

Use of the Cape Breton County Burial Index - Version 3.0

By Joe Petrie

I am in sunny Naples Florida on vacation. It is 82 degrees outside. But, my wife and I are trapped inside our rented condo recovering from very bad and lingering colds. We are afraid that we'll infect one or all of our friends if we go to the pool with them.

It is a perfect time to explore the monumental Burial Index Version 3.0 in Excel format that I downloaded earlier today.

In summary: From my perspective, this is a great news, a good news and a bad news story. I'll cover them in reverse order: Let's start with and dismiss the bad news story. First, the Index is incomplete. Let's face it: It may never be complete. There are lots of cemeteries where the records are not included in the Index. (The missing records include hundreds of my Petrie relatives interred in cemeteries from New Victoria to Bridgeport.) Second, more bad news: there are duplicate records. For example, in my Camus family buried in North Sydney, there are 3 identical records for my great grandfather Martin Adolph (Adolphus) Camus (7488, 7496, and 7497). There are two identical records for my great grandmother Lucy Boutilier Camus (7487 and 7494). There are 3 records (7490, 7491 and 7492) for George Camus - Martin's step-son by his third marriage to Marie (Mary Ann) Landry.

Good news: For Martin Adolph Camus, there is at least a record for all three wives: Lucy Boutilier, Annie Beaton McNeil (widow of Neil McNeil) and Marie (Mary Ann) Landry. Also, what is more important from the database viewpoint is that the structure is there. What is needed is to make the index more complete is simply to gather more records from more cemeteries to reformat and to load. Based on my 50+ years of experience in the computer industry, I do not believe that all that is needed is a cookie cutter approach. Easily modified software is probably needed to convert existing cemetery records into the Excel structure's format. A good starting place may be the CBGHA records. Of course, there may be policy and staffing decisions that need to be made – they are outside of my pay category. Finally, more good news: the multiple records seem to be rare and could be only for Old St. Joseph's Cemetery (aka Goat Hill) in North Sydney.

Great News (for me at least): Today, using the Index and other databases, I finally fixed the records for my mother's Uncle John Camus's family. In fact, I was able to correct an error that I made over 20 years ago.

First my original error: My mother's sister (Mary Aloysia Tobin) was the source of information that I misinterpreted. My Aunt May was truly the genealogist in the family. Despite the fact that she was so visually handicapped that she could not write her information, she dictated it to me and others so that it was not lost. Aunt May told me that her uncle John Camus had 5 children but she could not remember the names of two of them. The 3 that she remembered were: Mary Regis "Regis", Mabel Zeta and John Clement "Jack". I seem to have assumed that the two she could not remember were the two that died when they were infants.

For 20 years, the records for a boy and a girl simply had no given names. Using the Burial Index record 7488, I determined that the girl was actually Mabel Zeta Camus (B: 25 Oct 1897 – D: 11 April 1901). Specifically, in Column D of record 7488, there is the following information: Camus ? - April 11 1901 - 3 yrs 5 mons 16 days, Daughter of John & Jessie Camus.

Earlier last year, I determined that John and Jessie's son who died at 2 months 12 days (who was buried with his grandfather and sister) was Leo Thomas Adolphus Camus. His Christening Record of 9 August 1903 for St Josephs in North Sydney is in FamilySearch Community Trees for Canada, Nova Scotia, RC Diocese of Antigonish. (I think that I am correct when I state that it looks like he was named for his two grandfathers: Adolph Camus and Thomas Fraser.) I verified the information using the Burial Index information in Column D, specifically, Camus (Child of) John & Jessie Camus - Oct 12 1903 -2 mos 12 days.

About the same time, I created a new error. Leo Gillis, a descendant of John and Jesssie's daughter Mary Regis Camus, provided me with information on Regis's sister Doris. Because I could not find Doris in my Aunt May's records or in the Automated Census of Canada for 1901, I assumed that Doris was Mabel Zeta's nickname. I changed Mabel Zeta's record to include the Doris Nickname. It was a DUMB error! I did not verify it! As a result, I should terminate my Association of Professional Genealogists Membership. Today, I deleted the nickname and gave Doris a record. (I have 5 children – as did my aunt – and all my Camus records now have given names.)

Today, I found Doris in the Automated Census of Canada for 1911. The date of birth looks like it is off by a year – probably a Census taker error. (There is a conflict with Mary Regis's birth year.) Only her given name was missing from my Aunt's list. The record for Doris is now verified.

One final note about Doris: She is missing from her mother's obituary.

Does anyone know anything more about Doris? She was also known as Doris Comes.

Finally, kudos to Bob Hegerich and the volunteers who put Version 3 together. It truly is monumental as well as historic. Because Burial information is so important and useful in verifying records, I am looking forward to the next version! By the way, Bob's World Connect database is a vital part of many of my Modified Register Reports that are available on cbgen.org/records/families. Bob's work is amazing.

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