January 2020 Newsletter

A year for excellent vision. ;^)

I am re-branding the site jamescobban.net to [ontariogenealogy.online](). This is the same site except that the home page is the top-level Genealogy page instead of my personal home page. Why ontariogenealogy.online? OntarioGenealogy.ca already belongs to [The Bailey & Eastwood Families in Ontario Canada](). OntarioGenealogy.com already belongs to [Michael Stephenson]().

While the site [ontariogenealogy.online]() implements a lot of the basic functionality of commercial sites such as Ancestry.ca, it has a number of unique features which distinguish it from even the most popular of the commercial sites.

Alternative to Traditional Hard-Copy Family History

The standard view of a family on this site is designed to mimic the appearance of a traditional hard-copy published family history. Each family is presented with anecdotal text about each of the members. There are footnotes at the bottom of each page documenting the sources of the information. And there is a [nominal index of the family tree]().

You can insert images almost anywhere in the family tree. Specifically you can attach images to each person using the Add/Edit Pictures button. These are displayed after the anecdotal information with "frames" around them and a caption. But you can also insert an image into the description of any event, into any of the note fields, and into the footnotes. Page numbers are not relevant because they are an artifact of the hard-copy codex. They are replaced by clickable hyperlinks.

In addition, unlike a traditional published family history, the web-site protects the privacy of individuals in the tree. All individuals less than 105 years old are automatically protected, as that is the regulation of the Ontario Registrar. Only designated family members can see these individuals. Any designated family member can grant access to this private information to other family members.

There is a [video tutorial]()on using the family page.

Social Networking

We live in a world of social networking, so every individual, and every family name, supports a blog. When you click on the "Contact Author" item in the page menu you can send a message which is securely delivered to every other contributor who has expressed an interest on that page. By securely delivered I mean that the contents is protected by encryption whenever it is transmitted across the Internet.

Bi-Directional Linkage to Sources

All family history applications support adding citations from the description of a member of the family tree to documentary sources, but only this site also implements a link from the source to the family member. I will use one of the less-often used tables as an example.

Many years ago an enthusiastic researcher, Ida Reed, transcribed the thousands of baptismal records created by the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Upper Canada. These records passed ultimately into the United Church Archives. Since Ontario only started collecting birth registrations in 1869, because it was required to do so by the British North America Act of 1867, these records are a useful resource for pre-Confederation Ontario. Bill Martin made Ida Reed's transcription available on the web, but only as a set of static web pages which could not be easily searched to find a name. So I converted that site to a searchable table. This means that while updating an individual you can easily search to see if that individual has a recorded baptism. But the opposite direction is even more interesting.

Go to the Wesleyan Methodist Baptisms District Status page. This displays a list of districts each of which originally represented a Wesleyan Methodist circuit. In the early days the population density was not high enough to support permanent churches in most rural areas, so Methodist preachers would ride a circuit preaching in a different neighbourhood each week. As required they would baptize both children and adults and write it own in a ledger to be copied into the central registry. These districts were fluid and particularly in the early days did not conform to the counties, which in most of Ontario did not actually have administrative staff until the implementation of the Durham Report in 1851. Some of these districts, for example "Johnstown", "Home", "Gore", and "London", share the names of militia districts, which were the main administrative units prior to 1851.

Click on the "View" button for a district, for example "Middlesex". This shows a list of smaller zones, called "Areas" by Ida Reed, which in many cases correspond to townships. Each line of this display gives the name of the "Area", the number of baptisms in the area, and the number of baptisms which are already linked to the family tree. This last column is colour-coded to measure the degree of completion of the linkages.

If you click on the "View" button for an Area you will see the first 20 baptisms registered in that Area, listed in alphabetical order. Those entries which have already been linked to the family tree include a hyperlink to the family tree on the given name. At this point I suggest that you shrink the browser window so that it only occupies the left half of your screen. When you click on the "Details" button for a baptism a new window is opened. Initially this is overlaid on top of the window containing the list of baptisms. Grab the "tab" at the top of this new window and drag it into the empty half of your screen.

This new window contains the detailed information from Ida Reid's transcription. The application also searches the family tree to see if there is an existing person who resembles this baptism. This appears as a selection list labeled "Possible matches to this registration". Click on this and it will expand to a list of the matches. If one of the matches looks like a match: that is the given name and surname are close, the birth date looks like a match, and the given names of the parents are right, then click on that row.

The page now looks like:

Wesleyan Methodist Baptism: Update

| Previous | Next | New Query |

Volume: 3   **Page:** 766
District: Middlesex
Area: Ekfrid
Name: Given: Phoebe Arabella   **Family:** Boyd
Birth Date: 31 Mar 1873   **Birth Place:** Metcalf
Link:
Phoeba Annabell Boyd (31 Mar 1873—1949) daughter of William Boyd and Laura Beers wife of Charles Maitland Macfie ▾
Baptism Date: 22 Jun 1873   **Baptism Place:** Ekfrid
Father's Name: William
Mother's Name: Laura
Residence: Metcalf
Minister: Rev. J. K. Stonehouse

| Update | Clear Form |

This one looks really good, with an exact match on birth date, only one character different in the given name, which may be an issue of misinterpretation of handwriting, and matches on the given names of both parents. If you are nervous you can go to the nominal index and look up the details on the existing individual, where it shows that she was indeed born in Metcalfe township. However in this case it is safe to click "Update". This does several things:

1. Adds the link to the family tree to the Baptism record so that subsequent researchers will see it already in place:

2. Adds a citation to the name of the person, including quoting the text "Phoebe Arabella Boyd" from the Baptism record. The citation to a Baptism identifies the volume and page numbers.

3. If the existing birth date for the person is not an exact date, the exact date from the Baptism is copied. Note that not all Baptism records include a birth date.

4. Adds a citation to the birth event as backed by the Baptism.

5. If there is no existing baptism date a baptism event is added. If there is a baptism event but it does not have an exact date, the date is updated.

6. Adds a citation to the baptism event as backed by the Baptism.

So you can quickly run through a portion of the Wesleyan Methodist Baptisms table and automatically update the referenced members of the family tree.

Status:

The complete description of the web-site and how it is implemented is available on the web at my Genealogy Wiki at https://github.com/jcobban/Genealogy/wiki.   "A *wiki* is a knowledge base website on which users collaboratively modify and structure content directly from the web browser." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki That means that contributors to this genealogy site are not only

invited to enter information about their families but even to contribute to the documentation of the site. Since the source code of the site is also maintained on-line volunteers may even contribute new functionality or fixes to the implementation itself.

Also check out List of Recently Added Individuals for information on the recent growth of the Family Tree which currently contains: 128,527 individuals, 35,106 families, 146,823 events, and 393,599 citations. The census transcriptions include over 750,000 individuals. There are 57,000 birth registrations. 24,000 marriage registrations, and over 30,000 death registrations transcribed on the site.

Thank you for your participation,

James Cobban