

Genealogy Basics – The Family Group Sheet Form

By Joe Petrie

This document covers the Family Group Sheet, a genealogy document that was manually produced and widely used until the 1990s when genealogy software for PCs became fashionable. Friends of Irish Research (FIR) covers the Family Group Sheet in FIR's free Introductory Seminars and in FIR's free individual consults. Because many of FIR's clients do not have PCs or genealogy software for PCs, FIR genealogists and staff help clients fill-in hard copy Family Group Sheets.

Background: The Family Group Sheet contains 13 vital fields for each parent: Full Name, Date and Place of Birth; Date and Place of Christening; Date and Place of Marriage; Date and Place of Death; Date and Place of Burial; Father and Mother. Some of the fields can be blank. For each child, there are 12 fields. They are the essentially the same as the parents' vital fields, except there are no fields for Father and Mother and there is a field for a Spouse. There's no notes field.

Often we are asked: When should a client use the Sheet? I recommend that clients without PCs or genealogy software for PCs start to fill in the sheet in pencil when they start gathering family information from official information from web sites such as from Canadian Census records, NovaScotiaGenealogy.com, CBGHA's cbgen.org, FamilySearch.org, Ancestry Library and Ancestry.CA.

I will cover the Family Group Sheet using the Case Study approach. The case in point: My Petrie grandparents' family: Edmund Ernest Petrie (1872 – 1948) from Bridgeport, Gardiner and Dominion, his wife Easter Cummings (1879 – 1948) from Lingan, Bridgeport, Gardiner and Dominion and their six children from New Waterford, Bridgeport and Dominion. Edmund was the eldest child of Richard Petrie and his second wife Agnes O'Brien. Edmund had an older step sister, Margaret. Esther Cummings was a twin born to John Cummings and his wife Mary Ann Boutilier – both of Lingan. Mary Ann was the widow of John Neville. Esther had 4 Neville step brothers. The sheet covers Canadians, with some USA records for 2 of the family who settled and died in Massachusetts.

CENSUS INFORMATION:

I usually start my research with Census data because 2 or 3 censuses will often contain the records for all family members.

I treat the Census records as a 10 year snapshot. For Canadian Census records, I am partial to the Census of Canada for 1871 as a starting point because it was the first nominal Census. (The prior Census records identified by name only the Head of the Household.) I also advise the clients that the information from the Census record may be erroneous or incomplete. For example, the Canadian Census for 1901 has a month, day and year of birth and in contrast the 1911 Census only has month and year. Neither has a place of birth. The 1921 record does not have a birth date. It has the age of the individuals.

My Petrie grandparents' family members appear in the 1901, 1911 and 1921 Censuses of Canada. My grandparent's 1901 Automated Census of Canada records from Bridgeport follows:

Petrie Edward	M	Head	M	Oct	1872	28
Petrie Hester	F	Wife	M	Jul 11	1879	21

Please note that my grandfather's given name was Edmund Ernest and my grandmother's given name was Esther. Grandfather was called Ed (or Ned) and his preferred name when in my parent's house was Ned. He was born in June, not October. Grandmother's given name was Esther. She preferred to be called Hester.

Planning to manually construct a Family Group Sheet? Remember to use a pencil. Because the Census-takers filled in the information on to a worksheet and later copied the worksheets on to the Census forms, errors were possible.

The 1911 Automated Census of Canada record from Dominion (Reserve Polling District) for the family follows:

Peterie Edward	M	Head	M	Jun	1873	37
Peterie Hester	F	Wife	M	Jul	1880	30
Peterie Edward	M	Son	S	Oct	1902	8
Peterie Hazel	F	Daughter	S	Dec	1903	7
Peterie Leo	M	Son	S	May	1906	5
Peterie Russell	M	Son	S	Apr	1909	2

Please note that there were a number of Petries in that Census whose Surname was incorrectly spelled Peterie. (There was a family with the Peterie surname.)

Remember that Edmund was the Head of household and Esther was his wife. Also, please note that my grandparents' years of birth were different. I suspect that the Census-taker miscalculated both years. Edward, aged 8, had a given name of Charles Edward. (My brother is named for him.). My father Leo, age 5, was enumerated as Peterie ?. (I managed to get that ? changed to Leo.)

Two children were born after 1911. Because Roy and Dorothy were born after the 1911 Census, they would not be enumerated until the Census of 1921.

The family's data for 1921 Census of Canada record from Dominion follows:

Edward Petrie	49
Hester Petrie	39
Edward Petrie	18
Hazel Petrie	17
Leo Petrie	15
Russel Petrie	12
Ray Petrie	8
Dorothy Petrie	3

Please note that all 6 natural children were enumerated. Please note that the given name for Ray, age 8, was Roy. Russell's given name was incorrectly spelled. Grandmother was probably 42, not 39.

In addition, in the early 1930s my grandparents took in a young female cousin from a local orphanage. She was raised as Joan Petrie. Unfortunately, she was never officially adopted. In the late 1950s, my father found that out when he tried to sponsor Joan's family immigration into the US. He was unable to sponsor the family because he could not prove that she was his sister. Her medical history of TB blocked the official process for all but immediate relatives.

In summary, so far using only Census records I have identified the family members and a possible year of birth. Remember that some of the information may have been incomplete or erroneous. Remember: Use pencils.

BIRTH INFORMATION:

To fill-in birth information, FIR clients often have to edit the Census information based information.

My preferred Birth source is Novascotiagenealogy.org which for some Nova Scotia counties is an excellent resource.

The Novascotiagenealogy.org web site's Death records often contain a date of birth. In fact, my grandparents' 1948 death records provided the exact date of birth. For grandmother, it validated one Census record's date. For grandfather, it provided the date that I show. My father was the informant and I suspect that he had help from his mother and siblings.

BIRTH and CHRISTENING INFORMATION:

Because the family was Roman Catholic and because the two oldest children were born before 1906, the Christening records for Charles Edward (Eddie) and Hazel are in the Catholic Diocese of Antigonish database in FamilySearch.org. Please note that I prefer to use the [FamilySearch](http://FamilySearch.org) Community Trees web site to read those records. Select Advanced Search on the Home Page, and in the trees field select Canada, Nova Scotia, Catholic Diocese of Antigonish. Then enter a Surname.

The Images are great. For some Parish records, each record has both the date of birth and date of the christening. The database also contains a record for my grandmother whose grandmother (Esther Mackie Boutilier) was a sponsor.

CHRISTENING INFORMATION:

[CBGHA's cbgen.org](http://CBGHA.org) has an enormous amount of christening information from Parish records. Kim Stevens is a major contributor.

FamilySearch.org/Collections/List has records for St. George Anglican Church that are being indexed. The records can be browsed. The coverage is:

Baptisms 1810-1838 and 1852-1945

Baptisms, marriages, burials 1785-1824 and 1785-1850

The Catholic Diocese of Antigonish database in FamilySearch.org's Community Trees is amazing. I added a few thousand christenings to my database.

MARRIAGE INFORMATION:

My preferred Marriage source is Novascotiagenealogy.org which for some Nova Scotia counties is an excellent resource.

FamilySearch.org/Collections/List has records for St. George Anglican Church that are being indexed. The records can be browsed. The coverage is: 1785-1824, 1785-1850 and 1813 - 1847.

The Catholic Diocese of Antigonish database in FamilySearch.org has marriage records up to 1906.

CBGHA's cbgen.org has Cemetery records, Obituaries, and Funeral Home records that often identify the Maiden Name of the deceased females including the spouse and parents.

DEATH and BURIAL INFORMATION:

My preferred Death and Burial source is Novascotiagenealogy.org which for some Nova Scotia counties is an exceptional resource.

CBGHA's cbgen.org has Cemetery records, Obituaries and Funeral Home records that sometimes identify the Maiden Name of the deceased females including the spouse and parents.

FamilySearch.org/Collections/List has records for St. George Anglican Church that are being indexed. The records can be browsed. The coverage for burials is 1785-1824 and 1785-1850.

SUMMARY:

Given the fact that there are so many information resources, you'd think that I would be able to fill-in all the appropriate fields. In fact, today, I filled-in Aunt Hazel's exact death date in Massachusetts and Aunt Dorothy's exact birth date. Hopefully, I'll soon be able to fill-in missing dates and places for Aunt Hazel, Uncle Russell and Uncle Roy.

The next two pages contain my Petrie Grandparents' "current" Family Group Sheet.

Family Group Record

Husband Edmund Ernest Petrie "Ed or Ned"				
	Born	22 Jun 1872	Place Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	
	Christened		Place	Baptized
	Died	31 Jan 1948	Place Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Endowed
	Buried	3 Feb 1948	Place IC, Ocean Av, Dominion, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Sealed to parents
	Married	1900	Place Bridgeport, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Sealed to spouse
	Husband's father	Richard P Petrie "Ed"		
	Husband's mother	Agnes O'Brien		
Wife Esther Cummings "Hester"				
	Born	10 Jul 1879	Place Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	
	Christened	11 Jul 1879	Place St. Anne's, Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized
	Died	27 Jun 1948	Place Dominion, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Endowed
	Buried	1948	Place IC, Ocean Ave, D, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Sealed to parents
	Wife's father	John Cummings		
	Wife's mother	Mary Ann Boutilier		
1 M Charles Edward Petrie "Eddie"				
	Born	14 Oct 1902	Place Bridgeport, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized
	Christened	17 Oct 1902	Place Immaculate Conception, Bridgeport, Nova Scotia, Canada	Endowed
	Died	20 Mar 1936	Place Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Sealed to parents
	Buried	22 Mar 1936	Place Ocean Ave, Dominion, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	
	Spouse	Alethea Rickard		
	Married		Place	Sealed to spouse
2 F Hazel Bertha Petrie				
	Born	1 Dec 1903	Place Bridgeport, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized
	Christened	6 Dec 1903	Place Immaculate Conception, Bridgeport, C, Nova Scotia, Canada	Endowed
	Died	28 Jun 1932	Place Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts, USA	Sealed to parents
	Buried		Place Ocean Ave, Bridgeport, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	
	Spouse			
	Married		Place	Sealed to spouse
3 M Leo Ignatius Petrie				
	Born	12 May 1906	Place Bridgeport, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized
	Christened		Place Immaculate Conception, Bridgeport, C, Nova Scotia, Canada	Endowed
	Died	17 Dec 1974	Place New England Baptist Hospital, B, S, Massachusetts, USA	Sealed to parents
	Buried	20 Dec 1974	Place Mount Saint Benedict's Cemetery, Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts, USA	
	Spouse	Loretta Elizabeth Tobin "Ethel"		
	Married	2 Aug 1931	Place St Columbkille Parish, B, B, Suffolk, Massachusetts, USA	Sealed to spouse
4 M Russell Petrie				
	Born	12 Apr 1909	Place New Waterford, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized
	Christened		Place	Endowed
	Died	18 Dec 1940	Place Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Sealed to parents
	Buried	22 Dec 1940	Place Ocean Ave, Dominion, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	
	Spouse			
	Married		Place	Sealed to spouse

Family Group Record

Husband Edmund Ernest Petrie "Ed or Ned"					
Wife Esther Cummings "Hester"					
5	M	Roy Petrie			
	Born	1 Jun 1910	Place Gardiner Mines, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized	
	Christened		Place	Endowed	
	Died	1966	Place Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Sealed to parents	
	Buried		Place Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada		
	Spouse				
	Married		Place	Sealed to spouse	
6	F	Dorothy Irene Petrie			
	Born	28 Jun 1917	Place Dominion, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized	
	Christened		Place	Endowed	
	Died	9 Dec 1987	Place Halifax, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada	Sealed to parents	
	Buried	14 Dec 1987	Place Dominion, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada		
	Spouse	George Donovan			
	Married	1938	Place	Sealed to spouse	
7	F	Joan Teresa Petrie			
	Born	9 Feb 1929	Place Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada	Baptized	
	Christened		Place	Endowed	
	Died	16 Oct 1967	Place Peterborough, Ontario, Canada	Sealed to parents	
	Buried		Place		
	Spouse	Ray Holland			
	Married		Place		

#

Your comments and suggestions are important to me. My address is: joe-apg@norwoodlight.com

Joseph F. Petrie

Founding Member, Friends of Irish Research (FIR)

Member, Cape Breton Genealogy and Historical Association (CBGHA)

Member, Family History Society of Newfoundland and Labrador (FHSNL)

Member, New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS)

Member, Association of Professional Genealogists (APG)

Email address: joe-apg@norwoodlight.com