

Interest in genealogy sparked by WDYTYA

By Norma O'Toole

The NBC Series *Who Do You Think You Are?* in which the family histories of American celebrities are explored has sparked interest in family history research. The third season premiered on February 3, 2012. The hit US series is a North American version of the popular British series by the same name.

The Comox Valley is well-served with resources for family history research. There are several genealogy groups to assist those who are interested in beginning their own search. The Comox Valley Family History Research Group (CVFHRG) meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month from September to May at the Latter-day Saints Church hall (rear entrance) at 1901 20th Street, Courtenay. This very active group gives a variety of presentations at their monthly meetings and gives tips to assist their members in solving "brick wall" problems. Volunteers have been taking part in a long-term project to catalogue birth, marriage, and death notices from the local newspapers and have recorded and published monument inscriptions and burial records in four of the local cemeteries. Although some of the members are not able to attend the monthly meetings, the \$10.00 yearly dues entitle them to receive frequent updates via e-mail of new genealogy research resources that are located on the Internet.

CVFHRG holds seminars approximately every two years. The next one-day seminar will be held at the Conference Hall, Florence Filberg Centre on Saturday, April 20, 2013. The guest speakers from Ottawa will be archivist and author Glenn Wright and Lesley Anderson, who is an Ancestry.ca representative. These talented, knowledgeable, and entertaining speakers will give six presentations on a variety of topics.

The Evergreen Seniors have a genealogy group meeting on the third Thursday of each month from September until June at 1:00 p.m. in the Soroptimist Lounge at the Florence Filberg Centre, Courtenay. This small group concentrates on assisting seniors with genealogy research problems.

There are other sources available on the North Island to assist those who are interested in family history research. The Vancouver Island Regional Library has the Library Edition of Ancestry.com for in-branch use only. On their web site they also provide an excellent list of web sites for accessing genealogy research via the Internet as well as lists of books on the subject. Interlibrary Loans are also available.

The local Family History Centre at the Latter-day Saints Church, located at 1901 20th Street, Courtenay has free access to many paid genealogy web sites. The Centre is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The Centre closes for the months of July and August and reopens on the first Tuesday in September. Researchers may search the Family History Library Catalogue on the <https://www.familysearch.org/> website for materials that are found at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. They can order in microfilms on the Internet from home on their area of study for viewing at our local Family History Centre.

The Comox Archives and Museum Society (CAMS) located at 1729 Comox Avenue, contains exciting exhibits and sponsor local events to bring the history of Comox to life. The Courtenay and District Museum and Palaeontology Centre at 207 Fourth Street, Courtenay provides research materials about the history of the Comox Valley and the north Island region such as newspapers, historic photos, interviews, maps, newspaper clipping files, early logging records, books and manuscripts.

Just a little further afield is the Campbell River Genealogy Society at the Maritime Heritage Centre. CRGS holds meetings on the first Thursday of each month and has an excellent genealogy library.

The Nanaimo Family History Society is a very active group and has the BC Birth, Marriage, and Death Registration films from the BC Archives, which saves a drive to Victoria to access copies of original forms. The Nanaimo society members are also working on a major project to index the Canadian passenger ship microfilms and have posted the results on their NFHS web site.

Also of note, accomplished genealogist, author, and Times Colonist Editor Dave Obee, who gives family history talks at many of the BC genealogy societies, has developed a website that is very useful for people who wish to research their Canadian roots. His CanGenealogy.com web site contains a wealth of information for genealogy researchers and also provides links to the websites of BC genealogy societies. Another source that should not be missed is the Library and Archives Canada web site titled "Collections Canada".

Family history research has been simplified in recent years with the adoption of digitization of historic records by many governments and organizations. It is now possible to download digital copies of documents for a small fee per record, through a paid subscription, or free. To explore the fascinating world of genealogy, record what you know about your family, talk to your relatives, read books on the subject, and visit some of the many web sites that exist to help people with their research.