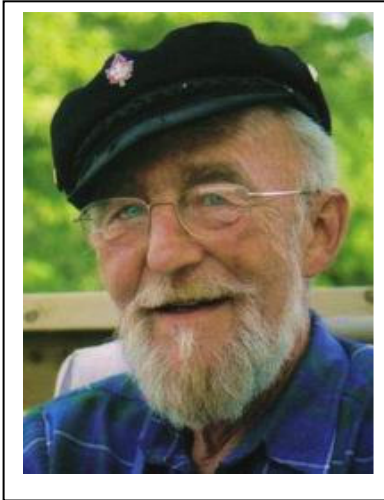


When You're Desperate



I was recently doing some research for a writer in Vancouver and needed some information from a small town in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. Internet sources that I had previously used for that area were no longer available and what I could find on the web wasn't helping me. The area had a very minimal web presence. There was not even contact information for the village council.

It looked as though we would have to brave the winter highways to go there ourselves and bang on doors until we found someone that could help us. Before taking the plunge, however, I found the addresses of all the churches in the area and sent them letters or e-mails asking for help.

Replies were slow in coming so I was desperately wondering who I could bother next that would, at least, be likely to respond. On the Province of Quebec's Tourism site I found an e-mail address for an office in that area and whipped off an e-mail.

Although I hadn't tried this route before, it turned out to be a really good move. The address was actually for the local Chamber of Commerce and the manager there got an answer right back to me with the name and phone number of a person who would be likely to be able to help me.

In the 'very long' telephone call that ensued I met the most delightful couple who were not only willing to help but who knew about the persons I was researching. It also turned out that the wife and I, as children, had summered at the same place at the same time--It was like old home week.

In the fullness of time I also heard back from three of the churches. In one case a volunteer from the church had actually gone to the local museum and found and photocopied a pile of material for me on my subjects. In another, the parish secretary did not have what I was looking for but she had actually known the people I was researching and shared some of her memories of them.

You just can't beat Family History research for meeting the most wonderful people and often in the most unexpected circumstances.

Military Medals

Many Family Historians have a few war medals that were awarded to an ancestor but may not be sure what exactly they are, which ribbon goes with which, or what is the proper form to display them.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has come to the rescue with an online resource. You can visit their site at: <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=collections>. On this page, select "Canadian Orders, Medals and Decorations". You will be taken to a page where you can select the category of medals you are interested in. Select the medal that looks like yours and you will see it with its ribbon and have an explanation of why it was awarded. Clicking on the medal will bring you to a larger picture of it that is virtually full size and makes for very easy identification.

This is a very nice clean site, is intuitive and easy to navigate. Your medals will no longer be a mystery.

More City Directories

The Toronto Public Library has a good number of 19th Century City Directories on-line at: <http://digit.tpl.toronto.on.ca:8000/>. It is a rich site but not entirely intuitive. To search for a person you can just do a simple search of all directories with the dialogue box that appears when you hit the 'GO' button. Results show up at the left of the screen showing the number of hits in each directory. Select a directory and click on the page icon beside the entry to see an image of the actual page of the directory. For anything more elaborate you had better give yourself a bit of time to study their "Help" pages. The service was temporarily down when I checked it out last Sunday, so I can not be absolutely sure that that the process is still as I have described. Good hunting.