

Genealogy: A century of Alberta telephone books

By Medicine Hat News on August 6, 2016.

Well folks, summer is half over. Have you been out harvesting your garden? That is the genealogical garden, finding some strong healthy roots to support your forever growing family tree. In order for these roots to remain healthy, they will need accurate and indisputable source citation. A genealogical source is the record used in locating the information you are attaching to your ancestor. By citing the source of your information you are guaranteeing the accuracy of your posted research.

Sources come in a wide variety such as census records, church records and local history publications, etc. There are however many other ways to document your research.

Recently the Medicine Hat and District Genealogical Society (MHGDS) received a gift of 100 years of Alberta telephone books. These telephone books are a complete set of books for every location in Alberta for 100 years.

You can now use these old Alberta telephone books as a “source citation” for your family research, and use the MHDGS as a “reference location.”

In the spring of 2015, the Medicine Hat Telus Community Ambassadors Group donated the entire collection of old Alberta telephone books to the MHDGS, for our use and safe keeping. Since then former club president Clark Lang has been busy scanning and digitizing these telephone books. So far, only the Alberta telephone books from 1907 to 1956 for Medicine Hat and Lethbridge have been scanned into a searchable PDF file at the following link: <http://www.mhdgs.ca> for the general public to access and use. As well, there are a few South Central, Calgary and Edmonton telephone books scanned to date.

On this site you can find names of our early city pioneers, their addresses, phone numbers and who their neighbours were. Also, who and where the early businesses were located. Because the phone books were issued every year, they give a much more accurate analysis than the census records, of where our early Albertan ancestors may have lived between the 10 years census.

An added bonus to accessing the telephone books: You can track your ancestors' residence location on Google maps and see where they lived.

To access the Alberta telephone books, place our website — <http://www.mhdgs.ca> — in your search engine to open the Medicine Hat genealogy website. When the site opens, go to the right hand side of the yellow ribbon where it lists the word ‘searches’. Put your cursor on the word ‘searches’, then go down to Alberta Telephone Books and click on it. This will open up the site where all the phone books are. The highlighted locations show the books that have been scanned to date. Click on one of these locations and you will be able to access any one of the books listed there.

The telephone books scanned to date are only a small number of the total pages still to be scanned. The MHDGS is committed to scanning the complete set of the Alberta telephone books. To this extent MHDGS is reaching out to the wider community for support in an effort to complete the project in a timely matter.

Once completed, the huge log of names, addresses and phone numbers will have an enormous impact in the world of genealogy. This information will be available to anyone worldwide, who may have had ancestors living in Alberta in the last 110 years.

The MHGDS website has had numerous visits, and positive comments. It is rewarding to know that the Alberta telephone books scanned are already in use. A woman from Vancouver stated in a thank you note, the information found made it possible for her to Google the addresses and find photos of the area, and the houses in which her ancestors lived.

I appreciate your emails and hearing from you.

Lloyd Robinson is president of the Medicine Hat Genealogy Society. He may be contacted at