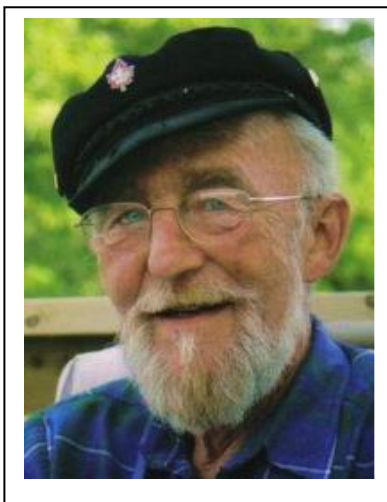


Send Us Your Children



One of the more poignant aspects of our immigration history was the importation, between 1869 and the 1930s, of 100,000 children from the British Isles. About 70,000 of these were settled in Ontario.

They came from all over the British Isles and their ages ranged from 6 months to the early 20s, although most were between 7 and 14. They were a sad mixture of orphans (about 30%), abused children, some were what we used to call juvenile delinquents, others were 'street children', and some were just from families that could not support them. Some of them came in groups, organized by about fifty child care organizations such as Dr. Barnardo's and the Quarriers (Glasgow), and they are known generically as 'Home Children'. The demand for them in Canada consistently exceeded the supply.

If you have older parents or grandparents from the British Isles, who refuse to talk about their family or background, it could be because they were Home Children. There could be other reasons, of course, but this one is worth following up.

In Canada many of the boys were sent to farm families, where they could supply cheap labour and many of the girls were used as 'mother's helpers'. I have read a few accounts these children wrote in later life, where they reported that they were well treated and brought right into the family. There are also many heart-rending cases where they were treated badly, virtually as slaves.

The British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa (BIFHSGO) has been seeking out arrival lists and transcribing data on the Home Children. That database is available online at: www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02011003_e.html. The years covered to date are: 1869-71, 1873-1894, 1896-1910, 1912-14, 1916.

The URL above takes you right to the search page for the database and you simply have to type in the name you are looking for. I would use only the surname, because some are identified by their first name and some by initials only. You will be presented with a list of hits and each name entry has age, sex, ship, and year of arrival.

To the left of each name is a page icon which will take you to a more detailed entry for that individual. It includes the Port and Date of Departure, the Port and Date of Arrival, The name of the group, if known, their destination in Canada (sometimes just a town and sometimes the individual receiving them), and the microfilm reel number. There is also a Comments section which can include such information as the number of children in the group.

Personally, I would go back to the microfilm reel at Library and Archives Canada. Here you could find who else was in their group. There might have been siblings that you knew nothing about or other children bound to the same destination. Both of these could be followed up for more information on your ancestor.

There are several organizations dedicated to re-linking the Home Children with their British families. You can find these by doing a Google search for "Home Children" (with the quotation marks). Heritage Renfrew is heavily involved in these children with a group that was founded and is chaired by Dave and Kay Lorente.

If you would like to know more about the Home Children, I would suggest visiting the Heritage Renfrew site at: <http://www.orphantrainriders.com/HomeChild/HomeMenu.html>. Actually their domain name expired last week and is now pending renewal or deletion. I am preparing this column on Sunday morning so I cannot check to see if they intend to renew or not.

InGeneas Expands

The inGeneas database has recently been expanded with more Toronto Emigrant Office Records, more Quebec Passenger Arrival Records (those from 1872) and Protestant Burial Records from Prince Edward Island. So if you have tried inGeneas unsuccessfully in the past, it may be time to try it again.

The database is located at <http://www.ingeneas.com/>. Type in the surname you want and, along with the information, you will be able to tell what kind of records in which they have found the information. Searches on this site are free but if you want copies from the records there is a moderate fee.