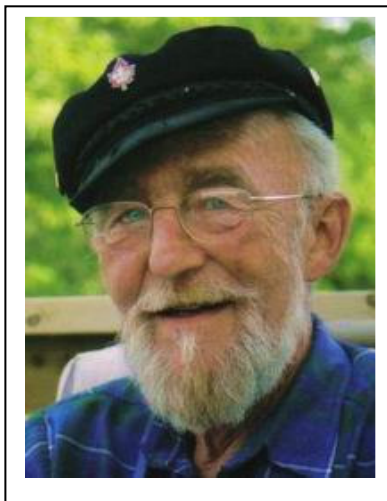


The Family Historian

Patrick Wohler

Column #76

My Cyber Trip to Alaska



Reader, Wally Clemens sent me to Alaska. Ever since he was a young teenager, he has been trying to track down a great grandfather who left the family and disappeared. Wally has done an incredible research job and he has identified a possible candidate who died in Alaska.

The case is not made any easier by the fact that the man's name was Samuel Clemens, the same as writer, Mark Twain. Sporadic pieces of evidence seem to fit together but there is yet no definitive evidence that the man in the Alaskan grave is his long-lost great grandfather.

Alaska is an enormous state, bigger than Ontario and almost as big as Quebec. Its population, however, is less than that of the city of Ottawa. The capital, Juneau, is about the size of Arnprior and the largest city, Anchorage, is smaller than Kingston. It is not divided into counties but into boroughs. The only records that these boroughs and the town maintain are usually the land records. Everything else is the

responsibility of the State Government.

Understandably, genealogical research resources are not as plentiful, especially online, as for more populous areas but there definitely are some. The state GenWeb site, <www.akgenweb.org/>, is a good portal to many of their resources. One of the important links on the page is to the Alaskan State Archives.

The Archives has an online index to microfilmed Alaskan newspapers (1866-1998) in their collections. This can be really useful if you are looking for notices of marriages or deaths. You can also use the list to find the paper for a town where you might want to send a letter to the editor looking for help from readers.

There are a several resources for records of prospectors during the gold rush. Not everyone who went to Alaska, however, went to stake mining claims. Many went for the express purpose of separating the prospectors from their hard-earned gold and others simply chose to go there to live.

Some cemetery records are available at <interment.net/us/ak> and some census material at <censuslinks.com/Alaska>. The Alaska Bureau of Vital statistics is responsible for all the state vital records. The vital records, themselves, are not available online but you can get access to them through <<http://vitalrecords.alaska.gov/dph/bvs/>>. Some ships passenger lists are available at <yukonalaska.com/pathfinder/gen>.

Questions about wills and probate would have to be directed to the Alaska Court System at <http://www.state.ak.us/courts>.

A good way to communicate with other researchers interested in Alaska and who might be able to help with your queries is to use the Rootsweb Bulletin Board at <rootsweb.com/~jfuller/gen_mail_states-ak.html>.

If you suspect that one of your ancestors may have disappeared, try Alaska – it's a fun place to visit.

Rochester, NY, City Directories

If you had relatives in Rochester, NY, you will be interested in the fact that City Directories from 1827 to 1930 are being digitized and put online. To date they have reached the 1850s. This is being done by New York's Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County from their collection.

You can either browse through a directory or select a section like alphabetical divisions of names. Viewing the images requires the free Acrobat Reader. If it is not already installed on your computer, you can download it from: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. A great advantage here is that the images are printable and downloadable.

To have a look at these directories, go to: <http://www.libraryweb.org/rochcitydir/citydirectories.html>.