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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

Canada:

Waypoint or destination?

By Janet Brigham Rands

Our GPS unit asks us whether an address we're locating is a waypoint or a destination. A waypoint is a stopping place — the dry cleaners, on the way to lunch. A gas station, on the way to Santa Cruz.

Or Canada, on the way to the United States?

I used to think I had no Canadian ancestors or relatives, until I learned that Canada was for some of my ancestors a crucial stopping place that held information both about where they came from and why they emigrated across the Atlantic.

Canada served that purpose in several distinct waves in European and U.S. history. It also was a destination — a new homeland, providing land and livelihoods for the privileged and the dispossessed alike.

The CanadaGenWeb.org site includes an excellent get-started page (in both English and French, as is the law and custom in Canada). Its instructions apply to most research that hinges on history: First, *identify the time period*. This is particularly important in Canadian research, since the immigration waves coincided with historical periods.

The second instruction from CanadaGenWeb.org is *identify where in Canada you are researching*.

Where is not necessarily a simple matter. Canada — which stretches above the United States like a huge umbrella — was settled largely from east to west. During the late 1600s, French and British explored the Atlantic coast of North America. By 1763, France had ceded most of its North



This map of the soils of Canada shows the country's diverse lands.*

American colonies in Canada and the United States.

Canada was formed as a federal dominion of four provinces in 1867. As it accrued provinces and territories, it sought increasing autonomy from Britain. Its legal independence from the British Parliament was finalized in 1982.

Across this time span, explorers, traders, settlers, entrepreneurs, soldiers, and refugees filtered into the areas we now know as Canada. An immigration wave starting with two centuries of French settlement in Quebec and Acadia concluded with an influx of British Loyalists who fled the American Revolution.

After the War of 1812, which ended in 1815, the British government

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*This is a copy of an official work by the Government of Canada; used with permission, it has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.)

Canada (continued)

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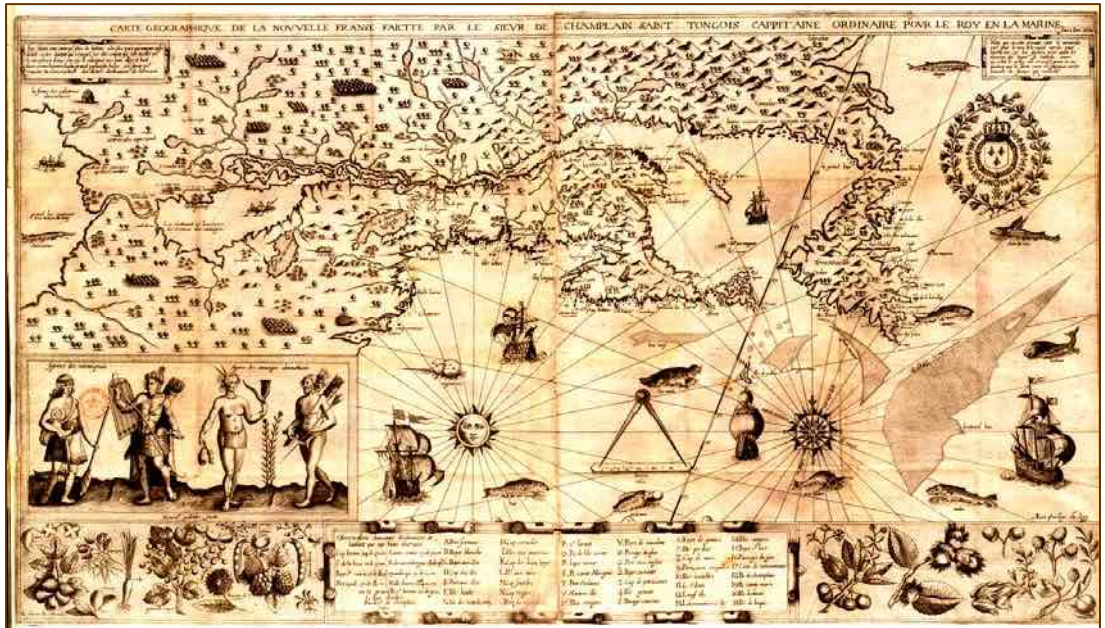
encouraged British settlement in Canada, particularly in the area of Ontario known as Upper Canada. During this period, some of my Scots-Irish ancestors were paid to emigrate from Ireland to Canada.

A small shipload of them made the journey in 1819, after reminding British officials that they had been promised passage. The emigrants were an extended family cluster including grandparents, children, spouses, and two “orphans.” It is consistent with later accounts that one of the orphans (whatever that term meant when it was recorded in 1819) was my second-great-grandfather.

Photocopies of the records documenting the correspondence, journey, and emigration are housed in a single location that we have identified — a one-room library in a small township in Ontario.

Finding these records has been a case study in Canadian research. First, we used the 1840 through 1880 U.S. censuses to locate the emigrant and his family after he moved to the United States and settled in Illinois and then Wisconsin.

Records in a county library in Wisconsin included a biography that also was available at the Family History Library in Utah, which I had not known to check. These efforts helped follow the first two instructions from CanadaGenWeb, to identify the time period and the location in Canada.



An early 1600s French map of part of New France, by French explorer Samuel de Champlain. New France comprised the area from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains, and Hudson Bay to Louisiana. Note the depiction of plant and sea life, and native peoples the explorers encountered.

Without starting in the United States and working backward, we likely would never have found him. Within Canada, we conducted family-name land record searches at the Toronto Public Library.


The next instruction from CanadaGenWeb (after notes about finding ancestors born or living “somewhere” in Canada) is to *become familiar with the area where the ancestors lived.*

Learning about the land, laws, and living conditions at the time your ancestors lived someplace is an invaluable approach. Each of Canada’s provinces and territories has a GenWeb site, with numerous links to online resources and regional archives.

Although many Canadian records are available online (e.g., through FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com, and smaller digital collections), the only way to access some Canadian records is to be on site.

The provinces and territories have archives rich with records, documents, maps, and helpful staff. The national repository, Library and Archives Canada, has some online links at the Canadian Genealogy Centre Web site. Additionally — as we found — local historical societies and town libraries often have findings that are not available elsewhere.

Once we found where in Canada my emigrant ancestor settled initially, we located what may have been his extended family in Ireland. We used Irish newspaper accounts and church records to draw a circle around his origins. We have not yet closed the circle enough to identify his parents, or how he and his brother were orphaned. Nor have we traced the family back to Scotland.

Without the keystone information from Canada, we would know little about him, and quite possibly would never close the loop. 

FamilySearch.org: Genealogical rollercoaster

By Richard Rands

The desert highway leading into Barstow, California, in the late 1940s has long since been smoothed out, but I still remember as a very young boy the excitement of the wild ups and downs in the family car, just like riding a rollercoaster at the amusement park.

Sometimes the sonic pace we are experiencing in the genealogical world triggers that same excitement from years past, as I experience the changes that are sprung upon me nearly every day.

A few weeks ago, as I made a last minute check of the General Land Office Web site before presenting a session at a seminar, I discovered that the night before, the entire site had been replaced with something new, leaving me no time to redo my slides.

Just last week, the morning before another presentation, I just happened to revisit a Web site that was key in my slides, and discovered that an entirely new collection of data had been added to the site, rendering my presentation obsolete. It has been reported that the LDS FamilySearch department has added 90 million new records to their FamilySearch.org site just recently. For someone who tries hard to stay current,

it is surely a wild ride.

Speaking of FamilySearch.org, it is important to be aware that besides having millions of new records available, FamilySearch made numerous changes in December 2010 to the Web site that has been the standard search site for LDS-held records since the Internet went public.

Perhaps you have been aware of the fact that the LDS Church has been working feverishly on numerous projects, including the Indexing Project, labs, FamilySearch.org, new.FamilySearch.org, wiki.FamilySearch.org, and beta.FamilySearch.org. Some of these projects have been used as test benches for trying out new ideas, gathering feedback, and tweaking ideas. As it turns out, toward the end of December 2010, a compilation of these trial sites was implemented as a replacement site for the old FamilySearch.org site. In other words, if you try to go to the usual FamilySearch.org Web site, you'll be taken automatically to the new site, which has a completely new look and feel.

This article will try to clarify the changes as they stand right now. But you should go back to the site

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Ask the doctor Linking a PDF to your database

Q I upgraded to PAF 5.2 quite a while back and am now ready to add photos and documents in PDF format to individuals. I've gone to the help section and followed the instructions for "How to add multimedia to individuals" but have not been successful.


From the individual screen, I clicked Options and selected Multimedia. When that screen popped up, I clicked Add. I next clicked on Browse, and when I attempted to reach the specific file I wanted to add, I got the message, "No items match your search," or "Invalid file format." I'm running 32-bit Windows 7; is there a compatibility problem?

PAF does not allow a PDF file to be linked as a multimedia file. You will need to have your photos and documents in the usual multimedia formats such as .jpg, .tif, .bmp, etc. To see the list of supported file formats, try to add a photo and then click on the

Browse button. Then click the down arrow at the right of the box for specifying the "Files of Type" and it will show you all the file types you can link in PAF. It has nothing to do with Windows 7.

Note that this is not the case for all genealogy database software. For example, **RootsMagic** allows you to add a PDF to the media album for the source. Go to the Media album (Media button on the Edit Person screen), choose Add, and select File from the pull-down list of Image, File, Sound, or Video. You can browse for and add a PDF. It will link to the PDF, but you can't print the PDF inside a RootsMagic report.

To do this within **Ancestral Quest**, click on the Scrapbook button in the Edit Individual screen, select Add, select Document as the item type, and browse to the document you want to add. You can select a PDF. Click OK, and you create a link to the document.

Something similar is likely to work in most other genealogy database programs. 

FamilySearch.org *(continued)*

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frequently to keep up with the wild ride as it unfolds.

The first point is to not be confused by new.familysearch and the December release of FamilySearch.org. They are two entirely separate applications. New.FamilySearch is still in beta test and currently is only available to members of the LDS Church. FamilySearch.org is the Web site fully open to the general public and is where millions and millions of records can be searched, including many of those that were only available at the old FamilySearch.org site, but now includes the newly indexed records from the Indexing Project, as well as the images from the film and book digitizing project. It also includes access to the Family History Library catalog where you can identify the microfilms useful to your personal research and have them sent to your

local Family History Center.

The second point is to understand which record collections were brought forward into the December release from the old FamilySearch.org. When you performed a search on the old site, the record collections that were included consisted of the International Genealogical Index (IGI), the Ancestral File, the Pedigree Resource File (PRF), the U.S. Social Security Death Index (SSDI), the U.S. Federal 1880 Census, and the Canadian 1881 and British 1881 Censuses.

Because the last four of these record collections (SSDI and the censuses) are primary source records, they have been carried forward in their entirety into the December release of FamilySearch.org. However, the first three collections, the IGI, the Ancestral File, and the PRF, contain some data that are not based on primary sources, and hence, have not been carried forward in their entirety.

The bottom line is that the LDS Family History department has made a valiant effort to select from these three collections only that information that they consider to be backed by reasonably credible primary sources. I say *reasonably* because sometimes the sources fall into a gray area that makes the data worthy of consideration as a starting point in your research, but should be researched further to establish their accuracy.

Steps have been taken to limit misinterpretation beyond the records' intrinsic value. For example, the bulk of the IGI database contains records that were extracted from original microfilm by LDS volunteers over the course of many years. These records consist primarily of birth, christening, marriage, death, and burial records

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch.org Learning Resources page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Learn', 'FamilySearch Centers', 'Give Back', and 'Blog'. The main heading is 'Learning Resources' with the subtext 'Explore the world's largest, free collection'. Below this is a search bar with the text 'Search through 40,000+ Wiki Articles' and a search button. The page is divided into three columns: 'Research Wiki', 'Research Courses', and 'Get Started'. Each column has a representative image and a short paragraph of text. The 'Research Wiki' section includes a link to 'Go to the Wiki'. The 'Research Courses' section includes a link to 'Get Started Now'.

The FamilySearch.org *Learn* link now provides instructions on how to use the features of the site, including the research wiki, online courses, and help in getting started.

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FamilySearch.org *(continued)*

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transcribed by volunteers who pored over the microfilms being collected by the Church. The technology did not exist to link the transcriptions with the images, so only the film numbers could be traced.

Recently the old extraction program has been replaced by the current Indexing project, with the technology to connect the indexes with the precise image from the films. Some years ago, additional records were allowed to be inserted into the IGI that were contributed by LDS members, but that came from personal family histories, many of which had never been verified with sources. This later portion of IGI records has been omitted from the December release of FamilySearch.org. Consequently, you can be reasonably confident that IGI records at FamilySearch.org are based on primary sources.

The situation with the Ancestral File and the PRF is not quite as clear. These two collections consist of genealogical information contributed largely by LDS members from their personal family histories. Back in the 1950s, every LDS family was strongly encouraged to submit to the Church four generations of their family history. These genealogies were keypunched onto punched cards and fed into the old mainframe computers, eventually forming the Ancestral File. Accordingly, it contains lineage-linked data that could be followed back many generations.

Problems arose when different factions of the same family submitted four generations that were not identical. Since the project had no provision for source documentation, the brutal conclusion was that you cannot distinguish between good genealogy and junk genealogy. Later, the PRF collection was started as a means to create a cleaner database, but it too resulted in the same weakness.

Since the Ancestral File and the PRF contain


potentially useful genealogical details, at least as possible leads that may lead to finding your ancestors among the millions of new records not available decades ago, the records in the Ancestral File and the PRF have been carried forward into the December release of FamilySearch.org, except that the multiple lineage linkages have been disabled.

This makes it such that you can use the individual's information only for your research (or parent's information from birth records), and cannot build family trees without doing further research to validate the connections. Furthermore, you cannot down-load these records using the GEDCOM format to be loaded directly into a computer database, thus making it a bit more difficult to use the records without an overt effort to examine them carefully.

Finally, the research guides, language word lists, and other helps were not brought forward

into the new site, but were added to the wiki site, wiki.familysearch.org.

A 24-page description of these and other aspects of the December release can be downloaded by following the What's New links on the site. Be cautious, however, that this document is not keeping up-to-date as more changes and collections are added to the site. The first several pages have a good table listing things that could be done on the old FamilySearch.org site, with the corresponding steps for how to do them on the December release site.

Also, be aware that, at least for the time being, the old FamilySearch.org site is still available should you still wish to access those portions of the IGI, the Ancestral File, and the PRF that have not been carried forward to the December release site. There is a link to the old site near the bottom right corner of the December release site. 



Users can link to this page describing the numerous changes in the December release of FamilySearch.org.

Get in touch with distant cousins

By Allin Kingsbury

A longtime friend of my wife expressed a desire to know more about her father's family. She told how her parents separated after her birth, but neither spouse believed in divorce, so there was none. That did not stop her father from marrying a second time and raising a second family. The friend wanted to know more about her father and about his second marriage.

My wife said, "Allin knows how to find people on the Internet, and he can find out about your father's second family." You all can guess what happened next: I was obligated to prove the veracity of my wife's claim, or else experience a decline in the quality of my meals if I failed.

Search for unknown siblings

The father had died. However, one document had reached the Internet and thus saved my reputation. A granddaughter from the second marriage had submitted a family tree to Ancestry.com. The second marriage had produced four daughters, all identified as "living," with no dates listed. The only remaining clue was the name of the granddaughter, who had used her full name in the Ancestry listing.

Fortunately, many Web sites are available for finding living persons. Using usa-people-search.com, I entered the name of the granddaughter who had submitted the information to Ancestry. Since I had no further information, I left other fields blank. Because her name is uncommon in the United States, the results included only one individual young enough to be a granddaughter. She was 26 years old and had resided in New York City and Boston. These search sites

require a paid subscription for source documents. The free results also included two possible relatives who could be the woman's parents. Additional searches indicated that they lived in Boston.

The next step was to find a phone number or e-mail address. Ancestry.com does not list e-mail address for the authors of family trees, but anyone can send a blind message through Ancestry.com. Since the submitter had not visited the site within the last six months, I looked up the telephone number of the possible mother in Boston.

I reported back with the results. It had all taken less than half an hour, including the e-mail to report the results. We concurred that a personal phone call might be better than a letter, so that my wife's friend could gauge the attitude of the possible half-sister. As it turned out, the half-sister said that only one sister was still living, and that this sister probably would refuse to provide any family information.

The woman contacted by telephone seemed willing but cautious. She agreed that the granddaughter could contact her. We scored the phone call as a victory.

Look for family historians

I have used this procedure many times to contact distant cousins. Sometimes I get a great deal of information, sometimes merely a "Hello, nice to meet you." The most rewarding contacts are with family historians actively doing research. These individuals are almost always willing to be research partners and share the information they are finding. I have never contacted a distant cousin who was hostile to the research I am doing.

A few wanted to help but were too busy to invest any time.

Through these contacts, I found several treasures that I never would have thought to search for. The first was a well-written, four-page letter written by my second-great-grandmother in 1851 to her family in Pennsylvania. She had migrated to Iowa in 1839, a year after Iowa Territory separated from Wisconsin Territory in 1846. She described visits by Native Americans living near Iowa City. From the window of her home she could see the tents of the nearest tribe across the "road" from their farm. She reminisced about picking wild strawberries in a clearing where the first state capital was located, now part of the University of Iowa campus.

Another treasure is a photograph of my third-great-grandfather. My mother had a blurry picture of him taken from a distance. A cousin had a better picture handed down in her family. This picture completed my set of reasonably good photos of all my third-great-grandparents.

The greatest genealogical treasures resulted from collaboration with a third cousin in New York. I successfully found records about ancestors, while this cousin, a marketing manager, got good results from written queries. Between us we solved the mystery of our mutual ancestors who lived in New York, but whose children were born miles away in Pennsylvania. It turned out that the family went to Pennsylvania every summer, when the babies were due. The records were in New York, where the family home was located.

It can be relatively easy to track

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Get in touch *(continued)*

descendants through several generations to the 1930 census. In many cases, the age, state of birth, and name spelling is off; look at whole families to connect the individuals from census to census.

Many descendants of my third-great-grandparents are listed in online trees, which vary in quality. Even incorrect trees provide clues.

Moving on to the living

Individuals born in the 20th Century may follow different migration patterns than individuals from earlier centuries. Modern transportation and economic trends have made recent generations more mobile. One difficulty with researching individuals living in the 20th Century is matching the correct individual with vital records information. Find the full name, birth date, spouses, children, and residences.

The U.S. Public Records Index in Ancestry.com is compiled from phone books, directory assistance records, marketing lists, postal records, public record filings, and historic residential records for 1950 through 1993. The index may contain the full name, complete address, telephone number, and birth date or age. Children under 18 years old are not included.

Individuals found through a search are not necessarily living, since records in the database may go back at least 20 years. One feature added recently to a site I often use is the ability to click on each possible relative and see his or her possible relatives, residences, and other names. You are never sure of relationships unless you use corroborating sources.

You may want to use several people-search sites. For example,

the usa-people-search.com site limits the number of possible relatives to three. Another site might have no such limit, but the ages of the possible relatives might not be stated.

Some people-search sites are specialized. Classmates.com might find the individual, his or her graduating class, and high school. Other sites search business or corporate affiliations. Other sites search for dentists, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals.

The last step

Once you make friendly contact with a relative, you could start with general questions such as these:

- Are you interested in knowing something about the history of your family?
- Do you have any information about your family?
- Is someone in your family col-

lecting family history information?

Summary

Finding cousins is different than finding ancestors. Even though some public records are not public, many sources, including a number available through the Web, can help you verify facts.

You may find more information from a phone call than from e-mail or postal mail, and even more if you can visit in person. Even if you are nervous about talking to strangers, someone else in your family could make the contact. Some persons have a talent for getting others to talk about themselves and their families.

If you contact someone unwilling to share information, you might find that the information is available from another close relative.

Good luck as you try to contact your distant cousins.

Find-a-cousin? Can it be that easy?

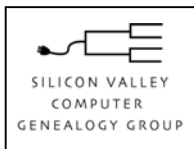
Sometimes it is easy. Some relatives find your e-mail address on a Web site and are delighted when the first message they send results in an exchange of documents and digital images.

Surname lists, surname sites, and newsletters — many of which you can sign up for online — are an excellent way to connect to distant cousins (and aunts, uncles, etc.).

On RootsWeb, for example, you can search the archive of surname lists, join numerous lists, post new queries and responses, and contact others.

The key to being found, however, is to use an e-mail address that has longevity. Sometimes a distant relative will spot your post from a decade ago. It will be difficult to contact you if you no longer use that e-mail address.

At least one commercial British site is attempting to grease the wheels of the cousin-finding process. Lostcousins.com offers free basic searching, although only subscribers can initiate contact with new persons they find through the site. Several times a year, all members have the same access as paying subscribers.



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Electronic contribution of articles is welcome. The editors reserve the right to accept, reject, and edit articles.

Upcoming SVC GG meetings, events

The group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 a.m. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right).


See the Meetings section of our Web site (www.svcgg.org) for any last-minute changes in the class lineup each month.

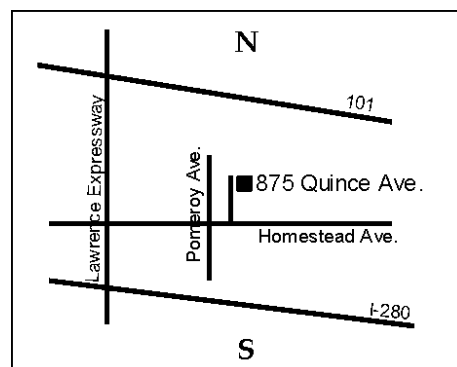
Classes for 12 February 2011

- Customizing your database
- Research in Canada
- RootsMagic (series)
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- Help for Beginners

Classes for 12 March 2011

- U.S. land records

- Sourcing and citing with genealogy software (Susan Goss Johnston)
- Getting started with Reunion
- PAF and PC's for Beginners - Q & A Help for Beginners 



See www.svcgg.org/directions.html

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVC GG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. The group is based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California, but members live all over the world.

PastFinder is the official publication of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. Published monthly except December, *PastFinder* is distributed at meetings to

members in attendance and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter by e-mail containing a download link.

SVC GG offers research tools and materials through its Web site, www.svcgg.org.

Membership dues are US\$15 per household per year, US\$20 for Canada, and US\$25 for other international locations. 