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Announcements

The Toronto FHC will be closed on Saturday, January 15th for a special function. The FHC will close at noon on Friday the 14th. Please call the FHC if the weather is bad and you are planning a visit – occasionally we will have to close because of bad weather and, even if you have a booking, we may not be open.

What's New

FindMyPast

FindMyPast added nearly 450,000 parish baptism records for Durham, Yorkshire, Cumberland, Northumberland and Westmorland for the period 1600-1997 today. The database covers 324 parishes. A list of the parishes is available in a pdf document downloadable from the news release. They added about 150,000 burial records for Birmingham, 1883-2007.

Ancestry

Ancestry has added a number of Jewish records from the American Jewish Historical Society to their databases since the beginning of the year: WWII Jewish Serviceman Cards, 1942-1947 (85,000 records), World War I Servicemen Questionnaires 1918-1921, New York Hebrew Orphan Asylum records 1860-1934, and Jews in Colonial America 1650-1850. Another new database in the Land Tax Valuations for London England 1910, which is searchable by name and includes tenants, property owners, property value and annual rental yield for properties.

FamilySearch

New recently uploaded records on www.FamilySearch.org include the New York State census 1892, the Texas County Marriage Index, Denmark Burials 1640-1917, Radom Diocese Poland Church Books, and the 1900 Mecklenburg-Schwerin Germany Census,

The Forum

Questions. No questions were received this week.

Suggestions:

Q2/01/2011. Early Ontario Immigrants.

My great grandfather, Joseph Atkinson, son of John and Jane, married Mary Finley, daughter of Barnard and Catharine, in Newmarket on October 9, 1867. He was 25 years old and she was 22. The 1861 censuses show the Finley and Atkinson families living in Whitchurch. John and Jane Atkinson were born in England but all their children were born in Ontario. Barnard and Catharine were born in Ireland and all their children were born in Ontario. Is it possible to trace the Atkinson family from England and Finley family from Ireland to their towns of origin?

To find out the origins of this family, family information available in Canada needs to be explored fully. Census entries are very informative and provide further clues to search. Searching the 1851 census, John and Jane Atkinson are living in a frame house in Whitchurch with nine children between the ages of 18 and 1, all of whom were born in Canada. John and Jane must have arrived in Canada before 1833 – immigration records at this time are fairly limited. If they married in Canada, Jane's maiden name needs to be found. Some Ontario civil registration records have the parents' full names listed. Joseph Atkinson's marriage does not have Jane's maiden

name but his brother, Simeon's, death registration in 1927 lists Jane's maiden name, Watson, as does brother, Richard's, in 1926.

Similarly, by looking at the 1861 census entry for Bernard and Catherine Finley in Whitchurch, the Canadian births for their six children indicate that they arrived before 1845. The marriage and death registrations for James Finley, brother to Mary, has parents Bernard Finley and Catherine Kenny, both born in Ireland. (Some minor spelling variations exist for these people.) A search of the early immigration records on Ancestry for John Atkinson, Jane Watson, Bernard Finley and Catherine Kenny was made but proved unfruitful.

The Irish Family History Foundation at <http://www.rootsireland.ie/> has 17 million records online and they can be searched without charge after one has registered. From the censuses and death registrations, birth dates for Bernard and Catherine (about 1820) were found and the parish records online here were checked. No baptism record for Bernard was found but fifteen possible entries were found for Catherine Kenney. To download the entries, one needs to pay. English parish records for relatively common names like Watson and Atkinson are difficult to search unless one has a town of origin.

The Ontario Vital Statistics Project - <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~onvsr/> - has birth, marriage, death, and cemetery records, which include civil registration plus other databases. The baptism records for the Primitive Methodist, Markham Circuit, 1843-1866, had the baptism and birth dates of five of John and Jane Atkinson's children. Many other records for the families can be found on this free site. [FamilySearch.org also has free indexes to Ontario censuses 1851-1891 and Ontario civil registration.] The Ontario Genealogical Society has an online database - <http://ogs.andornot.com/CemeteryIndex.aspx> - to search for the cemeteries in which ancestors were buried. Some of the Finley's can be found buried in the St. John Chrysostom Cemetery in Newmarket. Richard Atkinson, Joseph's brother, was buried in Heise Hill Brethren in Christ Cemetery in Newmarket, as are many other relatives. The Heise Hill Cemetery can be found on the free "FindaGrave" website (<http://www.findagrave.com/>) and it has pictures of the gravemarkers – Richard's is particularly impressive with an inscription that includes his parents' names.

The Atkinsons and the Finleys lived in Whitchurch throughout the second half of the 1800s and the McGill Digital Library has a project containing images of county atlases at <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/>. Going to the *People Search* button and entering Atkinson in the county of York and the Township of Whitchurch, one finds records for John and Simeon Atkinson near the town of Bethesda. It shows John Atkinson on the half-lot on the NE corner 2km N of Bethesda (Warden & Bloomington). No Finleys could be found.

Although we were unable to find any hints about the origins of the four grandparents, we did find a lot of information about the families of Joseph Atkinson and Mary Finley.

News From the Trenches

Drive Through the Cemetery Backwards!

Paul Branson recently had a "Eureka" moment that he thought would be worth sharing. The lesson he learned was - "Drive Through the Cemetery Backwards"

"I have always enjoyed spending time in cemeteries. They are peaceful scenic places - and chock full of valuable Genealogical information. Cemeteries all have those small twisty roads that can make you feel like a rat in a maze. If you're like me you always drive to the same sites on the same route in the same direction, which seems to be the easiest way to locate gravesites that only get visited once a year or less. Last spring I was given a photo of some Italian ancestors most of whom I knew, but there was one short mystery man with a very round face. My contact thought his name was Vito Pirri, but could not be sure, so it went into the "shoebox" file. Over the holiday, I went to a local Cemetery to check a few dates, and when I drove through the main gate I turned left instead of my usual right and proceeded to my destination a different way. After completing my mission, I drove back toward the exit, on the road which I would normally be using to drive in, and on the way admired many of the decorative memorials. It was at this time I stopped hard as I spied a headstone with the name Pirri, and stuck to the marker was one of those oval cameos showing the same round faced man in my photo. Sure enough, on closer inspection this was the final resting place of Vito Pirri and his wife Vincenza, complete with birth and death dates. I had driven by this site dozens of times, but had never noticed because the headstone was facing away from my usual driving direction!! Armed with birth and death dates for Vito and his wife, it was then an easy matter to search their obituary on the Toronto Star Pages of the Past and I was able to find out exactly how this man was related to me. I know what you're thinking. Wouldn't it be easier to just ask the office staff to look it up? YES - however I had already bothered them with so many previous requests that even my usual bribe of Tim Horton Gift Certificates is no longer

effective. Anyway, finding it on your own is always so much more rewarding, and next summer I'm going to pack a lunch and hike each section of that place on foot."

About New Records on FamilySearch

Sonia van Heerden recently took a class put on by the Pinellas County Genealogy Society in Florida on the new Family History Library website, where all the new sections were investigated. She writes: "When I reached my home down here, I checked out the site further, inputting some of the surnames I am researching. I put in my husband's name, and found the digital copy of the death certificate for my father-in-law from 1963. Persons in the South African Orange Free State were scanning in these death certificates and it was fascinating to see current documents on my screen. I know Toronto OGS members are also volunteering to do similar scanning - volunteers from around the world are helping us find our ancestors!"

Were You Aware...

St. Michael's Cemetery, Toronto

One of our patrons mentioned that the records for people buried in St Michael's Cemetery in Toronto (Yonge and St Clair) are at Mount Hope Cemetery, north of Eglinton and between Mt Pleasant and Bayview.

Toronto's Park Lots – Press Release from Toronto OGS

"If you have an interest in local, social or family history, make it a New Year's resolution to visit Simcoe's Gentry, a new on-line publication created by the Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society and now available through the Toronto Branch website.

Simcoe's Gentry is a searchable web-based resource showcasing the results of a Toronto Branch research project to document the history of Toronto's Park Lots. The Park Lots were exclusive properties carved out in the 1790s just north of the newly-surveyed Town of York under the direction of Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe. A typical Park Lot was 100 acres in size, ten times as deep as it was wide, with a narrow frontage on what is now Queen Street, to allow all owners access to the town and harbour, and extending north to today's Bloor Street. Simcoe handpicked the settlers who would receive these prestigious estate lots—prominent individuals who he felt were best suited to be community leaders in the new capital of Upper Canada and ultimately help govern the province. Many of Simcoe's gentry also owned land in townships elsewhere in what was to become southern Ontario. All of the Park Lot grantees were free to subdivide their acreages and lay out streets within them, as they wished. The decisions they made literally shaped the downtown Toronto that we know today.

The Simcoe's Gentry project is a collection of research articles, each written by a volunteer author and reviewed by a dedicated editorial team, and each thoroughly documenting the story behind part or all of an original Park Lot. Contributors include members of the Toronto Branch, other genealogists and historians, and even some descendants of the Park Lot owners. Work on the project continues. New articles will be added regularly and existing articles augmented as additional sources become available. Reader feedback and contributions are most welcome.

Visit www.torontofamilyhistory.org/simcoesgentry/ to explore this new resource, and subscribe to the Simcoe's Gentry blog to be sure you are among the first to find out about content additions and the latest project discoveries. For more information about the Simcoe's Gentry project and the Toronto Branch, contact Jane MacNamara by e-mail at simcoesgentry@torontofamilyhistory.org."

No films were received in the 7 days ending 13 January 2011.

A patron wishing to view a film ordered by another patron should check first with staff. The patron who ordered the film will always have priority. The description of the film given above may not be a full description. A film number search in the Family History Library Catalog will reveal the full content of the film. The geographical abbreviations used above are based on 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.)

Monday 9.30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tuesday 9.30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon and 6.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.

Friday 9.30 a.m. to 4pm

Saturday 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon.

Closures: Early closing Friday January 14th at noon; closed Saturday, January 15th. Bad weather may also close the FHC.

For a copy of a searchable listing of all the films, fiche, CDs and books held at the Toronto Family History Centre in pdf format, go to the Toronto FHC Website at <http://torontofhc.blogspot.com/> and look for it under Resources.

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Toronto Family History Centre

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

24 Ferrand Drive (Don Mills & Eglinton) M3C 3V4 Phone: 416 422 5480 Ext. 111.

Email: Toronto_FHC "at" bellnet dot ca