



Toronto Family History Centre Bulletin 2013-42

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<http://torontofhc.blogspot.ca/>



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Remembrance Day Edition

From Bulletin 2010-45 – Written by Gwen Armstrong

Five battles were fought in Ypres, Belgium during the First World War. The first in the fall of 1914; the second in the spring of 1915; the third, also known as the Battle of Passchendaele, summer and fall of 1917; the fourth known as the Battle of the Lys or Battle of Estaires in the spring of 1918; the fifth during the fall of 1918.

It was during the second battle that poison gas was used on a large scale on the Western Front. Major John McCrae, a surgeon from Guelph, Ontario, attached to the 1st Field Artillery Brigade spent 17 days treating injured men in the second battle of Ypres. In his own words:

"I wish I could embody on paper some of the varied sensations of that seventeen days... Seventeen days of Hades! At the end of the first day if anyone had told us we had to spend seventeen days there, we would have folded our hands and said it could not have been done."

Within the space of just 48 hours there were over 6000 Canadian casualties. One of those who died was a friend, Lt. Alexis Helmer. Major McCrae witnessed his death and later, in the absence of a chaplain, presided over the funeral. The next day found McCrae north of Ypres. As he sat on the back of an ambulance in a rare break he pondered the poppies growing wild in a nearby cemetery. It was at this time he penned the famous poem, In Flanders Fields.

A soldier watching him later wrote, *"The poem was exactly an exact description of the scene in front of us both. He used the word blow in that line because the poppies actually were being blown that morning by a gentle east wind... It seemed to me just an exact description of the scene."*

In Flanders field the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead, Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.

John McCrae'

In This Bulletin

Announcements – Closed over Christmas and New Years

What's New – FamilySearch (Toronto Trust Cemetery update), Ancestry (WWII UK Civilian deaths, FREE access to Canadian 1921 Census and Canadian military records)

News From The Trenches – My Uncle – 1916-1943

The Forum – Three new questions and some suggestions for last week's question

Were You Aware ... - Potter's Fields, Old Occupations & DustyDocs Links

Announcements

We will be closed for two weeks over the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

What's New

FamilySearch has updated the records in the [Toronto Trust Cemeteries collection](#) and it now includes over 150,000 records indexed by 75 members of the Toronto Branch of OGS. Several collections for South Africa have been added as well as updates for Argentina, Brazil and Italy. It is a good idea to check new collections regularly by going to the [collections list](#) and clicking on the **Last Updated** button. New collections will appear at the top of the list

Ancestry has added a UK database of nearly 60,000 WWII Civilian Deaths. These records came from seven volumes of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to honour civilians who were killed in the UK by enemy action in WWII. Exactly the same information is available at the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission website](#). A marriage index for Collin County Texas 1800-2010 with over 300,000 records has been added.

1921 Canadian Census is always available without charge on Ancestry.ca as part of an agreement with Library and Archives Canada. You will have to give them your name and email address.

Ancestry.ca is offering [FREE ACCESS](#) to all Canadian military records until November 12th. Again you will need to register with your name and email address. This free access appears to include British Army WWI Service Records and Chelsea Pensioner records for soldiers who served in Canada 1743-1862.

The [Irish Family History Foundation](#) has added Armagh Presbyterian church records to its record collection. If you click [here](#), you will see a list of records currently available for Armagh and by scrolling down, you will see the new records added for these Presbyterian churches.

News from the Trenches

My Uncle – Robert Chorley – 1916-1943



As a child, Remembrance Day was when my father talked about his older brother, who died in World War II, a number of years before I was born. It made a great impression upon me and Remembrance Day does not pass without me thinking about him.

Robert was born in 1916, exactly nine months after his parents were married. This photograph of them is a postcard that my grandmother had taken to send to my grandfather. At the top there is a hole; this was how my grandfather pinned the photo up in his WWI trench to remind him of his wife and a son he had not yet seen.

Robert grew up with ambitions beyond his working class roots – he wanted to be a journalist. He managed to get a press card and started working freelance. At the age of 21 he went to report on the Spanish Civil War. He was lucky enough to escape with his life and found himself back in France with no money at all (the British Consulate paid his fare home.). In September 1938 he used his press card to attend Hitler's Nazi rally in Nurnberg, arriving home with quite remarkable photos of it. He then got a regular job with the Catholic Times, for which he wrote until he signed up in the RAF in 1941. He received training in Canada and the US. (He loved Canada and wrote to his parents that he would return when this "bloody war" was over).

On August 30, 1943 he left England as a gunner in a Lancaster bomber to fly over Germany. The plane went missing. Up to the last sortie, he had a total of 48:15 hrs day flying and 108:05 hrs night flying. His death left a big hole in the family; he was a treasured son and a worshipped older brother to my father and his two sisters.

He was only one of many who have died in the service of their countries.

We will remember them on Monday.



The Forum:

Questions:

Q1/2013/42. Germany. Ships.

I am looking for pictures of the ferry ships which took passengers from Hamburg, Germany to Liverpool, England before they started their emigration to Canada. Do you know where I might find these ship pictures? They not appear to be listed on normal sites.

- 1846 Rio Grande later sold renamed Gellert 1856
- 1880-1883 Gainsborough
- 1872 German Empire

Q2/2013/42. UK. Manchester, 1891.

I have been unable to track down my 2X grandfather – James Hand and family in the 1891 Census. Records show that on May 3, 1887 the family lived at 7 Heelis Street, Manchester, England. In 1881 they lived at 63 Warwick St and in 1901 they lived at 4 George St. Under the assumption that when the 1891 Census was taken, the Hand family continued to live on Heelis Street, I searched the Census by address. In studying the 1891 census (RG12/3249, f26, pg 46) for those who lived on Heelis Street in 1891, it shows that the family no longer lived at 7 Heelis Street and there were no occupants at either 14-16 Heelis Street. I'd like to confirm that this is in fact what the notation on the 1891 Census means and was hoping that someone may be able to confirm this fact. I was also wondering if it could mean that there was no one home when the Census was taken. If there was no one home would it be common to note "Uninhabited" beside the address or was there a "follow up" process – were people required to make sure that their names appeared on the Census?

Unfortunately it still doesn't give me any information on the Hand family's whereabouts in 1891. Other addresses mentioned: William born January 19 1883, 21 Heelis Street; Francis Patrick born July 17 1885, 8 Heelis Street; Michael Joseph born September 16 1887, 42 Collyhurst Road; daughter Mary Anne Hand died May 3 1889, 7 Heelis Street and Charles Ernest was born on July 17 1892, 14 Heelis Street. Where were they on April 5, 1891?

Q3/2013/42. Greece.

Can you tell me where someone might go to search ancestry records from Greece (other than going to Greece)?

Suggestions:

Q1/2013/41. Canada. Grand Trunk Railway Records.

Do you have or know if there are records from the Grand Trunk Railway? The GTR was active in Canada, mostly eastern Ontario, in the 1800s. My great grandfather worked for them as a "section man". He died in 1886 at the age of 36. I have wondered if he was in a railway accident. *The researcher provided a bit more information: My great grandfather's name was David Maher (1849-1886) and I have his baptism, marriage, and burial (in Kingston) records but no death registration.*

Adrian Hetherington sent the Bulletin this extensive answer:

"The Grand Trunk became part of the Canadian National, so technically their records would have been subsumed into the CN archive. An enquiry with CN may assist locating any record holdings that are open to research. You could try the [Canadian National Railways Historical Association](#).

"This [link](#) is to a CN map dating from 1968, it gives an indication of where the former GTR lines ran. This [map](#) dates from 1885 and covers the whole of the GTR system (Canada and the USA, CN still owns and operates GTR lines in the US).

"Hopefully somebody with better railway knowledge than mine reads the bulletin and can advise on the nature of a section man's work, but I suspect that he is what the English would call a ganger. He walked the track to check for and repair problems. If others can identify how his work week was structured it helps pin down the geographic area to search.

"If you know where great granddad lived the local newspapers could tell you a great deal. Start with his home town paper and work out along the line from there checking for reports of railway deaths. In 1886 a death was news.

"Checking the local newspaper is also indicated to see if there might have been an illness running epidemic in the area. Influenza can kill but so did a significant number of other illnesses. You could be inoculated against smallpox in 1886 but that was it. Measles and meningitis, to name two, were and would remain killers for some time.

"Do you know where he is buried? Have you enquired there for any details? It may be that the cemetery records will be annotated to show what the permission to bury was i.e. with the coroner's authority. If that is the notation then I'd look for reports of the inquest too. Bear in mind that the coroner may be based some distance away so you'll have to work out who had jurisdiction in that area. If it wasn't the local coroner then work out along the tracks to the next jurisdiction.

“As a railway worker might he have been a union member? There could have been a mutual fund he paid into which then paid for his funeral and maybe paid a pension of sorts to your great grandmother. But, given that so many unions have amalgamated along with associated credit unions and the like it is difficult to suggest where to start looking for any records.

“I’m presuming that you have copies of all his primary records. There’s a lot of work to do there, more if you don’t have the basic documents, good luck. I’d suggest you start with a letter to the CNRHA and then a few hours with the newspapers where grt granddad lived.”

David Maher lived in the district of Leeds South but not in Gananoque in 1881. He was a switchman and his neighbours all worked for the railway. It could be that he lived in a settlement where a branch of the GTR goes south to Gananoque. (A map of the area can be downloaded from an [archived page](#) of Library and Archives Canada.) As Adrian suggests, newspapers would have reported his death and the best place to search would be Gananoque (where the railway would be very important) and Kingston. I have been unable to get online access to newspapers of this area and for this time period. It does not appear that the Toronto Reference Library has microfilm of Kingston newspapers but the researcher should try the Kingston Library. It appears that the Douglas Library at Queens University may have microfilm newspapers. Check U of T as well. I did briefly wonder whether the accident may have happened in the US as his death registration does not pop up, but local papers would report that.

Were You Aware...

Potter’s Fields

Until recently I was unaware that potter’s field is a generic term for a burial place for paupers, strangers, etc. from Matthew 27:6-8. “And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.”

One of the Toronto Trust Cemeteries indexed by OGS Toronto and now online at FamilySearch is Potter’s Field Cemetery, also known as the York General or Strangers Burial Ground. It was located on the west side of Yonge, just north of Bloor, where the land cost \$300 when it was established in 1826 as Toronto’s first non-sectarian cemetery. 6,685 burials took places between 1826 and January 21, 1855. After it was closed in 1855, monuments and some remains were moved to the Toronto Necropolis and Mount Pleasant.

There is a huge Potter’s Field on Hart Island, New York City (101 acres) and potentially nearly one million people have been buried there. New York City bought Hart Island in 1868 to serve as its Potter’s Field, a burial place for unknown and indigent people and it is still being used. It was the tenth Potter’s Field in the City’s history. Now run by NYC’s Department of Correction, there is a new (as of September) searchable database available [here](#). The [Hart Island Project](#) is a non-profit charitable organization that has a complete database for burials between 1980 and 2011 with records of 32,765 adults and 27,769 children who were buried there.

Potter’s fields exist or have existed all over the world. Many are now parks. Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables* was buried in Potter’s Field.

Broken Links

My apologies for two links that did not work last week: [DustyDocs](#) - <http://dustydocs.com/> and [Old Occupations](#) - <http://www.familyresearcher.co.uk/glossary/Dictionary-of-Old-Occupations-Index.html>.

Films received in the week ending November 7th and due for return about January 26th.

| Film Content | Film No |
|---|----------------|
| DEU Mecklenberg-Strelitz, Badresh, PRs, 1650-1875 | 0069708 |
| ENG SSX Wills, v. A22-A24 1632-1636 | 0097243 |

A patron wishing to view a film ordered by another should check first with staff. The description of the film given above may not be a full description but a search in the FamilySearch catalog will reveal the full content. The geographical abbreviations are Chapman codes.

Toronto Family History Centre Current Opening Hours:

(Always phone us if you do not have a booking to ensure that we are open.)

Tuesday 9:30 am to 2 pm (Linda)

Wednesday 9:30 am to 3:45 pm (Ann, Joe am, Helen & Leslie pm); 6:30pm to 9:30pm (Helen)

Thursday 9:30am to noon (Don & Roberta); 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm (Don & Roberta)

Closures: If you do not have a booking, call before you come.

For a copy of a searchable listing of all films, fiche, CDs and books held at the Toronto Family History Centre in pdf format, click [here](#).

[FamilySearch - Search](#)

[FamilySearch - IGI](#)

[Hugh Wallis IGI Batch Numbers](#)

[FamilySearch Catalogue](#)

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[Steve Archer IGI Batch Numbers](#)

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