



Wetaskiwin Branch  
Alberta Genealogical Society

# Roots & Branches

Vol. 12 No. 3

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## WEBSITE

[www.wetaskiwin.abgensoc.ca](http://www.wetaskiwin.abgensoc.ca)

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## ROOTS & BRANCHES

is published three times per year by and for the members of Wetaskiwin Branch of AGS. It is emailed to members and posted on our website.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Diane Strohschein

Thank you for your confidence in me as President of this organization. I think we have a good set of Executive and committee people. Thanks to all of you.

I am looking forward to an interesting year. Our society decided to change the meeting format so we will have less "business" and more "education and help" for the members.

Claudia and Carole have already gathered some ideas from us, and are arranging programs to make us into better genealogists and family historians. Please let them know if any other ideas come up.

~\*~\*~

*"Everyone's destination is to achieve a 'complete' and orderly family tree, a veritable impossibility. Therefore, the journey, with all its complexities and with all its unexpected detours, should be more important and ultimately more fascinating than the goal."*

East European Genealogical Society  
Chairperson, Ron Smelski – 2001

~\*~\*~

## COMMITTEES

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## BRANCH MEETINGS

**3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month,  
7:00 pm at LDS CHURCH  
5410 – 36 Ave  
except Dec., July & Aug.**

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## WETASKWIN BRANCH: AGS GENEALOGICAL LIBRARY

Located at  
City of Wetaskiwin Archives  
4904 – 51 Street  
Resources available "On call"  
Branch Library co-ordinator  
Contact: Bob Maynard  
780-387-4187  
[maynard@persona.ca](mailto:maynard@persona.ca)

~ ~

## WETASKIWIN FAMILY HISTORY CENTER

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day  
Saints,  
5410 – 36 Avenue, Wetaskiwin  
Thursdays: 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm  
& 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Sharon Aney

Springtime! Why do our childhood memories stand out so clearly? Is it because we were not distracted by other responsibilities? I recall the days in the 1950s when it was so much fun to use a stick, or real tool like a spade, to make channels to direct water running off from the melting snow banks. Even more fun was to see how far we could wade into a slough without filling our rubber boots!

At the one-room country school we put away the soccer ball and brought out the softball and bats to play scrub. All ages were involved and the grade 7, 8 or 9 students helped the little ones learn to hit and throw because they were needed as players.

We practised for the inter-school "Track and Field Day". The sand pits were dug up for high jump, broad jump and hop-step-jump training, and mini competitions were held for running and throwing events.

On THE BIG DAY one of the dads would come to the school with a 3-ton grain truck to transport us to the usual competition site about 15 miles away. All 25 or so students piled into the grain box (imagine!) with bats and balls, javelin & discus, lunch kits and a great deal of excitement. The dad's patience was tried as there were always a few stops to be made to retrieve someone's cap or other item that had been tossed out onto the road or into a ditch.

We ran. We jumped. We threw. We won red, blue or white ribbons for placing 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> (no participant ribbons) and wore them proudly pinned across our shirt fronts. We combined forces, if necessary, with another country school to make enough teams for softball games. It was a great day.

The ride home was very subdued as we had used up all of our energy. It always seemed that the day had been blazing hot, and after Mom congratulated us on our efforts she brought cool, thick farm cream from the fridge to soothe our sunburns.

## RECAP OF MEETING PRESENTATIONS

### FEBRUARY 2014

On the same evening as the regular meeting the Annual General Meeting was held. Refer to page 1 & 2 of this newsletter for the new executive members. Thanks to those who stepped forward!

**Presentation:** "Our Branch History" – Rosella brought scrapbooks with photos, articles and other items documenting the past 14 years of Wetaskiwin branch of AGS.

### MARCH 2014:

**Presentation:** TIME TRAVELLER WEBSITE – due to some technical difficulties, we were unable to watch this presentation; however Carole and Bob were able to advise of numerous aspects relating to the website, and Carole passed out information on how to access the site and suggested that we personally view as many of the videos as we could. We also experienced a very interesting 'round table' discussion among branch members that resulted in some humorous exchanges.

### APRIL 2014:

**Presentation#1-** Carole Koop reported upon her attendance at the Alberta Family History Society Seminar. Canadian genealogist, Dave Obee, presented at all 4 sessions. He stressed that stories are what matter, not just dates. He strongly recommends [www.cangenealogy.com](http://www.cangenealogy.com)

**Presentation #2** – Claudia showed "Crossing the Pond" "Collecting Records": one of a series of films available on [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

**Research Tip:** on the [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) website, go to the upper right corner and click on "get help" for an abundance of learning and research resources.

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## INSPECTOR MAIGRET; HERCULE POIROT! STEP ASIDE! Alice Hoyle

I love a good mystery story – the twists and turns in the plot can keep me awake long into the night as I try to figure out what's coming next and whodunit! I think this is one of the reasons why genealogy is so intriguing to me.

Picture this: I'm sitting at my computer, researching some important link in my family ancestry.....a link that has been eluding me for years. Suddenly: as I click my mouse one more time, I find the exact piece of information I have been looking for. Kazam! Yahoo! – let's see, who can I phone to tell them this exciting news? I pick up the phone to call one of my sisters – I'm dying to share this news with someone who will care about it as much as I do. Luckily, I look at the time on my computer – oops.....I guess there isn't one of my sisters who would appreciate being woken at 1:00 a.m., even to hear this new discovery. Once again, I have been sitting at my computer, researching my ancestors, and totally oblivious to the amount of time that has elapsed! THAT is the beauty of genealogical research – it just pulls you in, grabs your imagination, poses those "what if", "why", and "who" questions that keep

running around in your brain, keeping you awake at night until, finally, you have to work at solving the mystery.

Our grandson is a very curious child: he is always asking questions. He wants to know how something works, why it works, and if it doesn't work....why doesn't it work? I love this trait of his! When I think back to my own childhood, I realize I was always curious as well – perhaps not in the same way he is (he is very mechanically minded so he wants to know all about machines, computers, anything electronic) but I always wondered about obscure things.....family dynamics, customs, habits, “family talk” – for instance, why did my mother and the other women of the family say someone was “P.G.” when they referred to someone who was pregnant? Perhaps I was an annoying child....asking questions. I'll have to ask some of my older sisters, since my mother is no longer here on earth, so I can't ask her.

So, where is this leading? My curiosity has helped me with my genealogical research! There are so many examples of this and I have decided to share some of them with you. Some of my methods and clues may help you with your research, and better yet....it may inspire you to become more curious, and let out the 'detective' hidden inside your normally calm exterior.

Mystery #1 - Why did a group of 191 Scottish people (89 of which were children under the age of 14), board a sailing vessel at Cromarty Bay, Scotland, on October 1, 1825, bound for what was then La Guayra, Colombia, South America – later to be La Guayra, Venezuela? My great-great-great grandparents, Alexander Butchart and Elizabeth (Webster) Butchart, along with their children, George, Caroline (my great-great grandmother) and Alexander, were 5 of the people on board. The journey to La Guayra would take 2 months, with a stop along the way at the island of Madeira. My research tells me that this stop was normal – British sailing ships going to the Caribbean and South America stopped in Madeira for repairs and to stock up on provisions, one of the provisions being a considerable amount of wine!

Today, in this modern world, I cannot imagine getting on a sailing ship, embarking from the N.W. coast of Scotland, with 3 small children (aged 10, 5, and less than one year), being on the ocean for 2 months, on a journey taking me to totally unknown parts, to a land where they spoke a different language, where the climate was completely different, and to a place so far away that contact with their family would probably be no longer possible.

So, why did they do it? Advertising! In June of 1825, a delegation from the Colombian Agricultural Association visited the United Kingdom. They were promoting a scheme that would see groups of people relocated to South America to settle and farm the lands there. The promotion must have been convincing, because newspapers at the time praised the scheme and gave glowing reports about that area of South America and its promise of great harvests from productive land.

The Scottish people who embarked on this journey were, according to documents, mainly tradesmen and military men – they were all classed as coming from “comfortable homes”, which apparently at the time meant they were not paupers!

My ancestor, Alexander Butchart, came from Aberdeen and had spent 9 1/2 years with the Royal Artillery.

This "adventure" of my ancestors did not turn out well: the arable land that they were promised, land that would be suitable for growing grain and vegetables, turned out to be land that needed to be cleared, and would only be suitable for growing coffee, indigo and cotton. Discontent grew, and by the end of 1826, many of the settlers were anxious to leave. Eventually, my ancestors and many of the other Scottish settlers, would re-locate to the Guelph area of Ontario, arriving there in 1827, just as Guelph was becoming an established settlement.

How did I find out this information? When my genealogical journey began, I did not know any of this. I found out a few clues from a distant second cousin living in the USA. From the bits and pieces she told me, I began my research. One day, years ago, while doing one of my 'random Google searches', I saw a reference to the La Guayra settlers, and in searching further I noted that in 1979, the Guelph Historical Society had produced a booklet on the history of these specific Scottish settlers. I did what I always suggest to people when I am giving a genealogy presentation: I wrote a letter to them! 😊 Even though it was probably 20+ years after printing, they still had some of the publications for sale – I was in luck! I mailed off a cheque and when I received the booklet, I was thrilled to see that it was 112 pages of information about the colonization project, the failure, the journey the Scottish people made, eventually ending up in Canada, and so much more!

Mystery #2 – Why didn't my uncle's "War Bride" follow him to Canada? Three of my Dad's brothers enlisted when WWII broke out, and they were sent overseas. One of my uncles was stationed in England, one in France, and one in Italy. My uncle who was stationed in England, met, dated, and married an English woman. When I was a child, it was common knowledge within the family, that my uncle's first wife was an English "War Bride" and that she refused to come to Canada. My uncle, by the time I was old enough to remember him, was re-married to someone from the area where I grew up. No one talked about "why" his English bride didn't come to Canada. Fast forward 50+ years: I decided to ask my uncle about his first wife. My curiosity had gotten the better of me by this time, and I didn't even know what her name was!

So, I asked him if he would mind talking to me about it, and he was fine with that. He told me her full name, and he told me he didn't know why she refused to come to Canada. After the end of WWII, he was shipped back to Canada and he was making arrangements for her to come to Canada, when suddenly he had a letter from her saying she was not going to make the trip. He was pretty devastated at the time and was especially confused because he didn't know "why" she seemingly changed her mind so suddenly. As you can imagine, communication at that time was restricted to letter writing. In the end, the marriage ended in divorce, my uncle re-married here and that was the end of the story. Well, not for me, obviously! 😊

Some of the clues I got from talking with my uncle: her family was 'dead set against the marriage' according to my uncle. They did not want their daughter marrying a Canadian serviceman. My uncle thought perhaps his absence from her life, and her

family's influence on her had combined to sway her decision to follow him to Canada.

After my uncle died in 2007, I was still bothered by this mystery. By this time, the increase in online data bases allowed me to search for my uncle's first marriage in England. Sure enough, there it was! As I am filling out the online request at the General Records Office in London, England, asking for a copy of the marriage registration, a little voice at the back of my head is saying "why are you doing this.....it's not your direct line of ancestry". Naturally, I managed to keep that little voice quiet long enough for me to finish filling in the form, plunk in my credit card number and push the mouse button that sent my request zipping across the ocean.

When the document arrived in the mail, one of the mysteries in our family was solved, as far as I am concerned. If you have ordered or seen the Marriage Registration documents from England, you know that the bride and groom have to list their father's name and his occupation.

My uncle's father (my grandfather) was a farmer: her father was a retired policeman. BINGO.....a light bulb went off in my head! I have a brother-in-law who emigrated to Canada 30+ years ago. He has told us that the English class system was still alive and well when he was there; certainly in the 1940's it would have been as well. My grandfather, being a farmer, would have been considered someone of a much lower status than my uncle's new father-in-law, a retired policeman! Add to this, the fact that according to the marriage registration document, my uncle's wife was 8 years older than my uncle at the time of their marriage. Her parents may have disapproved of the age disparity, and certainly the fact that he was in the Canadian Forces and would be going back to Canada may have had a bearing on their disapproval of the marriage. So, to me, it was mystery solved!

I related this story at the round table discussion we had after our March meeting, and one of our branch members said "So, I suppose you searched to see if his ex-wife had remarried?" and I had to admit that Yes...I DID do that! She had remarried, and had children. Again: why did I do that? She wasn't remotely related to me at this time.....curiosity, again. 😊

I have listed only two of the many mysteries I am working on, or have worked on. The more I solve, the more I seem to find.

When I am doing personal research, or when I am assisting others, I find myself constantly asking the question, "**what if**". **What if** they aren't listed on this census because they have moved; **what if** the family of your ancestor's brother kept better records than your ancestor, and **what if** we find the brother and his family, and **what if** they have a bunch of information posted somewhere that will give you a clue; **what if** the spelling of the name is not the spelling that is on some of the early records; **what if** the ages you have recorded from family lore are not correct; **what if** the date of marriage you were given by your ancestors is not correct; what if, what if, what if.....

I encourage you to allow yourself to think outside the box when you are doing your research. Look at all the angles; allow yourself to think of all the possibilities; let a bit of 'doubt' creep into all your so-called family "facts". Sometimes when you free your mind of the set-in-stone facts, you find out the facts weren't quite as set-in-stone as you thought.

Above all, enjoy the process – don't be discouraged if others don't quite 'get' your enthusiasm or if a bit of family information isn't received by older family members enthusiastically! In the dead of night, when you are staring at your computer screen, and you find that bit of information you have wanted to find for the last 10 years, you can silently raise your arm in victory and (silently) yell "YES"!

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## **THE SINKING OF THE EMPRESS OF IRELAND 100 YEARS AGO**

Mavis Nelson

"Worst Marine Tragedy on Canada's Great Waterway Shocks the Whole World" read the headline of The Quebec Chronicle on May 30, 1914.

At approximately 1:40 am on May 29, 1914 an incoming ship was off the right side of the *Empress of Ireland* as it started down the St. Lawrence. The ship was the Norwegian collier *Storstad*, on its way to Montreal to deliver coal. As the two ships approached each other, a patch of fog crept over the river. At 1:55 am the *Storstad* struck the *Empress of Ireland* making a deep gash in the ship's side. The *Storstad* backed up letting water pour in. A total of 1,012 people (172 crew members and 840 passengers) perished.

The *Empress of Ireland* was loaded with 432 crew members and 1057 passengers, coal, cargo, and passengers' luggage to cross the Atlantic to Liverpool, England.

Fourteen years earlier, on June 29, 1906 *Empress of Ireland* set out on its maiden voyage from Liverpool, England to Quebec City, Quebec, Canada. She measured 173.7 metres, was 20 metres across at her widest point. From her keel to her top deck she measured 26.5 metres, the height of an eight-storey building. Her maximum speed was 20 knots, about 37 kilometres per hour. The *Empress* could carry 1,550 passengers, in three classes. First class tickets were the most expensive about \$450.00 for a single person, second class was about \$47.50 and third class from Liverpool to Quebec City was \$28.75 for an adult. On the maiden voyage she had 1,276 passengers.

*Empress of Ireland* was not only transporting passengers it was also carrying mail across the sea. Canadian Pacific boasted "ONLY FOUR DAYS – OPEN SEA!" but it did take another 2 to 3 days to travel down the St. Lawrence River.

On the May 13, 1910 voyage, five year old Agnes Desideria Anderson sailed on the *Empress of Ireland* with her father, mother, two sisters and two brothers. They landed in Quebec City. She was the mother of my husband Neil Nelson. Agnes did

not talk much about the ship but talked about playing on the big stair case and that her mother was sick most of the time.

On May 29, 2008 Royal Alberta Museum held a gala opening of "Lost Ship, Recovered Voyages". It celebrated the preservation of 55 artifacts that the "Empress of Ireland Artifacts Committee" was able to purchase (by raising \$45,000.00) and save them from being exported to another county. It was the accomplishment of the committee's great dream to keep *Empress of Ireland* artifacts in Canada.

This year, May 29, 2014 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what is considered to be Canada's greatest maritime disaster. At this time, partly due to The Empress of Ireland Artifacts Committee's influence and publicity, the Canadian Museum of History has purchased the remaining artifacts, including the ship's bell, from the famed Philippe Beaudry collection. The Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec will commemorate the disaster by opening the exhibition with a guided tour through the tragic sinking of the *Empress*.

**Footnotes: Facts taken from:**

"Empress of Ireland the Story of an Edwardian Liner" by Derek Grout  
Canadian Museum of History Canada. 100 Laurier Street, Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0M8

"Into the Mist" by Anne Renaud

Marion Kelch, of Czar, AB, who formed an Empress of Ireland Artifacts committee, to raise money to buy Phillippe Beaudry's Empress collection before he sold them to an American collector(s).

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## **WHY YOU CAN'T DO ALL YOUR RESEARCH ONLINE**

Michael J. Leclerc's Genealogy News,

from the Mocavo newsletter 11 Feb 2014

One of the major reasons I went to Salt Lake City the week before the RootsTech conference was, of course, to take advantage of the research opportunities in the Family History Library (FHL). I was astounded at how slow the library was when I was there. There were nowhere near the number of patrons I have seen in the past.

Over the last decade, the Internet has blossomed with resources for genealogists. Websites such as Mocavo are indispensable for finding all of the information you need to research your family. None of us would want to go back to the pre-Internet days of research now that so many resources are available to us on the other side of a computer monitor, mouse, and keyboard. But the internet is not the all-in-one research tool that many think it is.

In one of the sessions, a speaker stated: "I'm relying on the internet to reveal all the secrets of my family tree to me. Now why do I rely, and so many others, rely on Internet research? Well, first of all, like many of you, I work long hours, and can only research on nights and weekends, which is usually not when archives are open.

Second of all, the time and costs to travel are hard, which means that actually going to the archive or former family location is actually the last resort, not the first option.”

As any experienced researcher will tell you, this is a path that will fill your research with unnecessary brick walls. The unfortunate truth is that not everything is available online. It takes onsite research in archives, libraries, and repositories to obtain as much information as possible about your family.

Many books have been published with compiled genealogies, extracted and abstracted records, and more. But many of these books will not be available online in your or my lifetime. Why? Copyright! Books are protected by copyright for long after the death of the author. And big corporations are only getting governments to extend that period, not abbreviate it. There are ways to access these materials, however. How? By going to your local public libraries (which almost always have some night and weekend hours) and asking for an inexpensive (and sometimes free) interlibrary loan. This allows your library to borrow materials from other repositories for you.

Digitizing records is time consuming and expensive. Governments are putting modern records online quickly because they are already in electronic form. But older, historical materials are slower to come online.

Even with the vast resources of FamilySearch, digitizing is taking a while. Last year, they estimated that it would take more than 300 years to digitize the items in their collection. Since that time, they have partnered with other organizations to help speed the process up, but it will still take more than 30 years before everything is available. Do you want to wait that long to access records that might break down your brick wall?

This is why I was at the FHL researching in person. By Tuesday I was joined by hundreds of other researchers, and by Friday evening the place was packed wall to wall with researchers cranking away to microfilm, scanning microfiche, reading books, and a few on computers. I came away with hundreds of images of original records that are not even available in extracted form online.

And while in-person visits to archives and repositories need not necessarily be the first stop, relegating them to the “last resort” pile will do nothing but ensure frustration for you. Research smartly, and use online resources and offline resources together to obtain as much information about your family as you can. Then you will have the most successful research experiences.

## LIBRARY – additions

1. The Settlement of Immigrants of German Origin in Southern Alberta between the 1880's and 1910's: A Fact Book, by Manfred Prokop
2. The Settlement of Immigrants of German Origin in Northern Alberta between the 1880's and 1910's: A Fact Book, by Manfred Prokop
3. Birth, Marriage and Death Extracts from the Camrose Canadian, 1908 – 1929, compiled by the Camrose Branch, Alberta Genealogical Society
4. Birth, Marriage and Death Extracts from the Camrose Canadian, 1930 – 1940, compiled by the Camrose Branch, Alberta Genealogical Society

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*We do not inherit the land from our ancestors -  
we borrow it from our children!*  
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## DAKOTA COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We received the following note which I include for your information.

from: Gail Bresee

403-783-2353

[breseeacres@ccewireless.ca](mailto:breseeacres@ccewireless.ca)

R.R. 4 Ponoka, Alta. T4J1R4

"Our small rural historical society has been busy for 2 years putting together 2 different books on the area in which we live in.

**Book 1:** \$20.00 is a small coil bound book that it contains history of the community from its beginning up to the present time. It shows how important community has been, how successful the small community church was, how things have changed

**Book 2:** \$40.00 is a hard cover book that was discovered under a bed while making the above book. We are selling exact copies of the original book made in 1961. It talks about all the pioneers in the district at that time, the forming of the schools, clubs and organizations. There is some miniature artwork around some of the pictures that is fantastic and the book is all done in beautiful original handwriting."

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### **MORE OF ALICE'S FAVOURITE WEBSITES: Germans From Russia Research:**

[odessa3.org](http://odessa3.org) – a free site

[grhs.org](http://grhs.org) – the website of Germans From Russia Heritage Society – you have to have a membership to access some of their data, but there is a lot of information that can be accessed without a membership

[ahsgr.org](http://ahsgr.org) – the website of American Historical Society of Germans from Russia – same as the above

[blackseagr.org](http://blackseagr.org) – a free website devoted to information & databases of Germans from Russia

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