

September Genealogy Column

Welcome back from your busy, fun filled, hazy days of summer to the bustling month of September. After the summer break the Medicine Hat Genealogy Society (MHGS) start their regular monthly meetings from September through to next June. The MHGS meets on the first Wednesday evening of each month at 7:00 pm located at 974 – 13 ST SW. across from Hillside Cemetery.

As you reflect on your summer, and your thoughts quietly drift to the snowy months ahead – think of tracing your family history, and learning how your ancestors fit into local, national, and world events. The MHGS library has many resources to help you with your research. I will take you on a “mini” tour of our library, and share some of the genealogical and historical materials available, to help you research your ancestors.

As we start our tour of the library, we find over 130 Community History books full of family histories and stories. These history books give us a peek into yesteryear's past, what life was like when our pioneers began to settle this part of Southern Alberta. These books give us the opportunity of stepping back in time and piecing together the family as it existed up to 100 years or more. This section also contains 50 family histories, compiled by local families, and donated to the MHGS for everyone's enjoyment and use.

Our latest acquisition is the entire inventory of AGT phone books for the Province of Alberta, beginning with the 1907 Medicine Hat directory. These AGT phone books are a gift to us from the Telus Corporation, and cover every district in the province.

This fall we are beginning to scan and index each year's book. The MHGS has just purchased a new Fujitsu SV 600 scanner that will help us with this huge undertaking. This will enable members and the public to search, locate phone numbers and addresses of ancestors who lived in Alberta in the last 100 years to the present. Each phone book is organized into districts, and will give us information of where they lived, their unique phone number, also who their neighbors were and what kind of businesses were located nearby.

Moving down the library, we find a complete listing of obituaries clipped out of local newspapers and organized into binders, one for each year, dating back to 2000 and beyond. Also, indexed are the 1950 and 1960s obituaries located at the MH public library, which give you the year date and page number for your search. Included in this section are binders with birthday and anniversary announcements, clipped and saved over the years.

The back wall of our library contains research material from most of the Canadian Provinces. The Canadian census records and publications from many Provincial Societies are located here. Also, a pull down screen that is used for presentations, etc.

If you are searching for a family member's burial record or plot location, the library has binders with this information. Not only are the Medicine Hat cemeteries listed, but many from across the province are listed and indexed too. The Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS) cemetery data base is housed here as well. With this data base you should be able to locate a family member's burial plot in Alberta.

For those of us searching for ancestors in England, Scotland, Ireland, Europe and the USA, there is a section full of information to help you with your research. Included here are Census records, County and State records, as well as passenger and immigration lists. These lists give us the dates of arrival, the ships name and others who may have accompanied our ancestors to the new land. Old maps, world atlases, survey charts, and rural directory maps of Alberta and Sask are also found in this section of the library. One book of interest in our library for anyone researching English roots, would be to browse through our copy of the Domesday Book commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1086. This book is a survey and inventory account of land and goods, so that taxes could be collected for William the Conqueror.

One of our largest sections in the library, and probably one of the most used, is the Germans from Russia collection (GRHS). This large collection of materials contain Black Sea, Volga and Bessarabian Census and birth records. Numerous reference books and articles fill these shelves, including Galezion, Eastern Europe and American Historical Societies of Germans from Russia. The complete compilation of research papers by Ferdinand Schwab is included in this section as well. A must read book for Germans from Russia is the Karl Slumpp book detailing the emigration from Germany to Russia from 1763 to 1862. If this is your ancestry, this section of the library is an important research stop and a must to visit.

Whether genealogy is part of your regular routine or a pastime, I hope this information brings you that enticing, exciting opportunity to discover your family story. I encourage you to "come visit and stay awhile"!

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