

Higgins, Bessie Maud (nee Downton) on March 15, 2012 in Caledon, ON in her 102nd year. Born on June 10, 1910 to Eli & Elizabeth Downton. Predeceased by her husband Duncan, sister Rhonda & brother Edward & son Kirk. *The Telegram* March 2012.

Kenny, Walter J. of Fayetteville, NC USA, formerly of Fremeuse on May 17, 2013. U.S. Army Ret. Predeceased by his parents Austin & Bridget & sister Wilhelmina. *The Telegram* May 25, 2013.

Miller, Barbara Irene (nee Hartson) in Calgary, AB on April 20, 2012, aged 54, formerly of South East Placentia. Predeceased by her parents Patrick & Ruby Hartson. *The Telegram* April 2012.

Patten, Ardith Louise (nee Dunford) in Kelowna BC on Feb. 7, 2012. Born in St. John's on March 20, 1945 to Ches & Anne Dunford. Wife of Clar. Resident of Kelowna for 33 years. Memorial service held in Grand Bank United Church. Photo accompanied obit in *The Telegram* Feb. 15, 2012.

Power, John in his 83rd year. Resident of Loch Lomond Villa, Saint John, NB. Predeceased by his wife Maud. Born in Carbonear, son of Maurice & Agnes (George) Power. Formerly of Traytown. *The Telegram* April 4, 2012.

Prowse, Frank in Norfolk, England on Aug. 29, 2003, aged 84. Veteran, WW II 166th Newfoundland Field Regiment Royal Artillery. Predeceased by his wife Pamela, 1994. His brother Bernard died Feb. 23, 2013, aged 87. No newspaper reference.



A REVIEW OF FAMILYSEARCH COMMUNITY TREES, A TREASURE FOR FHSNL GENEALOGY RESEARCHERS

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We researchers often “hit the wall”. Sometimes, I simply use Google Chrome to search for information on the person or family that I am looking for. Usually, there’s nothing or nothing

more than what I already know. Sometimes there is a bonanza! For my research and for others researching Canadians, FamilySearch Community Trees can be a bonanza!

For background, I was looking for the parents and siblings of Reverend Michael Leo O’Connell. Father Leo was a Parish Priest in Whitney’s Pier in Sydney, NS. His older brother “Nate” was John Ignatius O’Connell, MD, who practiced Nova Scotia and in Curling, Newfoundland. In fact, the hospital in Curling is named for Nate. (Our mothers descended from the Ormond Family that immigrated to North Sydney, NS from Lismore, Waterford County, Ireland in the early 1800s.)

My family’s oral history on the O’Connell family was spotty at best. It was a listing of names provided by my late aunt, May Tobin, who had lived and taught in Halifax most of her life. She was born in Glace Bay. She went to high school and college in Halifax. At age 20, she permanently moved to Halifax. Because she was visually impaired, very little of her genealogy information was documented including from numerous trips to Newfoundland until she was in her 80s - when she dictated the information to volunteers. She is buried with my grandparents in Holy Cross, North Sydney. As an aside, I have validated lots of her information using a number of databases including Newfoundland Grand Banks and the Automated Census of Canada for 1901 and 1911. There were no errors – although some of the information was incorrect chronologically.

Using Google Chrome, I searched for Michael Leo O’Connell, Sydney, Nova Scotia. Honestly, I did not expect much new information. The URL for the FamilySearch Community Trees web site was in the resulting search list. The record was identified as being from the Canada, Nova Scotia, Antigonish Catholic Diocese, one of eight Canadian databases currently in FamilySearch Community Trees. Specifically, when I opened Father Leo’s record, his given name and surname was hyperlinked. When I drilled down by clicking the link, I found his christening information from Sacred Heart Parish in Sydney NS. When I searched for his siblings’ records and drilled down, I also found vital information for them.

Since then, I have been adding birth, christening and marriage information from St. Joseph's to my PAF records for my North Sydney NS families (Cames, Camus, Dooley, O'Connell, Ormond and Tobin – the descendants of my great grandfather who relocated from Northern Bay Newfoundland). In addition, I have added vital information for my Cape Breton Petrie families - from Sacred Heart, St. Alphonsus (Low Point, New Victoria, NS), St. Anne (Glace Bay, NS), St. Joseph (North Sydney NS, Lingan, NS and Reserve Mines. NS), and Immaculate Conception (Bridgeport NS and Sydney Mines. NS). At the FamilySearch Community Trees Advanced Search Page, I selected the Antigonish Catholic Diocese database and typed the Petrie in the Surname field. Over 400 parish records were found - a high percentage of the 4000+ Petrie records in my PAF database. Finally, I have just added vital information for my Nova Scotia Boutilier families (Little Bras d'Or, Bridgeport, Boulardarie, Dominion, Glace Bay, Lingan, Reserve Mines, Sydney, Sydney Mines, and North Sydney, I was surprised at the number of Newfoundlanders who married and stayed in the Antigonish Diocese. I suspect that some of the Boutiliers returned from Newfoundland with their spouses and families.

I really liked the fact that the Community Trees software allowed me to comment. I took the opportunity to both complement and to complain. My initial major complaint was that the records were not integrated into FamilySearch.org. On November 30, I received an Email from David S. Barss, Historical Family Reconstitution, Community Trees Project, FamilySearch. David indicated that the records (and images) were integrated into FamilySearch.org. To see the images, David indicated that the user simply needed to register after a record in the results of the search was selected. I tested the FamilySearch selection and image software using the birth information from Community Trees for my uncle, Charles Edward "Eddie" Petrie born and baptized in October 1902 at Immaculate Conception in Bridgeport, NS. Why Uncle Eddie? For over 30 years, I never had an exact date. Now after reading the image of the original record, I know the dates and sponsors: Born 14 October 1902, Baptized 17 October 1902, Sponsors were his maternal grandmother Mary Ann Boutilier Rockett and her third husband Richard Rockett.

My other complaints were fixed or improved! The FamilySearch Community Trees site is new. It is still really in development. Some planned features simply do not work. In time, I suspect that all features will work. Family Group Sheets are incomplete. The latter is probably more due to spelling errors by the clergy. Initially the site was slow! There has been a steady improvement in the past few months.

My advice to potential users is USE BOTH FamilySearch and FamilySearch Community Trees at the same time by opening two browsers! I use Google Chrome and Internet Explorer. Also, I open my PAF software and switch between the three. Start with FamilySearch Community Trees to see whether one or more records are available for the individual (there can be parent and children records). That retrieval is at the Surname level. If records are available, left click on the hyperlinked name to see a preview and ensure that you have the correct individual. Then switch to FamilySearch.org to see the image. Finally, I switch to PAF to add or update a record in my database.

There are other reviews worth noting. One famous genealogist's review is less critical. James Tanner is the author of *The Guide to FamilySearch Online*. He is an avid Blogger and his genealogy blog, Genealogy's Star is one of the top genealogy blogs. He has been a presenter at a number of Genealogy Expos and Conferences. His recent comment follows: "What is Community Trees? Essentially it is a focused collection of genealogical studies that concentrate on either a certain type of record, a certain geographic area or a certain time period and provide an exhaustive listing of every record found in the target study." Tanner also says: "This is a fabulously valuable website with practically no visibility in the genealogical community. We can only wonder why this program has not received more publicity?"

WOW! - Fabulously valuable! I assume that Mr. Tanner would recommend its use by researchers searching for vital information on Roman Catholics in the Diocese of Antigonish as well as from the seven other Canadian sites and the other sites in the web site's Advanced Search inventory!