

ALBERTA
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Relatively Speaking

Journal of the Alberta Genealogical Society © 1973

In This Issue: President's Message; Sergeant Arthur Clifford Pettifor, C/95400; Letters from an RCAF Airman During WWII; The Many "Shades" of Gray, The story of two members of the RCAF from Medicine Hat; Manny Raber and Raber's Department Store, Medicine Hat History; What better a time to write his story?; Themes for *Relatively Speaking* February; Author Guidelines; A Poem For Ar-lene; Finding Gold on Cortes Island; Remembering Joachim "Jo" Nuthack; ABCs of Genealogy—Under the B; Themes for 2025; Spinning Webs; Index



Alfred Scott, an air frame mechanic with the Royal Canadian Air Force during WWII, sits second from the left amongst his fellow airmen at the Service Flying Training School #7, Fort Macleod, Alberta. His son, David Scott, recounts his father's story and that of his uncle Adam Hodgins of Carp, Ontario, starting on page 139. Their contributions to the war effort with the RCAF were among many others filling the pages of this issue.

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RELATIVELY SPEAKING

Mission Statement

Relatively Speaking is the quarterly Journal of the Alberta Genealogical Society whose purpose is to support the goals of the Society by providing:

- a regular, attractive, high-quality periodical
- articles of genealogical and/or historical interest
- genealogical articles written by youth
- information on family history, genealogy resources, methodology, research tips and collaborative events
- timely information regarding major AGS events and Conferences

The Publication

RELATIVELY SPEAKING is produced by a team of volunteers, and uses contributions submitted by members and supporters of the Alberta Genealogical Society.

RELATIVELY SPEAKING is published and mailed on or about the 15th of February, May, August and November. Closing dates for receiving contributions are the 15th of December, March, June and September.

We accept contributions on a wide variety of topics that will be of interest to anyone researching their family history and that are appropriate to our Mission Statement and theme of the issue. We especially welcome those with an Alberta connection.

Final authority for acceptance or rejection of material rests with the Editor and Ad hoc Editorial Committee. Neither the Alberta Genealogical Society nor ***RELATIVELY SPEAKING*** assumes any responsibility for errors or opinions on the part of contributors.

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In This Issue

In the following pages we honour the achievements and sacrifices of our family or hometown forebears who contributed to WWII in the air. We also have the pleasure of hearing from AGS president Lianne Kruger, in her welcoming message.

Aerial missions were indispensable to the Allied victory, and by 1945 the Royal Canadian Air Force was the world's fourth largest. More than 17,000 Canadian airmen had perished. Many of their remains lie in cemeteries across western Europe.

Bob Franz shares the enlistment story of his mother-in-law's brother Arthur Pettifor, who was part of a significant air offensive in the spring of 1945 in proximity to his and his crew's burial place in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery.

David Scott explores the experiences and hopes of his uncle Adam Hodgins through the airman's and others' military records and letters, and shares his own father's adventures as an RCAF ground crewman, while William Anhorn relates the story of Allan Middleton and Kenneth Gray, two RCAF airmen from the author's home town of Medicine Hat who served together over the skies of Europe.

Lynn Hart Myette relates the history of another respected Medicine Hat citizen, air gunner Manny Raber who survived being shot down over Belgium only to endure being a POW before returning to Alberta where he joined the family department store, while Denise Daubert relates her journey discovering her Great Uncle John Neill's contribution to the RCAF.

Through written logs and archives uncovered during a 2024 trip to Cortes Island, Lynne Duigou shares the experiences of her Danish grandparents who set up in the Discovery Islands, while John Althouse pays fond tribute to mentor and friend Jo Nuthack, AGS member, supporter and trailblazer who passed away this year. Finally, a gift for longtime AGS volunteer Arlene Borgstede lights up the genealogical landscape, with a poem by her niece.

As always, my gratitude to the team that consistently pulls together an engaging and informative issue every quarter. You and the authors are what makes *Relatively Speaking* come alive.

Kate Wilson, Editor

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| In This Issue..... | 133 |
| President's Message..... by <i>Lianne Kruger</i> | 134 |
| Sergeant Arthur Clifford Pettifor.....by <i>Bob Franz</i> | 135 |
| Letters from an RCAF Airman During WWIIby <i>David Scott</i> | 139 |
| The Many "Shades" of Gray by <i>William Anhorn</i> | 146 |
| Manny Raber and Raber's Department Store by <i>Lynn Hart Myette</i> | 154 |
| What better time to write his story? by <i>Denise Daubert</i> | 157 |
| Themes For February | 161 |
| <i>Relatively Speaking</i> Guidelines for Authors | 162 |
| A Poem for Arlene by <i>Arlene Borgstede</i> | 163 |
| Finding Gold on Cortes Island by <i>Lynne Duigou</i> | 164 |
| Remembering Jo Nuthack by <i>John Althouse</i> | 168 |
| ABCs of Genealogy by <i>Denise Daubert</i> | 172 |
| Themes For 2025 | 173 |
| Spinning Webs by <i>Denise Daubert</i> | 174 |
| Index | 176 |

President's Message

by Lianne Kruger



Relatively Speaking is an amazing journal that AGS should be proud of, including this issue on the RCAF 100th Anniversary. I enjoy the stories and the step-by-step process genealogists took to reveal one person or family of their family's history. Thank you to all who contribute to the journal.

I have enjoyed reading the reports of what branches are doing. As usual, each branch has exciting and new activities. Monthly branch meetings help members feel a part of the group. Plus, they give members a time to help each other by celebrating each other's successes and helping with other challenges, and just having fun with friends.

Please mark your calendars and set aside Saturday, April 26, 2025 for the AGS GenFair and Annual General Meeting in Red Deer. Thanks to Red Deer Branch for being willing to organize the Gen Fair again this year. There will be sessions throughout the day, with the AGM at the end.

In my inaugural President's report, I would like to say how nice it is to see and work with board members I worked with before, for almost 10 years, and to meet new board members who joined in the last two years. Thank you to all who volunteer to make this society vibrant, to those who put in the time, energy, skills, know-how and talents to come up with new ways to help Albertans, and anyone from around the world, find their family history in Alberta. You do a great service.

RS



**2024 is the
Centennial of the
Royal Canadian
Air Force**

Read stories about our
earlier generations'
contributions in this
issue of *Relatively
Speaking*



Bob Franz is a Past President and life member of the Alberta Genealogical Society. He has written several articles for genealogical and history publications. Besides genealogy, Bob enjoys reading and writing science fiction, high fantasy and alternate lifestyle fiction. His short stories have appeared in print and digital anthologies and e-zines. He has also had shows of his artwork, and holds "Master Artist" status in the Alberta Community Art Clubs Association.

Sergeant Arthur Clifford Pettifor, C/95400

by Bob Franz

Arthur Pettifor, my mother-in-law's brother, was born in Cowley, Alberta, September 25, 1916 – the third eldest of six children – to CPR Station Agent Walter Thomas Pettifor and Kathleen Pettifor (née Hackett). He attended high school at Killam and then technical college at National School in Los Angeles 1937-1938 to study engines and machine shop. Between 1938 and 1940 until his enlistment, he worked for the Eastern Irrigation District as a tractor and auto mechanic (diesel engineer) in Brooks, Alberta where his father had transferred as station agent. He was active in the local Brooks militia (South Alberta Regiment 1st Battalion) since it was formed in response to the war. He initially applied for recruitment in January 1940 but was rejected due to his height. His attestation listed his height as 5' 4 ½ inches and his weight as 120 lb.



Arthur Pettifor was enlisted with the RCAF as an aero-engine mechanic.

Arthur's mother passed away May 3, 1940 and he reapplied for recruitment in August of that year. He was enlisted with the RCAF as an Aero-Engine Mechanic. At that time, he was unmarried. A patriotic and dedicated serviceman, he moved up from AC2 (Aircraftman 2nd Class) to AC1, LAC (Leading Aircraftman) and then Corporal.



Service Flying Training School (SFTS) barracks.

A rations coupon places him at RCAF Number 7 Service Flying Training School at Fort Macleod July 4, 1941. The following entries in the No.7 S.F.T.S. Operations Record Book give a snapshot of what the life of a trainee was like at that time:

4/7/41 1240 hours. *Anson Aircraft 6555 and 6567 ... delivered to station from Regina. Flying Officer Bisson in Aircraft 6555, whilst taxiing onto Apron, brakes failed when applied. Pilot seeing that collision with stationary Aircraft was unavoidable, closed throttles, cut switches, jumped from the Aircraft, and by exerting pressure on fuselage at Tail Assembly managed to swing the Aircraft enough to avert a serious collision.*

4/7/41 2100 hours. *The Airman's Dance Committee held in the Recreation Hall, their final Dance of the season, and a very enjoyable time resulted. Approximately 200 couples attended. The music being supplied by the Station Dance Orchestra. A great ovation was accorded to Class 33, who arrived from Australia, while the Dance was in progress.*

13/7/41 2000 hours. *A Picture Show was held in the Recreation Hall under the supervision of the Canadian Legion.*

14/7/41 1600 hours. *36 proud graduates of course No 27 received their coveted wings at the hands of wing Commander James. This being our first open air Wings Presentation ceremony, it allowed approximately 400 friends and visitors to witness this presentation. Tea was served to the Officers and their wives and friends in the Officers' Mess.*

15/7/41 1145 hours. *Anson 6268, Pupil Pilot, LAC Buls R.S. (403129) R.A.A.F., Course No 28, whilst landing at No. 2 Relief Landing Field, Pierce Alberta, overshot, crashed into fence, causing damage to Flaps and wire cuts on Leading Edge. Temporary repairs were carried out and the Aircraft was flown back to station.*

August 23, 1941, seven weeks after his arrival and while on leave, Arthur married Gertrude Roselie Biron of Beaver Mines in Fort Macleod. His record indicates another leave in October 1942. On July 23, 1943, a daughter, Julie Ann Cecilia, was born in Fort Macleod. In a conversation with a relative many years later, Roselie mentioned that Arthur and his father, who had transferred to Coleman as station agent, had gone to the Coleman Grand Union Hotel for some beer, that she had been angry with her new father-in-law over some conversation that he and his son had, and that she still was angry.

The nature of the conversation is now obscure, but shortly thereafter Arthur made a crucial decision that would affect all their lives—he pursued training as a Pilot Officer.



The Canadian built Avro Lancaster MkX served in the 431 Squadron of the RCAF.



Insignia of RCAF Squadron 431

In completing a Personal History Form (dated 6-9-43) as part of an application for further training, Arthur indicated his goal since graduation was to enlist in the air force. He listed his interests as tennis, swimming, horseback, hunting, fishing, physics and chemistry, but noted that in high school he failed French and art. He reported his leisure interests were music, movies, the Readers Digest and the newspaper.

He was approved for training, and in a report on November 15, 1943 from No. 3 W.S. (Wireless School), Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he had taken a 10-week training course, he was described as a “*quiet, unaggressive, sincere Airman*”, medically unfit to be a Pilot and with marks too low to be a navigator, but suitable as an Air Bomber and recommended to be considered as a Flight Engineer. In a training course from May 8 – 20, 1944 at B & GS (Bombing and Gunnery School), Fingal, Ontario – which offered instruction in the techniques of bomb aiming and aerial machine gunnery – his instructor described him as “*Good student, works hard. Slightly deliberate. Average student.*” June 11, 1944 he wrote a Service Will and was placed under Active Service.

Arthur served initially in 432 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force before joining 431(B) Squadron (The Hatiten Ronteriios [“Iroquois”]) as a Pilot Officer. The Squadron was formed in November 1942 as the RCAF's 11th bomber squadron. The squadron was equipped with Canadian-built Avro Lancaster Mk X aircraft from October 1944. Their motto was “*Warriors of the Air*”.

Arthur's last leave was between May 31 and June 3, 1944. On Sunday, March 11, 1945, 431 Squadron Lancaster X KB853 SE:A took off at 11:42 hours from RAF Croft in North Yorkshire. It was part of the largest number of aircraft sent to a single target as of that date, with 1,079 aircraft participating. It was also the last raid on Essen, Germany. Complete cloud cover led to the use of Oboe sky-marking, the most accurate bombing system used in the war, coupling radar tracking with radio transponder technology. Some 4,661 tons of bombs were dropped, paralyzing Essen until the Americans arrived.

A total of 897 people were said to be killed, although there is no proper report on this raid, such was the level of disarray. It is estimated some 7,000 people from Essen were killed in air raids throughout the war and the population of the city halved due to people leaving for country areas for their own safety.

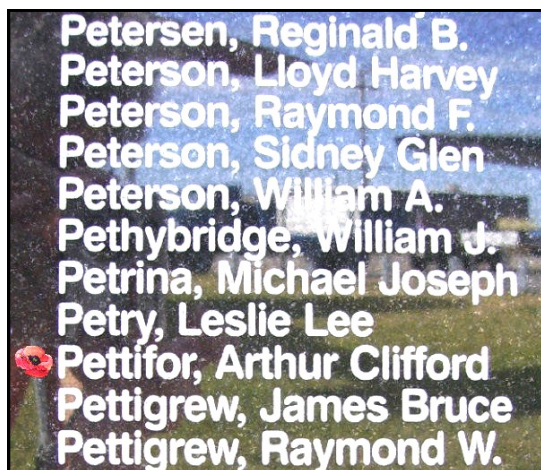


Canada's Bomber Command Memorial was built in 2005 on the front lawn of the Bomber Command Museum in Nanton, AB.

Lancaster KB853 was one of only three aircraft not to return, crashing in the target area and presumably a victim of flak, the Luftwaffe being unable to match this type of heavy onslaught. The crew was at first reported missing. In a letter dated March 12 to his wife, it was noted Arthur had nine operational sorties to his credit and a total of 67 operational hours over enemy territory, and that there was a possibility he was a prisoner of war.

On November 8, 1947, in response to a letter received in

October indicating his son had been found buried in Park Cemetery along with a fellow pilot Charles Fraser and that their remains were being relocated, Arthur's father replied:



"This matter of my son, has always seemed rather peculiar to me. It would appear that the vision I had at the time was more definite (sic) than an (sic) information received (sic) for the last three years. In this vision a German lady was trying to tell me something and pointing to something horrible. No doubt these were friendly people and no doubt saw that these bodies were buried in a German cemetery (sic). It would be interesting to locate these people something may

be learned about the crash. Another vision I had at the time was Arthur showing me a tiny piece of machinery and trying to explain something to me. He appeared to be at work on the rear of a plane. He asked me if I understood. I said no. He in a tone of regret said, "It is too bad you do not understand" and faded out of sight. These are only visions of course, but if they can be of any use to anyone trying to find out more about this matter it is well. Thanking you for your kind letter."

There appears to have been no response to the letter. The crew was subsequently reunited and buried in the Reischwald Forest War Cemetery:

Pilot: Wing Commander Ralph Frederick Davenport RCAF C/190 [Killed]
 Engineer: Pilot Officer Sgt. Arthur Clifford Pettifor RCAF C/95400 [Killed]
 Navigator: Flying Officer Donal Kevin Joseph Hector RCAF J/40804 [Killed]
 Bomb Aimer: Flying Officer Wendelin Rink RCAF J/40335 [Killed]
 Wireless Operator/Air Gunner: Pilot Officer WO2 Charles William Fraser RCAF J/95308 [Killed]
 Mid-Upper Gunner: Pilot Officer Hubert George Bishop DFC RCAF J/92591 [Killed]
 Rear Gunner: Pilot Officer Flg. Sgt. Clarence Reginald Lecky RCAF J/94158 [Killed]

Engraved on Canada's Bomber Command Memorial are words from a speech made by Chaplain Father Lardie in 1985 at the dedication of another memorial at Middleton-St. George, UK:

"Three thousand miles across a hunted ocean they came, wearing on the shoulder of their tunics the treasured name, "Canada," telling the world their origin One day, when the history of the twentieth century is finally written, it will be recorded that when human society stood at the crossroads and civilization itself was under siege, the Royal Canadian Air Force was there to fill the breach and help give humanity the victory. And all those who had a part in it will have left to posterity a legacy of honour, of courage, and of valour that time can never despoil."

Sgt. Arthur Clifford Pettifor, with 1680 days of service, 265 overseas, now rests in Reischwald Forest War Cemetery Grave 14.D.6. He had little time to spend with his wife and even less with his infant daughter. His marker bears the personal inscription:

*THEY HAVE THEIR DAY AND CEASE TO BE: THEY ARE BUT BROKEN LIGHTS OF THEE
 (In Memoriam A.H.H., Alfred Tennyson)*

Yes, they have ceased to be, but will never be forgotten.

RS



David Scott was born and raised in Montreal, PQ. He earned a BSc in Engineering at McGill in 1971 and an MSc at the University of Alberta in 1974. Dave worked for the Alberta Dept. of Agriculture for 32 years, retiring in 2006. Shortly after he joined AGS and began to research his Scott ancestors. He and his wife traveled to England with the 2010 London Trippers. David enjoys gardening during the summer months and skating in winter, and volunteers at the Greenfield Community Seniors Luncheon. He and his wife live in Edmonton.

Letters from an RCAF Airman During WWII

by David Scott

If you have ever traveled south from Calgary along Highway 2, you will go through a town called Nanton and likely spot a jet plane on a pedestal outside of a museum. This museum is the Bomber Command Museum of Canada. Outside the museum is a memorial containing over 10,000 names of those who gave their lives serving in Bomber Command during WWII. I know one of the names on this memorial, Adam Kidd Hodgins, my uncle.

From his military records and the many letters that he wrote home while overseas, I was able to put together his story as an RCAF Airman.



Bomber Command Memorial, Nanton, AB

Bishop's University in the Faculty of Theology. After spending only one year there, he went back to farming on his father's farm.

War broke out in 1939, and on January 31, 1941 Adam enlisted with the RCAF recruiting centre in Ottawa. He was accepted and recommended as either an Air Observer or a Pilot. Over the next year, Adam received training in the BCATP (British Commonwealth Air Training Program) at several training schools – Picton, ON; Victoriaville, QC; St. Johns (St. Jean), QC; Jarvis, ON and Pennfield Ridge, NB. In December of 1941 he received his Observer's Wings at the Bomber and Gunnery School, Jarvis, ON.

Dispatched to England and Training

On February 28, 1942, Adam, along with many other military personnel, boarded a ship at Halifax port heading for England and arrived March 9 at the No. 3 PRC (Personnel Reception Centre), Bournemouth Port on the southern coast of England. This was one of several arrival points for thousands of

Early Years

Adam Kidd Stewart Hodgins was born January 16, 1912, the first of four children born to parents Howard and Ellen Hodgins who operated a dairy farm west of Carp, Ontario. The second child born was Adam's sister Vera, who was my mother.

Adam grew up on the farm, attending primary school and high school in Carp, Ontario.

In 1932, Adam enrolled at



Adam Hodgins, uncle of the author, was born and raised on a dairy farm near Carp, Ontario.

Commonwealth aircrew after training in Canada. The role of the PRCs was to register the airmen, conduct medical examinations and administrative processing of the airmen, provide accommodations for them and assign them to squadrons, training units or other duties. Adam spent about a month here before being assigned to further training.

On May 11, Adam was assigned to No 3. AOS (Air Observer School) located at RAF Bobbington airfield, just west of Birmingham. This unit was one of ten in the UK which provided further training for navigators arriving back from the BCATP in Canada to the UK. They trained on day- and night-long distance navigation missions over the Irish Sea on Avro Anson and Bothas aircrafts.

In a letter dated May 15, 1942, Adam writes that his good times are over. Notice that parts of the letter have been cut out as every letter was censored before it was mailed. A few days later he writes home telling what it is like to fly over the countryside and going to dances during his time off.

In another letter Adam writes about the 1000 Bombing raid on Cologne which took place on Saturday/Sunday May 30/31.

Adam was at Bobbington until June 16, 1942 when he was then assigned to No. 23 OTU (Operational Training Unit) at RAF Pershore, located at Throckmorton, Worcestershire. No. 23 OTU was part of the No. 6 Group RAF Bomber Command Group which trained air crew members on night bombing operations using the Vickers Wellington twin engine, long range, medium bomber. OTUs were the last stage of training for aircrew before being assigned to an operational unit in the theatres of war. Shortly after arrival at an OTU, airmen would “crewed up” with other men with whom they would fly. This was done on an almost random basis by men picking each other until they had the necessary mix of trained air men to make up a crew – much like picking baseball team members in our youth.

These crewmen would fly together for the rest of the war barring illness, death or reassignment. The Wellington bomber required five crew members: Pilot, Wireless Operator, Bomb Aimer (Observer), Forward Gunner and Rear Gunner. These bombers were not heated and at altitudes of 20,000 feet temperatures were very cold. During this time, Adam wrote several letters home asking for socks and shirts and other items. He then received several parcels of socks, shirts, candy, peanut butter and cigarettes (yes, he smoked) to the point where Adam had to ask his family not to send any more as he had enough to last a year.

In late 1941 the RAF acquired heavier bomber aircraft—the Avro Lancaster and the Handley Page Halifax. To “convert” air crews trained on medium bombers to these heavier bombers, the RAF introduced Conversion Units where crews would be further trained to operate the heavier aircraft. After his training at No. 23 OTU, Adam was assigned, on September 1, to a Conversion Unit with the 405 RCAF Squadron located at Topcliff, Yorkshire in northeastern England.

My good times are over now for a while as we are back to school again and flying at an advance flying observers school in the midlands just on the boundary between England and Wales. It is a very nice country and the Scotland, England and Ireland

A portion of Adam's letter home, May 15, 1942

we are situated in. We are only on an advanced training station for Observers. It will be quite a while yet before we or at least I will be on any bombing raids over enemy territory. It is quite easy to get lost flying over here if you are not on your toes all the time while you are up flying. Not like in Canada. There are so many towns, roads, railroads that the country all looks alike. All small fields little rivers and little clumps of trees all over. There are dances every Wednesday and Saturday nights about 9 or ten miles from the station at. and where I go every Wednesday and Sat. nights if I am flying at night. They have

Adam's letter dated May 19, 1942

The Halifax aircraft required seven crew members: Pilot, Navigator, Wireless Operator, Bombardier (or Bomb Aimer), Flight Engineer, Mid-Upper Gunner and Rear Turret Gunner.

Adam was the Bombardier. As the aircraft went into a bombing run, the Bombardier would lie flat in the nose of the aircraft below the pilot, directing the pilot to the targets until all the bombs had been released and photographs were taken. The photos were the proof the operation had been completed. The Bombardier would also act as the front gunner in case enemy planes were spotted.

finally arrived back on my new station. I am on the 405 Squadron supposed to be the best Squadron over here in Bomber Command. It is practically an all Canadian Squadron which makes you feel more at home with everything. I have finally got my biggest desire which was to be flying on big four engine bombers and am quite happy about the whole matter now. Perhaps when I complete my term of operations I will have a chance to get back to Canada to train as a pilot which I am going to fight hard for.

I am enclosing a picture of my crew that was taken when I was at O.T.U. but now we are getting two more so there will be seven of us flying together all the time. I will write the names on the back & addresses so you will know their names and where each comes from. I want you to keep it because it is very precious and they are a fine bunch of lads as I want it to look back on in you to come when there is no more and we are all separated again.

Above left, in his letter of September 8, 1942, Adam shares his hopes of training as a pilot when he gets back home. At right is Adam's letter of September 18, 1942.

On September 8, after returning from leave touring the countryside, Adam writes home expressing his future desires.

September 18, Adam writes home again and includes a picture of his crew OTU members taken while in OTU, and describes how precious this picture is to him and wants to keep it to look back on after the war is over.

This picture is below.



This photo of Adam Hodgins with fellow aircrewman includes Gordon Manning, who sent a postcard to Adam's family while Gordon was a POW. From left to right top row are Gordon Manning, Saint John NB; Ward Ralph Waddle (Pilot), Tavistock, ON; Wendell Black, Toronto, ON. Bottom Row: Woodrow W. Waddell, Cotton Wood Falls, Kansas, USA; Adam Kidd Hodgins, Carp, ON.

contained a general summary of each operation, along with the weather and other operational activities of the squadron for each day.

Bombing Missions over Germany in the Theatre of War

It wasn't until September 27, 1942 that Adam and his crew were assigned to the 405 Squadron operational unit. It was now for real. Together they would carry out six bombing missions over German territory as listed below. These missions were all carried out from Topcliffe, taking off before midnight and returning the following day.

The information following is taken from the Operational Record Books and the Details of Sorties for No. 405 Squadron RCAF Squadron, Topcliffe, Yorkshire, AIR 27-1787 from The National Archives, London. The Details of Sorties shows the date, destination, target, and bomb load for each operation and, for each aircraft on the operation, a list of all crew members, the time up (takeoff) and the time down (landing), as well as a briefing report from each pilot after they returned. The Operational Record Books

These two documents together provided a wealth of information as to the missions and what these Air Force men experienced. The operations that Adam was on are listed below.

1. October 2/3, Bombing attack on KREFELD, 10 Aircraft Detailed.
2. October 5/6, Bombing attack on AACHEN, 10 Aircraft Detailed. 1 Aircraft crashed on return flight.
3. October 6/7, Bombing attack on OSNABRUCK, 7 Aircraft Detailed. 1 Aircraft missing.
4. October 13/14, Bombing attack on KIEL, 11 Aircraft Detailed
5. October 15/16, Bombing attack on COLOGNE, 10 Aircraft Detailed. 1 Aircraft missing.
6. October 23/24, Bombing attack on GENOA, ITALY, 10 Aircraft Detailed.

In case you did not get my last letter or so I am flying on Big black Halifax Bombers now. Four engine jobs just what I was hoping to get on some day. I have been on a no of operational trips over Germany's happy valley and planted a few tons of bombs on the target for tonight starting big fires and destruction hoping to get them to get them to give in and get the war over with. We have a damn good crew of seven members and only once have we come back with any holes in our kite which goes to show it is not sunshine over there even though it is dark night.

Adam's letter dated October 11, 1942

On October 11, after the attack on Osnabruck, Adam writes home.

Every mission experienced mishaps. They all encountered flack as they approached their targets, and many planes returned to base riddled with holes. In one instance the pilot was wounded in the neck by flack but managed to drop the bombs and return to England. Some aircraft experienced malfunctions on the way and had to turn back. On the mission to Cologne, Adam's aircraft had the rear turret malfunction just off the coast of England, forcing them to return to Topcliff. On one aircraft, while diving to release bombs on Krefeld, the starboard inner engine exploded. The aircraft

became uncontrollable and lost altitude but the pilot regained control and pulled out of the dive at about 100 feet. However, one of his crew had bailed out unknowingly. They returned safely to England. On the mission to Aachen, one aircraft successfully dropped its bombs and returned to England but then crashed in a field near West Maling killing five of the crew. The cause of the crash was never determined. There were aircraft that would not return and were reported missing. On the mission to Osnabruck, the crew of one aircraft saw another aircraft explode and all seven crew members parachuting out, the search lights spotting them, and being shot at.

405 Squadron Transferred to Coastal Command

On October 25, 1942, the 405 Squadron was transferred to No. 18 Group RAF Coastal Command operating from Beaulieu, Hampshire to assist in the protection of shipping convoys sailing to the invasion of North Africa in Operation Torch. Fifteen Halifax aircraft, their crews, including Adam's, numerous ground equipment and vehicles and personnel were relocated to this airbase.

| DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|---|------|------|---------|---------|
| BY 405 R.C.A.F. SQUADRON, BEAULIEU (COAST) | | | | | | |
| FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 1942 | | | | | | |
| DATE | AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER | CREW | DUTY | TIME | | REMARKS |
| | | | | Up | Down | |
| 8-11042 | HALIFAX II "U" | Sgt Yaddle W.R., Sgt Vaddell W.W., Sgt Hodgins L.K., Sgt Manning G.M., Sgt Maroney P.J., Sgt Black W.G., Sgt Welland A.C. | | 0300 | MISSING | |

Details of RCAF 405 Squadron, reported missing in November 1942, National Archives, England.

From here Adam and his crew would fly three anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay as follows:

1. October 30, Anti-Submarine Patrol, Bay of Biscay. 3 Aircraft Detailed.
2. November 3, Anti-Submarine Patrol and Escort, Bay of Biscay. 3 Aircraft Detailed.
3. November 8, Anti-Shipping Strike, La Gironde Harbor. 3 Aircraft Detailed. 1 Aircraft Missing.

The crew of the missing aircraft were: Sgt. Waddle, W. R. (Pilot); Sgt. Waddell, W.W. (Observer); Sgt. Hodgins, A. K. (Bombardier); Sgt. Manning, G.M. (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner); Sgt. Maroney, P.J. (Air Gunner); Sgt. Black, W.C. (Air Gunner), Sgt. Walland, A.C. (Flight Engineer).

At War's End

Sgt. Gordon Manning was the only survivor of the aircraft. When he arrived back in Canada after the war, he travelled to Tavistock to meet with the family of pilot, Ward Waddle. A *Tavistock Gazette* reporter was also invited to be there. The following is taken from the *Tavistock Gazette* article dated July 10, 1945 which quoted Gordon Manning's description of their mission that day:

"We left England flying at 80 feet above the water to evade the Nazi listening devices. As we came to our target, Ward sent the plane up to about 1500 feet and straightened out for the bombing run on a submarine we had spotted. The flack was pretty thick, and fighters came at us, but Ward drove in. The bomb bay doors were opened, and we had just dropped the "stick" across a submarine when it happened. The rear gunner had spoken through the intercom that there was a fire aft, and I told Ward I would go back to help put the fire out. Turning, I picked up my extinguisher and that's all I remember until regaining consciousness in the water. All I could see of the plane was the tail assembly sticking out of the water and Abe (Adam Hodgins) some distance away. We were picked up a short time later by a launch set out from shore. It was about 9:30 in the morning...I believe I am the only survivor of the flight...Hodgins died that night from his wounds...His uniform had been badly cut up and the officer in charge of the hospital asked if they could use mine...I believe Hodgins received a decent burial."

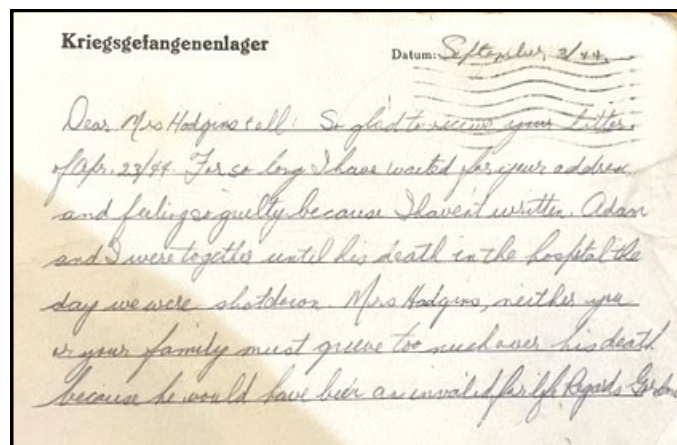
The *Gazette* article goes on to describe how Sgt. Gordon Manning, after recovering from his wounds in hospital, became a prisoner of war and was sent to several camps including Dulag-Luft III and Stalag 344. Gordon further describes how he was treated while a POW and how he escaped the camp but returned when he learned that the Americans had freed the camp. While at Stalag 344 camp, Gordon sent the following postcard to Mr. & Mrs. Hodgins, dated September 3, 1944. It reads as follows:

"Dear Mrs Hodgins & all. So glad to receive your letter of Apr 23/44. For so long I have waited for your address and feeling so guilty because I haven't written. Adam and I were together until his death in the hospital the day we were shot down. Mrs. Hodgins, neither you or your family must grieve too much over his death because he would have been an invalid for life. Regards Gordon."



Figure 12: Inscription: R95943 Flt. Stg. A. K. Hodgins, Navigator
Bomber Royal Canadian Air Force 9th November 1942, Age 30

The inscription on the gravestone of Adam Hodgins in Bordeaux, France reads: R95943 Flt. Stg. A. K. Hodgins, Navigator
Bomber Royal Canadian Air Force 9th November 1942, Age 30.



Postcard by Gordon Manning while he was a POW, sent to Adam Hodgins' parents.

My uncle Adam Hodgins is buried in the St. Bris Cemetery, Bordeaux, France. The names of the six crew members who lost their lives on that fateful day are on the Bomber Command Memorial.

My Dad was in the BCATP

In celebrating the RCAF centennial, one cannot forget the major contribution that Canada made to the WWII effort in the way of the creation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, or BCATP. Pilots and air crews were badly needed to fight in the war in Europe. Canada had an abundance of air training space, excellent climatic conditions for flying, access to the American industry and was far away from enemy threats.

The construction of the training schools and airfields was a massive undertaking by the Canadian government at the start of the war in 1939. A total of 231 sites operating 94 schools were developed across Canada. Pilots, navigators, bomb aimers, wireless operators, air gunners and flight engineers trained and graduated from these schools. The operation of these schools and airfields required well over 100,000 men and women in the way of administration, aircraft maintenance, ground crews, facility management and servicing, and so on.

After signing up with the RCAF, a recruit would start their air force career at what was called a manning depot. Here, they were issued uniforms and learned about military life such as marching drills, physical training, cleaning, and performing guard duty. After four to five weeks, a selection committee would determine which of two streams a recruit would be placed, the air crew stream or the ground crew stream. Within the air crew stream, if it was determined that a recruit was suitable to be a pilot, they were sent to Initial Training Schools. Otherwise, they were sent to Bombing and Gunnery, Air Observer, Navigation, or Wireless Operator Schools. If a recruit demonstrated a high level of mechanical ability, they were selected for the ground crew stream and sent to the Technical Training School at St. Thomas, Ontario where they learned aircraft maintenance skills.

An excellent website describing the BCATP, its history and the schools in Alberta can be found at www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca. I would like to draw your attention to a picture within this site. On the main page click on BCATP at the top, then BCATP Schools in Alberta, □ Fort Macleod □ BCATP Fort Macleod. On this page scroll down until you see a picture with the caption: "Ground crew at Fort Macleod". The short person standing behind the propellor is my father. My father was in the ground crew stream.



Alfred Scott, the author's father, stands outside of the barracks, Fort Macleod.



*"Life in the Airforce"
Dad lounging on a wing.*

Alfred Scott, or as I called him, Dad, was one of eight children (five boys and three girls) born to Albert and Evelyn Scott in the Pointe St. Charles district of Montreal. Alfred graduated as an apprentice machinist with the Canadian National Railways in 1934 and worked for the CNR at the Pointe St. Charles "shops".

As war broke out in Europe, Dad took a leave of absence from the CNR and signed up with the RCAF on July 2, 1940 in Montreal. Because Dad was a machinist, the RCAF determined that his skills were best put to use in the ground crew stream as an Air Frame Mechanic, maintaining and servicing aircraft that the pilots trained with in the BCATP.

Dad was stationed at several air training schools, including Service Flying Training School #7 at Fort Macleod, Alberta in 1941/42 and Rockcliff airfield, just east of Ottawa. It was at Fort Macleod that Dad had many fond memories and pictures of his time there. He would fondly say of Fort Macleod that it was so windy there that if you lost your hat in the wind, just bend down and pick up someone else's. Dad was with the RCAF until he was discharged, March 24, 1945. He then joined up with the Canadian Armoured Corps, but was there for only six months as the war was ending. Dad returned to the CNR shops in Pointe St. Charles, where he worked for over 40 years.

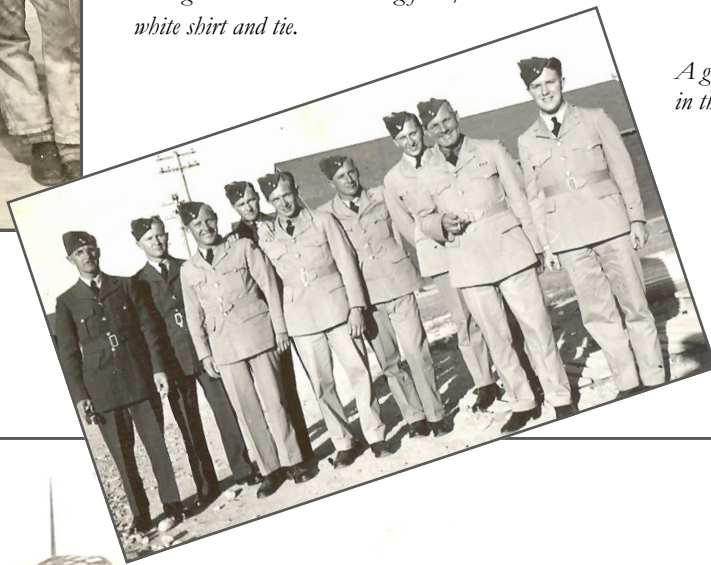
I have included several of my father's pictures while at Fort Macleod. On the back of some pictures Dad had written a note, which are within quotes on the picture captions.



"Fellow mechanics", Dad is on the right.



"Caught while we were waiting for a/c to come down." Dad is wearing a white shirt and tie.



A group picture with Dad in the middle.



"A&B Flights of No. 2 Squads". Dad is 2nd from left sitting on tractor tire.

RS



William Anhorn was born and raised in Medicine Hat, Alberta. He graduated with a BA (Political Science) from the University of Calgary and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Alberta, then practiced law in his hometown for over 35 years. He and his wife Joan Anhorn (Medlicott) continue to reside there.

Having a keen interest in history and genealogy, he has written a series on his family and extended family (Medlicott/McIvor), and his passion has resulted in several articles on local history. He is a member of the Medicine Hat Genealogical Society and former Chair of the Historical and Heritage Resource Management Committee of the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Company.

The Many “Shades” of Gray

The story of two members of the RCAF from Medicine Hat who made the ultimate sacrifice for love of country during WWII

by William J. Anhorn

History and genealogy often intersect with interesting results

I have always had a keen interest in history, and my passion for the history of WWI and WWII was no doubt inspired by my wife’s family (Medlicott). Although none of my immediate Anhorn family were involved in either war, both my wife’s father (Norman) and her grandfather and great uncle (Medlicott) participated in each campaign.

Norman Medlicott was a young 18-year-old when he volunteered in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in WW II. Although he left his birthplace and home in Medicine Hat as a “boy”, he returned to his hometown as a man, having observed and experienced all the hardships of war.

His father Thomas Medlicott was a part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, being a member of the 175th Battalion of the 3rd Canadian Mounted Rifles. This regiment was composed of young men from Medicine Hat and surrounding area who enthusiastically volunteered to join the war effort. Her uncle, Edward Medlicott, was a member of the famed Calgary Highlanders.

My own grandfather on my mother’s side, William John McIvor after whom I was named, fought in WWI as a member of the 5th Scottish Rifles. My early recollections of my grandfather were his Scottish brogue and that he had served gallantly in WWI and saw action overseas. Subsequent research reveals that he had enlisted at age 18 in the British Army on the 26th of January 1917 and became a member of the Scottish Rifles (Reg. #41711). He was discharged in 1919.

All these extended family members returned from the First and Second World Wars safely, but not without their own scars and wounds both physically and mentally. Others unfortunately were not so lucky, and many Canadians paid the ultimate price for love of country.

In 2019, my wife and I traveled through France and Belgium and visited such historic WWI sites as the Canadian Memorial at Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Hill 60, Ypres and the infamous



Norman Medlicott volunteered in the RCAF during WWII.



William John McIvor, the author’s grandfather, was a member of the 5th Scottish Rifles during WWI.

Menin Gate. Only in visiting such places and walking among row upon row of white markers in the Canadian and British War cemeteries does one fully appreciate the full nature and extent of the carnage and terrible loss of life that occurred, when so many young men who heeded the patriotic call made the ultimate sacrifice.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission



One of several WWII cemeteries with simple headstones in France.

Following WW1 in 1917, the British government established the Imperial War Graves Commission to care for the overseas graves of the Empire's war dead. The new organization developed out of the British Army's Graves Registration Commission, established in 1915 and in 1960 renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

The British Empire, including Canada, chose to bury its battlefield dead from the First World War near the sites where they had fallen, and not to repatriate remains to their home countries as many grieving families and politicians had demanded. The CWGC imposed a sense of social equality in its cemeteries and made no rank distinctions in the physical construction of grave markers. Each simple white headstone carries the name, rank and unit symbol of the deceased, and a religious symbol if the soldier's religion was known.

The unknown dead carry an inscription chosen by British author Rudyard Kipling, who lost a son during the war: *"A Soldier of the Great War – Known Unto God."*

No other personalized adornments were allowed other than the opportunity for next of kin to pay for a short motto to appear at the bottom of headstone. The same procedure was adopted in dealing with war dead from WW II.

Unlike WWI however, many of the war dead from WWII, rather than being buried in massive commemorative cemeteries, were often interred in small local cemeteries in proximity to where they died.

The task of identifying and recording their final resting place was a daunting one. Nonetheless the CWGC have taken exhaustive steps to identify, record and preserve the identities and location or final resting place of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom.

This is the story of two of those patriots from Medicine Hat. Their story is a compelling reminder of the sacrifice that so many young men made, which should be honoured and never forgotten.

Let me explain.

In the course of doing some research on an unrelated subject, I came across a picture of two RCAF airmen from WWII and the picture caught my attention, as the men in the photo were identified as childhood friends from Medicine Hat. Both were purportedly crew members of a WWII bomber, which is pictured in the background of the photo. These two airmen were Kenneth MacGregor Gray and Allan John Middleton.



Kenneth MacGregor Gray, right, and Allan John Middleton.

I was intrigued by the photo and filed the picture away with the idea that at some point I would investigate further these men who called Medicine Hat their home and research and tell their story about the role they played during the Second World War as members of the RCAF.

My instincts told me there was a story here which might form another interesting chapter of the history of Medicine Hat. Like many of my research projects and resulting articles, my passion for history and genealogy have often intersected with some very interesting and surprising results.

This was no exception!

Little did I know their story is an amazing one of courage and sacrifice, and one which should be documented and more importantly shared as part of the legacy of the place I myself call home, Medicine Hat.

But let's start at the beginning.

The Gray Family of Medicine Hat and their legacy

Kenneth MacGregor Gray was born on the 9th day of July 1914 at Vancouver, British Columbia, the son of William Henry Gray (1886-1950) and Molly Adeline McGregor (1885-1962).

He had eight siblings:

- William M. (1917-1984)
- Walter (1926-2008)
- Robert (1920-1980)
- Richard J. ["Dick"] (1920-1990)
- Edward ["Ted"] (1918-1981)
- Betty (1918-)
- Helen (1913-1995)
- Donald (1912-1986)

The patriarch of the family, William Henry Gray, was born in Ontario but he and his wife ("Molly") following their marriage resided in Vancouver, British Columbia where the first and second of their nine children were born (Donald, 1912 and Kenneth, 1914). The 1916 Canada census shows the family having moved to Medicine Hat, residing first at 81 Fourth Street SW and later at 8 Aberdeen Street. It is here that the remaining children of the Gray family were born.

In the early 30s William Gray, with that many young sons and in Walter Gretzky-like fashion, decided that an outdoor hockey rink would be a suitable project to keep his "boys" and their neighbourhood friends occupied, to give them some wholesome activity and no doubt help keep them out of trouble. With the assistance of A.P. Burns, the owner of a local lumber store called Gas City Planing Mills, Mr. Gray along with the assistance of others in the community constructed a hockey rink on four vacant lots east of 8 Aberdeen Street, an area where the Gray family had now taken up residence.

At least five organized hockey teams can claim to have been created and had their origins at the "Gray" rink, including the Safeway Midgets, the Wolfpack intermediate team, the juvenile Blue Bombers and the precursor to the Medicine Hat Tiger Junior Hockey team. Most if not all the Gray boys were involved with these teams as players or coaches.

A Twist of Fate

The start of the Second World War disrupted the plans of many young men who felt the need to volunteer in the war effort. For the Gray family, the contribution to the defense of freedom was unparalleled, as six of the seven sons of William and Molly Gray joined the services. This included Kenneth MacGregor Gray who joined the Royal



Kenneth Gray, a childhood friend of the author, joined the RCAF and became a pilot with the 405th Squadron.

Canadian Air Force and became a pilot with the 405th Squadron. Ken Gray attended Connaught School (1920-1928) and Alexander High School (1928-1932). He worked in Manitoba in a gold mining operation and then as a passenger agent for commercial passenger airline TWA before joining the RCAF in January 1940 at age 26.

Allan John Middleton was born the 26th day of August 1921 in Medicine Hat, the son of Earnest and Maude Lillian Middleton. He attended Alexander Primary School and the Toronto St. School and graduated from Alexandra Collegiate High School in 1939.

He became employed as a bank clerk with the Royal Bank at Medicine Hat before taking a leave of absence and enlisting in the RCAF. The family resided at 444 Belfast Street. Prior to his deployment overseas with the 405th Squadron, Allan John Middleton married Enid Gwendolyn McClohy of Toronto, Ontario.

Like many of life's interesting twists, Ken Gray and Allan Middleton became members of the same bomber crew during WWII and served gallantly overseas as members of the RCAF 405th Squadron.

At 10:52 pm the evening of August 9th, 1943, 457 bombers including aircraft of the 405th RCAF squadron left on a night raid over Mannheim, Germany. Many of the aircraft on this mission departed from Gransden Lodge.

Gransden Lodge Airfield was a WWII wartime airfield located 16.3 km west of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England and operated as part of the operational RAF Bomber command from April 1942 until the end of the war.

The 405th RCAF Squadron, which primarily flew the Handley Page Halifax Bomber (I, II & III), operated from Gransden Lodge from 1942 until the end of the war.

A Handley Page Halifax II Bomber, identified as HR872 with markings LQ-K piloted by Flight Lieutenant Kenneth MacGregor Gray, was among the many aircraft that left on this fateful mission over Mannheim.

The flight crew included the following:

- Sgt. D. A. Black – RCAF
- F/S J. H. Evans – RCAF
- F/S J. Hanna – RCAF
- Sgt. H. King – Royal Air Force
- F/O Allan John Middleton – RCAF
- F/S C.W. Pickering – RCAF
- Pilot – Flight Lieutenant Kenneth Gray



Allan Middleton enlisted with the RCAF and became a member of the same bomber crew as Kenneth MacGregor during WWII, 405th Squadron.

The subsequent operational and bomb assessment report following this night raid indicated that due to heavy cloud cover, bombing of the target area was described as being "scattered", but much damage was inflicted on the enemy including 1,316 buildings destroyed or rendered useless and 42 industrial premises having "suffered loss of production".

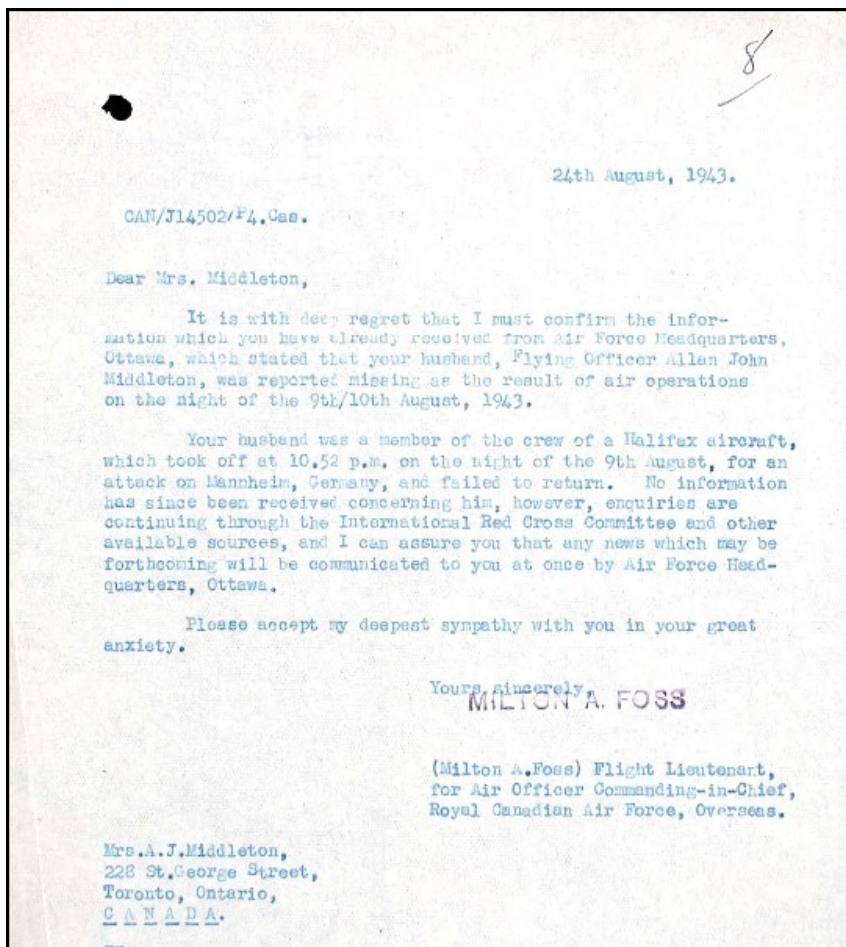


Flight Lt. Kenneth Gray piloted a Handley Page Halifax II Bomber like this one during his fateful mission to Germany.

The operation was considered a major success with “only 9 aircraft lost” representing statistically a two percent attrition rate. One of the aircraft lost on the Manheim Mission was the RCAF Halifax II Bomber identified as HR872 with markings LQ-K, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Kenneth Gray.

The subsequent debriefing from other aircraft that participated in the raid indicated that the “Gray” bomber was shot down by a German night fighter and crashed in an area northwest of St. Hubert, Belgium. Initial reports indicated that the entire flight crew were “missing in action and presumed dead”.

This information was regrettably communicated to the family of Allan John Middleton and Kenneth MacGregor Gray.



Letter of August 1943 sent to Enid Middleton confirming her son's missing in action.

One can only imagine the grief and sorrow and veiled hope that accompanied this notification with the words “missing in action” that was sent to the Middleton and Gray families in Medicine Hat and to the widow of Allan John Middleton, Enid Middleton, who was residing in Toronto, Ontario.

Beyond that, little information was available as to the exact circumstances of the crash, other than the approximate location of the site and more importantly, the fate of the crew members. The official notification was that the airmen were “missing in action”, which was a rather disquieting description which must have created a great deal of angst and anguish to family and loved ones back home, being obviously uncertain as to their fate.

More unsettling was the subsequent revised notification, “now presumed dead”. Staff Sergeant Richard “Dick” Gray, brother of Kenneth Gray, was determined to find out more about the fate of the Halifax bomber and launched his own investigation a year later while he himself was on active duty overseas.

The Investigation and Remarkable Conclusion

In a detailed letter to the RCAF Headquarters dated November 13th 1944, Sgt. Gray advised that he had received information from a reliable source that F/O Allan Middleton, a close family friend and member of his brother's crew, had been buried in a local cemetery in Florennes, Belgium. Determined to discover more about the fate of his brother and other crew members of the Halifax bomber, he enlisted the services of a Belgian army officer who had family in the area and who was familiar with this part of Belgium. Together they traveled to this part of the country.

Upon visiting the cemetery and making enquiries of the local citizenry, and as a result of an unusual twist of fate, it was determined that a cousin of the Belgian army officer was well familiar with the crash of the Halifax bomber. He apparently was one of several local men who had immediately attended the scene before the arrival of the local German garrison. He was interviewed and he offered some startling information.

The Belgian advised that in the early morning hours on that date (August 10th, 1943) a RCAF bomber had crashed about five miles from Florennes near a town called Awenne. He indicated that it was typical that Belgians in the vicinity would rush to the crash site as soon as possible, hoping to get there before the German military arrived in order to lend or offer assistance to any survivors.

He and several others from the town arrived at the crash site and observed two parachutes on the ground, but no trace of the servicemen. An effort was made to bury the parachutes before the arrival of Germans to the scene.

Three bodies were found in the wreckage and were identified by the names Middleton, Pickering and Hanna. All three bodies were recovered by the Germans and buried in the local Florennes Cemetery with the assistance of the local citizens. Two other gravesites were noted alongside the others and unidentified, but nonetheless were known as being members of the ill-fated Halifax bomber.

It was clear from this information that the "Gray" Halifax bomber was the aircraft that crashed near Florennes.

The immediate fate of the other crew members was unknown, including the two who had apparently successfully parachuted out of the aircraft. Sgt. Gray concluded it was possible that one of the parachutists was his brother, Kenneth Gray, and that he may have survived the crash and was either alive or, regrettably, possibly one of the unidentified men buried in the cemetery.

Seeking more information, Sgt. Gray visited the local Police Commissioner of Florennes who was responsible for maintaining local records of these types of incidents. The Commissioner confirmed and corroborated the earlier information provided by the Belgians who had attended the crash site but offered some further stunning details.

| FRENCH CANADIAN | OTHER |
|--|---|
| NEXT OF KIN AS SHOWN ON REC. OF SERV. & RELATIONSHIP | |
| MRS. ENID G. MIDDLETON, (WIFE) | |
| ADDRESS 144 BELFAST ST, MEDICINE HAT, ALTA. 228 St Mary St Toronto | |
| NAME ADDRESS D.A.B. AGREES | |
| NEXT OF KIN AS SHOWN ON CAS. SIG. & RELATIONSHIP | |
| ADDRESS | |
| FATHER'S NAME | LIVING ON ENLISTMENT |
| ADDRESS MR. & MRS. ERNEST MIDDLETON, | YES |
| MOTHER'S NAME 144 BELFAST STREET | LIVING ON ENLISTMENT |
| ADDRESS MEDICINE HAT, ALTA. | YES |
| WAS MEMBER ATTACHED TO R.A.F. AT ANY TIME? YES/NO | |
| IF CASUALTY OCCURRED IN CANADA DID MEMBER HAVE SERVICE OUTSIDE CANADA DURING WAR WITH THE GERMAN REICH? YES/NO | |
| IF ON LEAVE, STATE DATE LEAVE COMMENCED AND WHETHER ON LEAVE WITH OR WITHOUT PAY? | |
| CASUALTY DETAILS: | |
| AUTHORITY CAS. SIG. NO. | AIR MIN KWY-----POK836-----8-29-JAN-44. NR103/31 JAN. |
| PREVIOUSLY REPORTED "MISSING" 10-AUG-43 AFTER AIR OPERATIONS (OVERCAST) (OVER MANNHEIM, GERMANY.) | |
| NOW "PRESUMED DEAD" 10-AUG-43 FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES. | |

Notification of "presumed dead" for Allan Middleton, sent to his mother in 1943.

He reported that the German military officers who occupied the area refused to provide information about the identity of the two airmen in the unmarked graves. He added that the Germans always “*stripped or removed any and all items of value from the dead*”, including cigarette cases, rings and jewelry, but typically offered up any identifying “dog tags” or other information that would confirm the name of the deceased airmen.

In this case however, the Germans refused to provide this information. But the Police Commissioner was able to get close enough to the bodies and their paraphernalia to be able to identify a nametag and stated with a reasonable degree of certainty that one of the names he was able to observe was the name Gray.

The unusual reluctance to offer information on the identity of the deceased by the Germans was attributed to the circumstances that led to the death of the two airmen who successfully parachuted out of the aircraft and survived the crash. It was reported that the two airmen, having parachuted safely, ran into a nearby forest and were followed or chased by men of the local German garrison who had arrived at the scene shortly thereafter. The servicemen were pursued into the forest and a running gun battle took place. Eight German soldiers were killed before the two airmen themselves were killed. The reluctance to provide any identification by the Germans was attributed to the fact that the two airmen put up a valiant fight and had “*caused the death of eight of the enemy*”.

Based on this information Sgt. Gray was confident that one of the fighters was his brother, Kenneth MacGregor Gray of Medicine Hat who, rather than surrendering and being captured, fought to his death alongside one of his fellow crew members!

The Aftermath

At the request of Sgt. Dick Gray and based upon his own investigation, the RCAF carried out further efforts to determine the names and identities of the deceased airmen, and the location of their interment. The RCAF investigation confirmed that on August 10th, 1943 the Halifax bomber piloted by Kenneth MacGregor Gray was shot down over Awenne, Belgium. Witnesses from Awenne and the nearby towns of Arville and Ninwart reported that the Germans attended the crash site with seven coffins and picked up the bodies of several airmen who were all badly mutilated.

After they left the scene, locals from the area further examined the crash site and discovered two other bodies. One body was buried in the local Awenne cemetery and the other in the local Arville cemetery. German war records and local burial records confirmed that the two burial sites belonged to two crew members of the Halifax bomber and that the other remaining crew members were all buried in the Florennes Cemetery.

All of the gravesites were exhumed, but it was impossible to make a positive identification and the result was that the remains of the airmen in the Awenne and Arville cemeteries were collectively interred with the other airmen in the Florennes cemetery. The identities and location of the gravesites noted for the archives and database of the CWGC are as follows:

Florennes Communal Cemetery, Florennes/Belgium:

Gravesite no. 60 – J. Hanna

Gravesite no. 61 – C.W. Pickering

Gravesite no. 62 – A. J. Middleton

Gravesite no. 63, 64 & 65 – K.M. Gray, H. King* & D. Black*

Gravesite no. 66 – J.H. Evans

(*respectively and collectively interred from the Awenne and Arville cemetery)

It was only through the efforts of Sgt. Dick Gray of Medicine Hat that this information was uncovered and the locations of gravesites of these brave men were identified and preserved for antiquity.

In conclusion, the Chief of Air Staff of the RCAF acknowledged the effort of Sgt. Dick Gray in investigating and bring some closure to the fate of the men of the Halifax II Bomber, identified as HR872 with markings LQ-K and

piloted by Flight Lieutenant Kenneth MacGregor Gray, and offered the following to the Gray and Middleton families:

“I sincerely hope that you find some consolation in the fact that your son risked his life willingly in the defense of freedom. What we owe to him is beyond estimation. May you be fortified by the spirit of courage and hope which enabled him to discharge his duties whatever the cost.”

The Moral Tragedy of War

The simple story of the valour and courage of the crew of the Halifax bomber is not unlike thousands of other stories of pilots and crew members who made the ultimate sacrifice over the skies of Europe during WWII.

But more importantly, a simple story like that of two boyhood friends from Medicine Hat humanizes this deadly conflict and puts in greater perspective the human cost of war, by identifying someone who was a real person, who like all of us had hopes, dreams and aspirations.

These dreams were dashed in a tragic few seconds and, for the family and loved ones left behind, began the real life tragedy – one that was repeated a thousand times over throughout our country.

LEST WE FORGET!

Footnotes

¹ See Commonwealth War Graves Commission website at <https://www.cwgc.org> .

²The aircraft is a Handley Page Halifax bomber, which was a primary bomber used by the RAF and RCAF during WWII. Thanks to my grandson Eli Anhorn who has a keen interest in and knowledge about WWII airplanes, and who assisted me in identifying with accuracy the aircraft shown in the picture.

³One such story about another Medicine Hat soldier from WWII is entitled *“Friendly Fire: The Shocking Untold Story of A Soldier from Medicine Hat”* featured in Vol. 49 No. 4 of *Relatively Speaking* (November 2021).

RS

There's some amazing genealogical websites in Alberta

Trace your family history, your Métis or French Canadian roots, your Mennonite heritage and much more. Find them listed on the AGS website abgenealogy.ca/links-to-other-resources



Lynn Hart Myette was born in Medicine Hat, AB in 1956. Raised in the Finns Lake area on her family's registered Hereford cattle ranch, she has been involved in the arts all her life and is a member of art groups in Calgary, Bragg Creek and Gabriola Island. Lynn started to trace her family tree in the 70s for a high school project, marking the start of her interest in genealogy. For the past 3½ years she has written articles on Medicine Hat and its history, people and events. In 2024 she wrote a book about her grandparents, Walter and Hilda Hutchison.

Manny Raber and Raber's Department Store, Medicine Hat History

by Lynn Hart Myette

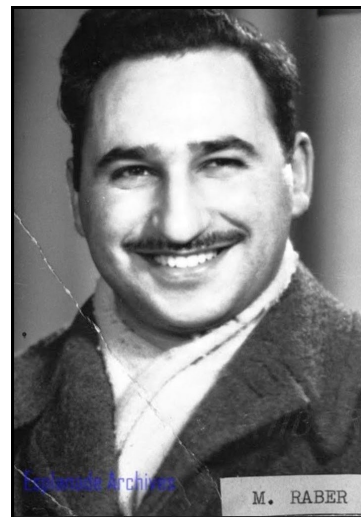
Manny Raber (born Manuel Rabinovitch) was born in 1922 in Burstall, Saskatchewan to Max and Lena Raber. Manny was the youngest of six children and grew up in a loving Jewish home. They all spoke Yiddish which is similar to German. His father and family moved to Medicine Hat in 1924 as a pioneer merchant. Manny enlisted in November of 1939 and joined the South Alberta Regiment. In 1941, he also enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force as an aircrewman and was sent to the No. 5 Bombing and Gunnery School in Defoe, Saskatchewan.

After graduation, he was given the rank of Pilot Officer and sent to England. Upon arrival he found that all operational training units were full, so was sent to the 5th Bn. Grenadier Guards for an Army Operation Course. In September 1942 he was posted to an operational training unit, and from there to his first operational squadron at RCAF Station Eastmoor.

Manny completed 30 operational flights over various points in Europe, but on his 31st, around the 25th of November in 1943, his Halifax airplane was shot down by a Junkers 88 over Belgium. Manny was just twenty years old, serving as the mid-upper gunner on a Halifax bomber on a mission to Frankfurt. Manny was wounded in the arm, but he and the other members of his crew managed to bail out and parachute from the burning aircraft, except for the rear gunner who was killed. He landed near the France-Belgium border.

Thus began Manny's experience on the run in Belgium and his eventual capture and placement in the P.O.W. camp Stalag Luft III and Stalag 3A before finally being repatriated back to Canada in 1945. Manny wrote about his wartime experiences in his memoir "Manny Goes to War: The War Time Memories of Manuel Raber" published in 1999.

Surra Raber Vardi remembers, "My father Manny Raber was a prisoner of war at Stalag Luft III for two years during WWII. His plane was shot down over Belgium and he was harboured by the Belgium underground prior to being captured. Luckily the air force changed his family name to a less Jewish one just in case he got captured. But still they tortured him thinking he was Jewish. A German POW camp was no place for a Jewish boy from Medicine Hat. When he was wounded and with the Belgian underground, a Roman Catholic priest gave Manny a Rosary for good luck. This saved him and after that he attended Catholic services in the POW camp. They did not have enough food or necessary supplies. He was in the Death March where hundreds died around him. The prisoners in the Medicine Hat POW camp were treated much better. Some even stayed in Medicine Hat to live. Dad suffered from antisemitism most of his life, but he fought for his country, Canada."



Manny Raber enlisted in 1939 with the South Alberta Regiment, and as an aircrewman in 1941.

Manny's father, Max (Rabinovitch) Raber, a Russian immigrant, had started a general store in Melville, Saskatchewan in 1904. The store sold everything from dry goods to shoes, as well as men's and ladieswear. Max later moved as building of the rail lines progressed, and he opened a second store, "Rabinovitch's General Store" in Burstall, Saskatchewan around 1921.

As his six children grew up, the family moved to Medicine Hat for high school education. Upon Manny's return to Medicine Hat after the war, Manny and his sister Nellie Schindelman joined their father Max in opening Raber's Department Store at 619 – 3 St SE in Medicine Hat in 1945. Manny was well respected by all customers and staff for over 50 years.



Raber Department Store, mid twentieth century.

Cadets for many years. He was an adventurous man and enjoyed hunting and fishing and always looked forward to the annual Medicine Hat "River Rat" canoe trip.

Manny remarried, his second wife being Muriel (Weiss) Raber. Manny died October 1, 2012, at the age of 89 years.

Royal Canadian Air Force – Medicine Hat History

The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) celebrates their 100-Year Anniversary in 2024. Established in 1924, the RCAF played a key role in World War Two, enlisting 232,000 men and 17,000 women between 1939 and 1945. The centennial of the RCAF is a time to honour those who served with valour. The No. 34 Flying Training School was part of Medicine Hat's important contribution during the Second World War.

At the start of the war, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was forged to address a critical shortage of trained Allied flyers. Construction of 137 flight schools at 231 sites took place in Canada within a short time of six months. The Medicine Hat No. 34 SFTS (Service Flying Training School) opened April 8, 1941.

The selected site of Medicine Hat's No. 34 SFTS had been in use for several decades as a dirt airstrip that could trace its roots all the way back to 1912 – just three years after the first powered flight in Canada. Following construction, the Royal Air Force took control of the new aerodrome and opened the No. 34 SFTS in April 1941, offering wings-standard flying training on North American Harvards, Avro Ansons and Airspeed Oxfords. The school also had relief (emergency) landing fields along the Holsom County Road (hard surfaced) just to the west of town, and in the District of Whitla there was a grass runway.

Manny married Ressa and together they had five children: Surra Raber Vardi, Avy Raber, Nadine Raber, Brian Raber and Maxine Raber. Years later in 1981, Nadine, Manny's daughter, joined her father in running their family business. The store later became "Raber's Fabulous Fashions" a department store that sold only women's clothes. Nadine's daughter Richelle Oerlemans joined in and managed the store for its last five years. Richelle had worked at the store for most of her youth with her family. In her time as the fourth-generation manager, Richelle found ways to modernize the store. After 65 years the store closed in 2009 and the building was demolished in 2011.

Manny was active in the community with the Royal Canadian Legion, Kinsmen, Rotary Club and Commander of the Air



Manny Raber (left, front row) with his wife Muriel Raber (right, front row) with fellow attendees at the Legion War Memorial gathering, circa 2010.



Harvard planes used to train pilots in the Service Flying Training School, Medicine Hat.



A group of planes from the Medicine Hat Service Flying Training School flying over Medicine Hat, circa 1942.

The population of Medicine Hat in 1941 was around 10,000. When the flying school closed November 17, 1944, the school had provided training to almost 2,600 students with about 2,200 graduates and recorded the highest-flying hours of any school in the country.

A significant sacrifice was made by the graduates, over half of whom would be wounded, killed, or taken prisoner. As well, 48 students lost their lives in training accidents and lie buried in the Field of Honour, Hillside Cemetery, Medicine Hat.

The total number of hours flown by the unit was 354,782 hours and 50 minutes. Standardized plans were used for the 88 training airfields, including the 29 SFTSs, constructed across Canada. There is an intact building from the No. 34 Service Flying School which is

representative of these facilities across the country still standing on the corner of Viscount Drive and Gershaw Drive SW in Medicine Hat.

The airfield was abandoned by the RCAF and handed over to the municipality of Medicine Hat, and continues to this day as the Medicine Hat Airport. Many of the RAF trainees married local Medicine Hat girls, and those who survived returned after the war to live and work in the “Hat”.

If you are interested in reading more about the No. 34 Service Flying Training School in Medicine Hat, David Carter has written the book “*Prairie Wings*”.

Information for this article was compiled from AlbertaOnRecord.ca – Manuel Raber family fonds, Gift of Nadine Raber and Surra Raber Vardi; correspondence with Surra Raber Vardi; [Vintage Wings of Canada](#); Medicine Hat News, Dec 27, 2016; Heritage Resources; Esplanade Archives.²



No. 34 Service Flying Training School, under the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, operated from the spring of 1941 to the end of 1944.

https://www.vintagewings.ca/?fbclid=IwY2xjawFhInlleHRuA2F1bQIxMAABHdy-95w9MzZ0P1kbFN9wdTFkzEc3XobknwRiwH6mb904RrRyG-nQnTYbVwg_aem_WvgfUKJ_zdKIUgfkjsMu9A

²[#rcafcentennial - Explore | Facebook](#)

RS



Denise (Juchli) Daubert is a member of the AGS Edmonton Branch and volunteers with the Relatively Speaking ad hoc committee. She has been actively involved in genealogy for the past 19 or so years. Denise enjoys "telling the stories" of both her and her husband's ancestors, with the hope that these stories will become special to children and grandchildren and the generations that follow.

Denise and her husband reside on an acreage east of Edmonton, in the Ardrossan area.

What better a time to write his story?

by Denise Daubert

This year, 2024, marks the Centennial of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). Interestingly one of my maternal great uncles served overseas as ground crew as an airline frame mechanic in the RCAF during World War II. So as the headline above implies ... *what better time* to undertake writing his story indeed!

For several years I had planned to write this story of my Great Uncle John Neill and his service in World War II. I often glanced at his photograph in uniform displayed in my historical family-items china cabinet, which was a reminder to me to "*write the story, Denise*".

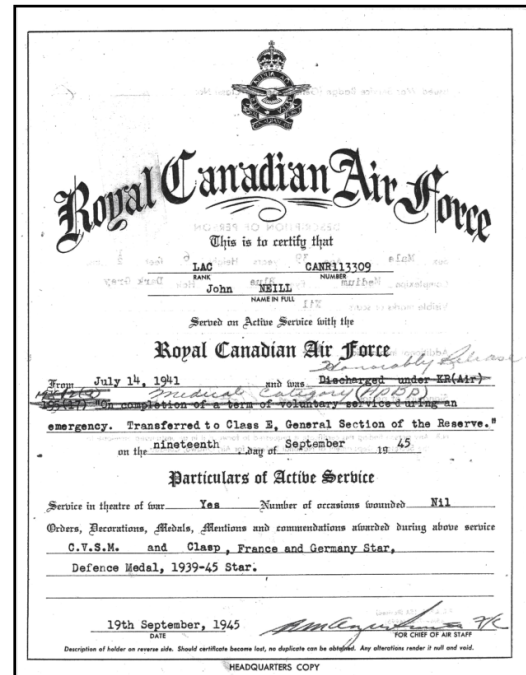
This great uncle never married nor had children, so there was no immediate family to tell the story. But once it was written Neill's nieces and nephews who are still alive, and my generation of great nieces and great nephews, would no doubt be proud to read an article and see photographs and paperwork about this uncle/great uncle's military service.

If John Neill was alive today I have no doubt he would be very proud during this year's Centennial. I think this article would bring back memories from his RCAF enlistment in 1941 to his return to Canada and civilian life in 1945. I am proud to have learned about his medals awarded for his service. He received The Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, the France and Germany Star, a Defense Medal, and the 1939-45 Star. Where these are today is a mystery.

From birth to life in his late 30s

It was just before Christmas in 1905 (December 18th) that Dorothy (McCallen) and John Neill welcomed a son and they decided to name him John. John was a name that had come down in the generations in the family. This little baby boy was welcomed to the Neill family by three older brothers and two older sisters at the Neill home in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Just three years later, in 1908, Dorothy and John decided to leave Ireland to make a home in Western Canada. Son John was three years old at the time. Father John came to Canada ahead of time to find work in his trade as a boilermaker and did find work in Winnipeg, Manitoba with the railway. He was then transferred quite quickly to Edmonton, Alberta by the railway. After finding a place to live in Edmonton, John's wife Dorothy – with their seven children and travelling across the ocean on *The Lake*



Active Service Certificate showing John Neill's active service in the RCAF from July of 1941 to September of 1945.

Champlain and then by train to Edmonton – came to join him. One more daughter, a little sister to John and the others, would be born in Canada not long after arriving. The baby girl's name was Annie Alberta.

Being Anglican by faith, the family first worshipped at Christ Anglican Church in central Edmonton and then at St. Faith's Anglican Church (in north Edmonton). The Neill children settled in at school. John did well at his studies and attended Oliver School and H.A. Gray for elementary and junior high grades, and attended Victoria High School for grades 10 through 12. It was after graduation from grade 12 that he made the decision to attend the Normal School for teacher training in Camrose, from which he graduated. However, for reasons unknown, John did not teach following graduation. Thoughts are that perhaps he had wanted to be a teacher in Edmonton to stay close to his family, but only rural postings were available.

The years passed and he worked at jobs such as truck driver, farm helper, house repairer and odd jobs. He did not take a trade such as carpentry or mechanical, which could have helped him get a permanent job as the trades were considered stable employment in those days. In the late 1920s and 30s the Depression years hit Western Canada very hard, and any available jobs were given to or earmarked for men with families. Very possibly, this all contributed to John deciding to join the RCAF in 1941. In the spot where recruits were to list their last employer prior to enlistment, the word "unemployed" was typed in and I felt sad when I read that.

Decision to enlist with the RCAF



John Neill in his active service uniform and cap.

John was 34 years of age when World War II war broke out in 1939. It was on the 14th of July 1941 (at 36 ½ years old) that he filled out Attestation Papers. On the bottom right of page three, an ink stamp indicated that the building where he had gone to the RCAF Recruitment Office was in The Ramsay Building.

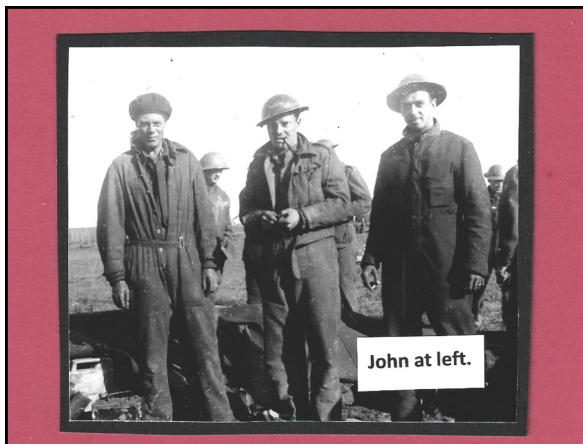
Twenty years ago, in 2004, I had applied for and received my great uncle's *Records of Service (Attestation Papers)* from Archives Canada. There were a total of 16 pages. I have combed through this document, discovering amazing details.

On the sheet titled *Royal Air Force Airman's/ Airwoman's Record Sheet (Active Service)*, I could barely decipher the official number given to him due to poor photocopying, but did finally make out CANR113309, handwritten. At the Recruitment Office and if accepted he would learn a trade with the ground air mechanic crews as a Standard Airframe Mechanic (Metal) and serve overseas. A stamp on the paperwork indicated that his application was accepted nine days later.

A helpful resource for me in reading and understanding these enlistment papers was an on-line Library and Archives Canada link to an information page about "military abbreviations" allowing me to learn that AFM and TTS stood for "airline frame mechanic" and "trades training school".

Prior to leaving for Eastern Canada for trades training school, my great uncle would have been provided with his RCAF uniform and cap while the work clothes/overalls he would need for trades training would have been provided at the trades school in Ontario.

I am guessing it must have been standard procedure for new recruits to have their photograph taken in dress uniform by a professional photographer. A black and white head and shoulders photograph shot of John in his uniform was beautifully framed in a standup cardboard frame – with artwork of an airplane, artillery for ground battle and a ship on the edges of the frame, representing airforce, army and navy. These cardboard frames were most



The author's great uncle, John Neill, on active duty.

probably designed by the Canadian Forces and provided to professional photographers across the country. On the lower left-hand corner of the actual photograph was the name of the Edmonton photographer (Hollingsworth's Studios). I assume that this framed photograph would have been given to John's parents before he left for eastern Canada for his trades training, or that when the photograph was developed his parents were called to come and pick this treasure up.

Total service time with the RCAF

John's total service in the RCAF spanned from enlistment in July 1941 to his return to Canada in July of 1945. He served three years as an airplane ground mechanic overseas in the countries of United Kingdom (England), France, Belgium and Holland.

I found John Neill's name in connection with his service in two *Edmonton Journal* articles (one where he is named as an RCAF ground air crew member aiding in the air triumph of Dieppe, August 1942) and another from July 11, 1945 wherein he was listed as one of 150 men returning to Edmonton following their service overseas. These newspaper articles were wonderful additions to the Neill Family book that I keep.

And there was another unique news article which was published near Christmas of 1943. John's older brother, Hamilton, was a typesetter with the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper and in their staff "paper/newsletter" Hamilton had submitted an article about his (and John's) parents celebrating a Golden Wedding Anniversary in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. There is mention of the names of all the sons and daughters of the anniversary couple and the line which of course immediately caught my attention: "*John is with the R.C.A.F in England*".

Photographs of my great uncle's service overseas show him beside airplanes he was working on, with buddies posing as a group and even one of him in his uniform on the beach in England.

In my Neill family collection I have a postcard dated February 1, 1943, mailed by John while in England to his parents – so a treasure as it is his handwriting. I also have a letter written by John three months later, penned on a special sheet designed by the RCAF for soldiers to write on. In this letter it was interesting to read the following: *I had a letter from a man in dad's lodge* (this would be the masonic lodge in Edmonton) *Mr. Thompson – seems they are writing a letter to all the sons & daughters of the members* (this would be sons & daughters serving overseas).

Prior to his discharge and return to Canada, he met with an RCAF counsellor. On that sheet of paper, the counsellor noted: "*plans for the future are quite indefinite but he does have a desire to enter the Civil Service field*". The sheet of paper also indicated that John Neill was "*fit for any type of employment*".

There is a bit of confusion over his discharge from duty in July of 1945. His official papers indicate that plans were for him to be discharged on the 19th of September, 1945. Handwritten on this paper was a phrase "*honourably released medical category*". I had heard from two cousins that John had been in hospital overseas but was unable to learn more about it.

Neills Celebrate Golden Wedding

Mr. and Mrs. John Neill of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary Tuesday, November 30.

Mr. and Mrs. Neill are the parents of eight children, four boys and four girls. Two of the sons, James and George, live in Edmonton; John is with the R. C. A. F. in England, and Hammy lives in Los Angeles. The daughters are Mary of Victoria, B. C.; Dorothy, now visiting in Edmonton, and Annie and Rebecca, who make their home there.

Due to transportation difficulties, Hammy was unable to be with his father and mother on this gala occasion. Even if walking conditions had been good, Hammy says, he would have been there.

The 1943 LA Times article submitted by Hamilton, John Neill's brother, celebrating their parents' 50th wedding anniversary in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.



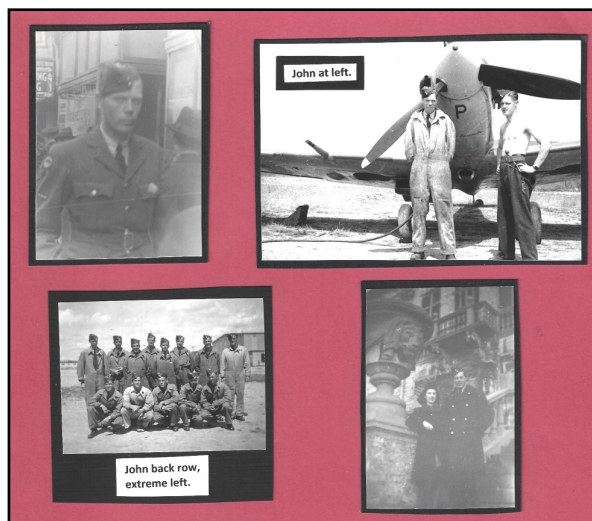
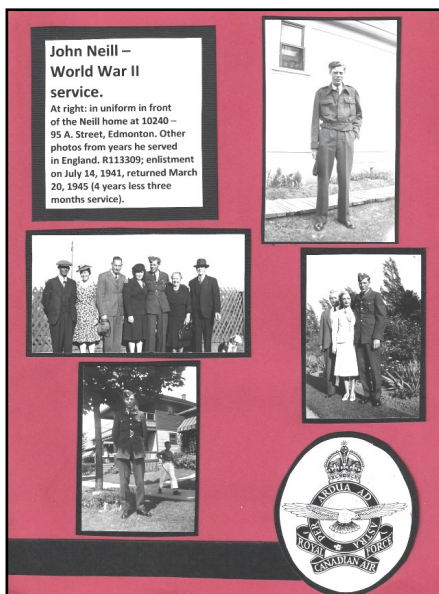
Postcard of February 1, 1943 mailed from England by John Neill, to his parents in Canada.

No date accompanied this handwritten notation, but I assume that John was released a few months before he was officially to be released.

Life after the RCAF

When John was released from service he returned to Edmonton. As was his hope, he was hired in the Civil Service, with Canada Post. His job was at Canada Post’s main plant downtown. He worked sorting mail and packages. He was in that job from release from service in 1945 until his retirement.

Along with his older sister Rebecca, he helped with his parents in their senior years by the four of them sharing a home together. After the death of his parents, John and Rebecca made the decision to move to Calgary to live near their youngest sister, Annie.



Left photos, John Neill during World War II. Above, more photos of the author’s great uncle on active duty.

At just one day short of his 73rd birthday (December 17, 1978) John passed away in Calgary.

His casket was brought to Edmonton for burial at Westlawn Cemetery. Rest in peace, Great Uncle John. Your family is grateful for your service so many years ago with the RCAF.

Dedication

At the beginning of this article, I included a line about how I hoped living nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews would enjoy this article. This wish is especially directed to one of John Neill’s nephews and my uncle/godfather, Roger James Neill. Roger Neill also served with the RCAF as a pilot during peacetime in the 1960s and he and his family were stationed in Germany. From there he went into a career with United Airlines as a pilot. I would like to dedicate this article to 91-year-old Roger James Neill who resides in the State of Washington, U.S.A.

Postscript

If you wish to learn more about the Royal Canadian Air Force Centennial visit rcaf2024arc.ca. This would be the perfect time to research and write a story about any of your ancestors who served in the RCAF!

In commemoration of the RCAF Centennial, a commemorative \$20 silver coin has been produced by the Canada Mint. As well, a special commemorative envelope by Canada Post is available for purchase.

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Alberta Genealogical Society

Relatively Speaking

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Food traditions: What are some traditional foods in your family for everyday or special occasions? Do you have stories about learning to cook or learning about foods from afar? How about community suppers or picnics? About times of food scarcity?

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Send these or other family history stories
Max. 2500 words (Word Doc), 4-6 pictures (JPEG) to:

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- Articles should be in Garamond font, in a digital Word format, 1000-2500 words maximum except for the rare, longer article which will be serialized and is published in two parts.
- A maximum of 4-6 photos/illustrations submitted in JPEG format will be accepted. Do not send original photo or documents. Please include information about the photos: who, what, where, when.
- We request a 100-word maximum biography and an author photo. We cannot be responsible for outdated author information that we keep on file. Please ensure your bio is up-to-date.
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- Due to space restrictions, we do not publish footnotes/references except in exceptional cases. We do state that "references are available upon request from rseditor@abgenealogy.ca" if references have been provided with the article.





Arlene Borgstede has been a member of the Alberta Genealogical Society for over 50 years. She served with the Edmonton Branch on the executive and as an active volunteer, including many years at the AGS library from which she recently retired.

Arlene lives in St. Albert, Alberta, having raised a family there along with her husband, and making it a home for over 60 years.

A poem for Arlene

This poem was written for Arlene Borgstede around 1985, as a Christmas gift. It came with a stuffed toy. Here's what Arlene shares about the poem:

Years ago, before our children had children, my sister-in-law and I took turns hosting Christmas dinners. We had decided that it wasn't necessary to get gifts for each and everyone. Instead, we drew names to purchase a 'gag' gift for a single person. A gift that cost no more than \$5. Those were the days when you could buy a reasonable gift for \$5. I'd like to share one of those gifts, which I received from my niece.

Her wonderful little poem was accompanied by the toy pictured here—which by the way, I still have!

Poem by Arlene's niece

Arlene has a hobby
It's gen-eal-ogy.
A little information,
and she'll grow your family tree.

A date, a name, a place...
And she'll build upon your past.
You'll find out where you came from,
though not how long you'll last.

Everybody comes from somewhere,
We have two parents each.
She can dig out information
that you thought was out of reach.

She can go back generations,
If it's out there she can find it.
But it might be stuff that people
have spent years just tryin' to hide it.

Every family has their share
Of weirdos and some losers.
Of those belonging to the tree
you really can't be choosers.

But there also might be branches
Full of famous folk...no zeros.
Kings and Queens and socialites
and those who might be heroes.

Tracing back through all those years
Might get you very far.
You'll end up with some answers
that might tell you who you are.

The trouble with genetics though,
Is genes you cannot trust.
You can end up with a throwback
which may ex-plain a few of us.



Finding Gold on Cortes Island

by Lynne Duigou

Denmark to Delia via Cortes Island: Zakariasen Family, March 1913 – 1916



My grandparents, Rasmus Zakariasen (1888-1962) and Johanna Zakariasen (1889-1964), and my dad Sydney (1911-1988) lived for a time between 1912-1916 on Cortes Island in British Columbia. I heard the family story that, “*They had land when the tide was out but no land when the tide was in.*”

When I contacted the Cortes Island Museum and Archives I was told the Archivist recognized the Zakariasen name. We were looking for land or other documents to prove or disprove this story when my husband Lou and I visited the island in 2024.

Charles Issac Allen’s “Log of Bute Ranch – Gorge Harbour”

Charles owned the land and some waterfront (SW1/4, Sec 33, and SE1/4 Sec 34) on Whaletown Road in Gorge Harbour. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace on November 17, 1905. He kept voters’ lists, witnessed documents, wrote letters and petitioned the Provincial government for roads, a post office, and a school for Cortes Island. The following are some of Charles Allen’s over 250 daily log entries that spoke of ‘Zack’:

The first mention of my Grandfather Zakariasen (Zack) on Cortes Island was Sunday, March 23, 1913. “*Zackeriason came here first thing this a.m. Told him we wanted him to do some work for us. We went to work on launch this afternoon.*”



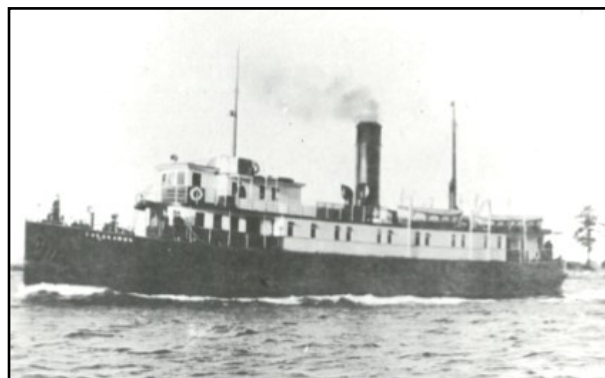
R.C. Zakariasen

Launches able to carry loads up to just over nine and half tons were larger boats which were preferred as having greater carrying capacity, though often less seaworthy. From what I understand from Charles Allen’s log, his launch was rowed by a single set of oars, but soon an engine was installed. The launch would have been used to go to Manson’s Landing, Mary Island (aka Marina), Whaletown, Herriot Bay on Quadra Island or Powell River with freight and passengers.

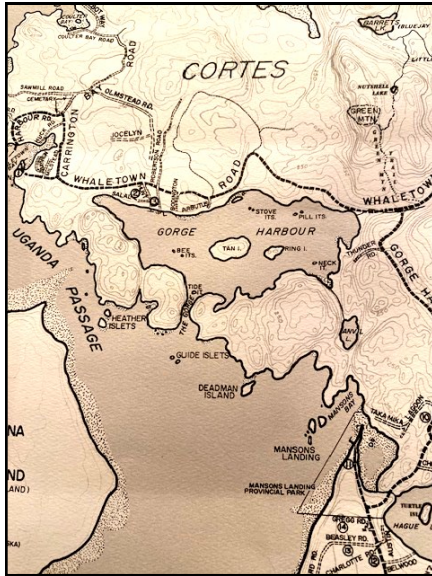


Charles Issac Allen
(Photo courtesy of Cortes Island Museum and Archives)

The Union Steamships *Comox*, or *Cassiar*, or *Cheakamus* sailed to Cortes from Vancouver weekly to dock at Manson’s Landing, Whaletown or Chamadaska on Marina Island. The vessel delivered passengers, the mail, groceries, canned goods, clothing, logging and farming equipment, and barrels of fuel. Cortes Islanders ordered their groceries from “town” (Vancouver). On the vessel’s return trip to Vancouver it carried Cortes Island produce (eggs, meat, fruit and vegetables) as well as passengers. Boat travel was the only way on or off the island. There would have been few roads on Cortes Island at that time so boats were the primary method of travel.



Union Steamship lines “Cheakamus” Photo #13732 courtesy Cortes Museum and Archives #CR 13732



Map courtesy of Cortes Island Museum and Archives

During the last couple weeks of March 1913, Charles Allen writes that he concentrated the work on the launch, patching, fitting engine beds, caulking, rudder etc. He went to Manson's Landing for mail, hauled bark, and took eggs to the wharf. He posted his letters and reported snow the night of the 25th and the morning of the 26th.

Grandfather (Zack) must have had room and board in Gorge Harbour or Manson's Landing because he seemed to be working on Charles Allen's launch for a number of days and at James Nicoll's, as they needed help after a fire. April 3, Charles writes "*Went to wharf and got Zack's bed he had there.*"



Johanna Marie
(Hansen)

The first mention of Grandmother Johanna Marie was April 1, 1913. "*While I was away Bernie and Mr. and Mrs. Zackeriason were here.*" My dad, Sydney, 18 months old, was never mentioned in any of the log entries.

April 6, 1913 Charles wrote, "*Zackeriason came early to get the team to take to Salt Lagoon [Whaletown Lagoon] and bring in his goods. Got him off about 9 o'clock. Jennie and I went up the road to see what was the matter with Zack and his team. Met him by Dave Robertson's. They had some trouble with the load. Got him unloaded about 9 pm.*" Charles' log does not indicate that they had their own house until May 18, 1913 so I must assume they stayed with another family, which was common at the time.

Grandfather was a blacksmith and farrier by trade and the following notes in Charles Allen's 1913 log show him using his skills. April 7, "*Showed Zack the land he was wanting to buy. Zack reset shoes on horses.*" April 8, "*Zack wanted the team to go and get the balance of his things but 'Frank' was too lame.*" April 10, "*Zack cut into 'Frank's' foot and put a bran poultice on it.*" April 14, "*Zack went hunting this morning but got nothing. He came back and put 'Frank's' shoe on and took the team and got the rest of his things.*" April 15, "*Zack had the team and hauled two loads [25 sacks] to Jim's [Allen] and his own lumber from the wharf.*" April 25, it is reported "*Zack hauled a load of lumber up to his place.*" I should note that I do not know the exact location of "his place" other than to say it was somewhere in the area of Gorge Harbour. With the lumber that was being hauled it appears he was building a house, as it was reported on April 26 that, "*Zack was hauling poles and some of his lumber and his stove down to his place with our big boat.*" April 30, "*Zack hauled one load of lumber from the Chinks.*" (Chinese loggers who had a logging camp and a small lumber mill. The use of the term "Chinks" was not considered derogatory at that time.) May 1, "*Zack was hauling away the lumber from the Chinks shack. Zack hauled his shakes up to his house and then he went to Thompson's and Strange's in the afternoon.*" May 18, "*Zack moved most of his things up to his house and is sleeping up there tonight.*" This is the first mention of a house. May 19, "*I let Zack have the team to move his chickens up to his place. Breeze got the launch today to go to Stranges. He brought back window glass for Zack.*"



Charles Allen's house built on Gorge Harbor.
Charles on left.
Photo courtesy of Cortes Island Museum
and Archives

Grandfather is reported at various times to have done repairs and tasks for various people. April 28, "*Took Mrs. Manson's buggy apart and brought the reach and axles home here for Zack to fix.*" April 30, "*Took off lead bend under sink in bungalow and Zack soldered it.*" May 12, "*Zack fixed Manson's buggy reach.*" May 13, "*Went down brought Mr. and Mrs. Manson and Ethel up on the launch, took the reach of their buggy back. [Zack] Charged them \$2.50 for fixing it.*" May 18 "*loaded five bales of straw in it (big rowboat) and towed it home and dumped it out at the old landing and Zack hauled them up and carried them to the barn.*" June 19, "*Conlin was here to get his logging jack fixed by Zack.*" June 20, "*Zack got to make a rig for cutting rings for friction pulley.*" June 21, "*Got him to fix some kettles and shoe the horses.*" June 23, "*Zack was cutting hay in the am. and putting in posts for a gate across the land below the horse stable.*"

Zack appears to have been hired full-time by Charles Allen to work on building Charles's house and do farm work. May 20, "Zack started work for us today, he was sharpening mattocks, picks etc. was digging out the new house and was helping me with the scraper." May 21, "Zack was digging out the foundation all day. I helped a little as he has struck a rock." May 22, "Zack was digging the foundations all a.m. and helping me level the field in the afternoon." May 23, "Zack was working on the dump all day and had all the chores done when we got back." The work on the house continued daily during June and July and was interspersed with haying, building fence, planting and hoeing spuds. Working on the house, Zack laid floor joists and flooring, cut rafters, laid sheeting, put up walls, shingled, boxed eaves, put up rustic and installed shiplap etc.

Early in 1913, Charles Allen had put together a petition to the Provincial Government in Victoria to build a road from Gorge Harbour to Horace Ward's place. Permission was granted to build the road and \$175.00 was given to do the work. During August 1913 Charles reported that Zack worked on building that road. He and others worked slashing and blazed out where the road was to go, blazed a trail from the top of hill to Bernie Allen's place to meet the survey line at his slashing and as far as William Selwood's slashing, and were nearly through to Hanson Creek Canyon (Section 31). They then finished blazing the road to Horace Ward's (Section 31) under the direction of

Charles Allen and Mr. Downie, the operator of the pile driver. Charles had also petitioned for a post office and was told it was approved and would open in about six weeks. Later in January 1914, he petitioned for another road "north of here."



Zack's land was on the west side of Robertson Road and north of the Whaletown Road. See earlier map for location. (Left) Gorge Harbor #CR13588 courtesy of Cortes Island Museum and Archives.

I had been told that the Zakariasen family had land on Cortes Island, and in Charles's log of January 3, 1914 he notes, "Wrote out Zack's Agreement of Sale papers." January 5, "Gave Zack his Agreement of Sale to read, which Jennie had signed and witnessed by Alf Hazeldon." My Grandfather was not a British subject and as a result he could not get a Pre-emption on land

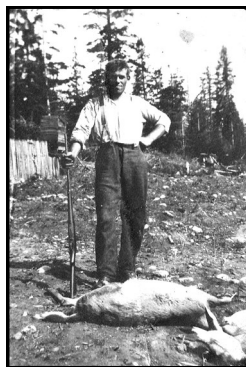
in British Columbia. The Pre-emptions were like homesteads given to farmers, with rules about clearing of land and improvements in order to be granted title to the land. The land he was buying was part of a Pre-emption that Charles Allen had obtained to SE 1/4 of Section 34 in 1899. There is no indication of how much land or the cost. Jill Milton, Cortes Island Archivist, estimates that the parcel was likely ten acres but I have not been able to confirm that information. I would need to pay for a historical land title search for confirmation.

Grandmother Zakariasen was a seamstress and milliner (hat maker) when she lived in Dillon, Montana. In November 1913, Charles noted that she was at their home on two different afternoons. It is unclear if she was visiting, working or sewing. Later in the month he mentioned that she was sewing and helping Jennie Allen, his wife. I knew that my uncle Harvey was born August 24, 1914 in Vancouver. Was he really born in Vancouver or could he have been born on Cortes Island? Would Charles's



Johanna, Harvey in Christening gown and Sydney Zakariasen circa 1914.

log reveal anything? It did! August 9 he wrote "Took Mr. and Mrs. Zack to meet the boat." August 11, "Zack came back from town." (Vancouver)



Zack with a deer he shot May 22, 1913.

I understood from those entries that they had gone to Vancouver and Grandmother stayed in Vancouver to have her baby. Her brother Rasmus P. Hansen and his wife Katherine lived in Vancouver so she likely stayed with them. Charles reports on September 6 "Mrs. Zack came back today via Whaletown." On Sunday, October 11, Charles writes "Had a Service in our house this evening. Zack's baby was christened by [Chanel] Hepburn. Jennie and I were Godmother and Godfather to him." This information told me that indeed Grandmother did have a baby in Vancouver. The baby was



Zack with Sydney and White Fir tree that he and Ward sawed down.

a son, my Uncle Harvey, who is three years younger than my father Sydney. Channel Hepburn was a minister for Columbia Coast Mission run by the Anglican Church. From these entries in the log, I understand that life on Cortes Island was a subsistence type of farming life and it seems the residents helped each other by getting the mail, sharing crates to ship eggs and other tasks.

"Zack went for the mail. Shipped one crate of eggs for Zack to Sing Lee at Powell River."
"Paid Zack the 50¢ I owed him for some things he asked me to get, but which I did not."
"Zack paid me the \$6.25, balance he owed me on the cheque for eggs from Sing Lee." *"Zack shot a deer this a.m. and gave us half."* *"I let Zack have the team to move his chickens up to his place."* *"Went to Manson's with Ward. Got two cans of C. oil (coal oil?) for Zack and two for myself and Nicoll's meat."* *"Ward started to work at noon. Zack and Ward were working on the rock pile all day."* *"I finished plowing the piece by Nicoll's and hauled the rock off."* *"Ward is up at Zack's helping him saw down a white fir tree. Zack only worked seven hours and Ward none. They were sawing down a tree at Zack's last night till 2 am., so they*

did not turn out. Zack started at 10 am." Another day he reported, *"Zack came at noon. He dug some of his spuds, then we put the old sow, Martha, in a crate he brought and took her and her little pigs over to Mary Isle."* Six weeks later he reported *"Brought back two little pigs, being the first installment of Zack's payment for Martha."*

I knew from the 1916 Dominion of Canada Census that the Zakariasen family had moved to Alberta by 1916, but did not have any dates. Charles's log provided that information. March 8, 1916, *"Zack paid some on his account."* March 19, *"Took Zack to get his 2nd. papers signed before Hawkins."* March 23, *"Sent telegram for Zack which cost \$1.00"* March 24, *"Zack was down this evening and sold us his setting eggs he got from Cyphers, they are to be charged to his land account."* March 29, *"Zack got Breeze and we all went to Hawkin's and he made out Zack's Naturalization papers. Breeze and I were witnesses."* March 30, *"settled up with Zack. He is going away to Alberta tomorrow."*

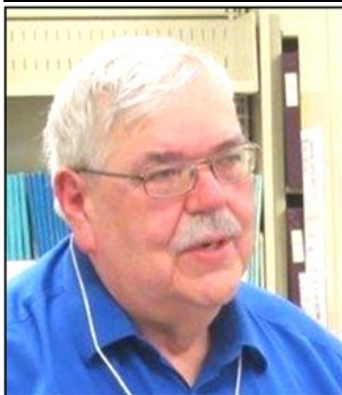
I am not sure whether the Zakariasen family had finished paying for the land they agreed to purchase from Charles Allen in 1914. They may have sold it back to him or just abandoned the land when they left for Alberta. Many of the Pre-emptions on Cortes Island were abandoned according to the records in the Cortes Island Museum and Archives history book, *Early Pre-emptions Cortes Island*.

I do have answers to a number of the questions I had before travelling to Cortes Island in July. Using Charles Allen's log, I now know :

- Rasmus Carl Zakariasen arrived at Charles Allen's on Cortes Island for work on Sunday, March 23, 1913. Carl and Johanna Zakariasen and my dad Sydney visited Charles Allen's home on Tuesday, April 1, 1913.
- My dad, Sydney, lived on Cortes Island because I have two pictures of him there, one with each of his parents. He was never once mentioned in Charles Allen's log.
- My grandmother travelled to Vancouver on a United Steamship vessel on August 9 and stayed there several weeks to give birth to Uncle Harvey, August 24, 1914. She returned to Cortes Island on September 6, 1914.
- Uncle Harvey was christened on Sunday, October 11, 1914 by (Channel) Hepburn at a service at Charles and Jennie Allen's home, and the Allens were his godparents.
- Grandfather had begun to apply for naturalization as a Canadian on March 29, 1916 but did not become a naturalized Canadian until October 11, 1935.
- Early life on Cortes Island was difficult, but everyone in the community worked together and helped one another to survive and prosper.
- The Zakariasen family left Cortes Island on Friday, March 31, 1916 for Alberta.

My thanks to Jill Milton, Archivist, and the Cortes Island Museum and Archives staff for their help in answering questions, editing and for allowing Lou and me to photocopy the many pertinent pages of Charles Allen's log. The use of the history books, maps and other resources that the Museum has printed and published on their website has been invaluable. Without their help and resources this story would have remained unknown and untold.

RS



John Althouse was born in Canora, Saskatchewan and moved with his family to Edmonton in 1956. He attended the University of Alberta and was teacher with Edmonton Catholic Schools for nearly 35 years. In retirement he was able to begin seriously researching his family roots in Canada, the USA, Germany, Volga German Russia, and Ukraine.

He does regular presentations for AGS and other groups, and has been a regular contributor to Relatively Speaking, the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society Bulletin and other genealogical publications. In Edmonton, he has moderated the German and Post Scripts (family history writing) Special Interest Groups and is an instructor in the Tracing Your Family Tree courses. His true love is experiencing and writing about the history of our Prairie Provinces.

Remembering Joachim “Jo” Nuthack (1936—2024)

by John H. Althouse

I was greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Jo Nuthack on July 29, 2024. I had the great pleasure of interviewing Jo for the German SIG (Special Interest Group) newsletter “My German Roots” in 2010. Below is the content drawn from the article based on that interview and other sources.

Jo’s interest in genealogy was sparked at an early age, the result of a single question, “what does our family name ‘Nuthack’ mean?”

While in school in Germany, Jo had noted that unlike many typical German surnames which were quite common, his surname was distinct, perhaps even uncommon. So, driven by his curiosity, he set out to find the answer to this question. While the question itself appeared to be simple at first glance, it was considerably more difficult than it appeared, more difficult than Jo expected. The search for the answer to it extended well after the Nuthack family’s arrival in Canada in 1952.

After Jo had established himself in Canada, he purchased a book on German surnames from a German publisher. However, to his disappointment, Jo did not find the meaning of his surname in this book. This did not stop Jo. He decided to write to the author of the book Hans Bahlow and ask him about the meaning of his surname. The author was impressed by the young man’s initiative and that he had ordered a book from Canada. The author provided Jo with the answer to that single burning question. It was Jo’s search for one answer that took him decades that was the first step in arousing his interest in genealogy.

Shortly after this, he read a series of articles in the *Edmonton Journal* about genealogy. Again, he consulted a person he considered to be knowledgeable. He contacted Charles Denney who suggested that Jo join Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS) to advance his interest. Jo did so in the Autumn of 1974. He was Member #305. He had been an actively involved member of the Society and Edmonton Branch since then. It was not long before Jo had become involved at the executive level of the Society. He held several executive positions, including presidency of the local branch and provincial executive at various times. His wife Judy served as AGS Secretary for a time. Most recently, he served as the AGS Parliamentarian for many years. He also was part of the team involved in mailing *Relatively Speaking* to members.

Jo was one of those few members who took a rather brave step moving outside the ethnic groups to which genealogists in AGS traditionally directed research. These pioneers showed that genealogy was a pursuit that anyone from any ethnic



Jo presenting at a German Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting.



Jo working on a German-based genealogy German translation exercise.

background could pursue, and provided a vehicle in the form of a special interest group in which they could do that. He and these other members embraced “diversity” long before it became common to openly do so. Jo was one of the German Special Interest Group’s initial members and a driving force in the group for most of its history. He had remained an active force in the German Special Interest Group at Edmonton Branch from its founding. He served as coordinator of the group. He made presentations on various aspects of German genealogy, history and culture to not only our tiny group but to larger audiences as well.

Throughout his time in AGS, Jo regularly made wonderful, informative presentations to the German SIG on various aspects of genealogy related to Germany. He had from time-to-time written articles on some aspects of German genealogy for *Relatively Speaking*.

Jo’s contributions as an active member of the Edmonton Branch and the German Special Interest Group were known and recognized. In 1998, Jo and Judy were awarded an AGS Life Membership. As a result of his many contributions to AGS, Jo received the President’s Award. It was presented by AGS President Susan Haga. In her remarks accompanying the presentation of the award, Susan noted, that it was “*in appreciation of his 41 Years of Dedicated Service to the Society.*”

During these 41 years of membership Jo served the Society in many capacities. He was Edmonton Branch President, he coordinated the "Tracing Your Family Tree" course for two years, assisted in the formation of the Special Interest Groups especially promoting German Research, chaired the 2000 Bylaw Revisions Committee and was Chair of the Bylaws Committee since that time. He was always ready to translate German records, work on the Policies and Procedures, and was the first to step forward whenever projects required a helping hand, such as GenFairs and elections.

At the time of interviewing Jo in 2010, his primary interest in genealogy was to record and to find a suitable repository for the record of his family – especially the most recent generations – so that younger members will have a written record of their family. He kept a daily journal writing in English and German on alternating days. He published two books, *Memories of Pomerania* chronicling his boyhood from 1943 to 1945 and *A Journey Through Northern and Central Germany*, a diary of a trip that he and Judy made there.

Like so many of us, Jo’s research began with little in the way of documentary evidence and several gaps that prevented tying the record together. Jo stated that though good research does pay, he also noted that many of his personal research successes came about as the result of luck or chance. He noted that at first, genealogists need to be patient as not everything will immediately fall into place or perhaps fall into place at all. In addition, Jo stated that it was essential to share one’s genealogical



Jo receives the Alberta Genealogical Society President’s Award from AGS President Susan Haga in Drayton Valley, April 23, 2016.



Jo with a display of German and Germans from Russia groups.

knowledge with others. This he did until he simply was no longer able to do so. In this it appears he was quite successful, as over time he found records that enabled him to extend the Nuthack family record back to 1635.

Jo was a long-time AGS member. Since he initially became a member in 1974, Jo remained active within the branch and society until the time of his death. Until very recently, Jo and his wife Judy were regular attendees of German SIG meetings. He was open to sharing his in-depth knowledge of genealogy rooted in Germany. In addition, until quite recently, he provided wonderful and interesting

presentations at German SIG meetings. Jo cherished the old and proven, but also was open to the possibilities that new methods and new technology offered. Change and learning new skills did not faze Jo; he learned the art of the “Power Point” as well as how to navigate ZOOM when he was in his 70s and 80s.

An excellent example of his adaptability occurred a few years ago, when he had a concern about who within his family might continue and update the genealogical work to which he had devoted so much effort and time. He was proactive and although not raised in the time of the computer generation, went out, researched and eventually purchased a photo quality scanner and scanned all his family photographs – over 10,000 in all – and saved them onto memory sticks which he gave to each family member for Christmas. In a discussion with Jo a few months after that Christmas, he stated that at least one family member was raising questions that suggested that person had an interest in the family past and might well be the person to carry on his genealogical legacy. In a similar vein, we must ask who will carry on the work that Jo and others have worked so hard to develop in our German Special Interest Group?

Here are the highlights of the short biography of Jo, as extracted from his funeral card and life story delivered at his memorial service by his son Rick:

Jo was born in Berlin in 1936 to Ema and Otto. He immigrated to Canada along with his parents and sister in May of 1952. During *“the Story of Jo’s Life”* delivered at his memorial service on August 10 by Rick, it was stated that the Nuthack family’s escape from Berlin had occurred near the end of the war as Russian troops were moving toward the city. They had managed to find a family with a truck who were headed to the Western Zone and were willing to take the Nuthack family, whom they did not know, with them.

There was no certainty that they would get there safely, and if caught the cost would be severe. Yet somehow, the truck and its occupants managed to arrive in the western part of Germany safely. This trip and the actions of the previously unknown family had a profound effect on Jo. He saw that they took the Nuthack family along because it was *“the right thing to do.”* Jo’s life time mantra, lived out through his actions, would be *“always do the right thing for people.”*



Jo and Judy at Oktoberfest with the German SIG at the German Canadian Club, Edmonton.

Jo met Judy Turner and in March 1959. They married and together raised three children, Rick, Bernie and Francine. They enjoyed 65 years of marriage watching their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren grow. Also in May 1952, Jo went to work for Building Products of Canada where he worked until 1996. He worked in the plant for 14 years before taking staff jobs in stores and in the office. Jo and Judy were very involved with the church. They were members of the congregation and choir of First Christian Church for many years. Jo was its senior deacon for much of that time.

He enjoyed bowling. There were a few family camping trips in the 70s. One especially memorable one saw a broken tent trailer, but also the discovery of a three to four-foot-long dinosaur leg bone. They [Jo and Judy] made two trips to Germany, one being after the fall of Communism and the Berlin Wall. That one was especially emotional, as the neighborhood where he grew up was on the East Berlin side of the wall.

When I became member of AGS interested in tracing my German roots, I was woefully ignorant as to what to do and how to do so. Jo was one of the few individuals who provided me with guidance in this, and I have come to know that many others who passed through the doors at AGS on this area of research benefited from his knowledge and willingness to share it. I benefitted from his thoughtful words of encouragement, accompanied by a bright, knowing twinkle in his eyes.



Jo at work at a table in the Edmonton Branch AGS Library.

I am eternally grateful for the wonderful mentorship in my personal German research and later in relation to preparing and managing German SIG meetings and other events. I know that Jo will be greatly missed as a mentor, an inspiration and a good friend by all who knew him.

Recently, AGS Edmonton Branch member Norma Wolowyk noted, *“Jo was always such a positive person it was an honour to have known him and Judy and the kindness they both had for the Society and all members.”* Jo’s positive example, his willingness to learn and share, and his active involvement should serve as a great example for all of us who had the pleasure of knowing him and working with him.

RS

ABCs of Genealogy

Under the “B”

by Denise Daubert

Where are your Alberta ancestors buried?

Burial – “*The act or ceremony of burying; grave.*”
(Source: Dictionary.com)

When a family member dies, he or she is usually laid to rest at a cemetery in a burial plot/gravesite chosen by the family. Sometimes plots have been pre-purchased by the deceased years before their actual death. Gravesites are referred to as “*final resting places*”. In cases where loved ones are cremated, the urn containing the ashes can be placed in the burial plot.

Cemeteries are where we can go to honour deceased ancestors. Many people take flowers on birthdays, on a Mother’s Day or on a Father’s Day. Being Alberta, it is a bit more difficult to visit a grave in winter due to our cold weather, so most people concentrate on paying respects in spring, summer and autumn. Taking a photograph of a headstone and of the gates into a cemetery are items to add to your family history binders.

We all know that family research leads us along many paths – some happy and some understandably sad. Deaths and burials of our ancestors would be considered sad if the deceased was a child who died during an influenza epidemic or if a grandfather died in a farming accident. But that said, many ancestors passed away in their elder years too, meaning their deaths were considered a blessing as they left families with many memories after having lived a full life.

Recording burial information is key for our family trees and certainly for our family stories. Are you fortunate that family members recorded deaths/burials along the way? Look through family bibles, review research recorded by ancestors before you, and/or check for newspaper obituaries and funeral programs saved by ancestors as there will be clues to reveal what cemetery you are searching for.

Cemeteries across Alberta can be owned and operated by a private company, administered by a village/town/city administration or overseen by a church or religious denomination. An example of a religious denomination overseeing Catholic cemeteries in Edmonton and immediate area is The Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton. The Provincial Archives of Alberta holds some of the historic death/burial registers for the United, Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran churches in Alberta and they can be accessed in person but call before you visit. In some of the smaller Alberta towns, you can approach a church office directly and ask for assistance.

To locate cemeteries, concentrate on those in the areas of Alberta where your ancestors lived, worked and died. When contacting a cemetery for information, be sure you have all the pieces they need to help locate a plot: first and last name of the ancestor, date of death and date of burial, if the plot is a single plot or a family plot, etc.

Some terms relating to burials you may run across when researching are: family grave/family plot – family members buried together in the same plot; headstone – upright or flat, religious or contemporary, headstones are made of granite and mark the place of a loved one; plaque – flat bronze plaques or flat granite plaques can also mark grave locations ... sometimes headstones and plaques include a Bible verse or special saying.

In closing, “hats off” to the volunteers who have spent thousands of hours recording cemetery information (and photographing headstones and flat plaques) across the world for both Find-A-Grave and Billion Graves. You can access these databases online, and it is very likely you will be successful.

RS

Relatively Speaking

Themes for 2025



February

Food traditions – What are some traditional foods in your family for everyday or special occasions? Do you have ancestral stories about learning to cook or learning about foods from afar? About community suppers or picnics? About times of food scarcity?



Providing sustenance – Has anyone in your ancestry worked in or owned a restaurant? Provided food through farming, gardening or hunting?

Deadline December 15, 2024



May

Music and Dance – Is there a musical tradition in your ancestral heritage? Is it an important part of family gatherings? How about traditional dance or pow-wow? Have you ever attended or participated?



Has anyone in your ancestry been part of a choir, band or orchestra? Or had a career in music? Any stories about music lessons? How did new technologies such as radios or gramophones bring music to your forebears?

Deadline April 1, 2025



August

Home and travel – What were your ancestors' traditional house construction styles? Any particular architectural type? Did anyone in your family ever build a Sears Mail Order House or Eaton's Catalogue Home, attend a barn raising?



What are your memories of travel away from home such as vacations or family trips, annual excursions or visiting relatives? Have you made any trips to research your roots? How about researching the history of a particular house? What resources did you use? Were there any surprises?

Deadline July 1, 2025



November

Through the seasons – What were some traditions associated with seasons in your family's history? Any strong connections to the seasons – cattle drives, moving encampments, following the trapline? How about home related activities like planting, harvest or preparing for winter? Have you carried any seasonal traditions or festivals from your cultural heritage into the present?



Deadline October 1, 2025

Spinning Webs

by Denise Daubert

As this issue of *Relatively Speaking* will be published around Remembrance Day, here are websites for two Alberta military museums.



themilitarymuseums.ca The Military Museums Calgary is the second largest military museum in Canada. The “Visit” link on the website is amazing, with an interactive floor plan to explore, photographs of exhibits, and where to learn about the W.A. Howard Library and The Arthur Child Archives & Library located inside the museum – of great interest to genealogists! On Remembrance Day 2024 (Monday, November 11) the facility will have formal events in the morning, with the museum open the remainder of the day. This would be a special way to mark Remembrance Day.



lermuseum.org Not only does this museum have collections specific to the history of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, but collections that relate to the military history of both Alberta and Canada. As it says on their website, this museum “is dedicated to preserve the military heritage of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment through their collections and displays of related artefacts and archival materials”.



albertahistoricplaces.com Called “RETROACTIVE Exploring Alberta’s Past”, this website/blog is maintained by The Historic Resources Management Branch of Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women. Here you can learn about and see photographs of designated Provincial historic places. An example? If you happen to have ancestors who lived in the Village of Empress, you can read the story of the Empress Hospital as well as two protected historic resources – St. Mary’s Anglican Church and the CPR Station Building. Really worth spending time with, to explore the amazing history

of our province.

digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca This is the website for the Glenbow Library and Archives (Calgary). Check under “Collections” to find information, graphics and photographs on various subjects, including Early Alberta, Early Newspapers and The Louis Riel Collection, to a few of several. It is easy to spend a good deal of time with this website, due to the broad topic base.





stalbert.ca/exp/heritage/history/ Located just north of the City of Edmonton, The City of St. Albert has a rich history dating back 150 years ... much of it tied to Father Lacombe and the Catholic Church as well as many people who settled the area. Incorporated as a village in 1899, then named a town in 1904, St. Albert officially became a city in 1977. There are several Heritage Sites featured on the

website (including the Father Lacombe Chapel and the Elevators Train Station), to name two. A link of interest on the website leads you to the Musée Heritage Museum where you can see amazing photographs in their collection and learn about their archives/collections.



edmonton.ca/city_government/Edmonton_archives/city-of-edmonton-archives If you have a free afternoon or evening, accessing the City of Edmonton Archives on the "Exhibits" link will bring you to some amazing presentations of photographs and stories. You can learn about *The Flood of 1915*, *Naming Edmonton*, *Edmonton Incline Railway* and *Building Education*, plus other interesting topics about early Edmonton. These virtual exhibits were created from the records held at the Edmonton Archives.

RS

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| Index | Evans 149 | Place | St. Thomas 144 | Cologne 142 | First World War 146 |
| Article | Franz 133, 135 | Canada 138, 144, | Tavislock 141 | Essen 137 | Second World War |
| A Poem For Arlene | Fraser 137 | 147, 154, 157, 168, | Toronto 141, 149 | Frankfurt 154 | 146, 148 |
| 163 | Gray 133, 147 | 170, 174 | Quebec 139 | Kiel 142 | World War I 146 |
| ABC's of Genealogy | Hackett 135 | Eastern Canada 158 | Montreal 139, 144 | Krefeld 142 | WWII 139, 146, 153, |
| 172 | Haga 163 | Western Canada 157 | St. John's (St. Jean) | Mannheim 145 | 157 |
| Finding Gold on | Hanna 149 | Alberta 133, 135, | 139 | Osnabruck 142 | Regiments/ Battalions/ Squadrons |
| Cortes Island 164 | Hansen 165 | 144, 163, 167 | Victoriaville 139 | Holland 158 | 175 th Battalion of the |
| Letters from an | Hazeldon 166 | Ardrossan 157 | Saskatchewan 154, | Denmark 164 | 3 rd Canadian Rifles |
| RCAF Airman Dur- | Hector 138 | Beaver Mines 136 | 168 | Italy 142 | 146 |
| ing WW11 139 | Hepburn 166 | Bragg Creek 154 | Burstall 154 | Genoa 142 | 305 Squadron |
| Manny Raber and | Hodgins 133,139, 141 | Brooks 135 | Canora 168 | Volga German Russia | 168 |
| Raber's Department | Hutchison 154 | Calgary 139, 160, | Defoe 154 | 168 | 405 th RCAF Squad- |
| Store 154 | James 136 | 174 | Melville 154 | Ukraine 169 | ron 149 |
| Remembering Joe | Juchli 157 | Coleman 136 | Regina 136 | Australia 135 | 431 Squadron |
| Nuthack 168 | King 149 | Cowley 135 | United States 141, | North Africa 142 | (RCAF) 13 |
| Sergeant Arthur | Kruger 133, 134 | Delia 144 | 168 | Cemeteries | 431B Squadron |
| Clifford Pettifor 135 | Lardie 138 | Drayton Valley 169 | California | Florennes Cemetery | (RCAF) 137 |
| Spinning Webs 174 | Lecky 138 | Edmonton 139, | Los Angeles 135 | 151 | 432 Squadron |
| The Many "Shades" | Manning 141, 143 | 157, 170, 175 | Kansas 141 | Hillside Cemetery | (RCAF) 137 |
| of Gray 146 | Manson 165 | Empress 174 | Cotton Wood | 133 | 5 th Bn. Grenadier |
| What better time to | Maroney 143 | Fort Macleod 135, | Falls 141 | Park Cemetery 137 | Guards 153 |
| write his story? 157 | McCallen 157 | 136, 144 | Great Britain | Reichswald Forest | 5 th Scottish Rifles |
| Write-Up | McCloghry 149 | Killam 135 | England 139, 142, | War Cemetery 133 | (Reg. 41711) 146 |
| Earn a chance to win | McGregor 147 | Lacombe 175 | 154 | St. Bris Cemetery | Bomber Command |
| your 2025 AGS | McIvor 146 | Medicine Hat 133, | Birmingham 139 | 144 | WWII Canada 139 |
| membership 162 | Medlicott 146 | 146, 154 | Hampshire 142 | Westlawn Cemetery | Calgary Highlanders |
| In This Issue 133 | Middleton 133 | Nanton 137 | Beaulieu 142 | 160 | 146 |
| President's Message | Middleton 147 | Pierce 136 | Scotland | Societies/ Associations/ Councils | South Alberta |
| 134 | Milton 166 | Red Deer 134 | United Kingdom 138 | Alberta Community | Regiment 153 |
| Guidelines for | Montane 166 | St. Albert 163, 175 | Middleton-St. | Art Clubs Association | South Alberta Regi- |
| Authors 162 | Myette 133, 154 | British Columbia | George 138 | 135 | ment 1 st Battalion |
| Submissions Request'd | Neill 133, 157 | 148, 164, 166 | Throck Morton 140 | Alberta Community | 135 |
| (Feb 2025) 161 | Nicoll 165 | Discovery Islands | Worcestershire 140 | Art Clubs Association | Military |
| Spinning Webs 174 | Nuthack 133, 167 | 133 | Ireland | 135 | Air Cadets 155 |
| Themes for 2025 173 | Oerlemans 55 | Cortes Island 164 | Northern Ireland | Alberta Genealogical | British Army 146 |
| Themes for February | Pettifor 133, 135 | Gabriola Island 154 | 157 | Society (AGS) 133, | Canadian Armoured |
| 161 | Pickering 149 | Powell River 164 | Belfast 157 | 134, 135, 139, 160, | Corps 145 |
| Surnames | Rabar 133, 154 | Mary Island 164 | England/UK 140, | 162, 163, 168, 168 | Canadian Forces 158 |
| Allen 164 | Rabinovitch 154 | Quadra Island 164 | 149, 154, 158 | Medicine Hat Genea- | Canadian Legion |
| Althouse 133, 168 | Rink 138 | Vancouver 164 | Cambridge 149 | logical Society 146 | 136, 155 |
| Anhorn 133, 146 | Robertson 165 | Victoria 166 | North Yorkshire | Archives/Galleries/ Museums | Commonwealth War |
| Anson 136 | Schindelman 155 | Whaletown 164 | 137 | Archives Canada 158 | Graves Commission |
| Bahlow 168 | Scott 133, 139, 144 | Manitoba 137,149, | Europe 133, 144 | 147 | 147 |
| Biron 136 | Selwood 166 | 157 | Belgium 133, 146, | Bomber Command | Medicine Hat Service |
| Bishop 138 | Strange 165 | Kipling 147 | 154, 158 | Museum 137 | Flying Training |
| Bisson 136 | Tennyson 138 | Winnipeg 137, 157 | Avril 152 | Cortes Island Muse- | School 156 |
| Black 141, 143, 149 | Vardi 154 | New Brunswick 139, | Awenne 151 | um & Archives 164 | Royal Air Force 153 |
| Borgestede 133, 163 | Waard 143 | 141 | Florennes 151 | Glenbow Library and | Royal Canadian Air |
| Burns 148 | Waddell 141 | St. John 141 | St. Hubert 151 | Archives 174 | Force (RCAF) 133, |
| Carter 156 | Waddle 141 | Nova Scotia | Ypres 146 | National Archives | 134, 135, 138, 139, |
| Cyphers 167 | Walland 143 | Halifax 139 | Western Europe 133 | (England) 142 | 146, 154, 157 |
| Daubert 133, 157, | Ward 166 | Ontario 137, 139, | France 143, 146, 158 | The Military Muse- | Ships |
| 172, 174 | Weiss 155 | 141, 144, 148, 158 | Bordeaux 143 | ums Calgary 174 | Cassier 164 |
| Davenport 138 | Wilson 133 | Carp 139 | Dieppe 158 | Musée Heritage | Cheakmus 164 |
| Denney 168 | Wolowyk 170 | Fingal 137 | Germany 137, 141, | Museum 175 | Comox 164 |
| Dillon 166 | Zackeriason 164 | Jarvis 139 | 149, 168 | City of Edmonton | Lake Champlain 158 |
| Downie 166 | Zakariasen 164 | Ottawa 139, 144 | Aachon 142 | Archives 175 | |
| Duigou 133, 164 | | Picton 139 | Berlin 170 | Wars | |

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website:
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Grande Prairie, Alberta

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email: lethags@theboss.net
website: <http://lethbridgeags.theboss.net/>
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Lethbridge, Alberta

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T1A 7G8
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