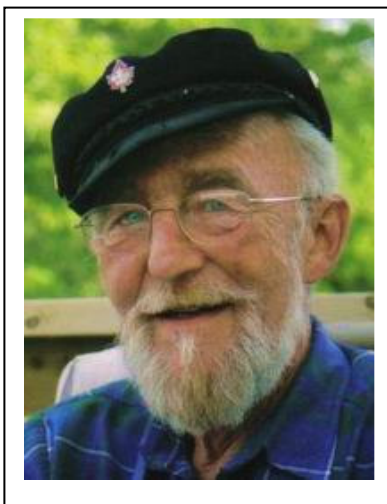


The Family Historian

Patrick Wohler

Column #31

Don't Reinvent the Wheel



Early on in our Family History research, it is worth while to check and see if anyone has worked on it before. We can ask the older members of the family, check the Rootsweb Name Board for the family, ask at the local archives if anyone else has been asking about the family. Many archives keep track of the research interests of their patrons and ask permission of the researcher to share their name with those of similar interests.

In my Mason family research, I have met (mostly via cyber space) at least nine fellow researchers currently dedicated to different branches of the family.

In earlier days, before Genealogy became a main stream interest, it was a popular choice of research focus for a number of clergymen. This was fortuitous because they often had the academic background and discipline to do a good job and had access to human and documentary resources that are no longer

available.

The initial research on our Hickey family was undertaken by a Jesuit priest and I have copies of some of the material that he collected.

A recent project has me looking for some of the writings of Pastor Robert Shields of the Almonte Reformed Presbyterian Church in the 1860's. They are housed in the Seminary in Pittsburg. A more recent Pastor of that Church, Dr. Robert More, is a respected historian.

Another family that I am working on is the Cahills. They were the original settlers on Lot SW26, Concession I, Drummond Township, in 1817. Their story has been documented by an Oblate priest, who is a descendant. I am now in correspondence with the archives of the Oblate Order to see if I can obtain access to any of his papers that they might have.

It might be worthwhile to see if there is a clergyman in your family and where his papers might be. One of his family, archives of Churches and parishes or congregations might just render up a treasure for you.

R.C.M.P. Records

I recently responded to a query by a researcher in Bayfield, on the shores of Lake Huron. He was looking for information on an ancestor who had been a member of the R.C.M.P .

The early personnel records of the Force, and what remains of those for the NWMP and the Dominion Police, are in Record Group (RG) 18 at Library and Archives Canada. They are not available on-line but you can find out on-line if there is anything for the person you are researching.

The search page is at: www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02010502_e.html . The search is by Keyword and Record Group. Type in the family name of the person you are searching as the Keyword and 18 for the Record Group.

You will be presented with a list of files about this person with their file numbers and, sometimes, an access code. Generally the access code will be "90". This means that the file is open and available for consultation. If it is some other number, just click on the "access code" and you will see a list of the codes and their meanings. Sometimes a file, itself, is restricted but a microfilm of it is available.

If you don't remember the RG number or are looking for someone who might be in some other RG, there is a finding aid on the search page which will give you the number you need.

Usually you can order photocopies of a file from the Archives, but if the file is large, it could get fairly expensive. I prefer to go to the Archives and see the file myself. Parking is somewhat limited there so a lot of researchers use the Park and Ride technique from Kanata.