

TRAILS

ESSEX COUNTY BRANCH OF THE ONTARIO GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

BRANCH INFORMATION

CHAIR - Vacant

VICE-CHAIR - Vacant

SECRETARY - Valerie Henley-Newell

TREASURER - Maggie Patterson

CEMETERY- Pat Clancy

MEMBERSHIP - Ruth Meloche

LIBRARY/RESEARCH - Colleen Ouellette

PUBLICITY-

PUBLICATIONS -Dari

PROGRAMS - Jim McTavish

WEBMASTER - David Hutchinson

NEWSLETTER - Cindy Robichaud

NEWSLETTER PROOFREADERS -
Robert Harman, Lisa Lee, Stephanie Stone,
Maureen Guay & Barb Margerm

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MONTHLY MEETINGS

2nd Monday of each month at the Windsor
Public Library, 850 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor,
Ontario.

See our website for more details at:

<http://ogs.on.ca/essex/>

Mailing Address:

Essex County Branch, OGS

P. O. Box 2, Stn. A, Windsor, ON

N9A 6J5

Email: essexogs@ogs.on.ca

REGION 1 MEETINGS

ESSEX BRANCH

January 13, 2014 -

February 11, 2014 (**TUESDAY**) -

March 10, 2014 -

All meetings held at the Windsor Public Library, 850 Ouellette Ave., Windsor, lower level, at 7:00 P.M.

KENT BRANCH

Look to our website under Upcoming Meetings for details on how to “join” us live at www.ogs.on.ca/kent

January 10, 2014 - USING ONLINE OPEN LIBRARY & NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES

(LIVE STREAMING!!!!!!) Donna Dickson will discuss the use of "Open Library" and "Newspaper Archives" in family history research.

February 14, 2014 - INTERESTING FAMILY MEMBERS

(LIVE STREAMING!!!!) Harold Snary of Wallaceburg will share some of his family research.

March 14, 2014 - BRINGING YOUR ANCESTORS TO LIFE

(LIVE STREAMING!!!!) Alan Campbell will discuss using online & offline resources to bring colour to your family history.

All meetings will be held at St. Andrews Residence, 99 Park Ave., Chatham at 7:00 P.M.

LAMBTON BRANCH

January 14, 2014 - WHAT'S IN A NATIVE NAME

George Pitfield will

February 11, 2014 - SURPRISES IN OUR RESEARCH

Allen Williams

March 11, 2014 - THE GREAT STORM OF

David Yates

All meetings are held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1400 Murphy Rd., Sarnia at 7:30 P.M.

Essex Branch News



Essex Branch November 2013 monthly meeting - Ted Steele gave a very informative and personal presentation of his ancestors participation in Canada's military endeavours since the birth of Canada to present.



Essex Branch elections were held. Dari has volunteered to take on the Publication Coordinator position and Will take over the Publicity Coordinator position from Pat Clancy. In turn, Pat has agreed to become our new Cemetery Coordinator and will continue to be our TONI Coordinator. The other members of the Essex Branch Council agreed to continue on in their respective positions. Thank you to each and every one for their dedication and time!

Also, Debra Honour was presented with a small token of appreciation from the branch for her years and years of service, particularly in the position of Vice Chair and Chair.

Using Ellis Island Records to Find Nanna and Nonno

I am a second generation Canadian-Italian with Calabrian and Sicilian roots. My Nana, Maria Caterina Spagnuolo ANDREOLI, was born in Mottafollone, a mountain village in Calabria, southern Italy. In 1912, when she was twenty-three, Nana Caterina boarded a steamship named America in Naples, Italy and crossed the Atlantic Ocean as a steerage passenger. She landed at Ellis Island, New York on January 13, 1913, moved to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada and married my Nonno, Pietro PERRI, in 1915. My father, Arnold Joseph PERRI, was one of her nine children.

Nana Caterina could not speak or write English. Little was known about her early life and I started genealogical research to solve her family mystery plus explore my Calabrian roots. Using Ellis Island records assisted my research and brought Nana's adventure across the Atlantic to life for me.

Ellis Island, situated in New York harbour, was an immigration station from 1892 to 1954. Prior to its opening, immigrants entered America through ports including Boston, New Orleans and San Francisco. My Nana Caterina and Nonno Pietro were among the twelve million immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island during this time period.

The Ellis Island Immigrant Experience

The Ellis Island complex housed facilities including a hospital, dormitories for about one thousand people, laundries, luggage areas and examination rooms. First and second class travellers were examined on their ship but steerage passengers, the cheapest ticket available, like my Nana and Nonno were sent to Ellis Island for inspection. If you were sick, you were detained at a hospital until you got better. If you were judged "incurable," however, you were sent back to your port of departure. Nana arrived in 1913 before there was a literacy requirement; immigrants, however, had to have at least \$10.00 plus money for railroad tickets they intended to purchase.

Where Can I Find More Information?

1. Google: www.ellisland.org
2. The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc. is the title of the homepage.
3. Begin your free search for passenger records through their extensive database.
4. Enter the first and last name in the box provided of the person you are researching. Refine your search to obtain a copy of your ancestor's passenger record, ship manifest and ship image.
5. Click a heading for information on search tips, genealogical societies and related websites. There are tips, charts and forms under the "Genealogical Learning Centre: genealogy heading."
6. Some documents and ship images are free to download and print whereas others must be purchased. A user name and password is required for the latter option.

I went to Ellis Island, New York as part of the genealogical research I conducted about my Nana Caterina and purchased the following books during my visit.

Bowen, Richard. *The Italian Americans*. Mason Crest Publishers. 2003.

Levine, Ellen. *If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island*. Scholastic Inc. 1993.

Quiri, Patricia Ryon. *Ellis Island*. Children's Press. 1998.

Szucs, Loretto Dennis. *Ellis Island, Tracing Your Family History Through America's Gateway*. Ancestry Publishing. 1986.

What is a Passenger Record?

Passenger Records are derived from ship manifests, lists of passengers on board a ship. They can help you learn about your ancestors' travels across the Atlantic Ocean. The Ellis Island database contains over 25 million Passenger Records and represents a major genealogical resource for those whose ancestors entered North America here.

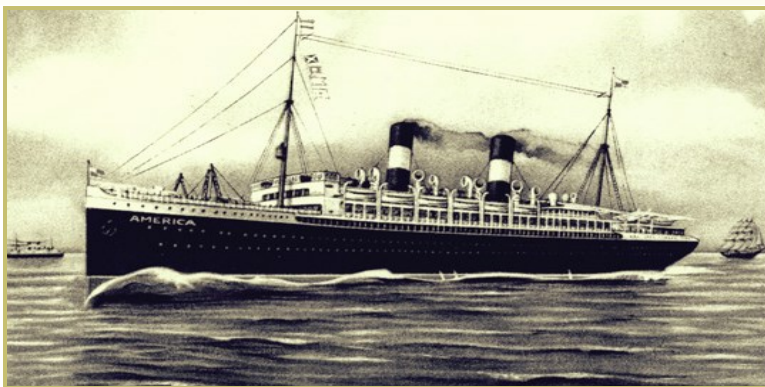
What Is A Ship Manifest?

A Ship Manifest lists all passengers confirmed for passage on a ship. The information recorded includes name, age, marital status, last residence, final destination as well as other details. The inspectors at Ellis Island referred to Ship Manifests when examining passengers who landed at the immigration station in New York.

Easy Steps To Access Passenger Records, Ship Manifests and/or Ship Images

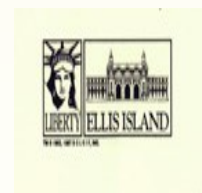
1. Go to www.ellisland.org
2. Conduct a free passenger search by filling in the data boxes on the homepage.
3. If the person is in their database, you will be given their place of residence, date of arrival at Ellis Island and age.
4. You may then select one of the options to access more information: Passenger Record, Ship Manifest and/or Ship Image.
5. You will need to register at this point by entering a user name and password. The process, however, is still free.

I began my genealogical research about my Nana at www.ellisland.org as my family knew that Nana had landed at Ellis Island in the early 1900's but nothing else! I followed the steps outlined above and found "Caterina Andreoli" on the database immediately. I then selected the "Passenger" and in a very short time, I had found answers to questions that had always stymied my family. I followed the above steps, found her Passenger Record first then accessed her Ship Manifest. Not only did I now have the exact date of Nana Caterina's arrival at Ellis Island, I now knew the name of her ship of travel. I ordered an image of the ship *America*.



The America (1908)

The *America* was built in Italy in 1908. There were 2,650 on board and Nana Caterina was among her 2,400 steerage passengers.



BALLOON, CABIN, AND STEERAGE ALIENS MUST BE COMPLETELY MANIFESTED.

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered to the Collector of Customs at the Port of Departure.

S. S. "in AMERICA" sailing from *Naples* Dec 20, 1912

No. of Manifest	NAME OF VESSEL		Age	Country of Birth	Place of Birth	Profession, Occupation, or Trade	Sex	Color of Hair	Color of Eyes	Complexion	Height	Weight	Build	Last Permanent Residence		Final Destination	
	Family Name	Given Name												Country	City or Town		Country
1			89														
2																	
3																	
4																	
5																	
6																	
7																	
8																	
9																	
10																	
11																	
12																	
13																	
14																	
15																	
16																	
17																	
18																	
19																	
20																	

Copy of the original passenger manifest from the Port of Naples issued December 20th, 1912

What Is The Difference Between The Original Ship Manifest and a Text Version Manifest?

These are two options available to you at this point; the former is an image of the actual complete ship manifest and the latter, an abbreviated text version. There is a cost to access a copy of the original but the text version is free.

The following table provides an example of the information I obtained about my Nana Caterina from the free text version.

Please note that *America* is the name of the steamship that my Nana Caterina sailed on across the Atlantic Ocean. The text version of the Ship Manifest provided me with the names of other passengers on board *The America*. By reviewing the sample image of the Original Ship Manifest, however, it was obvious to me that the information contained on this document could really help make my past come alive. As a result, I ordered it directly through the Ellis Island website.

Ship Manifest for America

Ship sailing from *Naples, Italy*

Associated Passenger: **Andreoli, Caterina**
 Date of Arrival: **January 13, 1913**
 Port of Departure: **Naples**

Line on Manifest	Passenger Name	Passenger Gender	Passenger Age	Marital Status	Ethnicity	Last Place of Residence
0001	Alase, Luigi	M	20Y	S	Italian	Montallo, Italy
0005	Pronsino, Felippo	M	18Y	M	Italian	Rocca Gurini, Italy
0014	Caravaggio, Teresa	F	20Y	M	Italian	Lauciano, Italy
0017	Andreoli, Caterina	F	20Y	S	Italian	Mottafollone, Italy

Bringing The Past To Life With A Picture

Ship images with brief descriptive text are provided at The Ellis Island website for passengers included in their database. The *America* was the steamship that brought my Nana Caterina to Ellis Island on January 13, 1913 and I found its picture plus details about the vessel on the Ellis Island website. I printed off a black and white picture of the *America* at no cost and the accompanying text informed me of the following:

- ◆ The ship had been built in Muggiano, Italy in 1908 for La Veloce Line.
- ◆ It was 476 feet long, 55 wide and weighed 8,996 gross tons
- ◆ The *America* had carried a total of 2,650 passengers and was scrapped in 1928. I had already verified from the Ship Manifest that Nana Caterina had been a steerage passenger and now learned there had been 2,400 in this category compared to only 30 in first class and 220 in second. This was new information for my family.

These books are full of fabulous interior and exterior pictures that will help you imagine what your ancestors might have experienced.

Miller, William H. *Pictorial Encyclopaedia Of Ocean Liners, 1860-1994*. Dover Publications, Inc. 1995.

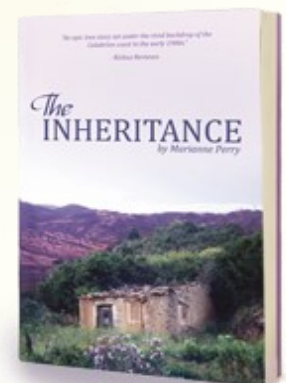
Server, Lee. *The Golden Age Of Ocean Liners*. Todri Productions Limited. 1996.



Nanna and Nonno on their wedding day.

Marianne Perry, a second generation Canadian-Italian and author, shares her interest in her Calabrian-Sicilian roots which has fuelled her genealogical research to solve family mysteries. You can follow more of her travels and research at <http://www.marianneperry.ca/>

Marianne's book, *The Inheritance*, tells the story of a family disintegrating from conflicting loyalties in 1900 Calabria, Italy. Superstition clashed with religion and a class system ruled the people. Calabria is the perfect backdrop for the tragedy that unfolds in *The Inheritance*.



Windsor Public Library Collection

The Windsor Public Library has a vast collection of resources to help the family researcher with tracking down the details of your ancestors' lives. The librarians are very knowledgeable and skilled at assisting with your searches. Tom Vajdik, Genealogist and Local History Librarian, provides updates of new materials and resources of interest to family researchers and genealogists alike.

The Windsor Public Library has several resources dealing with immigration:

A dictionary of Scottish emigrants to Canada before Confederation by Donald Whyte. Volumes 1, 2, 3.

Erin's sons: Irish arrivals in Atlantic Canada, 1761-1853 by Terrence M. Punch.

Nova Scotia immigrants to 1867 by Leonard H. Smith Jr. and Norma H. Smith (in 2 volumes).

Passengers to New Brunswick: the Custom House Records, 1833, 1834, 1837, 1838 by the New Brunswick Genealogical Society, Saint John Branch.

Passage to America 1851-1869: the records of Richard Elliott, Passenger Agent, Detroit Michigan by the Detroit Society for Genealogical Research is a particularly interesting book.

The library also has an incomplete set of microfilms dealing with emigration (reels which have the ports of Windsor, Walkerville, Sandwich and Ojibway.) Many other border crossing ports are also listed. The reels are: *Border Entry Records [into Canada], 1908-1918*. These are now on the internet, but these reels are at the library to be consulted. Here is an example of the Border Entry Records:

REPORT of Admissions at the Port of WILKERVILLE, ONT. for the Month of April 1911

Total Number Admitted 27

NAME	AGE		OCCUPATION	COUNTRY OF BIRTH	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	TRAVELING BY	TRIP NO.	FROM	TO	HOW MUCH MONEY	REMARKS
	M.	F.									
W. W. Fairland	28		Barber	Canada	Canadian	Tray		Detroit Mich	Windsor Ont	20	
Stirling Johnson	32		Manager	Canada	W. S. A.			Windsor Ont	Windsor Ont	25	
John ...	26		Wife								
James ...	52		Son								
Frank Baker	34		Labor	Chi. W. S. A.	W. S. A.					100	
Albert Cross	18		Yunnan	Mich						30	
John Shrubert	19									24	
John Reid	38		Labourer	Denmark	Denmark					200	
Frank Baughan	35		Painter	Chi. W. S. A.	W. S. A.					10	
Thomas K. Britton	38		Plumber	W. S. A.						10	
Harold	3		Son								
Beatrice	1		Daughter								
D. A. MacKangie	40		Merchant	Scotland	Scotland					570	
Dolphus Pearson	49		Laborer	Canada	Canada					570	

Admitted as Settlers

Signature of Immigration Inspector

More immigration resources:

A new blog called "Heart break and Hope" tells stories of immigration to Ellis Island at:

<http://blog.hornblower.com/heartbreakandhope/>

<http://www.ilw.com/articles/2005.0808-smith.shtm> is a link to an article on the myth of surname changes upon arrival at Ellis Island.

This site is FULL of immigration info of all sorts! <http://jubilation.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/thevoyage.html> and do not forget to use <http://www.theshipslist.com/>.

Canadian WWII Red Cross Quilts

This story began with a gift I received from a friend in England. It was a small catalogue entitled, *Sewing in Wartime, Canadian WWII Red Cross Quilts*. It has been quite a journey since then.

Knowing my interest in old quilts, my friend Libby mailed me the catalogue after attending an exhibition in her home town of Maidstone, Kent in the U.K. This exhibition was a display of Canadian Red Cross Quilts (CRCQ) that had been rescued by members of the Quilters Guild of the British Isles. Maxine March, Anna Mansi and Jackie Maxwell, also known as the Canadian Red Cross Research Group, set out on a mission a few years ago, not only to form a joint collection of CRCQ, but to add stories about the makers and recipients of these quilts.

During the Second World War, the Canadian Red Cross played an integral role in supplying thousands of patchwork quilts to British families, hospitals, and the armed forces. These quilts were made by women all across Canada. The women typically belonged to church groups, the I.O.D.E., or other war service groups. While there are many stories about the recipients of these much appreciated quilts, not much is known about the quilt makers themselves. The Canadian Red Cross used their own labels to identify the quilts and requested no personal labels be affixed to the quilts. Thankfully, a few women did not receive this missive and it was these quilts that piqued my curiosity.

On looking through the catalogue, I was amazed at the many different styles, patterns and materials that were used on these quilts and began to wonder about the quilt makers and if they ever received thanks for all of their hard work. On a second reading, I noticed there was a quilt labeled, "Mrs. J. A. McCOWAN, Summerberry, Saskatchewan, CAN." At this point, my curiosity got the better of me and I looked up Summerberry, Saskatchewan on the internet. Given that Summerberry was a very small place in the 1940s, it was easy enough to find local history and from the cemetery records I was able to establish that the quilter was Jenny May MILLS, the wife of Mr. James Alexander McCOWAN. Jenny May was born in Downie, Perth County, Ontario in 1881 and died 1965 in Saskatchewan. She was the daughter of Joseph Smith MILLS and Jennie CHISHOLM, both born in Ontario but of Scottish heritage.

James and Jennie May McCOWAN had 3 children according to the 1916 census and Summerberry cemetery records; Marjory, born 1905; Georgina, born 1912; and James Gordon born 1920. Their son James Gordon McCOWAN was a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Canadian Air force and was killed in Edmonton, Alberta in May 1942 while on training exercises. He was but 22 years of age. How poignant that Jennie May donated a quilt to the Red Cross after her son's death. I like to think that sewing and donating the quilt gave her and her family some comfort.

I sent Jennie May McCOWAN's information to Anna Mansi, from the CRCQ research team and she was thrilled to add this story to her "talks." She then asked if I could look up some other names. A CRCQ, in a patchwork dog pattern, had been discovered in a private collection in Lewes, Sussex, England. It was labeled with two names; Helen SOVIE and Eva COVIL, both of Comber, Ontario.

After several searches on Ancestry.ca and sending an e mail to the Essex County Branch Genealogical Society, I received two replies on the same day; one from Heather SPROULE, a granddaughter of Helen SOVIE, and one from Colleen OUELLETTE, a researcher with the Essex Branch of the OGS. Both of these ladies had information about Helen and Eva. It turns out that Eva and Helen were great friends when they lived in Comber and belonged to the same chapter of the I.O.D.E. Colleen kindly phoned Heather and gleaned all kinds of information about her grandmother Helen SOVIE. Below are the contents of two e mails that I received from Helen SOVIE's daughter Ida and her granddaughter, Heather Sproule. They both paint a lovely picture of their mother and grandmother.

Ida wrote:

“Hi, Anita, I am the second daughter of Helen SOVIE. My mother was born in 1916 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She was conceived by Scottish parents in Scotland. Her mother was Eliza Mae BOYER and her father Fredrick BOYER. She married my father George SOVIE in 1937. Eileen, my sister, was born in 1938 and I came along December 31, 1943. My Father did not see me until mid 1944. I, of course, only remember stories of the war time and my mother knitting and making quilts with the ladies at church. She was also a member of the Comber Branch of the IODE. Yours, Ida Sproule”

Heather wrote:

“Anita, I've been chatting with my mother and she informed me that Eva COVIL was a dear friend of my grandmothers, especially during the war years. My Grandma's maiden name was BOYER and her legal name was actually Eva Ellen BOYER (she went on to legally use Eva Ellen SOVIE). Apparently, her name was miscommunicated to the government when she was born and she just went along with it, although her name was actually Helen. She grew up in Comber and met my Grandfather, George SOVIE, there. They had two daughters, so the last name was lost. My aunt was born before the war and my mother was born at the end of 1943. During the war, Helen was a stay at home mother. Following the war, Helen worked for H.J. Heinz in Leamington, Ontario as a Supervisor. She continued to cross stitch and was involved with the United Church and the Rebekah Lodge. She passed away in 1991 after a short battle with cancer. My Grandmother was a giving individual who has left me many happy memories. George, my Grandfather, drove an ambulance overseas in World War II. He lived another ten lonely years after Helen passed away and died in 2001. Yours, Heather Sproule”

Eva COVIL's war experience was quite different from her friend Helen's. Helen's husband was overseas for part of the war leaving her at home with two young daughters. Eva on the other hand did not have children of her own and there are no records to indicate that her husband George COVIL was directly involved in the war. Eva was a member of the East June Chapter of the Eastern Star and Good Luck Rebekah Lodge.

Eva was born Eva Madeline McALLISTER on 21 April, 1912 on Lot 7, Middle Road South, Comber, County of Essex, Ontario and died 20 October, 2000 in London, Ontario. She is buried in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, London, Ontario next to her husband George COVIL. Eva was brought up in both Ontario and in Michigan, US and at some point in time lived in Los Angeles, California. She is listed as a Housewife on all of her travel documents. Eva married George COVIL, born 16 November, 1911 Ontario and died 6 Oct, 1996. George was a longtime member of the Parvaim Masonic Lodge in Comber.

Eva was the daughter of John Allister McALLISTER, born 21 September 1890 Comber, Ontario, and Mildred A. McNAUGHTON, born 1889 Comber, Ontario. Mildred's brother, Robert James McNAUGHTON married Fern SOVA (SAUVE/SOVIE) perhaps a relative of Helen's. John Allister and Mildred were married on 12 April, 1909 in Windsor, Ontario. Eva had one brother, Gordon Duncan McALLISTER, born after 1921.

John Allister McALLISTER, Eva's father, was the seventh child of Duncan McALLISTER and Elizabeth RICHARDSON. There were nine children in this family but two died in infancy. At the time of his marriage, John Allister is listed as an Inspector at the Burroughs Adding Machine Company and in 1917 was living in Wayne, Michigan, US. In the 1921 Ontario census he is listed as a Carpenter.

John Allister's siblings were all well educated, with some of his sisters attending a Ladies College in Ontario and others attending the Royal Conservatory of Music in Detroit, Michigan. One sister studied telegraphy and became the Assistant Post Mistress in Comber. John Allister's two brothers went into the medical field; one becoming a doctor in Michigan and another practicing Pharmacy. John Allister McALLISTER was drafted by the USA (Michigan) to serve in the First World War in 1917-1918. (World War 1 Selective Service System Draft Registration).

Eva's grandfather, Duncan McALLISTER, born 17 April 1844 Erin, Wellington County, Ontario was the Postmaster of Comber, Reeve of Tilbury Township and Justice of the Peace for many years. He owned Cedar Lawn Stock Farm and raised shorthorn cattle. He was a Deacon in the Presbyterian Church and involved in many other community volunteer groups. He married Elizabeth RICHARDSON on 13 February 1865, when he was 19 years old and Elizabeth was 16 years of age. Elizabeth was the daughter of John RICHARDSON and Margaret STEWART, born January 1849 in St. Louis de Gonzague, Quebec, Canada. Duncan McALLISTER had been in partnership with Elizabeth's father John RICHARDSON. John RICHARDSON was another prominent member of Comber and owned several general stores in the County of Essex.

Finding other quilt makers of CRCQ is still a work in progress. At the present time, I am researching a quilt that was found in the cellar of a pub in London, UK. No doubt the pub was used as an air raid shelter during the war years. This quilt is white with a block pattern and has the name "Mrs. LEADLEY Snr. Waterdown, Ontario" on the label. So far I have not had much luck in finding the right Mrs. LEADLEY, but as with Helen and Eva, that can change in an instant.

In closing, I would appreciate hearing from anyone who knows about family members, friends or quilting groups that donated quilts to the Canadian Red Cross. It would be nice to recognize these quilt makers for all of their dedication and hard work.

Anita Fellows fellows.anita@gmail.com
416-488-0703

The information I have used in preparing this article has come from the following sources:

Sewing in Wartime Canadian Red Cross Quilts 1939-45

Quilt Museum and Gallery (QGBI) St. Anthony's Hall, York England

Dr. Anna Mansi CRCQ research team

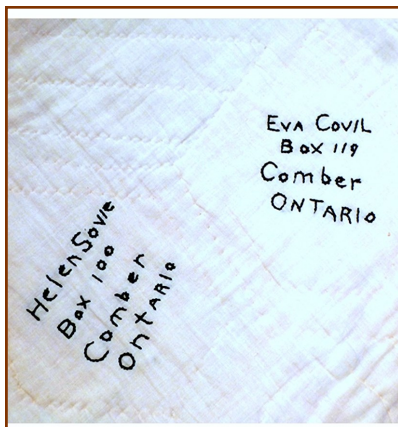
Ancestry.com.

OGS Cemetery Records, Toronto Reference Library

Colleen Ouellette, Researcher for Essex County, OGS

Ida Sproule and Heather Sproule

CRCQ HEXAGON & STAR (PATCHWORK DOG, LEWES)



The Truth May Never be Known

After 52 years of research, I have come to the conclusion that the above title might very well be the final chapter in my research on my Grandfather. It is something I have resisted and hesitated to admit to myself, but I have to face the facts that failure to discover the truth is a possibility.

My grandfather, best known as “Bampa” to me, lived a very interesting, tragic, adventurous, heartbreaking, fly by the seat of your pants type of life and, as his eldest grandson, who knew him for 13 years before his passing, I never heard the man complain. He was a very quiet, caring, loving gentleman, who overcame several tragedies in his life. He lost his first wife and baby daughter in childbirth, walked over a mountain in the Yukon, lost his arm in a train accident, went through divorce and went blind at 93 years of age.

Wesley John GAY was born 26 June 1859 in Napier, Durham County, Ontario, Canada to John GAY and Phoebe JOHNS. It is interesting to note that he was born prior to Canada becoming a country. In 1861, John and Phoebe, along with daughter Melissa and Grandpa moved to Newbury, Middlesex County, Ontario and took up residence. Grandpa spent most of his life in Canada. He was three days past his 80th birthday when I was born 29 June 1939 in Detroit, Michigan, and he came to my baptism that September in Ridgeway, Michigan.

I was fortunate to have him in my life for 14 years. On occasion, regardless of his age, he would work his way over to Detroit and then on to Dearborn, Michigan and finally walk the rest of the way to our home. He would come unannounced and spend a week with us, or Mom would drive over to Windsor and pick him up. My mother was his only child and the love between them was very evident. Grandpa and his wife Winnifred Pearl Lynn divorced in 1919 when my mother was seven years old. Grandpa was awarded custody of his daughter and she kept house, cooked and cleaned for him for many years until she married in 1934. I was always pleased to see him show up for a visit. He was a quiet man who spoke very little and he loved to eat. I gravitated to this elderly man and he amazed me for a special reason; he had no right hand and part of his forearm was gone to just below the elbow. I knew he was different, but did not know why. I remember climbing up on to the toilet and standing there while he shaved with his straight razor. I would hold the shaving cream cup and he would lather it up and brush it onto his face. Once done, I held his shirt for him to put on then buttoned it up for him. I would hold the sock he wore on the stump of his arm and put the small garter belt over it to hold it on. He would finally lift me onto the floor and, holding my hand, we would walk into the kitchen for breakfast.

At night, during the winter, we would go to my special place in the attic and lay on the floor listening to the hockey game from either Detroit or Toronto. At these times, he would come out of his shell, explaining the different aspects of the game to me. This grew into a passion for me, and having him there compounded my interest and love of the game. By the late 1940s, I was a diehard Detroit Red Wings fan. These memories have stayed with me my entire life.

I was too young to ask questions of him as time with him was sporadic at best. What I did learn came from my mother over the years. Around 1950, Grandpa lost his eyesight and was put into a nursing home in Windsor. To visit him we had to climb a wooden pull down staircase into the attic where he and several other elderly gentlemen resided. There was no heat or air conditioning, they slept on cots and used bedpans. The other gentlemen helped him with his food and whenever he needed them. He always asked about me and if I was there I would sit next to him on his cot and we would talk hockey. There was a special bond between us. In May of 1953 Grandpa died.....and I missed him terribly.

Over the years, before and after his passing, little bits of information came from my mother about her father. In February 1961, was discharged from the Air Force and spent the next few month readjusting to civilian life. One day, I picked my Gramma BACHMANS bible, which had sat on the fireplace mantle for years. In the center of the book, I found pages Gramma had maintained over the years regarding births, marriages and deaths of family members. This piqued my imagination and interest in the family, and this discovery set me on a path that I have been on ever since. I do not believe my mother held back information. Rather she just did not know, as her father was not one to talk about himself, to anyone.

First came the information that her mother was never in her life to any extent. She was not aware that her mother died in 1941. The divorce of my grandfather and his first wife was simply a matter of Gramma GAY falling in love with a former renter whom she eventually married.

The story of his missing hand and forearm also came out over time. According to my mother, Grandpa was so distraught over the loss of his first wife and newborn daughter that he left Ontario. In 1898 - 1899, he was in the Yukon Territories for the Gold Rush. He came home from the Yukon to gather another grubstake but went to work for the railroad in Windsor instead. While coupling rail cars together, his right arm was in the coupling when the engineer backed up the train which thus cut off his hand and forearm. Pictures I later received from my mother showed picture of Grandpa with both of his hands.

While recuperating, he met Winnifred Pearl Lynn. They married on 29 June 1910 in Windsor and my mother was the result of this union. I never heard him talk or even mention the Yukon, or the accident that cost him his arm and hand, or anything about a first wife and child, and he never complained either. So many loose ends and unanswered questions have left a brick wall; the answers having gone with my Grandpa. Of course, I was too young to ask but I like to think that if I had, he would have told me.

The 1891 census shows John and Phoebe, Grandpa, sister Laura and brother Ernest residing in Newbury, which indicates he was not married. My belief is that between 1891 and 1897 he met and married his first wife. Lillian was the name my mother recalls hearing from my Grandpa. I can find neither a marriage or death record nor her last name. I will keep the search going, hoping to resolve the missing pieces.

I have had a Canadian genealogist look into the first wife and child and I have done research myself but have found nothing. So, as I stated at the beginning of this article, I must entertain the possibility that I may never know.

I would certainly welcome any information.

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Queries