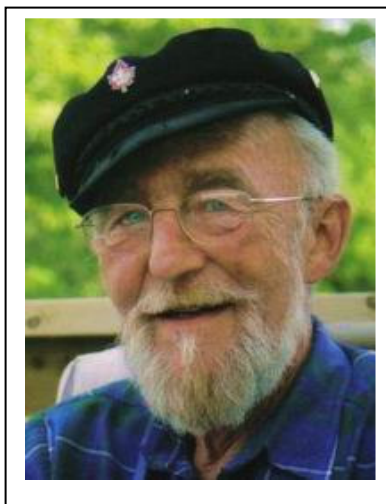


Tracing Those English Ancestors



Finding archival information on your English ancestors from a distance has been made a lot easier by a collaborative project of about 500 record holding institutions. They have pooled their catalogues into an integrated online resource called A2A (Access to Archives).

Searching the catalogue is easy. You can search the whole thing, if you don't know where your ancestor was from or you can narrow the search if you do know the area. The narrower the search, the fewer inappropriate responses you will receive.

Just go to their site at: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a and click on the 'Search' button. You can do a "Keyword" search using the name or place that you are interested in and you can select the region of England, if you know it. Every document that contains your 'Keyword' in that region or in all the archives will be listed for you.

You may have several hits so you will have to select each and scroll through the catalogue listing. Your 'Keyword' will be highlighted in yellow. Each record has a document number which is highlighted in red. Note the number of any documents that you are interested in.

You will likely want more details of the document to see if you want to order a copy of it. Go to the blue lettering near the top of the screen and select <Catalogue in Full>. Scroll down to the yellow highlighted Keyword and you will get a little more detail.

If you want to order a copy of the document, select the record office name at the top of the screen and then their e-mail address. Copies are generally quite inexpensive. This is a very user friendly site and it can save a trip across the pond or hiring a local researcher to do it for you.

If "Invalid Access" appears on your screen, it is usually because you have don't have cookies enabled and they must be enabled to gain access. When I tried it, I was delighted with the way it worked.

Irish Censuses

I have sometimes wondered why I could never find any useful Irish national censuses to help in my research. Mark Skulnick has finally cleared it up for me in an article in the new magazine, Internet Genealogy.

National censuses were taken in Ireland every ten years from 1821 to 1911. The first four of them (1821-1851) were destroyed when the Public Record Office burned in 1922. The next two were destroyed shortly after the censuses were taken and the next two (1881 and 1891) were pulped during WW I because of the paper shortage. Therefore none of the returns from 1821 to 1891 survived.

Now, just to cheer you up a little, the 1901 and 1911 censuses will be going online. This is a collaborative project with the National Archives of Ireland and Library and Archives Canada and the 1911 census is scheduled for completion in December 2006.

More Help in Dating Photographs

A number of readers have contacted me for help in dating photographs because of the work Judy and I did on the early commercial photographers of Lanark and Renfrew counties. I am delighted when I can help. But what if your photographer is not from this area?

Roger Vaughan might be able to help. He is a British collector with several thousand early photographs and his website is a gold mine of information. Hundreds of photographs are organized by date so that you can compare your image with them and get a feel for the date by both costume and style of studio backdrop.

A section of the site that is of even more interest to me deals with the designs on the back of the photographs. It is, in effect, a dated catalogue of these designs and I have found many of them on photos in our area.

He even has the date of introduction of many of the designs. It is a wonderful resource and you can check it out at: www.rogerco.freeserve.co.uk/index.htm. Explore the whole site, I'm sure you will find it interesting too.