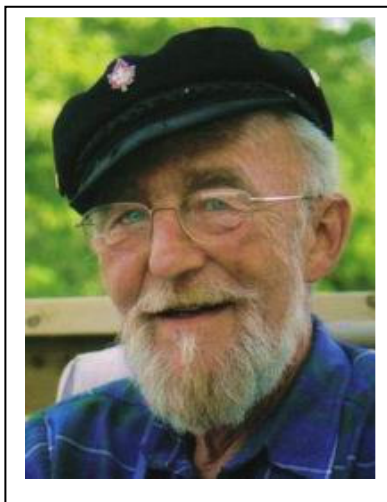


The Family Historian

Patrick Wohler

Column #88

Jewel of An Archives



The Arnprior and District Archives (ADA) has its genesis in the work, collections, and energetic enthusiasm of local researcher and writer, Peter Hessel. Since 1993 it has grown into a fully functioning archives with an active, interested, and involved Board of Management consisting of 10 members. These include representatives of the Township of McNab-Braeside and the Town of Arnprior, the archives' mandated area of historical interest.

The Archives is an independent non-governmental agency and a registered charity that depends on grants and donations for its operation.

It is managed by a part-time professional archivist, Laurie Dougherty, who also trains and supervises a cadre of active volunteers. (In the interests of full disclosure, I am one of those volunteers). These volunteers assist researchers, conduct research, develop archival projects, raise funds, and serve on various committees.

The extensive and growing collections include business records and family documents of the Gillies and Stewart Families, two of the earliest mill owners in the area, and other collections pertaining to the lumbering industry; a number of family collections which document the life and times of area residents; Tweedsmuir Histories produced by the several Women's Institutes of the area; Renfrew County Land Registry Records (1867-1967); microfilm copies of area newspapers from 1888 to the present; cemetery records, Assessment Rolls, and census records. You can see a more detailed list on their website at www.adarchives.org.

The archives also has an active publishing program. It has produced three volumes of Birth-Marriage-Death abstracts from local newspapers (1888-1930). Some of these are now out of print but they have all been transferred to CD-ROM format and are available for sale. Other publications include the Arnprior Village Census – 1891 and The Early Commercial Photographers of Lanark and Renfrew Counties 1850-1925.

The facilities in the archives include two microfilm readers and a microfiche reader and they are developing a fund to acquire a microfilm reader-copier, a tool in much demand by researchers.

The ADA is located on Madewaska Blvd. in Arnprior, on the lower floor of the Arnprior Public Library building and is open Monday to Saturday from 1 to 4 pm. There is ample parking and there is no fee for the use of these resources. You might want to consider joining the growing number of researchers who are finding answers to their questions there.

When It Seems Too Good To Be True

Denver-based Morphcorp, owned by Maxwell MacMaster, has been offering an attractive bargain. Their genealogical "Family Yearbook" will contain your family history, coat of arms, family recipes, and even family jokes and all for only \$44.85 U.S.

Over 150,000 people couldn't resist this opportunity. The Colorado Attorney General, John Suthers, however, wonders how come all these families had the same coat of arms, recipes, and even jokes.

Advertising flyers claimed that MacMaster and/or his wife was related to the recipient's family and promised genealogical research specific to your family. In fact no specific genealogical research was done.

A further element of false advertising was the claim that the price requested was a special pre-publication offer. This was demonstrably untrue.

A suit launched in late November 2005 seeks to close down the operation, pay refunds to the purchasers, and penalize MacMaster up to \$2000. per book. This could amount to \$300 million dollars. It is also claiming the costs of prosecution. Go for it Colorado!

You can read the Press Release from the Attorney General's Office about this at: http://www.ago.state.co.us/press_detail.cfm?pressID=733.

The popularity of Family History has spawned a variety of scams and it is definitely a 'caveat emptor' or 'buyer beware' market. A number of these operate on the internet and they are more difficult to apprehend as they can pop up at another site and under a different name.

A favorite gambit here is to offer a subscription site at a very reasonable cost. As a subscriber, you can submit a query and they will point you to a number of sites that might help. You can get more help from 'Cyndi's List', which is free.

Our only real protection is due diligence and a healthy skepticism and check out anyone who wants your money or information. There is a Santa Claus but there is no free lunch and if something seems too good to be true--it probably isn't.

I welcome comments, queries, and suggestions at: p_wohler@hotmail.com

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