



HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

newsletter



Family History - telling your story...

Welcome to the July / August 2021 newsletter.

Mem'ries, light the corners of my mind... 

Lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Tratore

This issue focuses on recording family stories, memories, hearsay, and of course gathering as many pictures, videos and scrapbooks that we can. We do this to learn about our ancestors, and we gather, to hopefully pass our 'collection' along to our descendants. Later in this issue we provide two stories & methodologies others have used to collect, save, and piece memories into a form that family members can then cherish.

But I have a personal story to share – don't I always? *Collecting memories... but with a twist.*

My daughter is an actress & her first 'paying gig' was with a local theatre company. With 3 other actors, she performed "Senior Stories" to over 50 Long Term Care, Senior & Retirement Homes & public venues in the greater Niagara region.

The twist? *They interviewed interested seniors at the homes about their lives – where they were born, grew up, & their key events, thoughts & memories, whatever was important to them. The actors compared interview notes, found trends in these 'life stories' & developed composite characters for a short play, with song & dance numbers - in just 2 weeks. A cohesive story evolved based on the interviews... "An original play based on stories from older adults."*

Once written, edited & well-rehearsed, they performed it for the homes, with of course, their interviewees in attendance. Seniors often don't see stories that reflect their own values, lives & experiences. If the nodding of heads in the audience was any gauge, it seemed they were relating to the four characters in the play, as their stories unfolded. It was great to see the audiences chatting together enthusiastically, after the shows.

Moral of the play... err my story, you ask? *Seniors love to share their stories, even with 4 perfect strangers. Just think of the stories they may have held back because they were private family matters, or too personal to share with strangers.*

I shared this story to demonstrate the openness if you simply ask seniors about their early lives, how they felt at certain times, why they did what they did, and the special moments they might want to share with their future descendants.

Give it a try, record what you find in some way, any way, so their senior story isn't lost forever.

With 'mem'ries', there should be no dark corners.

Stay safe, stay optimistic, and stay in touch with a fellow HEIRS member.

- Rick McCormick



After 16 months we are emerging from Covid shutdown at last, so be aware of new options to do, and things going on.

Free Concerts: Mondays at Colchester Park near the harbour & Wednesday nights in Essex, near the Spitfire Memorial & train station. Enjoy free concerts by local talent from 7PM to dark. Bring a lawn chair & sunscreen for a great relaxing evening. Check out Tune Up The Parks - Town of Essex for details.

Heritage Colchester: 2 more Market events will be held at the Colchester Schoolhouse on Bagot St., Colchester, to raise funds for preserving & restoring the building, August 21 & Sept. 18 from 10AM -3PM. Enjoy browsing among the vendors' interesting treasures.

HEIRS Resource Centre: We plan to reopen in August, Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10AM - 3PM as before, BUT visitors need to make an appointment ahead of time so we can manage the number of people with us at one time. Hopefully we'll open a bit more in September as restrictions loosen.

HEIRS Meetings: October will hopefully be an in-person meeting, with our AGM planned for November to be held on Thursday, November 25th, 2021, tentatively set at 1PM. We'll show off our new research centre improvements.

St. Peter ACHS College: This all-boys elementary level school has operated at Malden Centre (old St. Theresa School) for the past several years, but has looked for a new venue. Harrow comes to the rescue, offering the Harrow Lions Hall on McAfee Street, which isn't being used for the Harrow Fair this year, being cancelled. The school has a 1-year lease, with possibility for extension. The school is also quite interested in the possibility of setting up permanent quarters in the old Harrow High School, should the proposed purchase by the town become a reality.

Our next issue will be emailed the first week of Sept., with meeting updates, speakers & activities. Make sure you remain a part of what is going on. You'll be surprised by the great things being put together for the next few months of the year.

Got skills? We're seeking volunteer(s) to assist us with computer upgrades. Connecting a new scanner for digitizing materials, updating software, etc. **Perfect opportunity for any tech savvy folks who would like to help HEIRS shine.** Contact Lorrie ASAP at heirsont@gmail.com for more info.

Good News... HEIRS now accepts e-transfers for payments. Pay membership dues, buy books, flash drives, etc., using this payment method. Donations are always needed & appreciated; tax receipts to be sent. **Are your 2021 dues overdue? Send your e-transfers to heirsont@gmail.com**

Questions? Contact Bonnie at bgstorey45@gmail.com

Genealogy of the Brush Family

- by Ted Steele

The Brush family arrived in Essex County in 1799 from Connecticut. By most standards, this is considered too late to be UE, but they are indicated as certified UE. Stephen Brush III, married Jemima Squire, and their son Jairus married Mary Cornwall.

Jairus served in 1812, and again during the 1837 Rebellion. Jairus' daughter Lucinda married Charles Pastorius and resided in Harrow.



Stephen's brother John, came to Essex County and married Betsey Wright, daughter of Henry Wright. John's daughter Sarah married William Mickle; daughter Elizabeth married Wheeler Cornwall, while another daughter, Julia Ann

married Morgan Baldwin. A son, Thomas Hardy Brush, married Lucinda Fox.

Stephen and Jemima also had a son named Stephen, referred to as 'Doctor'. He married Mary Quick, daughter of Joseph Quick and Susan Monger. When the elder Stephen died, his widow Jemima, married Philip Wright.

This article outlines the roots of the Brush family, which is still a vibrant part of our community. It demonstrates the degree to which many Loyalist families intermarried through the years, as this list of names in the Brush tree (Cornwall, Wright, Quick, Monger, Baldwin, et al) is almost completely Loyalist, families who stood by their principles and often paid the price for their loyalty.

The Brush family are among the many that founded our way of life & established Essex County, according to their values. Most families in the area no doubt connect with one or more of these family groups in a variety of ways, with kinfolk they may not be aware of.

This is the same family line from which our own Hospitality Committee members, John and Ann Brush descend. The Brush family line is an important part of Essex County's families, and continues with HEIRS.

Our HEIRS files have many links from these first individuals to the families of Harrow today.

When once again we can all access the Resource Centre, it will not be difficult to trace these paths.

The Magic of Stereoscopic Photos!



Here's a follow-up to our 'dating old photos' article, about another well-loved type of photograph from the past.

Most of us have peered through hand-held stereoscopes to see the double photos come to life. Millions of people around the world did just that in their own 19th century homes.

While invented in 1838, the first images were created 2 years later. Photography was in its infancy, but the confluence of technologies allowed likenesses of people & places to be affordably made. Prior to this, people who could afford it, relied on local painters, of variable skill.

The technology is straight-forward, mirroring how our vision works. Our eyes are set about 2-1/2 inches apart, with each eye viewing objects from a slightly different angle. Our brain combines them into one image along with both depth & dimension.

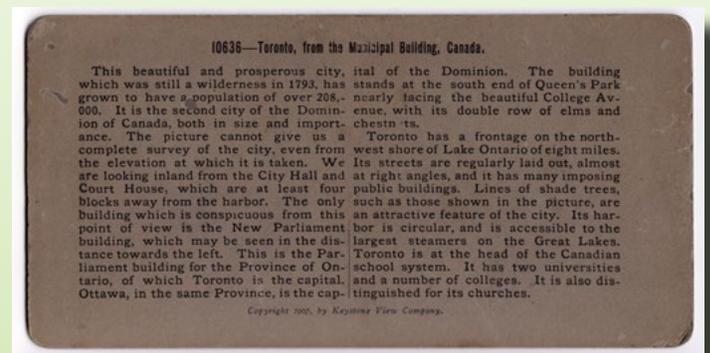
Stereoscopes use 2 lenses set about 2-1/2 inches apart, with a holder for the 'double photo card'. The card distance from the lenses is adjustable to compensate for individual vision. Placing the viewer 'cup' right up to your face blocks extraneous peripheral view, which enhances the 3-D illusion.

Queen Victoria gave them thumb's up in 1851 during London's Great Exposition. Five years later, more than 1/2 million viewers were sold. This excitement spread to America, using a new, simpler 'natural light' viewer.



Keystone Image: View of Toronto c. 1907

Called stereographs, stereoviews, or simply views, they're 2 paper photos, mounted on standardized card backs, 3 1/2 high x 7 inches wide. Some later photos were taller but maintained the same width, to fit everybody's viewers. Numbered cards provided details of the scene, manufacturer & locations on the front. Some provided detailed description of images on the reverse side. Most have slightly curved backs that enhance the 3-D effect, & facilitate stacking during manufacturing.



Dating cards:

1860s-1870s: Yellow or orange cards, by large & small volume photographers, over 10,000 photographers were making the broadest range of subjects, using a 'wet plate' process.

1890s-1920s: Beige/grey cards were produced by large companies like Underwood & Underwood, later Keystone (who bought out all competitors). They are more commercially oriented, mundane & generic in nature, although still interesting to view today.

Millions of images came to life in homes & were shared with guests. Prints were tack sharp & even the oldest cards look great today. Half of all U.S. homes owned them & thousands remain today, ranging from humorous scenes, gruesome Civil War battlefields, nudes, exotic locations & landmarks – places at the time, that most folks had never seen before.

Photo postcards became popular in the 1910s. Photos began appearing in local newspapers, & portable cameras were brought to market... all competing with stereoviews. Keystone, with millions of negatives in their archives, pivoted from being entertainment-based to an educational-based company. They sold box sets like 'Tours of the World' containing 500 cards along with teacher reference manuals.

Keystone boasted that all 50,000-student regions in the US. had purchased their sets. Technology advanced & schools soon became saturated with these 'lessons'.

A World's Fair saved the day again in New York City, 1939. View-Master & Tru-View reintroduced new 3-D viewers as children's toys – a new circular format, with multiple colourful, transparency film images & a cool, plastic viewer. Traditional scenics like the Grand Canyon made way for TV stars & cartoons. In the 1960-70s the Disney characters were big.

I also remember being given a View-Master to see all the great dessert menu choices at East Side Mario's.



Who could resist... our table tried them all.

Dig out your old viewers, or consider buying one on-line. **But a warning... it will be hard to choose only a few cards, & even harder to pry them away from your guests.**

- Rick McCormick



Kilburn c. 1899. Civil war veteran, inventor, photojournalist & most extensive manufacturer of stereocards (3,000 daily) for 45 years. Jame Davis, his agent, helped pioneer door-to-door card sales.

History As It Used to Was...

- by Ted Steele, HEIRS Director

I climb upon the podium of this newsletter to remind readers that each of us is a repository of memories, facts, stories and legends gathered during our years.

Over the past few years at various meetings & in newsletter issues, some of my collection has been shared, as well shown to any interested family members (even perhaps some, who were not so interested).

Each of us has a 'best before' date & my fear has always been that what I've learned would be lost when I departed. Therefore, I decided to make use of the time provided by Covid isolation to produce a hard copy of my personal files, including the mental ones.

Once that first copy is created and printed out, it can be reprinted and shared with kin, or offered in electronic form on disk, or flash drive.

The more copies I can scatter around, the more likely it might be read, added to, and preserved long-term.

So I sorted out, edited & assembled a rough copy of the 'Steele Family History'; then with the invaluable assistance of my HEIRS newsletter partner & friend Rick McCormick, a proof copy emerged.

It tells the story of William Steele - from rich plantation owner complete with slaves, to being tarred and feathered, being wanted dead or alive, fighting with the New Jersey Volunteers, and eventually coming to Canada as a Loyalist, where he was granted land.

Six generations later, I am able to tell his story and point to several individuals of which we can be proud. Rick gave it a professional touch making it readable, attractive & well-worth the time spent perusing through its 35+ pages.

Following where I left off in part 1, plans for part 2 begin with my GG-Grandfather Wilmer Steele, born in the 1850s.



My GG-Grandfather, Wilmer & Julia (Sherk) Steele's home, located on his land grant where they raised their 7 children, east of Port Colborne, Ontario

From Wilmer, the family story will continue through his son (my Grandfather Ezra), to my father and then the 5 Steele brothers, of which I am one. Part 3, at some point, will contain anecdotal stories of various distinguished kin.

My efforts will now safely outlast me!

Please consider putting your own family files down in a form that will outlast you. HEIRS can help you do so.

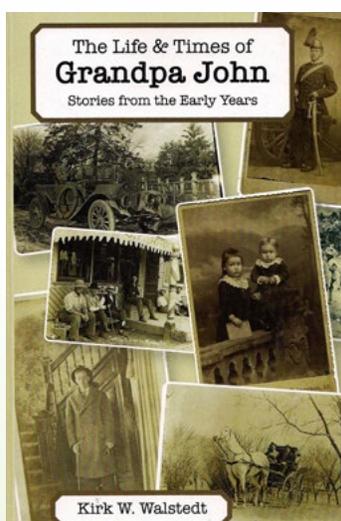
Be the one in your family who takes on this job, while such data is still accessible.

Another Approach

Quite coincidentally, an old friend was thinking along the same lines and has documented the roots of his family tree.

During the 1970s, local politician and history fan, Kirk Walstedt, decided to tape record his Grandfather's memories from long ago. He's turned them into a book offering a personal glimpse of what it was like to be young and struggling in another era.

Entitled, "The Life and Times of Grandpa John", it begins with the transformation of the family name from Svenson to Walstedt, in itself an interesting story.



The family crossed the Atlantic from Europe in 1882, and then began the struggle as poor immigrants to establish themselves in the U.S. Amazingly the family at one time lived in Malden, Illinois, a precursor to the future awaiting them.



Kirk's book goes on to recall the story of a Wild West show that Grandpa John got to see, which involved the infamous Frank James & Cole Younger (members of the James Gang of the Old West). Another told about the Apache Chief, Geronimo, who fought so long & hard against overwhelming U.S. cavalry forces.

By the 1900s, the family was located in Malden Township here in Essex County, and stories recalled the arrival of cars to replace horses as transportation mainstays, although the farmers still swore by their teams of horses to get the farm work done.

Grandpa John retold his memories of WW 1, of the racehorse Man O' War running at a track near Windsor in 1920, and always how these events influenced and affected his life. It's like a scrapbook of the life of a very interesting man, who dealt with hardships and personal losses, but still kept his positive outlook.



Kirk's good use of his tape recorder has become a printed record that family & others can enjoy. **Why not do the same with your family members? Start today to gather & record any way you can... then share your efforts with your family, so future generations can read about the stories of their ancestors The book is available for sale through HEIRS.**

HEIRS RESOURCE CENTRE

Open September - June (December excepted)

Tuesday & Thursday: 10AM - 3PM

Call to confirm Wednesday or other appointments.

Office is temporarily closed due to Covid restrictions!

Newsletter

Published 9 times per year, in conjunction with General Meetings held on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (December excepted).

Receive full colour newsletters by email, or a B&W print version by regular post. Simply provide your email or street address to our office.

Memberships

\$30 CDN / U.S. per person or couple.

Memberships run May 1st - April 30th, annually.

Send membership cheque to:

HEIRS PO Box 53, Harrow
ON, Canada N0R 1G0

Please include phone, postal address, email & family names you are now researching.

Non-member using Research Library

\$10 per visit (+ photocopy costs).

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Kudos go to Greg Harrison at The Computer Centre in Harrow, who provides HEIRS support for all things technical to help keep our office running smoothly.

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