

Cornwall Township Historical Society

Newsletter March 2016

www.cornwalltwphistorical.ca

Editor: Don McIntosh

Editor's Note: The following article was submitted by Jennifer DeBruin. Jennifer is a writer and author of novels: *A Walk With Mary* (2012), *Shadows in the Tree* (2013) and *Daughter of Conflict* (2015). www.jenniferdebruin.com We always welcome submissions from our members so if you have a story to tell, please contact the editor.

New Methods to Discovering Old Stories

by Jennifer (Lalonde) DeBruin

The search for family history has become a booming business. Though there are many methods by which we may discover our family history, the universal reason seems to be a yearning for connection to our past and each other. In the sixteen years of my own intensive research, I have never tired of the quest to 'meet' my ancestors. While the history detective in me was satisfied with the finding of ancestors for many years, it had become apparent my extensive archive was not bringing their stories to life. More distressing yet, as older generations passed on, they were taking their stories with them.

Connecting with others who share common ancestry was an unexpected surprise when my historic novels, based on my SD&G ancestors, were published. These meetings, so meaningful to me, sparked a desire to find ways to connect with even more family. Not only would this be a wonderful way to share the archive I have been amassing for years, but perhaps I would find clues, insights, or better yet, details, photos, and confirmation of stories that had been seemingly lost to time. *But, where to find these cousins?* The solution, as it turned out, was in my DNA.

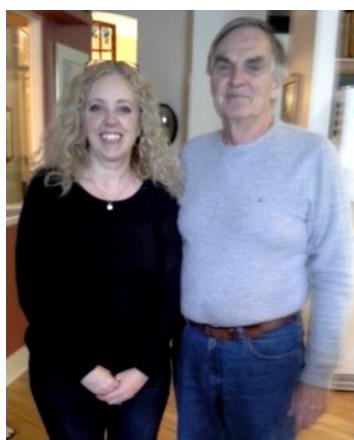


I was first intrigued by genealogical DNA analysis by watching one of my favourite genealogy shows, *Finding Your Roots*, on PBS. While Henry Louis Gates Jr., host and historian, and his team use traditional research methods: scouring over reams of information from records, newspapers, and photos found in government archives, libraries and historical societies, to using online research tools such as Ancestry and other online databases, they also have taken discovering family history to the next level by testing DNA to find out the ethnic origins of their famous guests. Further to revealing ethnicities, many of these services allow people sharing common DNA to connect – thus the hidden cousins could be found. While cost had been prohibitive in the past, often being hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars, the technology and popularity in recent years reduced the fees and it was now possible to pursue this avenue, but time was of the essence.

I am fortunate enough to have both of my grandmothers yet living, one in her 90s and the other turning 100 this April! Having their DNA tested would provide a unique snapshot of our family origins, and could also be used to further decipher my own results, as I was going to have my DNA tested as well. Combined with my grandmothers' analysis, I would be able to determine which origins belonged to which side of the family. My DNA would also help provide information on my grandfathers' origins, both having passed over 20 years ago. The first step, of course, was to find a qualified, professional testing service. Luckily I met professional Genealogist, Kathryn Lake Hogan, at the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC) conference in Toronto, Ontario in 2014. Having suggested Family Tree DNA (www.familytreedna.com), I ordered the Family Finder kit at \$99 USD, which tests Autosomal DNA. "Autosomal DNA is inherited from both parents, and includes random contributions from their parents, grandparents, and so on. Therefore, your autosomes essentially contain a complete genetic record, with all branches of your ancestry at some point contributing a piece of your autosomal DNA." (Source: http://genealogy.about.com/od/dna_genetics/p/autosomal.htm). Though there are other more in-depth tests available, I was only curious about my overall places of origin.

Once the results were in it took me a couple of days to process what was revealed. I was fascinated by my grandmothers and my own results, but my first reaction was that I felt strange looking at myself in the mirror. I had always identified myself from a young age as: French, Scottish, English, German, and Irish. Happily, my 1% First Nations from my Innu (once known as Montagnais by the French) 5xs Great-Grandmother was confirmed with the DNA results, but I had NO idea I had Italian and/or Spanish roots, and further, my Eastern European heritage was also previously unknown. I was not shocked to see Scandinavian, but was VERY surprised to find I am 16%. Finally, it was the East-Middle East and Asia Minor results that astounded me. Though single percentages, these speak to early global migration of our local families from places we may have once believed we had no connection to. With the meaning of the analysis still swirling about, I was already thinking of all the research ahead of me. Within days of receiving my results, the emails from cousins started to arrive. Others just like me, who had wanted to find out their roots, were already reaching out to connect.

Meeting Family



Cousins Jennifer (Lalonde) DeBruin and Bruce Attfield, both descendants of Sigouin (Seguin) and Brisbois families of SD&G

I have since been contacted by a number of genetically related cousins. Many are too far geographically to meet, though most were interested in exchanging information to determine our connections. However, one day I received an email from a gentleman who seemed most closely related. In sharing our family trees with one another, we quickly determined we are both descended from the Sigouins (Seguin) and Brisbois families of Cornwall Township. That is likely only the tip of the iceberg, as many lines in my family tree often reveal many connections, but it was start. We set a date to meet.

Bruce Attfield and I met at a quaint café in historic Almonte, Ontario. The minute I passed by the large window, I saw a hand go up, and a friendly smile. Opening the door it was as though I were meeting someone I had known my entire life. We happily

greeted each other with a hug and sat down, I placing my bag full of family history books on the adjacent chair, Bruce having his at the ready. Over the next couple of hours we talked about our families, determining just how close they were. Sharing our documents revealed further details that help in developing a better understanding of our family history. What really struck me, even in this first meeting, was just how fragile our connections are. Before our meeting, Bruce and I were strangers to one another, yet only a couple of generations ago, we descended from the same couple, the extended family often being witnesses at each others' marriages, and spending Sunday afternoons and holidays together. If not for our fortuitous decision to have our DNA tested, we would have missed a wonderful opportunity to reconnect. We exchanged gifts of information, I giving a large family tree of our common lines, and he giving me a copy of his grandmother, Emma (Sigouin/Seguin) Lagroix's, memory book. Her book was one of those treasures kept by many older generations with clippings of weddings, deaths, births, deployments, poems and other items of interest, and staring back at me on some of the pages were familiar faces from my own family's photos. Finishing our coffee, we took a short walk to meet his wife, Lorraine, at their home where he had more family photos to show me. It was a lovely morning spent with family. Finally it was time to leave, but not before we promised to remain in touch. I can't say who sent the first email, but within hours we were continuing our conversation! Incredibly this revealed even more connections, and almost miraculously, a photo I had from Moulinette, Ontario, would now have more of its story told.

Stories Revealed

Over the years family members had generously shared information and photos with me. One such item was a photo of my great-grandfather, William (Bill) Seymour's garage in Moulinette, Ontario (Bill and Bruce's mother, Alice (Seguin) Lagroix, were first cousins). My family determined that of the three people in the photo, Bill was likely the man standing in the doorway, his hand resting on one of cars. The other two men, an older gentleman sitting in a car to the far left of the photo, and a younger man in the open air car to the right, would remain a mystery. *Or would they?*



William (Bill) Seymour Garage and Blacksmith Shop Moulinette, Ontario.

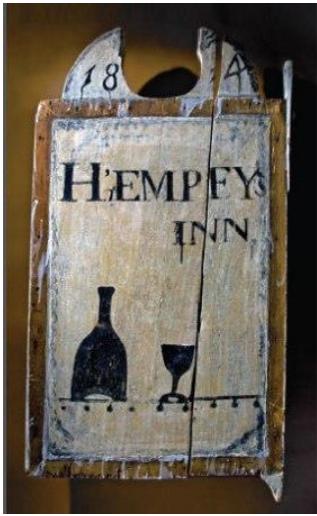
Only hours after of our initial meeting, Bruce had emailed me a 1921 Cornwall Township census record showing his uncle, Oswald Lagroix, living in the household of Bill Seymour (misspelled Seymore) as a Lodger. He was 24 years old, and my grandmother, Mary, was 5 years on this census. With a little more digging we tried to determine the reason his uncle would be a lodger at my great-grandfather's (though they were first cousins). Another email quickly followed from Bruce: "In the marriage record a few months later (to 1921 census), Oswald is listed as a Garageman, obviously working for William. I note the picture of William's garage and the assembled cars. My early recollection of Grandma Emma (Lagroix), William's aunt, is her driving a car just like those...betcha that is where she got it." *Could he be the young man to the right in the photo?* Evidence is very strong that it is!

Legacy

There are many ways in which family can connect with each other. Whether you use traditional methods to trace your history and find family, use new methods, such as genealogical DNA testing, or a combination of both, the rewards will inevitably motivate you to continue your journey of discovery. There is something special about meeting people who were once strangers, but upon meeting, as Bruce and I, are instantly family.

In fact, through these various methods I have connected with cousins worldwide! Recently cousins from New York, Virginia, California, Montreal, Toronto, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and even Australia have reached out to me! The world seems much smaller, my heart much bigger, as I welcome each new family member. My sense of connectedness to those near and far is only the result of something put in to play many generations ago by our ancestors.

We are their legacy, not their heirlooms, or even their stories – we are what they often sacrificed everything for. Though they did not know us, they surely have a hand in helping us find one another again. In sharing their stories, and making our own memories, their legacy will continue to thrive for generations to come.



Henry Empey's Inn (1814), situated on the Post Road was an important stop in the early 19th century on the stagecoach route from Montreal to Toronto. The trip could take as much as five days so seeing Henry Empey's sign was a welcome relief for weary travelers. The wineglass with the stem indicates a touch of class; perhaps only the more affluent travelers could afford to stay there. Incidentally, for anyone wishing to purchase the old Empey-Thompson house, it's currently on the market and available for a cool \$560,000! What would Henry Empey think of that?

Our Out Reach and Promotion of Local History

After much success at IPM, Sharon McCullough and her outreach committee have been busy over the winter months working on a new project. They have planned a series of activities for local students scheduled for the second Wednesday of the month starting in March and running until June. The format is a contest and students have a chance to win cash prizes. We are hoping the activities foster an appreciation of local history among students and also promote the CTHS museum. Here's the tentative line-up but still subject to change:

March and April: Members from the Historical Society will be at the museum to show students the various artefacts and machinery we have on display and explain the story behind them. We encourage CTHS members to come out and help us. Perhaps you have some stories to share or memories related to the museum pieces.

May: Participants will create a diorama in a box. They will depict a scene of life, preferably local, during the period 1900s to 1940s. This could be a farm scene, school or church scene, having winter or summer playtime etc.

June: This grand finale takes place on June 8th at the Heritage Centre. All the dioramas from the previous month will be on display. For this date, student will write a short, humorous, funny story of a true event that happened long ago, at least 50 or more years that happened in our area. Their parents or grand parents will have to get involved in this project so this should generate some free publicity for us. Winners will be announced and prizes given out. We encourage CTHS members to attend this event, meet the student participants and enjoy the fun.

CTHS Genealogy and Historical Inquiries

Don Kenny handles the genealogy inquiries that we receive through our website. He has been fairly busy since Labour Day. You may find some of these interesting. 18 inquiries were received, 15 on the genealogy side and 3 on the historical side. Three visitor groups were here last fall. Visitors are normally escorted to family property and monuments, and shown some of the area's main attractions as time permits. The following is a summary of our inquiries. Anyone who has information relative to these is asked to contact Don. 613-534-2564 donleskenny@gmail.com

1. Old Time Trains (Canada) inquired about the **CSL No 5 boxcar** used by Canada Steamship Lines in their packet steamer service up until 1958. (Closed)
2. A Washington State inquiry as to the possible link of the **Cornwall surname** to this area. (Closed)
3. A Brockville inquiry requesting **Routier/Chevalier** marriage documentation from St. Andrew's parish ca. 1835. (Open)
4. Looking for data on the **McManus/Ouimette** family's short stay in Cornwall around 1885. (Incomplete)
5. A Fredricton, NB resident wondered if any of **Jesse James** gang ever visited Northfield, Ontario, (Closed) and asked for **Cariboo Cameron's** story. (Closed)

6. A Saskatchewan inquiry regarding a **McAuley/McRae** family of Roxborough. (Likely closed)
7. A Swiss inquiry had the wrong **Cornwall Township**. She was looking for the Cornwall Township in Henry County, Illinois. (Closed)
8. An inquiry questioned the accuracy of data in Eliza Hoople's 'Jonas Wood UEL' booklet regarding an **Osborn**. (Open)
9. A Vancouver resident was looking for information on a **Duncan McDonell** who died in Cornwall in 1826. (Incomplete)
10. Three Vancouver residents visited. They were toured around the area and saw various **Hartle** sites (Union Valley Cemetery, Northfield and Toll Gate Road. (Closed)
11. An Ontario resident was researching **John and Isabell (Campbell) Phillips** on Lot 16 S1/2 Concession 3 (Toll Gate Rd) in 1784. (Closed)
12. An Oakville couple visited (a 2nd time) researching **Langevin** ancestors. (Closed)
13. An inquiry looking for **Dr. James Stuart**'s grave location was processed. The gravesite is in question. (Closed)
14. A Chesterville historian was researching the burial location of **Lottie Daniels** (nee Paupst), daughter of Jonah and Emma. (Closed)
15. An inquiry regarding two connected Cornwall families (**Maynard/Smith**) was processed. (Closed)
16. An inquiry regarding **Jacob Alguire** ca. 1820 was received. (Closed)
17. A series of inquiries on the Stormont **Kirk**'s (ca. 1800s) await resolution (Open)
18. A couple from the Coast of Maine visited. They were given the tour, and shown probable **Abijah Christie** sites. (Closed)

Some of the above were handled quickly and productively, while others dragged out and little was found. However, it is **never too late** to add bits and pieces to the puzzles, as most research of this type goes on for years.

A Replica of a Replica! Last fall we were contacted by Brian Sturgeon who practices his craft of building miniature wooden models of historical buildings in our area. He was at the beginning stage of building a scaled model of the log church. He asked for a tour of the interior so he could study the dovetail joints connecting the logs. I was impressed with his attention to detail and told him that we look forward to seeing the completed project. Brian says that this is his winter project and once it's completed he'll visit us at one of our meetings and show his work. I contacted him recently asking for a progress report. Brian says the model is over 50% completed. He sent along some pictures of the work in progress and I've included one here.



Roofing Project Completed

2015 was a busy year for our organization. One of the major capital projects undertaken was the roof replacement of the log church in the old cemetery. To briefly recap, you recall that this log church was built by CTHS in 1991 in commemoration of the original settlers who came to this area in 1784. Even though this replica log church is owned by R.C. Dioceses of Alexandria Cornwall, we continue to be stewards of the building ensuring its longevity.

After nearly 25 years the original roof was beginning to leak. The contract to replace the roof with new cedar shingles was awarded to Red Maple Building Co. at a cost of \$7,525.00 plus HST. We thank Mike Wheeler and his crew for the excellent job they did. Using advanced materials like ice and water shield and a layer of cedar breather we can expect this roof to last much longer than the last one.



Re-roofing Log Church Replica September, 2015

A Brief History Lesson

Recently, lifetime member Bernie MacDonald and Art Buckland paid a visit to the Simon Fraser property where his house stood on Lot 19, 6th Concession Cornwall Township. This is the location where Bernie's father found the fireplace keystone and house key that are on display in our museum. Down the road, Bernie indicated that the heritage plaque now located on Mel Valade's farm was originally located further north along the former 6th Concession where the steel girder bridge was, north of the present bridge that spans the Raisin River. The original location would have been close to the mill pond that was the water source for Fraser's grist mill.



In photo above left, Bernie MacDonald stands beside the Simon Fraser Heritage Plaque. Right, Art Buckland pretends to uproot the sign and move it to its original location. Fortunately Bernie discouraged him since it would land in what is now Mel Valade's front yard. (Not that Art didn't have the strength to do such a deed. Hmm, Hmm)



Remember: Our next meeting is Tuesday March 22, 7:30 pm at the Heritage Centre. After a long break since last fall, we have a lot of business to attend to. So hope to see you there.