

Genealogy Basics – How I Linked Two Step-Children who did not Know of Each Other

By Joe Petrie

INTRODUCTION:

The research started when I discovered a note in my late Mother's Address Book that listed all of the Petrie individuals that Mom corresponded with and/or called. Listed was a woman named Barbara and a note that she was Eddie's daughter who was married to Horace F Because his surname started with an F, it should have been on another page in the Address Book.

That discovery was the first time that we learned that Eddie had a daughter. What was strange was that she was someone that no one spoke of! Of course that increased my curiosity!

Eddie was Charles Edward Petrie, my father's older brother. He had passed away as a result of burns suffered when he rescued his wife and baby son, Bill, from a house fire in Cape Breton. Bill was raised by his mother, her Livingstone parents and his aunts in Dominion, Cape Breton. During Dad's trips to Cape Breton, my father always sought out Bill. I met Bill on one of those trips. We were both kids!

Barbara was never spoken about!

I asked Bill about **Barbara! He never heard of her.**

MY SEARCH:

Mom suffered from a mild form of dyslexia. (I probably inherited my milder case from her.)

In her address book, Mom's written address for Barbara looked like she lived in Sands Point, New York.

I wrote to Barbara in Sands Point. The letter was returned as undeliverable. I called the Post Office and found that there was no-one with her surname and no such street in Sands Point. That conversation made me more curious. The research was a back-burner item for some time.

At one point, I created a hand-written Family Group Sheet for my Petrie grandparents (at that point I did not have genealogy software). I sent a copy to first cousins and Dad's direct line. I asked for comments. My father's sister Dorothy commented. She provided information on Eddie's first marriage in New York. She could not remember Eddie's first wife's surname. One of his Petrie first cousins attended.

Bill lived in Ontario and I lived in Massachusetts. We met in Cape Breton while I was researching at the Beaton Institute. We visited our fathers' sister. Aunt Dorothy told Bill what she knew about Eddie's first wife. Initially, I was surprised that she did not know more. That changed when I remembered that she lived and went to school in Massachusetts in 1925 - 1932. She returned home to Dominion each summer.

Later on when I had genealogy software, I added a record for Barbara and Horace and a marriage record to my database. I added an individual record and a marriage record for Barbara's mother with a note that her maiden surname was unknown. The search was still on a back burner,

THE FINAL CLUE TO FINDING BARBARA:

One day, when I was planning a trip to New York, I looked up all the cities and towns that we'd be passing through or staying in. On a whim, I decided to search the New York Atlas for all the communities beginning with the letter S. One community looked very promising: Sodus Point. It was time to move the search to a front burner.

I called the Sodus Point Postmaster. I was told that there were lots of individuals with that Surname. But there was no one with a given name of Horace. Also, there was no Barbara. The Postmaster suggested that I call Rochester Telephone Information.

I called Rochester Phone Information. The operator gave me the one phone number listed for that Surname.

I phoned and talked to Barbara's son. He gave me her address and phone number.

I called. We talked. She was so excited. I was the first Petrie that she talked to in years. She told me about her mother, her twin sister Beverly (who died young in Cape Breton), her step-father, her first husband (Horace), her children, her grandchildren, her job, her retirement, and her search for step-siblings. (That fact did not escape me!)

I told her about Bill.

She asked me where Bill lived. I asked her if she could see Hamilton, Ontario from where she lived. She could. Could she see the big smoke stack? She could. I told her that he lived a few miles from the smoke stack.

After that call, I called Bill and left a message that I talked to Barbara. He called me when he returned from Florida.

He called Barbara. Bill drove to Rochester. They met. Bill and Barbara visited her family. Bill visited Barbara in Florida.

SUMMARY:

Three documents (Mom's Address Book; a hand-written Family Group Sheet and a NY Atlas); sound advice from a Postmaster; a helpful Rochester NY telephone operator; and some telephone calls led to my finding Barbara.

I'll admit it! The timeline took years. In fact, it may have taken nearly two decades. My search was on the back burner for too long.

If I were a policeman, I'd describe it as a cold case that I finally closed.

I persevered! And I was lucky!

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Your corrections, comments and suggestions are appreciated. Please Email me at:

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Please note that Friends of Irish Research is the repository for my published genealogy articles in the *Newfoundland Ancestor*; and in *EZINE*, the electronic magazine of the Cape Breton Genealogy (See friendsofirishresearch.org; specifically the Tabs for Publications and Joe's Free Web Sites.)