



## Toronto Family History Centre Bulletin 2014-19

May 22, 2014

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



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### In This Bulletin

- **Announcements** – Closed June 12th
- **What's New** – Ancestry (only items previously available on FamilySearch); FamilySearch (more images for Quebec & the Czech Republic, more indexes for Italy, Peru, etc., US Civil War records), MyHeritage (Free US Military records for Memorial Day weekend)
- **News from the Trenches** - The 100th Anniversary of the Sinking of the Empress of Ireland - Part II
- **The Forum** – One new question
- **Were You Aware...** – Deciphering Certificates

**Announcements** – The Toronto FHC will be closed on June 12<sup>th</sup>, both the morning and evening shifts.

### What's New

**Ancestry** has added some collections for Italy, Peru, Paraguay and other countries that have previously been available at FamilySearch.

**FamilySearch** has added many more images to old browse-only collections. For example, the Czech Republic censuses 1843-1945 now has nearly 1.8 million images and the Quebec Notarial Records 1800-1920 has nearly five million images. More indexes have been added to collections from Peru, France and Brazil. To observe Memorial Day, FamilySearch announced today significant updates to its free Civil War historic record collections online. The new [FamilySearch.org/civil-war](http://FamilySearch.org/civil-war) landing page provides a quick overview of the vast array of historic records and aids for those researching casualties and veterans of the Civil War. Collections include: Union and Confederate pension, prisoner of war, cemetery, National Soldier Home, and census records.

**MyHeritage** will be offering free access to all their US Military records from tomorrow until Monday. Click [here](#) to access.

**Mocavo** and other websites may also offer free access to US Military records over this coming Memorial Day weekend.

### News From the Trenches

#### The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sinking of the Empress of Ireland – Part II

Next week Canada will be commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada's largest maritime disaster in peacetime, when the **Empress of Ireland** sank near Rimouski on **May 29, 1914** after it was struck by a Norwegian collier. 1,012 of the 1,477 people on board died. The passengers included 167 members of the Salvation Army on their way to London for their World Congress. Many of these were members of the Canadian Staff Band of Toronto and the Peterborough Temple Band. Denise Reynolds' grandparents, Thomas and Margaret Greenaway, and her great-uncle, Bert Greenaway, were three of the Salvation Army members who survived the sinking. Thomas and Margaret had been married only a week when they set sail on the Empress. Margaret's letter to her parents-in-law in England is a very gripping account of the events that night, reproduced here with permission of Denise Reynolds:

*Dear Father and Mother,*

*I have been wanting to write you for a long time, but have not seemed well enough to so, and I have been trying to get Tom to write telling you the exact facts about our wonderful rescue but I cannot get him at it.*

*In the first place, I want to say how disappointed I feel at not getting to see you all especially Ma, as I have been so building upon it, but it was through no fault of ours and we will just have to wait. Of course, I do not ever expect you. It must be you all coming to see me next.*

*Well, words fail to describe the awful experience which we all passed thro. The few of us who are left, I suppose, can tell to a certain extent just the experience those who are gone passed thro, at any rate what they experienced on the decks that awful morning.*

*I was lying on the lower berth, awake, and I thought how smoothly the Empress was moving (but now I know that it was not moving at all). Just then I heard three whistles and it seemed only a second when the awful grinding and tearing took place. My first thought was that the Empress had run upon a rock and her bottom was being torn off. The impact was so great that it knocked me against the back of the berth. I immediately got out on the side of the berth and called Tom. He would not get down at first and I called him sharply and said "Come quick now Tom, let's go up on deck and see what has happened". Tom got down very slowly and said "Don 't be nervous Dear, it is only a little iceberg and we shall be alright" but I said "No, come now", and the ship began to list so much that Tom had to put his hand against the side of the cabin to hold himself.*

*I got so nervous that I ran out myself and met Captain Dodd, and he said "It's only a fire" and I said "No, it's not a fire, Dodd". I then heard the men giving orders on the deck. I rushed back to the cabin and said "Tom, come quickly" and he said "all right", and at that I started to run along the corridor, but instead of going to the second-class stairs and the stairs just near us, I ran almost half the length of the ship to the first-class stairs. Of course, I heard someone following me whom I thought was Tom.*

*I got on the stairs but the list was so great I lost my hold and fell, rolling back against the corridor. I struggled to my feet, as the water was just rushing down the corridor, and with a mighty pull I got to the deck. Just as I got to the deck, (and only about five or six minutes had elapsed from the time of the impact until I got to the deck) the lights went out, and of course knowing that Tom had not followed me I concluded that he had thought that there was no danger and delayed too long to get something on, and was drowned down in the ship before she sank, and then my sorrow began.*

*It did not seem to worry me that I was going to die, my whole thought was on Tom. As I stood on deck, Guido Whatmore came along and I was crying because I had lost Tom, and Guido comforted me and said "that we were in God's hand, and what ever was best He would do". Then Captain Spooner came and comforted me, and went and got a life-belt and put it on me, but I lost him on the deck after awhile.*

*While he was standing with me he let me stand on his feet and he held me into him, and put a rug around us both. The ship listed so quickly and to such an angle, that I had to climb through the railing on to the side of her, and Bandsman Bigland helped me thro. (He is gone) Then as I stood there a second or two I knew we had come to the end. The 'Storstad' was lying about a mile from us, but no help was forthcoming.*

*Then the crowd on the side of the ship cried for help, and about five minutes before we went into the water I saw life-boats being launched from the Storstad, but it was then too late. As I stood there, I with my arms round Bandsman Ernie Aldridge's neck, an explosion occurred right at my side, and we all went into the water, and the Empress disappeared. I tell you it was awful to hear the wails and moans, and the calling for God to have mercy. I lost my grip of Aldridge, and just went down, down, down, the Water was filling me, and I was turning my wedding ring on my finger and thinking I had only been married a week. Then the message you sent to be read at our wedding was going thro my mind and I kept repeating 'Ten thousand welcomes to the new daughter'. Then I was smothering and I just put my hands to my sides and asked Jesus to help me die easy, and I never knew anything more.*

*When I opened my eyes I could not imagine where I was or what had happened, and then I lifted my head and saw a deck chair under me, and all around me were dead bodies floating, and man on an up-turned boat handed me a long pole and he drew me thro the bodies and wreckage to the boat and pulled me on. I had no feeling from my waist down and no feeling in my arms. Just my lungs seemed to be paining me. There was a Swede on the upturned boat and he stood me up and then the water began to come out of my mouth, eyes and ears. The Swede opened his coat and buttoned me inside of it, and it was then I began to feel a little life. The warmth from his body revived me. About an hour after I was taken on the Storstad, they gave me stimulants and brought me back partially to life.*

*On that ship Bert came to me, but no Tom, and of course I did not expect to ever see him alive and I cannot tell you the agony of my spirit. They then, I am told, transferred me with the rest to the 'Lady Evelyn' and took us to Rimouski, then from the 'Evelyn' laid me in a shed with the dead and dying, and from there to the little French hotel where at eleven o'clock my own Husband (your son) found me. You can imagine this joy. Bless him!. He never ever looked quite so sweet to me. His hair was all in little curls and his face as white as death, but he was our boy just the same. I think I shall have to write a little book and call it "Wedded, parted, and reunited".*

*When I was taken to the Storstad they said it was just five o'clock, so from the time of the accident to the time I was rescued was nearly three hours, so how I am alive is a mystery which we cannot solve, but thank God we are here, and doing well. I of course was scalded on the arm, awfully bruised, and cut across the back of the ankle, and have been a little lame but it is getting better. Of course we both still feel the effects of the shock and I suppose will be a long time in getting over it.*

*Now, when I woke Tom, he did not think it serious and says now that if I had not just urged him, he would have been in the ship yet. He stopped to get my raincoat, then went and shut the port-hole, then got to the deck by the proper second class stairs. He passed Commissioner and his family standing at the foot of the stairs, and the Commissioner was asking them to stand there while he went to see what was going on. You see, we had the advantage of so many because I was awake when the impact came and we got on deck sooner than most.*

*When Tom got to the deck he sought for me but could not find me. He then gave my coats to Mrs Adjutant Green and Jessie. The Adjutant and Tom were standing against the library, then by stretching himself full length on the listed deck, Tom could just reach the railing of the ship and pulled himself through on to the side. Seeing we were lost and thinking I had drowned, he still clung to the ship as she started to sink at the bow, and the water came sweeping up to him, and then the explosion occurred and he thinks he was shot clear of everything and when he came up he grasped the top of a round table and it turned and he turned with it three times and then a raft from the Empress picked him up.*

*He was so shocked that he could not speak and he does not seem to remember much. He was among the first to be taken to Rimouski, then a couple of hours after this Bert and I arrived. Ernie Pugmire and Bert were brought to the same house as Tom and they told Tom I was saved. Capt. Spooner, who put the lifebelt on me, was among the first rescued and he told Tom he had put the belt on me. As soon as Tom and Spooner and Pugmire got clothing they started to search for me and went to nearly every house in the village and finally at eleven o'clock in the morning discovered me at the little French hotel 'La St. Germaine' I was pretty far gone, but when I saw our boy (whom I never ever expected to see again in this world) you can imagine our feelings.*

*After being taken to the hotel, two doctors attended me injecting strychnine and stimulants into my arm to keep up my strength. I was not on my feet for over two weeks after the accident, as I had a bad cut across the ankle and was badly bruised. I am now recovering very rapidly and hope soon to be quite myself. We certainly had a wonderful escape.*

*We seemed to have abundance of sympathy and kindness shown us. When we got on the special train that afternoon for Quebec, a gentleman whose sister was rescued from the wreck, had his private car attached to the special and they took Tom and I in there, and gave us every attention. Then the C.P.R. officials on the train from Quebec to Montreal were extremely kind to us, and the steamship manager who was on the train wired ahead to have an invalid chair at the station when we would arrive, in fact everyone seemed so good to us and did everything for our comfort, and our friends Mr and Mr Douglas entertained us for two weeks at their home.*

*At my own home they all suffered dreadfully from the shock, as they did not know any of us were alive until Saturday morning. Tom sent a wire at 12:00am on the Friday but they did not get it, until the next morning. Mother would not believe I was rescued, as the papers had me amongst the lost and my picture in the paper. Then it was reported that I died after being rescued, but when I wrote a little note in my own handwriting, they believed I was alive. They have not been up to see us yet, but I think in the fall some of them will be coming up.*

*I hope I have not wearied you with this long letter. As you will see I started it on the 14th and it is now the 26th.*

*We are now in our own little home, and Bert is with us, and I am trying to look after him well.*

*When are you coming to see us? I hope it will be soon. Tell Eva that Jessie Green has a sweet Maple leaf sterling silver pen with Salvation Army engraved on it which she was bringing to her. She was showing it to me on the train.*

*We are all getting on well, and hope you all had a good time at the Congress.*

*With much love to all,  
Yours affectionately,*

*(signed) Margaret*

Margaret & Tom in 1923



The chaos must have been dreadful and all news had to be wired out. The Toronto Star of May 29<sup>th</sup>, Toronto's evening paper at the time, has headlines reading: "Only 377 Survivors of 1422 Souls; Empress Carried 122 Torontonians, Six Wired Back". The Globe and Mail reported on May 30<sup>th</sup>: "Captain Dodd [mentioned in Margaret's letter] and his wife, only two weeks married, alike shared a watery grave. Mr. Herbert Greenaway is given amongst the saved, but the wife he married only last Wednesday has gone down with the other." [Margaret was actually married to Thomas.]

Denise has written a short family history about Thomas and Margaret Greenaway which you may wish to read [here](#).

The newspaper articles from around the world make fascinating, although horrifying, reading. The Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star can be accessed at home, if you have a Toronto library card, or at any area library. This feature is also available from other GTA libraries. Australian newspapers can, of course, be accessed freely at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>. The British Newspaper Archive has many articles but payment is necessary. Ancestry has many newspapers in its collection with articles about the sinking, as does the worldwide FindMyPast. Another free newspaper website, which Dick Eastman mentioned in his [blog](#) on Monday, has nearly 28 million pages of New York State newspapers. Over 3,000 articles about the Empress of Ireland can be found [here](#).

## The Forum:

### Questions:

#### Q1/2014/19. Manchester, England.

Editor's preamble: This researcher has, for a number of years, been looking for the family of her 2g-grandfather, James Hand, house painter, born about 1842 in Castleblayney Ireland and his wife, Elizabeth Hand, born about 1852 in Dublin. Last year she posted a question in Bulletin 2013/08 because she could not find them in the 1891 census, despite having a lot of evidence that they were in a small area of Manchester before and after the census. One sharp-eyed Bulletin reader, Mike Webber, found that a few pages were missing or damaged at the end of the district that they may have been living in. By November, she still had not found the family in 1891 but had acquired many certificates indicating that the family had lived on Heelis Strret and area between 1883 and 1892. But she is now possibly faced with a more difficult problem.

While searching Ancestry I came across another tree containing a James Gilbert Hand, who had first married a Mary Flood (died 1866) and had a child, Mary Anne (born 1864). The tree owner had also attached my 2g grandmother Elizabeth Hand and some of her children to this James Hand as his second wife and offspring. I contacted the owner and email exchanges led me to believe that our James Hands were connected. Both were born in Castleblayney, Monaghan, Ireland and both had moved to Manchester, England, dying within a couple of years of each other.

A hand-drawn tree done by a descendant of James Gilbert Hand indicates the daughter, Mary Anne, married James Frederick Cavanagh. The marriage certificate shows James Frederick Cavanagh (sic), 23, bachelor, marries Mary Ann Hand, 20, spinster, daughter of James Hand, painter, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1884 in St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Manchester. I was thrown by the fact that this James Hand was a painter, as was "my" James Hand. Were they the same person?

I have the marriage certificate of "my" James Hand, full age, bachelor, painter, to my 2g-grandmother Elizabeth Hand, 18, spinster, servant, daughter of John Hand, bricklayer in 1872 in Dublin. James and Elizabeth had a daughter, Mary Anne, in Castleblayney in 1874 and she died in Manchester in 1889 (I have certificates).

Also the Cavanaghs witnessed the marriage of "my" James and Elizabeth's son, James Gilbert Hand, to Mary D'Arcy in 1905 and were living in the Manchester area. Mary Anne Cavanagh indicates in the censuses that she was born in Liverpool, not Ireland, but that registration cannot be found.

Editor's note: The hand-drawn tree shows that James Gilbert Hand died in Manchester in 1925 but that James was only 48 years old [FreeBMD], meaning that he was born about 1877 and certainly could not have had a child, Mary Anne, in Ireland in 1864. When I see mistakes like this, I tend to discount the veracity of the rest of the tree.

Are the two James Hand's the same person? If not, how are they related?

## Were You Aware...

### Deciphering Certificates

The Irish marriage certificate in last week's Bulletin with the question "what is the condition of the bride" elicited a couple of responses from readers. Ken Monk suggested "Carnale", a sort of a relative, perhaps cousin? Both Ken and Elizabeth Barrick thought that the bride's name was Margaret Ann Nickolson/Nicholson. With the benefit of the whole certificate, I can read that her surname is actually Kerr, but the writing of the person at the registration district office is very poor and all the Ks are badly formed. It would be helpful to be able to see more of this writing to decipher it all. I have found it very helpful to have other people look at a bit of writing to try to decipher what is written and, in turn, the FHC volunteers are often called to film readers or computers to answer the question "What does that say?"

## Films received in the week ending May 15<sup>th</sup> and due for return about the end of July.

Film Content	Film No
ENG LAN Liverpool Misc. Records	1647413
ENG Rec. Copy Wills 1873	1596749
ENG Rec. Copy Wills 1873	1596748
ENG Rec. Copy Wills 1876	1544942
ENG Rec. Copy Wills 1876	1544941
HUN Ács-Teszér Index RC BMD 1785-1895	0699500
PRU POS Schonlanke Jewish Recs.	1184451
PRU POS Schwerin Jewish Recs.	1190959

PRU SCI Neustadt Jewish Recs.

1190975

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 catalogue 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](#).**

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