hudon-Beaulieu
- Beaulieu-Hudon
- Hudon
- Beaulieu

When recording a dit name in your family tree software, it is generally standard practice to record it in its most common form – e.g. *Hudon dit Beaulieu*. A standardized list of dit names with their common variants can be found in Rene Jette’s, “*Repertoire des Norms de Famillie du Quebec*” des Orugubes a 1825 and Msgr Cyprien Tanguay’s “*Dictionnaire genealogique des familles canadiennes*”, (volume 7). Another extensive source is “*The dit Name: French Canadian Surnames, Aliases, Adulterations, and Anglicizations*”, by Robert J. Quentin.

Powell, Kinberly. “Understanding Dit Names” Web 5 Dec. 2011, <http://genealogy.about.com/b/2010/07/08/understanding-dit-names.htm>

Another good source to visit that further explains “Dit” names is at the Universite de Montreal, the website is: <http://www.genealogy.umontreal.ca/en/nomsPrenoms.htm>

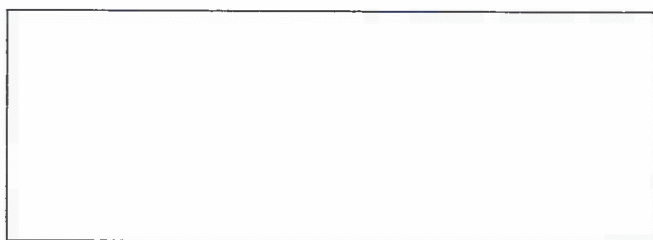
Military Dit Names

When a soldier enlists in the French army, he is given a nickname or *nom de guerre*, for example Philibert Couillaud dit Roquebrune, soldier of the regiment de Carignan. This nickname takes on an official character. It becomes the equivalent of an identification number. The soldiers are recognized by their family name, their first names, and their noms de guerre. In daily life, the nom de guerre replaces the real family name especially when the soldier speaks a dialect or the provencal language. In

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Mesa County Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 1506
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81502-1506



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In 1716, French military rules require a nom de guerre for all regular soldiers. The assignment of these nicknames is done in a flexible manner. It can be the soldier's choice or that of the Company's captain. During the American Revolution, France sends the regiment de Tourraine to help the American rebels. In each company, all the nicknames start with the same letter. Thus in the Dugre company, the soldiers' nicknames all start with the letter D, in another company, they start with B. It is thus easy to identify to which company a soldier belongs. From 1764 to 1768, the Company of Casaux of Regiment de Boulonnois-infanterie uses names of vegetables. We thus find Lartichaud, Laletue, Lachicoree, Lecresson et Lecerfeuil. (Traslator's note: the artichoke, lettuce, chicory, cress, and chervil.)

The nom guerre is a personal property. A soldier does not change it readily. It can happen when the soldier is transferred to another company and the nickname is already in use. In France, the soldier's wife will take his nom de guerre. On the other hand, a soldier's son will always carry a name that is different from his father's if he serves in the army. The absence of a genuine nickname is a sigh of esteem. Officers, cadets, volunteers, and gentlemen do not have one.

Lepine, Luc, PhD, Research and Practice, "The Military Roots of "dit" Names, Web, 5 Dec. 2011, <http://www.histori.ca/prodev/article.do>

*Our Family name is us. We recognize it everywhere we see it...
Thus, it is something that is precious to us,
Since its nature awakens in us often pleasant memories,
Especially when it is a question of our own family.*

Narcisse-Euthrope Dionne, 1914