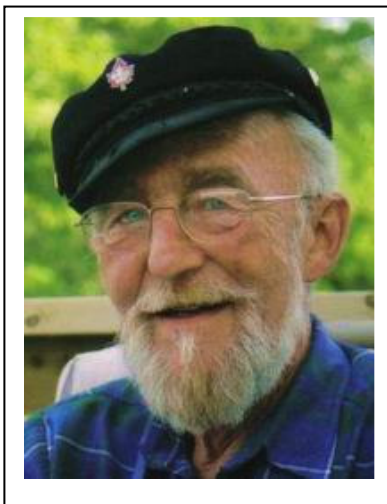


Clues from Postage Stamps



Family correspondence, if you can find it, can provide a lot of leads to people's origins, distant family members, and significant events. Often, however, the old letters have been thrown out but don't give up yet. Someone may have saved the envelopes or the stamps and, if you can find a stamp collection in the family, especially with the envelopes intact (so that you know it was sent to your ancestor) you could be in luck.

The stamps, themselves, will be able to tell you the country of origin of the correspondent and a date range for the correspondence. The date of introduction for each stamp and the period in which it was used is known and published in such books as *Scott's Stamp Catalogue*, which may be available in your local library. If the catalogue suggests that there are variations of this stamp over time, you might want the help of a stamp collecting friend who will be able to identify your stamp

more easily.

The other thing to look for is the cancellation and you may want a magnifying glass for this. There may only be a partial one on the stamp but, if you have several stamps from the same correspondent, you may be able to put together the post office of origin and then you will know what town or village or part of a city these letters were mailed from. If you only knew that someone was from Germany, then finding that the bulk of their German correspondence was from Brake, gives you a place to start looking for their origins.

The Rebellion Losses Bill in the Service of Family History

The passage of The Lower Canada Rebellion Losses Bill has long been regarded as a milestone in Canadian History. Although one had already been passed in Upper Canada, to indemnify people who had suffered property damage and losses due to the Rebellion of 1837-38, the opposition to the one in Lower Canada was noisy, vituperative, and violent. The real significance of it is that having been passed by the Assembly of Lower Canada and despite all the agitation, Lord Elgin gave it Royal Assent on 25 April 1849.

This is widely regarded as the birth of responsible government in Canada and what a birth! The labour pains included rioting in the streets, supporters of it being hanged in effigy, the governor being pelted with rotten eggs, and the parliament building in Montreal being looted and burned.

The bonus for Family Historians, however, is that the government set up a Commission of Indemnity to investigate claims of losses. The files of that commission are filled with original documents proving property ownership, values of losses, information on relations, substantive testimony from witnesses, details of their life and history, accounts of rebel and loyalist activity, returns of judgements, and details of social life and local military history that are a joy to read.

The *fonds* has been incorporated into the Department of Finance *fonds* (RG19) at the National Archives in Ottawa (NAC) and occupies 11.8 metres of shelf space. The new Reference Number for the series is: R200-113-0-E. There is a computer generated finding aid (#19-13) and a hard copy, listing claimants in alphabetical order, with the volume number of their file, in the Reference Room of the NAC. Ultimately it will be placed on-line.

The detailed claims made by residents of Upper Canada are included in an Appendix to the Journal of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada from Dec. 3, 1839 to Feb. 10, 1840 and these are available on-line at:

http://www.canadiana.org/ECO/mtq?id=cbb2655eea&display=9_00942_17+0486.

There were thousands of claimants, so if you had ancestors anywhere near the scenes of action in the Rebellions, it might be worth checking these out.