



AncestryTree

The Nanaimo Family History Society Quarterly Journal
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President's Message

By Ruth Stewart

Welcome back everyone!

If you're like me, summers are busy with a variety of activities, visitors, trips both near and far, along with a heavy dose of gardening (read: weeding!) I'm afraid my serious genealogy work took a back seat to all of the comings and goings this year.

I had two wonderful opportunities this summer to dig a little deeper into my father's ancestry in Quebec and Germany. I'll be sharing the details of both those research trips on a Mini Zoom session (see pages 7 and 8 in this issue for all our mini Zoom details)

Speaking of Mini Zoom sessions, our co-ordinator, Susan Bates, sent out a request for volunteers to make presentations. I understand that the response was, at best, meagre. Do you have an interesting ancestor, a unique story about your family's migration or a family mystery that could benefit from crowd sourcing? Why not gather your data and make a small presentation in front of a friendly group?

If you have a computer (with a camera and audio function) and access to the internet it is an easy process to make a presentation. Susan will guide you through the minimal steps required to share your screen if you want to show documents or photos. Otherwise you can just chat. Most of the Mini Zoom sessions are between 30 and 60 minutes long. Believe me, there is nothing like making a small presentation that will do more to focus your research and reporting.

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We need to haunt the house of history and listen anew to the ancestors' wisdom.

Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

American memoirist, poet, and civil rights activist.

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Save the Date!

Nanaimo FHS Oct Meeting	Oct 21
Nanaimo FHS Nov Meeting	Nov 18
Christmas Social	Dec 9

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Personally, I am making a concentrated effort this year to improve my researching and reporting abilities. How am I accomplishing that? Through our Mini Zoom DNA Book of the Month Club. The club has been going for two years, led by our own DNA guru, Terry Hartley. Each year we read through and discuss a new book. For our third year we are focussing on the book, *Research Like a Pro with DNA* by Diana Elder, Nicole Dyer and Robin Worthlin. Every month we read two chapters and complete specific assignments designed to help us solve our genealogical brick walls by sorting and focusing on our DNA matches. It is an amazing process that is applicable to both traditional genealogy research and making sense of all those DNA 'cousins'. If you're prepared to catch up, it's not too late join us. Send an email to infonfhs@gmail.com and ask to register.

In response to my request in June, Lorri Riddoch volunteered to take care of our membership duties and Sheila Wilson offered to sell 50/50 tickets at our in person meetings. Thank you so much to both of you.

I must remind everyone again of our need for members to step up and sit on the executive. I know from speaking with many of you that there are many talented members within our ranks. Currently our advertising position is vacant, although I am covering those duties. After our next AGM in February 2025 we anticipate there will be four or five vacancies on our nine person executive. Obviously that will be an untenable position. It is not hyperbole to say that the very existence of our society is in jeopardy. Please, step forward and volunteer a few hours each month to this worthy organization.

With sincere regards,

Ruth Stewart

President

**Did You Know ...**

Nanaimo Family History Society has a [Facebook Page](#) hosted by NFHS member Donna MacIver. If you would like to join this group, you will need a *Facebook account*. To do this, first click "Google Facebook Account" and follow instructions to set up your account. Once you have an account, you can "Search" for "Nanaimo Family History Society" inside *Facebook* then click "Join." Currently, there are one hundred and sixty -three members in the group.

**NFHS CO-OP FUND RAISER**

Don't forget to use our membership number at a Mid Island CO-OP! In 2023, members helped to raise \$40.46 for NFHS.

GENEALOGY NEWS IN BRIEF**FROM LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA**

- * LAC continues to review our web content and make it easier to find historical records online. This often means that we are moving content from our legacy and stand-alone databases or web pages into our federate search tools, Collection Search or Census Search.
We're committed to communicating these changes with our users to make the transition to the new access model as seamless and easy as possible. Here are a few examples of how we're doing this:
- * Census access update:
 - "We have finished integrating Schedule B to the 1851 Census returns, Schedules 2–9 to the 1871 Census returns, and Schedule 2 to the 1901 Census returns into Census Search. Previously, users had to sift through this information on separate web pages.
 - Census schedules are the copies of the specific census questionnaires that offer valuable insight into what the census records really tell us about the lives and work of the people listed therein. Each census had several different questionnaires and therefore several different schedules. You can find the respective census schedules in the digital viewer for each year.
 - This work concludes the migration of census records and supporting documents into Census Search.
 - This means that in the coming weeks, we will be closing the previous, standalone census web pages and related databases from the Census of 1825, Lower Canada, to the Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1926."If you visit the old databases and web pages, you will be redirected to [Census Search](#).
- * British military (RG8) files update:
 - We have migrated the British Military files (RG8) into [Collection Search](#). These were previously only available through outdated web pages.
 - This record group covers a wide range of military and naval topics—like Canadian militia, the War of 1812, and the Rebellion of 1837—and civil topics like roads, bridges, and public buildings. They are indispensable primary sources for research into military and civilian life between 1759 and 1906.

KELOWNA NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES DIGITIZED

The University of BC Okanagan now has Kelowna newspapers available online at [B.C. Regional Digitized History](#).

Copies of the paper covering community events and news from its inception in 1930 to 1986 have been uploaded to UBCO Library's Okanagan Special Collection and Archives. In addition to the papers, [265 photographs from Capital News](#) from 1980 to 1984 are available online.

MANITOBA BMD'S UPDATE

[Manitoba Vital Statistics](#) has released births, April 1 to June 30, 1924, marriages April 1 to June 30, 1944 and deaths April 1 to Jun 30, 1954. If you order a certified copy on line, it will cost \$12.00.

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FAMILYSEARCH EXPERIMENTAL LABS — FULL-TEXT SEARCH

Although limited in scope, this new feature, [Full-Text Search](#) is a VERY worthwhile site to explore. *FamilySearch* writes: A new era in search technology! With handwriting recognition and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, we can convert an image of text into a machine-readable text format giving you the ability to search the full text of these records before they are even indexed." Currently, content is limited, but already some valuable sources for your research are available such as Ontario probate records, US land and probate records, Australia and New Zealand wills and probate records. Canadian probate and homestead records can also be found. Much more is yet to come.

Your editor has been accessing the site over the last few weeks, and has found many documents to support and supplement her research. For example, entering a search for a Kent village and surname has provided detail on ancestors who emigrated to a number of countries.

SIMON FRASER SURVEY OF CLOSELY RELATED UNKNOWN GENETIC RELATIVES



Genealogist Gail Dever announces a new survey from Simon Fraser University. The university needs older adults to participate in this online survey:

"Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia invites people, aged 55 and older, to complete an online survey for its Family Genealogists and Long-Lost Relatives Study, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada.

The study is focused on the psycho-social impacts of family searches for long-lost relatives using DNA databanks. The university wants to learn more about the experiences of midlife to older-aged adults who have searched for and located a previously unknown immediate or closely related genetic relative in the past five years. Dr. Barbara Mitchell, Professor of sociology/gerontology, manages the project.

Do you qualify for this study?

- Are you aged 55+?
- Have you searched for and located a previously unknown immediate or closely related genetic relative (i.e., parent, child, sibling, grandparent) using DNA testing and databases within the past 5 years?
- Have you had at least one meaningful contact (i.e., face-to-face visit or phone call) with that long-lost immediate genetic relative? OR, if they are deceased or you have been unable to contact them, have you had contact with another relative who knew them and is also genetically related to you?

This online survey will take less than 30 minutes to complete. Your name and identity will remain confidential, using a pseudonym, and your individual answers will not be linked with your name in any reports of data. Learn more and take the survey on [Simon Fraser University's website](#).

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FINDMYPAST HOME CHILDREN RECORDS

Findmypast has made a huge update to its Home Children Collection, with Barnardo home records and more. It has added a trio of important Home Children record sets to its collection.

If you have a Home Child in your family tree, you may find their name within all-new enlistment and military death records, burial records, or the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Index. Explore these new additions to discover important stories that, until now, have been lost to history.

Over 130,000 children were sent to live overseas by the British government between the 1860s and the 1970s. Care homes, the church, local authorities and philanthropic organisations rallied behind the scheme, whereby children as young as 2 were sent to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa as a way of solving England's "juvenile vagrancy" problem.

This period in the Commonwealth's history has been largely forgotten - but we're dedicated to changing that. In partnership with Home Children Canada and Library and Archives Canada, we're publishing an ever-growing collection of Home Children records. Over 4 million people worldwide are descended from a Home Child - if you've got a Home Child within your family tree, these free-to-access records may help you to uncover their story.

- **Home Children Burial Index** – this new index, created in partnership with Home Children Canada, includes burial information for over 7,000 Home Children.
- **Home Children Enlistments and Military Deaths** – this brand-new collection tells the story of Home Children who went on to enlist in armed forces across the Commonwealth between the 1890s and the 1950s. Containing records from the Anglo-Boer War, both World Wars and the Korean War, this set provides a comprehensive and transnational account of Home Children's involvement in military conflicts over a 60 year period. These 6,653 records are transcription-only.
- **Home Children Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Index, 1883-1923** – these 9,050 new records document Home Children that were received at the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home in Ontario, Canada between 1883 and 1923.

In conjunction with the Canadian Home Children Immigration Records Index, Inspection Reports, Boards of Guardian records and these indexes from Bethany Children's Homes in Pennsylvania, this new record set tells the story of each child's migration to an unfamiliar land.

[Search Home Children records](#)

FINDING YOUR ROOTS EMMY NOMINATION

PBS Documentary series *Finding your Roots*, hosted by Henry Louis Gates Junior has received its first Emmy nomination for outstanding non fiction series or special.



Genealogy News in Brief continues page 6

Genealogy News in Brief continued from page 5

WINDSOR CITY DIRECTORIES

Windsor City, Ontario directories from 1888 to 1988 are now online for researchers. "The main alphabetical listing of people and companies provides information, such as the place of work and occupation of individuals, and the proprietors and executives of companies." The directories can be viewed on [Internet Archive](#).

QUÉBEC ADOPTION RECORDS RELEASE

Quebec recently made a big step forward regarding the rights of adopted persons. The right to know the identities of the members of your family of origin is now included in Quebec's *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. Until recently, the general rule was confidentiality. However, as of June 8, adopted persons can find out who their biological parents were — even if the parents previously refused to have this information disclosed. Genealogist Gail Dever reports: "Adopted people will have access to the name of their mother, their father (whether or not he has been officially recognized), or their grandparents if they are registered in the file. Brothers and sisters can also be found in certain cases.



FREE TO VIEW ON BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE

Over one million new free-to-view pages have recently been added to the [British Newspaper Archive](#). Over four million newspaper pages are now free. A complete list of the available newspapers can be found

SOUTH AFRICAN ANCESTORS?

[Ancestral Findings](#) has created an excellent site, Introduction to South African history, the site provides numerous links to [tracing South African ancestors](#)

HELP BUILD OUR MEMBERSHIP! The larger our membership, the more resources we have and the more family connections that can be made. Do you have a friend wondering about his or her ancestry? Why not bring this person to our next meeting or perhaps purchase a membership for your friend to help start someone else's genealogy search? Perhaps invite them to a zoom session!



DON'T FORGET!

2025 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

MEMBERSHIP EXTENDS FROM JANUARY 1ST TO DECEMBER 31ST

- ◆ Senior \$30.00
- ◆ Non-senior \$35.00

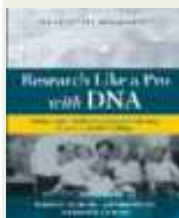
Zoom "Mini-How-To" Sessions September to December 2024

The sessions are all on Thursday evenings, with presentations beginning at 6:30 and lasting for about an hour.

They are open to all members of NFHS, at no charge, but you must register in advance. **The links in blue** below the description of each session will take you to the registration page for that session. Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email containing the link that will give access to the Zoom session on the day of the meeting. You can use the link to join in as early as fifteen minutes ahead. If you have ideas for topics that you'd like to present, or hear someone else present, please [contact your executive](#).

VIRTUAL
WORKSHOPS

Genealogy Book Club Study Group with Terry Hartley



The group meets the 2nd Thursday of every month from September, 2024 to June, 2025. Sessions start at 6:30 pm and run for an hour. The next session is October 10th.

We're diving into *Research Like a Pro with DNA* by Diana Elder, Nicole Dyer, and Robin Wirthlin. Together, we'll read through this guide and apply its methodology to tackle one of the brick walls in our family trees. Over the course of ten months, you can expect to make substantial progress on your genealogical puzzle, identify actionable next steps, and perhaps even solve your mystery. This study group offers a unique opportunity to learn about the application of DNA in genealogy and to apply these techniques to your research in a supportive, collaborative environment. Terry Hartley, a graduate of the inaugural session of the *Research Like a Pro* course (2019) offered by the authors, will share her insights and experiences from the course. The book is available in paperback from Amazon for \$37.99 and \$9.99 for the Kindle version. Once registered, you'll receive information about the readings and other preparatory work for our next session. Embark on this journey with us and enhance your genealogy research skills using DNA! Use the link below to register for all sessions:

[Registration](#)

October 3 – November 7, November 7, December, 5. Irish Research With Bronwyn Frazer

This special interest Group (SIG) will meet once a month, on the first Thursday of the month. Ideally, it will attract participants who have some experience researching in Ireland as well as those who are seeking guidance with their own research. Discussions will follow an informal Q and A format. The group will work together to solve queries posed by members, sharing knowledge of existing resources, and devising strategies for specific problems. Use the link below to register for all sessions:

[Registration](#)

October 24 – Computer Talk for Technophobes with Susan Bates

This session is a followup to a similar one held last spring. The objective is to acquire some computer skills that can help your work on your family histories. The topic for a short presentation will be "How to Capture a Screen Shot." It will be followed by an open Q & A session. Bring a list of things you always wanted to know how to do on your computer.



[Registration](#)

Zoom "Mini How To" Sessions continue page 8

Zoom "Mini "How-To" Sessions continued from page 7

November 21 – A UK Genealogy Pub Crawl with Carolyn Kemp

If your ancestors were UK victuallers or licensed inn keepers, discover sources and methods to research their lives. Join Carolyn as she traces some of her "liquid" ancestors in order to flesh out their lives.

[Registration](#)

**November 28 – A Tale of Two Research Trips With Ruth Stewart**

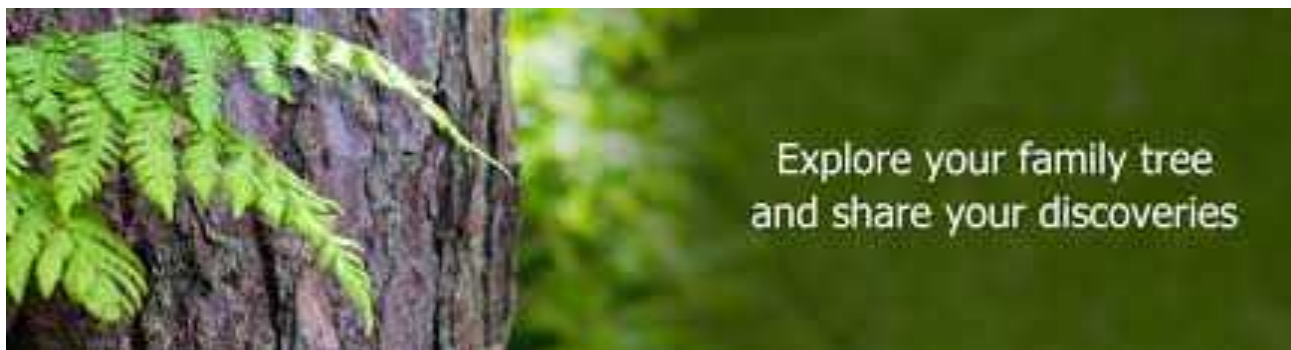
Ruth will discuss two recent research trips: what went right, what went wrong, and how she will improve her chances of success next time.

[Registration](#)

**RESEARCHING IN ENGLAND WITHOUT BAPTISMS, MARRIAGES, AND BURIALS**

series of blogs from Jessica Morgan on her site Family Locket contain excellent tips and links if you are researching in the UK. Each is well worth visiting!

- [Without the Parish: Researching in England Without Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials Part 1 – the Parish Chest](#)
- [Without the Parish: Researching in England Without Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials Part 2 – Tax Records](#)
- [Without the Parish: Researching in England Without Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials Part 3 – Probate Records](#)
- [Without the Parish: Researching in England Without Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials Part 4- Court Records](#)
- [Without the Parish: Researching in England Without Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials Part 5- Manor](#)



MY FAMILY AND THE "ROARIN' ELGIN"

by NFHS Member Beth Skala

Many of my mother's stories began, "So we took the train . . ." By "train" she meant the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railroad (originally Aurora, Elgin and Chicago Railway), fondly called the "Roarin Elgin" by its passengers. The frequency of its appearance in family stories tweaked my curiosity. This train was an integral part of my family history and I wanted to know more about it.

The Aurora, Elgin and Chicago Railway began construction in 1901 with the intention of building an electric railroad for passenger service between Chicago and the Fox Valley communities to the west of Chicago. A passenger railway with a dedicated track would be faster than the existing steam trains, which valued freight over passengers and scheduled their trains accordingly. To make the new railway even faster, the proposed passenger train would use a third rail (an electrified rail between the usual two rails) which would be more efficient than overhead wires. In 1903, the AE&C was clocked at over one hundred MPH, a world record at the time. Practically, though, it travelled at 60-70 MPH. At a time when steam trains chugged along at thirty MPH, this was still an impressive speed, hence the nickname "Roarin' Elgin."¹

In 1904, the AE&C began offering day excursions to the western suburbs sponsored by real estate agents flogging the new subdivisions that were springing up as farmers sold their land to developers. Passengers were encouraged to take the train to the Fox Valley to see the plots of land on offer. Many city dwellers moved out to the suburbs, knowing they could count on the railway to take them into the city for work. As the population moved west, new stations were added to the route. Two years later, in 1906, the AE&C began catering to the funeral trade, adding a spur line to the Roman Catholic Mt. Carmel Cemetery. This service continued until 1932³



Aurora, Elgin and Chicago Car 10 Inspection, August 4, 1902²

Roarin' Elgin continues page 10

¹ Ostberg, Brian. "History of the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railway"; Presentation to Wheaton Public Library, 5 July 2022; accessed via *YouTube*. All subsequent facts about the railroad are from this video.

² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Aurora_and_Elgin_Railroad#/media/File:AEC_inspection; original author unknown; reprinted in *Sunset Lines: The Story of the Chicago Aurora & Elgin Railroad: 2-History* by Larry Plachno (1989). Public domain.

³ "Funeral trains serving the Cemeteries," Chicago and Cook Cemeteries; chicagoandcookcountymeteries.com; accessed 20 December 2023

Roarin' Elgin continued from page 9



Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railroad Map 1936 ⁴

My grandparents, Charles and Anna Newbauer, arrived in Chicago in 1912.⁵ According to historian Rosemarie Johnson, "Between 1914-15, a new subdivision was opened in the former corn and oat fields of Adam Fippinger."⁶ This area would eventually become the village of Berkeley, Illinois. On September 1, 1915, Charles and Anna took possession of two plots of land, which included a small house, on the former Fippinger property.⁷ Surely my grandparents must have taken the Roarin' Elgin into the country to view the lots for sale. The only other mode of transport would have been a horse-drawn wagon and that would have made the trip awkward. Probably they left their two small daughters, Blanche and Marian, with Charles's mother Marie Neubauer,⁸ who had moved in with them in 1913.⁹ I'd like to think the young couple made a holiday out of their train trip.

Roarin' Elgin continues page 11

⁴ commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chicago_Aurora_and_Elgin_Railroad_1936_map; originally published in the public timetable folder of the Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroad dated February 2, 1936. Public Domain.

⁵ Charles Newbauer Naturalization Petition: National Archives at Chicago; Chicago, Illinois; ARC Title: *Petitions for Naturalization, 1906 -1991*; NAI Number: 6756404; Record Group Title: *Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-2009*; Record Group Number: RG 21.

⁶ Johnson, Rosemarie, *From Oats to Roses: The History of Berkeley*. Friends of Berkeley Library; May, 1974. p. 17.

⁷ Cook County Torres Pages. Book 28-G Elm; Page 101.

⁸ Neubauer is the original spelling of the surname; Charles changed the spelling to Newbauer when he applied for US Citizenship.

⁹ Ancestry.com. New York, Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), Washington, 1820-1957 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Year: 1913; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: T715, 1897-1957; Microfilm Roll: Roll 2236; Line: 19; Page Number: 1.

Roarin' Elgin continued from page 10

Almost exactly a year after purchasing their land, on 6 September 1916, another daughter, Peggy, was born. Two years later, in 1918, a son, Fritz, joined the family. Peggy and Fritz were both born in the little house in Berkeley.

In 1919, Marie Neubauer died. Her wake was held in the family home. She was Catholic and was buried at Mt. Carmel Cemetery¹⁰. The family probably travelled by train with the coffin to the cemetery. There were special fares for the mourners accompanying the casket. The casket, of course, was charged only a one-way fare.¹¹This was by far the fastest and least expensive route. That same year the AE&C filed for bankruptcy.

The Newbauer family continued to grow, adding another daughter, Betty, in 1920. In 1922, new investors purchased the railway and renamed it the Aurora, Elgin and Chicago Railroad. This was also the year my mother, Irene Newbauer, was born. To her, the Roarin' Elgin was the way her family traveled. It was the only way for Irene and her family to get from their suburban home in Berkeley, Illinois, to the city of Chicago and its other suburbs in the 1920s.

Charles Newbauer took the Roarin' Elgin every weekday to go to work in Chicago. Without the availability of the train, he would have been unable to move his family out of downtown Chicago. Anna Newbauer took the train into Chicago to purchase items for her growing family that she could not obtain in Berkeley. (It must also have been the way Charles and Anna snuck off to the Cook County Courthouse on 21 October 1924 on their secret mission to finally get married. A fact unknown to the family until I uncovered it in my research many years later.)



The seven Newbauer children (Annie was added in 1925) all took the train to high school when they were teens. Proviso Township High School was located in the community of Maywood and served a large geographic area. The train schedule indicates that the train trip from Berkeley to Maywood took less than ten minutes. Of course there was the walk to and from the train, but it was a very doable trip. Without the train, education beyond grade school would have been out of the question for many Berkeley children in the 1920s and 1930s. The Berkeley Station was a "flag stop" on the AE&C line. Passengers would raise a metal "flag" to tell the driver to stop for a pick-up. Most of the outlying stations on the AE&C were flag stops.

In 1941, Anna took the train to downtown Chicago to get copies of her children's birth certificates.¹² War was looming, and the Newbauer family had been advised to obtain the documents proving they were Americans and not German nationals.

Roarin' Elgin continues page 12

¹⁰Ancestry.com. *Cook County, Illinois, U.S., Deaths Index, 1878-1922* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011

¹¹"Funeral trains serving the Cemeteries," Chicago and Cook Cemeteries; chicagoandcookcountycemeteries.com; accessed 20 December 2023.

¹²Conversations between Irene Newbauer Dabrowski and Beth Skala, supported by copy of Irene's birth certificate certified 27 December 1941.

Roarin' Elgin continued from page 11

While Charles had a car by then, the train made it much easier for Anna to take care of this task while he was at work. Car ownership burgeoned after WWII, but the train still played an important role in many peoples' lives. I remember riding the Roarin' Elgin to visit my aunts who lived in neighbouring suburbs. And once my mother took my cousin Donna and me on a train trip to Marshall Field's department store in Chicago to see the Easter Bunny!

My mother travelled far from home during the early 1940s, and eventually returned to Berkeley in 1946 with her husband (Adam Dabrowski). I was on the way, but did not make an appearance until early in 1947.

We moved away from Illinois in 1954. On July 3, 1957 the Aurora, Elgin and Chicago Railroad shut down passenger service for good. The passenger trains stopped at noon without any notice, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded in Chicago with no way to get home! In 1959 freight service ceased. In 1961, the rails were officially declared abandoned. In 1963, the railroad right of way became the Illinois Prairie Pathway, the first rail-to-trail conversion in the United States.



Newbauer Family Photo 1946; original held by J. Motto, Eau Claire, WI, USA. Anna and Charles Newbauer in 1946 with their seven children, three sons-in-law, and first seven grandchildren (they ended up having twenty grandchildren).

Genealogists do not gather facts, but breathe life into all who have gone before.

Faces of Our Ancestors

from NFHS member Dave Blackburn



A family photo from August 1924, of Dave's mother's family, the Hartstills. The photograph was taken to commemorate the 30th wedding anniversary of Dave's grandparents, Arthur and Ellen Hartstill probably taken in or near Belvedere, Kent (now SE London). All the children of the couple are present. The eldest, David's mother, **Dorothy Blackburn (nee Hartstill)** (1894-1973), is seated on the right, and his grandmother, **Ellen Sophia Hartstill (née Perkins)** (1868-1954) is third from the left in the back row.

!



When searching news stories, remember that words are costly for the publisher, so many abbreviations are used. This is particularly true for names. If you're searching a name, try common abbreviations such as "Hy" for Henry or "Wm" for William. Many times first names might not be used, so try last names only or first initial and last name.

A SEWING HEIRLOOM

by NFHS Member Eva Clegg

“This machine was the top of the line in its day” said Julie at my fabric store as she took the sewing machine in to be serviced. “It’s heavy because it’s all made of metal” she added. It was much heavier than my modern Husqvarna for sure.



No one wanted the sewing machine in my mother’s bedroom. It served as a bedside table for dad after mom passed away. Everyone’s trying to downsize, not add more clutter. Eventually I softened and brought it home.

Cobwebs were vacuumed out of the inside of the cabinet; furniture oil applied to the wooden top and legs. An unseen pull-out shelf was discovered under the leaf that extended the sewing surface. Little treasures like nineteen tiny spools of every conceivable colour were found. Inside the green Singer box were tools, metal feet and 8 ‘Fashion discs’ for decorative stitches. Then I unfolded a yellowed piece of paper titled ‘Singer Sewing Machine Company, Cash Receipt’ dated January 31, 1961. The buyer was Mrs. W.H. Shelvey of Forrest, Manitoba; the cost was \$347.50. The sewing machine had belonged to my grandma.

After servicing, a manual was located on the internet for a Singer Slant-O-Matic 403 Special, ‘The finest semi-automatic sewing machine ever built!’ A spiral-bound copy was printed at Staples. I was ready to try it out.

I turned eight years old the summer of 1961 while staying at my grandparents’ farm. I now marvel at grandma’s patience as we played endless games of Sorry in the summer porch. Most days we’d drive to a wooden-floored general store in the village of Forrest to get the mail. The transistor radio was always tuned to CKX in Brandon for farm reports. At church, she proudly introduced me to her friends, pointing out that we shared the same first name, Eva. She was born **Eva Phoebe Elizabeth Hales** in 1904 in Rapid City, MB, the first daughter of new British immigrants.



I tried to figure out how Grandma, a farmer’s wife, would have come up with the price of the sewing machine. I called Uncle Percy, one of three remaining children. He remembered his mom buying the machine, taking lessons in Brandon and making a suit. Previously she had sewn all her children’s clothing on a treadle sewing machine. He said she made money from raising geese and turkeys.

The old Singer sewing machine runs like a charm. Two baby quilt tops for my expectant nieces have been sewn and I made sure that they knew their baby’s great-great-grandmother had used the same machine. Grandma died in 2013, aged one hundred and eight years.



Five Generations!

You might be a genealogist if you love living in the past lane.

GENEALOGY CHRONICLES WRITING CONTEST 2024

Nanaimo Family History Society members are invited to enter a "Meet My Ancestor" contest. Entries must be submitted by **midnight, December 31, 2024** and meet the contest criteria. We must receive at least four entries for the contest to run. All entries will appear in future editions of *AncesTree*. Please submit your entry [here via email to your executive](#).

1. BE YOUR OWN PHOTO DETECTIVE

Provide a photo and describe how you determined who was in the photo.

2. SURPRISE PACKAGE

Describe your biggest surprise in your genealogy journey.

3. BRICKWALL BREAKER

Describe a genealogical brick wall and how you broke through it.

4. FACT OR FICTION

Describe how you unravelled a family story to discover how much was truth and how much fiction.

5. SAME NAME CONUNDRUM

Describe how you discovered and distinguished between same name individuals in your research. You may have to include a chart.

6. EAST MEETS WEST

Do you have ancestors from divergent cultural backgrounds who wed and had a family? Describe how they met and overcame any difficulties.

7. DNA SINS AND OMISSIONS!

Describe any surprises you had with DNA testing. Did you find a close relationship you didn't know you had or perhaps you didn't find whom you were expecting?

8. CHOOSE A TOPIC!

Yes, a **free choice** topic that relates to genealogy! What would YOU like to write about? What would YOUR FAMILY like to hear about?

CONTEST CRITERIA

1. The author is a current member of Nanaimo Family History Society on December 31, 2024.
2. The entry has not been previously published.
3. The entry is an interesting, coherent read responding to one of the topics, with a specific focus of genealogical interest.
4. The entry demonstrates the reader's methods of research including any problems encountered and their resolution.
5. The entry includes family tree diagrams **and/or** photograph(s) **and/or** other illustrations **if appropriate**. These visuals are appropriately placed to support the context of the entry.
6. The length of the entry is not more than 1500 words and not fewer than 750 words.
7. The entry includes footnotes and /or sources as necessary.
8. The entry has page numbers and is submitted in *PDF, Word, or Pages* format.

MY FATHER — THE LAST OF A KIND — A RAIL MAIL CLERK
by NFHS Member Georgina Dingwell

Not that long ago, (well, pre-email and Amazon), every letter, package, magazine and paper in Canada were transported via the CPR. Once the Canadian Pacific Railway had been completed in the mid 1880s from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Canadians had the benefit of daily mail-car service. The Canadian Pacific soon generated enough traffic to create two more transcontinental lines. This booming growth persuaded the post office department to create the Railway Mail Service Branch in 1897. In pre-World War II British Columbia, Nelson became the hub of major shipping and transportation for the Kootenay region. The Canadian Pacific Railway linked the mines and smelters of the Kootenays to the Coast. The Kettle Valley Railway (KVR), a subsidiary of the CPR, also provided essential industrial transport as well as passenger service to the CPR main line and both had railway mail cars that served as “traveling post offices.” In 1937 my father, **Fred Dingwell**, was hired by the Canada Post Office as a Railway Mail Clerk. He was to be stationed in Nelson BC and to work on the railway mail cars on both the CPR and Kettle Valley lines.



Canada Post and Internal Hiring Railway Mail Clerk ID

My father and mother moved from Prince Rupert to thriving Nelson where they built their house on McQuarrie Avenue in Rosemont. This is where I was born in 1944.

Until the late 1940's my father worked both the CPR and the Kettle Valley run; however, the challenges of the steep grades of the KVR eventually made it uncompetitive with the lesser grades of the CPR mainline. By 1950, the CPR mainline from Alberta to Vancouver became the primary route for mail transport by rail.

Our family left our lovely home in Nelson, BC in 1949 to settle in Vancouver on Hudson St. in Marpole where my father began his years working the railway line from Vancouver to Calgary.

Railway mail clerks were far from the glamorous pistol packing postman of the great mail robbery days. They were hidden away in their closed cars, unnoticed by the public. They carried no arms apart from a jackknife, which was issued to cut bundles of letters or to sharpen pencils to make reports. They were warned dutifully to “press hard” on forms of which five copies were required.

The Railway Mail Service was the elite branch of the Post Office. It took intelligence, manual dexterity, strength, endurance and an excellent memory to qualify as a clerk. Railway mail clerks were subjected to stringent training and regular testing of details regarding their handling of the mail.

On a given RPO (Railway Post Office) route, a clerk was expected to know not only the post offices and rail junctions along the route, but also specific local delivery details within each of the larger cities served by the route.

Rail Mail Clerk continues page 17

Rail Mail Clerk continued from page 16

The post office ensured the mail was sorted accurately by testing mail clerks annually. Examiners selected five hundred cards bearing post office names, and the clerk was expected to sort them into pigeon holes (correct compartments) within thirty-eight minutes. Every year he was tested with a different set of cards and it was expected that he would obtain a minimum of ninety percent to pass. Clerks purchased practice sets of cards to study. It was a year round proposition as the clerks needed to keep informed of changes in all the offices and routes along the way. My father sometimes practiced with these cards at home. I loved to "borrow" some of his cards with the strange names like Craigellachi of the KVR line to "play-sort" myself.



Practice Card

When I was very young, my father took me to the old Vancouver Post office. The 1910 building (now known as the Sinclair Centre) was at the corner of Hastings and Granville. As a six year old I do recall the building as being quite imposing. Today, I appreciate the historical value of that building as a Beaux-Arts architectural design of the time.



**Vancouver Post Office
Library and Archives
Canada PA-46652,1909**

An office dedicated as a place where railway mail clerks could practice was stationed in some part of that cavernous building. An area was allocated with an enormous number of compartments, accompanied by hundreds of 3x5 cards. These compartments and cards contained the names of 3000 post offices in Western Canada. The job was to accurately connect those cards with the right post offices. I watched my father deftly sort those cards into the compartments with the post office names and the connections. He would pride himself on a usual exam result of 100 percent!

The railway mail clerk did his traveling the hard way.. The cars were sixty feet long with a tunnel of bags on

either side, with built-in letter cases, pouch and paper racks, and overhead boxes. The folding iron gates as doors were installed to prevent losing mail while en route. Cars were enclosed and the windows were narrow with bars on them. Passengers were forbidden entry.



Fred Dingwell in a tunnel of bags

The cars had a small clothes closet in one corner at the letter case end of the car. A private flush toilet and swing down wash basin was across the car from the closet. The train steam line was connected to the water supply at the wash basin for heating the water. By turning the water off and the steam on it was possible to make coffee and heat food for lunch.

The rail clerks were busy sorting as they rumbled along the tracks. The mail was put into compartments or cubby holes, then bundled and then put into canvas bags for the various stops. Newspapers and parcels, magazines were sorted directly into non-locking "tie sacks." Cancellation marks were made as necessary with type-headed hammers.

Part-time postmasters met the trains in small towns along the routes. Railway clerks would have to prepare a pouch of mail ready to be dispatched as the train could be traveling at 70 mph or more as it passed the station. In a co-ordinated movement, the catcher arm was swung out to catch the hanging mail pouch while the clerk stood in the open doorway. The mail pouch had a strap around the middle that was tightened in preparation for pickup with an approximate equivalent weight of mail in either end of the pouch to prevent the heavier end from pulling the lighter end off the catcher arm. As the inbound pouch slammed into the catcher arm, the clerk kicked the outbound mail pouch out of the car, making certain to kick it far enough that it was not sucked back under the train!

Rail Mail Clerk continues page 18

Rail Mail Clerk continued from page 17

Outbound pouches of first class mail were sealed with a locked strap for security. Larger sacks with optional provisions for locking were used for newspapers, magazines, and parcel post. An employee of the local post office would retrieve the pouches and sacks and deliver them to the post office. The work was a steady grind, tense against a continuous deadline. Clerks were often on their feet for nine hours at a time. They had to keep pace with the progress of the train by time and an occasional glance through the narrow windows of the doors for familiar landmarks.

Clerks knew their routes so well they reported "at night the rumble of a car crossing a bridge signalled mail had to be picked up or put off even a mile distant."

The shifts of mail clerks shifts would be dependent on the particular "run" to which they were assigned or bid on. In the mid 50's my father worked a length of the Vancouver-Calgary run. He would sort the mail along that line until the train arrived at Midway Mile 0 of the KVR. He would disembark at some "ungodly" hour and catch a few hours nap in what he described

as the "hot little shack at Midway." When the train returned from Calgary bound for Vancouver, it picked him up for his return shift.



Midway Shack

The job of the railway mail clerk went the way of the steam engine, the demise due to passenger train abandonments, and highway hauling of mail by trucks.

In 1952 the post office operated 177 railway post offices in Canada, employing 1368 clerks on trains. By 1960-61, the number of railway post offices had dropped to 65 in all of Canada and the number of clerks to 647. The miles travelled by the clerks

dropped from 57,486,338 in 1952 to 29,690,406 in 1960-61.

Railway Post Office operations ceased in Canada in the mid sixties. When my father Fred Dingwell retired in 1966, he estimated that he had travelled over a million miles in his thirty years as a railway mail clerk. The era of Canadian travelling railway clerks officially ended on April 4, 1971.

Now, for anyone wishing to return to the early days, a model of a CPR Baggage/Mail Car can be visited at The West Coast Railway Association in British Columbia (current home of the Royal Hudson Steam train) and custodian of Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Baggage / Mail Car #3704, which was one of ten cars rebuilt from standard baggage mail cars in the 3600 series. It has a fifty foot baggage compartment and a thirty foot mail compartment.



**Last Group of Railway Mail Clerks
Fred Dingwell back row, 3rd from left**

Sources

O'Reilly, Susan McLeod. *On Track, The Railway Mail Service in Canada*

Mosher, Willard C.(1982). *Railway Postal Service Revisited.*

The 470 (March 1982). *The 470 Railroad Club: 11&12. Parks Canada Historic Places*

Photographs from collection of Georgina Dingwell.

NANAIMO FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY FUTURE GUEST SPEAKERS

Hybrid meetings will be held live at Beban Park and on Zoom



MONDAY, MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2024

ROSINA T. SCHMIDT

DANUBE SWABIAN LOST CHILDREN



Rosina, a NFHS member, will share historical information on the most tragic chapter of the Danube Swabian tragedy. The Danube Swabians are the youngest Germanic tribe who were invited in 1688 by the Austrian Emperor Karl IV to colonize newly freed areas that were occupied for 150 years by Turkey, and the depopulated parts of the Austrian Empire, mainly today's Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, and Ru [o]mania. Just prior to WW II there were over 5 million of these people spread in different villages and towns. I am one of them.

In Serbia and Croatia at that time were still part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In 1944 Tito, the partisans' leader, ordered all ethnic Germans to be imprisoned and their assets to be confiscated. Some managed to flee, the others sent to the concentration camps. Food was prevented from being delivered, so many prisoners starved to death. Any surviving children were sent to orphanages in order to make them the true patriots of Tito's state. Today we know that Russia is doing the same thing, stealing the Ukrainian children, so they would be educated as "Russians."



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2024

GLENN WRIGHT

RESEARCHING WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN MILITARY



MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2024

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL 2:00-4:00 P,M,



MONDAY, JANUARY 20, 2025

TONY GREEN

LETTERS FROM THE CRIMEAN WAR



Do you have ideas for future guest speakers? If you have a name or a topic in mind, please let a member of our executive know!

ANCESTRY (subscription)

[Canada, Canadian Pacific Steamship Co. Records 1897-1981](#)
[Canada Ontario Deaths and Deaths Overseas 1869-1950](#)
[Canada Newfoundland and Labrador Death Certificates 1950-1968](#)
[Czech Republic Select Marriages 1654-1889](#)
[UK Red Cross Volunteers 1914-1918](#)
[UK London Freedom of the City Admission Papers 1681-1930](#)
[UK East Sussex Wills and Probate](#)
[UK West Sussex Wills and Probate](#)

FAMILY SEARCH (FREE, (just register)

[Canada British Columbia Crown Land Grants 1869-1930](#)
[Canada British Columbia Crown Land Pre-Emption Registers 1860-1971](#)
[Austria Roman Catholic Church Records, 1565-2007](#)

FINDMYPAST (subscription)

[UK British Newspaper Death & In Memoriam Notices](#)
[UK Lancashire Wills & Probate 1487-1858](#)

MYHERITAGE (subscription)

[France's Tables of Successions and Absences 1890-1970](#)
[Antrim and Down Baptisms and Marriages](#)

MISCELLANEOUS (Free) LINKS

[Ireland Genealogy Projects Headstone Photos and Church Records from 9 counties](#)
[Accessing Ancestry's Free Collections](#)
[Italian Genealogy 21 Genealogy Tools](#)
[Finding Women Ancestors in Your Genealogy Research](#)
[Free Websites to UK Essential Genealogical Records](#)
[Intro to German Genealogy Practical Tips for Family History Research](#)
[9 Million boost to Largest WW2 Soldier database of Former USSR](#)
[Finding All the Daughters in the Family Tree](#)
[Dutch Genealogy News August 2024](#)
[137,859 Free Maps of England and Wales](#)
[101 Best Genealogy WebSites of 2024](#)
[How to Understand German Handwriting and Gothic Scripts](#)
[Don't Dismiss Findmypast's Newspaper Hints](#)
[How to Create a Genealogy Research Plan: The Secret Solution](#)
[10 Genealogy YouTube Channels You Shouldn't Miss](#)
[Ancestry Pro Tools Enhanced Shared Matches: Is it Worth \\$10 Per Month?](#)
[Estate Planning for Family Historian & Genealogists](#)
[Unexpected Websites You Can Use for Genealogy Research](#)
[Heirloom Preservation How do You Preserve Them? Here's One Way](#)
[Tracing Ethnic Routes in the Phillipines](#)
[Data base Eases Search for Small Russian Towns and Villages](#)
[Polish Marriage Records](#)
[Introduction to Genealogy of India](#)
[AI Tools for Genealogy Research](#)



Most of the links above are **new** links recently spotted by your editor. Remember, though, that sites such as *Ancestry* and *Family Search* are continuously adding to older collections. There is no room here to include all the additions, so remember to periodically re-check the sites you've used before — your editor has frequently found additional information about ancestors whom she began researching years ago.



FROM NANAIMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(note — this is not our Nanaimo Family History Society)

LOOKING LOCAL from Susan Garcia

- November 14, 2024: Kevin Hills presents The Commonwealth War Graves Project in Nanaimo
- January 9, 2025: A popular members Show and Share of historic artifacts and treasures.
- Dr. Rollwagen has joined the NHS Board of Directors.
- The [NHS Website](#) has videos of past presentations and interesting essays from scholarship recipients.

Visit the [Nanaimo Historical Society website](#) for updates and information about the September 12th 2024 speaker and please feel welcome to join in as a member or guest. In-person meetings are held at 7 pm at Bowen Social Centre, 500 Comox Rd. on the second Thursday of each month, except December and June through August. Membership is \$10 per calendar year and \$15 per family. Guests are always welcome.

EDITOR'S NOTES

A thank you to our contributors to this edition, especially to a new contributor, Gina Dingwell. Her story fits nicely with the railway memories of Beth Skala in her tale of the Roarin' Elgin.

With writing in mind, sharpen your pens or stretch your typing fingers and remember to enter our writing contest detailed on page 15.

Many a thank you to my eagle-eyed volunteer proofreaders, Maureen Wooten, Jan Nelson, and Wilma Kennedy.

Genealogy without documentation is mythology.

MEMBERS' MISCELLANEA

From NFHS member Barry Kemp. The anonymous poem below is a favourite of his. How true are the thoughts in the verse that we also have when perusing our own family albums.

OLD FAMILY ALBUM

Down home there's a book with a plush covered back,
And of some of the faces, it seems I've lost track;
But my mind never tires as my mem'ry retrieves
The thoughts that accompany these gilt-edged leaves.

There are some of the pictures I don't even know —
They were friends of the family a long time ago.
While most of my cousins, my uncles, and aunts,
I can readily tell who they are at a glance.

But the faces that seem to interest me,
Are the ones that make up the old family tree;
From grandma and grandpa, and all down the line,
I can see the resemblance as I creep up to mine.

As I check up the list of those living today,
I can count less than half in this sad resumé,
While often I find lying loose on some page,
A card trimmed in black with the date and the age.

So I'm never back home that I don't take a look
At the old fashioned pictures in this plush covered book.
As I stumble along in this world of strife,
To me this album is the last book of life.



NANAIMO FAMILY SEARCH CENTRE FALL HOURS

Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

An appointment system to access the centre at other times is available. Appointments can be made by [email to the Search Centre](#). Most of our NFHS collection available for borrowing is at this location.

If you're the family photographer, and not showing up in photos, your family historian descendants will be upset with you!



A BCGS trip is being scheduled for **April 27 to May 2, 2025** to go to the Family Search Library in Salt Lake City.

The trip is not a formal trip but rather each participant would book their own flight and own hotel. We would share mutual support on the trip. We would gather for a meet & greet on Sunday the 27th, plus further get-togethers throughout the week to share their research - wins and brickwalls.

The trip is open to anyone interested in genealogy research. You do not need to be a member of BCGS. The group is trying to gather at least 20 participants so they can take advantage of a library orientation and specialized research groups. No commitment needed at this time.

A [Facebook Group](#) has been created where you can find more information, ask questions and join in discussion.

For further information contact either:
Linda Hurtubise. lindahurtubise@gmail.com



CRAZE: Postcard, Postal History and Family History

In earlier years, postcard messages were like the online chats of today. If you have or find family postcards, they offer evidence of social and family connections. Even if you haven't found any yet, learn how you can find postcards to illustrate and enhance your family stories!

GOONS: Why Study A Surname?

A One-Name Study can break down brick walls, expand your surname family lines, and hone your research skills, (even if it's not your study). Learn what One-Namers do, and how surname studies can benefit your own family research.

FREE for members of Campbell River Genealogy Society and Qualicum Beach Family History Society

Non-Members please e-transfer \$10 to crgstreasurer@gmail.com

**Nanaimo Family History Society
Executive 2024**

President	Ruth Stewart
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