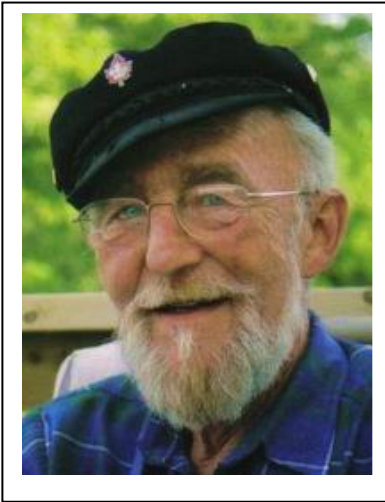


**Too Many Dates**



Reader, Kathleen Ogg-Moss, recently wrote to me about an interesting situation in which there were three different birth dates found for the same individual. The Family Bible gave June 24. A family register in the father's handwriting specified June 22. The 1901 Census listed it as June 20.

This is more than just a simple case of establishing reliability, although on that basis, I would eliminate the Census as a contender. We just do not know who gave the information to the enumerator and under what conditions. Furthermore we know that there have been many errors in birthdates in the Census.

The exact dates here may be a factor and we would have to know a little more about the family. June 24 is St-Jean-Baptiste Day in Quebec. If the family were proud Francophones, they might have done a bit of jiggery-pokery with dates to have a child born on that date. Conversely, if they were Francophobes, they might have

done the same to ensure that the child did not appear to be born on that day.

While this may sound a little silly, we have a case in our family where an outspoken anti-Catholic English father had a daughter born on March 17<sup>th</sup>, St. Patrick's Day. He doctored the records to make it seem that she was born a day earlier.

There is also the possibility that, if the family were very religious, they were both right. The child being born to the world on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and baptized (born to Christ) on June 24<sup>th</sup>.

It would be helpful to be able to check the other entries in the Bible for their accuracy and to know when the entry was made. Its reliability is much greater if it was entered shortly after the birth rather than much later. The same is true of the family register.

The ideal solution, of course, is to find a church record or vital registration of the birth but this is not always possible. I, then, have a final question. 'How many of you know fathers who could tell you the birth dates of their children?'

It is not a perfect world but we just might have a 'definite maybe'!

**Locating Western American Land Grants**

If you have found a deed or land patent in the Western States for an ancestor, there is now an online Graphical Locator to help you find the exact location of it. It works for the 17 Western States: Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

The Locator is at: <http://www.esg.montana.edu/gl/trs-data.html>. It is supplemented with another program: <http://www.terraserver-usa.com>. The instruction page on the Locator site is very useful and I would be inclined to print it out to keep it handy. It also explains the land survey system which is very similar to that used in Western Canada.

Townships run East/West and Ranges run North/South. Each township measures one square mile and is divided into thirty-six Sections.

Results of a search will include links to topographic maps and aerial photographs. A good tool.

**A Note to Readers**

I thoroughly enjoy hearing from you and, as many of you can attest, I try to maintain a 24-hour turnaround time for my replies. Occasionally the volume of mail slows me down a bit, but I reply as quickly as I can.

Many of you will have noticed that, at the end of each column, I request that you include the name of the newspaper in your subject line. This is because the column runs in several local papers and I would like to know which repositories and resources are most appropriate to suggest to you. It doesn't hurt me with the editor either.

Many thanks and keep the e-mails coming.