March 2014 Newsletter

The major work that I have been doing on the website for the past couple of months is a migration to support for HTML5. As I mentioned before when I started web design it was two decades ago, back in the days of HTML2, and I continued with some of the bad habits I picked up in getting around the limitations of that primitive level of functionality. I am now about 90% complete on this migration. I have also been doing a lot of bug fixing as you can see from the detailed report.

I know a lot of you are still uncomfortable about actually making changes to the family tree, so this month I have addressed one of the clumsier aspects of my original design: adding children to a family.

With the latest level of functionality you can now add an entire family onto an individual without ever leaving the Edit Families page. You can enter the name of the spouse, and add the children, entirely on this page. The "Add Child" button now just adds a new blank line at the end of the list of children. You can click on this button as many times as you want, and it will just keep adding blank lines. You can then go back and type in the name, birth date, and death date of each child and when you finally click on the "Update Family" button the entire family is created. The dialogue attempts to guess the gender of each child by using a table of the most common girls and boys names in Canada at the end of the 19th century. This is shown by changing the colour of the name. If the colour remains green you can click on the "Edit Child" button and explicitly set the gender, or you can temporarily add a common name with a clear gender, such as "John" or "Mary" to trick the dialogue into assigning the gender.

One of my major objectives in designing this web-site is to identify as many documentary sources for the family tree as possible. So not only does each piece of information about an individual contain links to each of the documentary sources backing up the assertion, but each of those documentary sources contains links to the individuals that it supports. I can then look at a source, for example all marriages registered in a particular year, and see which of those registrations are connected to the family tree. If I see one that is not connected, then I can look for possible connections, which show up as selection lists in the edit dialogue for each record. If I cannot find any possible connections then that is an indication that there are individuals who were present in my area of research but who are not yet in the family tree when they should be.

One such piece of information which is now tracked for the first time is linking the name of the minister who performed a marriage to the family tree. After all the minister is clearly an individual who resided in the area of research and moreover the bride frequently calls upon a friend or relative who is ordained to perform the marriage.
--

Jim Cobban webmaster@jamescobban.net
Web-site: www.jamescobban.net
34 Palomino Dr.
Kanata, ON, CANADA
K2M 1M1
+1-613-592-9438