

Genealogy Basics – My Search for a Burial Record in the Images of the Registers of Two RC Parishes in Cape Breton

By Joe Petrie

BACKGROUND:

The original focus of this document was on my use of FamilySearch's Nova Scotia, Antigonish Catholic Diocese database to verify an oral history burial record for my 2nd great grandmother, Johannah Maher Cummings (B About 1816: Newfoundland, M: 1839 Newfoundland, Died: About 1881 Langan).

Oral history indicated that Johannah's burial record was in the Sacred Heart Marriage Register for February 1881. Unfortunately, I did not find a record in my "Default" search of the database.

In case the record was not transcribed and indexed, I decided to browse a set of the images – not the whole 10,000+ images in the database. Essentially, I attempted to determine whether the burial record was imaged. This article documents my approach.

Why document my method? I want other researchers to avoid the problems that I experienced. The image browsing software is based on the community. Finding Sacred Heart Images was easy. It was the only Sydney parish. The designers assumed that I knew that St. Joseph's Parish in Langan was in the community of New Waterford.

I knew of another approach. I used it to jump start the image browsing software for St Joseph's. This article has instructions on how to use that approach.

Why attempt to validate the oral history? I try to get two sources for each vital record. The oral history indicated that Johannah was buried from Sacred Heart on February 16, 1881 by Father James Quinan. There is a major problem with the February 1881 date. The date conflicts with the 1881 Census of Canada record. The Census was taken on April 4, 1881/ It indicates that Johannah was alive on April 4, 1881. The 1881 Census is a nominal listing of living individuals. Please note that the parts of the 1881 Census that covered the deceased etc. were destroyed years ago. Based on the Census record which is often a genealogy starting point, I assumed that Johannah died in late April or in May of 1881. Ancestry.com played a major part in defining the May part of the date range.

INTRODUCTION:

The FamilySearch's Nova Scotia, Antigonish Catholic Diocese database has nearly 95,000 records and over 10,000 images. To find Johannah's Death or Burial record, I started by searching the database. Please note that the database contained records from only 43 parishes. For Registered Users, the images could be displayed and copied and even downloaded.

I encourage all users to register. It is fast and easy. FamilySearch is not trying to collect records for the Mormon Church. They simply want to identify the users. Every time I use FamilySearch, I log in and I sign on as a registered user. Please note that I am a practicing Roman Catholic and I registered.

Based on the oral history, I expected Sacred Heart in Sydney would have a record. I also expected St. Joseph's in Langan might have a record. In 1881, St Joseph's Parish Registers were maintained by Father James Quinan, the Pastor at Sacred Heart in Sydney when St. Joseph's was a Mission Church. St Joseph's was elevated to a Parish in 1886. Father Quinan provided Registers for earlier years to the new pastor. There are images for St Joseph's Registers dating back to 1853.

At various times in his 46 years of service at Sacred Heart, Father Quinan preformed services at Cow Bay, Glace Bay, Langan, Low Point and Point Edward. His record-keeping was amazing.

About my starting point for St Joseph's: For readers who are interested in all parishes and counties in the database, the list of forty-three Parishes is available on the Friends of Irish Research (FIR) web site (www.friendsofirisresearch.org/publications.htm). The title is: Links to the Communities and the 43 Parishes that provided Registers for the Antigonish Catholic Diocese database. I suggest that the user use Control-F and type 43 in the resulting search block so search my article. Click on the document title to open it. Once you open the document, the FIR software will download the table to your device.

Technically, my approach uses most of the FamilySearch Browsing software. It has a different starting point. The FamilySearch software provides a way to view the 10,000+ images by a Browse Images link on the Home page. The difference is that the 43 Parish Listing identifies the Community and the Parish. There is a hyperlinked line for each Parish which links back to the FamilySearch browsing software for the parish. Please note that until I re-read the 43 Parish List, I never knew that St Joseph's Parish in Lingan was in New Waterford. Was it in New Waterford in 1886 to 1905? Imagine, I once attended a Mass in a Catholic Church on Lingan Road and did not know that I was in New Waterford.

The following table identifies the fifteen Cape Breton Parishes that submitted records to the Antigonish Diocese.

:

<u>Community</u>	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number of Register Pages that were Imaged</u>				
		Baptisms	Marriages	Deaths	Others	
Big Pond	St. Mary's	2	3	0	7	1890
Boisdale	St. Andrew's	109	3	0	110	1850
Bras d'Or	St. Joseph's	117	7	0	122	1879
Dominion (Bridgeport)	Immaculate Conception	177	2	0	181	1885
Frenchvale	St. Mary's	44	15	6	66	1853
Glace Bay	St. Anne	355	42	0	156	1873
Glace Bay	St. Anthony's	33	19	1	3	1903
Glace Bay	St. John the Baptist	45	8	0	13	1903
Grand Mira	St. Margaret's	352	47	0	401	1836
Main-à-Dieu	Immaculate Conception	305	0	0	13	1846
New Waterford	St. Alphonsus (New Victoria)	172	36	6	225	1856
New Waterford	St. Joseph's (Lingan)	119	3	3	128	1886
North Sydney	St. Joseph's	559	391	4	951	1846
Port Morien	St. Mary's & St. Gregory's	104	7	0	112	1873
Reserve Mines	St. Joseph's	44	12	0	58	1895
Sydney	Sacred Heart	552	166	52	706	1846
Sydney Mines	Immaculate Conception	47	33	0	63	1884

I viewed all the records for the two Parishes. I highlighted and bolded the eight Event Types that I viewed.

MY SELECTION CRITERIA:

First, I decided to view Death or Burial Records Images for the 1880s for the two Parishes – a total of 55 images.

I thought that I could enter any image number to get to the image of the page that I wanted to view. The software forced me to go image by image starting at the first image.

Second, I needed to go into the Marriage Event Type for Sacred Heart because the source of the oral history said the burial record was with marriage records. There were 166 Sacred Heart Marriage images.

Because I found “Mixed Events” early on, I decided to include the Other Event Type.

Eventually, I decided to review all Event Types for the two parishes.

Now that I knew how find St Joseph's, I could use either the FamilySearch Image Browsing software or either version of the table (the downloaded version with 43 parishes or the partial table with 15 parishes). The parishes are hyperlinked. Control click on a parish. Wait a few seconds. The software will display the Event Types that have images. Then click on the Event Type. Most will not display Deaths because there are no images.

No burial records! It is too bad for genealogy research.

The most difficult Event Type was the Sacred Heart Other. My Notebook kept running out of storage. Eventually, I deleted temporary internet files and cookies before I started - again and again on Image 1 of 706. The following table identifies the composition of the Sacred Heart Other Event Type Images.

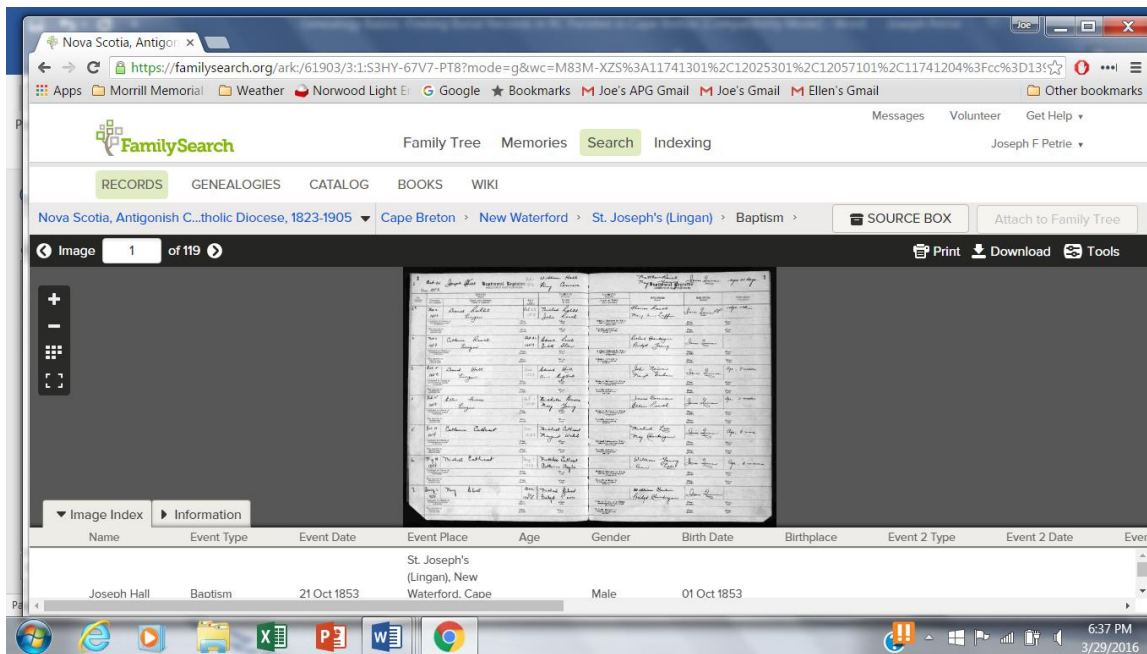
Parish	Event Type(s)	Dates		Image Start
		Start	End	
Sydney	Baptisms	November 7, 1846	December 25, 1853	2
Sydney	INDEX			171
Sydney	Baptisms	December 31, 1879	August 2, 1902	197
Sydney	Another INDEX			298
Sydney	Baptisms	August 12, 1902	November 1, 1905	326
Sydney	Baptisms	April 15, 1886	December 31, 1905	379
Sydney	Marriages	March 9, 1886	December 1, 1905	465
Sydney	Deaths & Burials	March 9, 1886	June 16, 1901	493
Sydney	Baptisms	January 3, 1869	October 25, 1884	504
Mission - Point Edward		1880	1880	524
Sydney	Baptisms	January 24, 1881	December 2, 1883	524
Sydney	Marriages	May, 1870	November 1885	530
Lingan	Baptisms	January 3, 1869	December 6, 1885	542
Lingan	Deaths & Burials	March, 1870	November 1880	563
Low Point	Baptisms	January 6, 1870	February 6, 1886	568
Sydney	Baptisms	January 1, 1884	December 31, 1886	582
Sydney	Burials	January 14, 1882	September 14, 1886	587
Sydney, Lingan and Low Point	Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths	October 17, 1853	November 29, 1855	595
Sydney	Baptisms	January 1, 1856	July 10, 1859	606
Sydney	Marriages	January 25, 1856	February 21, 1860	612
Sydney	Baptisms	July 15, 1858	July 15, 1858	614
Sydney	Deaths and Burials	April 5. 1856	6 Nov 1856	615
Low Point	Baptisms	March 19, 1856	October 6, 1860	618
Low Point	Marriages	May 4, 1856	February 10, 1867	624
Low Point	Deaths and Burials	1858	1869	628
Lingan	Baptisms	January 14, 1856	April 21, 1861	630
Lingan	Marriages	January 30, 1856	November 28, 1865	636
Lingan	Deaths and Burials	April 1859	April 1868	640
Bridgeport	Baptisms	April 20., 1857	December 8, 1863	642
Bridgeport and Glace Bay	Baptisms	August 7, 1864	February 10, 1865	647
Bridgeport	Marriages	January 21, 1857	November 16, 1864	648
Bridgeport	Deaths	January 1, 1856	November 22, 1865	651
Sydney	Baptisms	March 28, 1859	November 16, 1865	653
Sydney	Marriages	August 29, 1863	November 14, 1865	662
Sydney	Deaths and Burials	August 20, 1861	November 20, 1863	664
Low Point	Baptisms	January 27, 1862	December 8, 1867	666
Sydney	Baptisms	January 25, 1866	December 15, 1867	668
Sydney	Marriages	January 22, 1868	July 20, 1869	671
Lingan	Baptisms	June 29, 1861	December 6, 1868	673
Bridgeport and Glace Bay	Baptisms	May 27, 1866	June 15, 1866	677
Bridgeport, Glace Bay and Cow Bay	Marriages	January 30, 1865	August 1, 1865	678
Lingan	Marriages	January 5, 1866	September 21, 1869	679
Sydney		January 1833	17 Jan 1840	682

METHODOLOGY FOR SEARCHING AND SELECTING AN IMAGE:

Select an Event Type (Baptisms, Marriages, Death or Other). Wait a few seconds. The software will display the number of images on the upper left hand corner. Image 1 is displayed. The Plus sign on the left allows the user to magnify the image. Remember that the image usually has two pages of records. The average image contains 10 records.

For this section, I selected St Joseph Baptisms to show that the first image was for a record dated October 1853. The first record is for Joseph Hall, baptized in October 1853. Please remember that St Joseph's became a parish in 1886. (Some Halls are in my Casey Family Register Report.)

At the bottom of the screen print, there is a transcription of some fields in the image.



Please remember that the challenge was in viewing the 706 "Other" Event Type images for Sacred Heart Parish. The Viewer kept shutting down. I concluded that I was running out of storage, I kept having to delete temporary internet files and cookies. On the fourth attempt, I was able to view all the 706 images. For each attempt, I had to start at the first image.

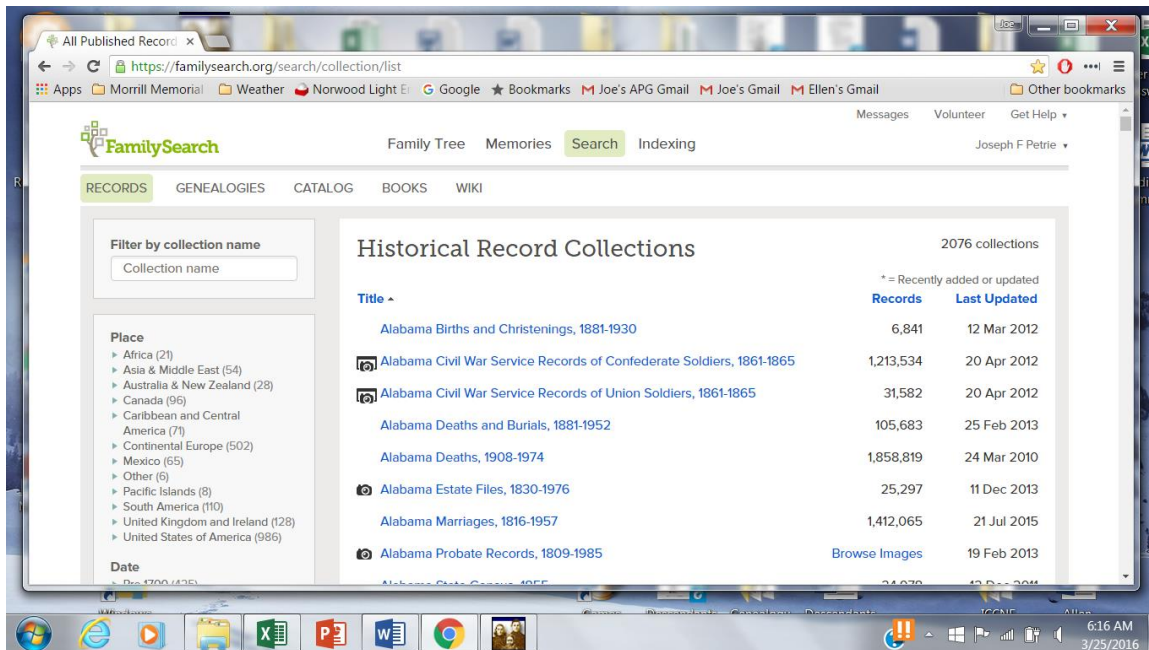
I considered downloading the images for viewing with a different software. My notebook did not have the storage capacity.

THE DEFAULT PATH TO AN IMAGE

I prefer to work with one database at a time.

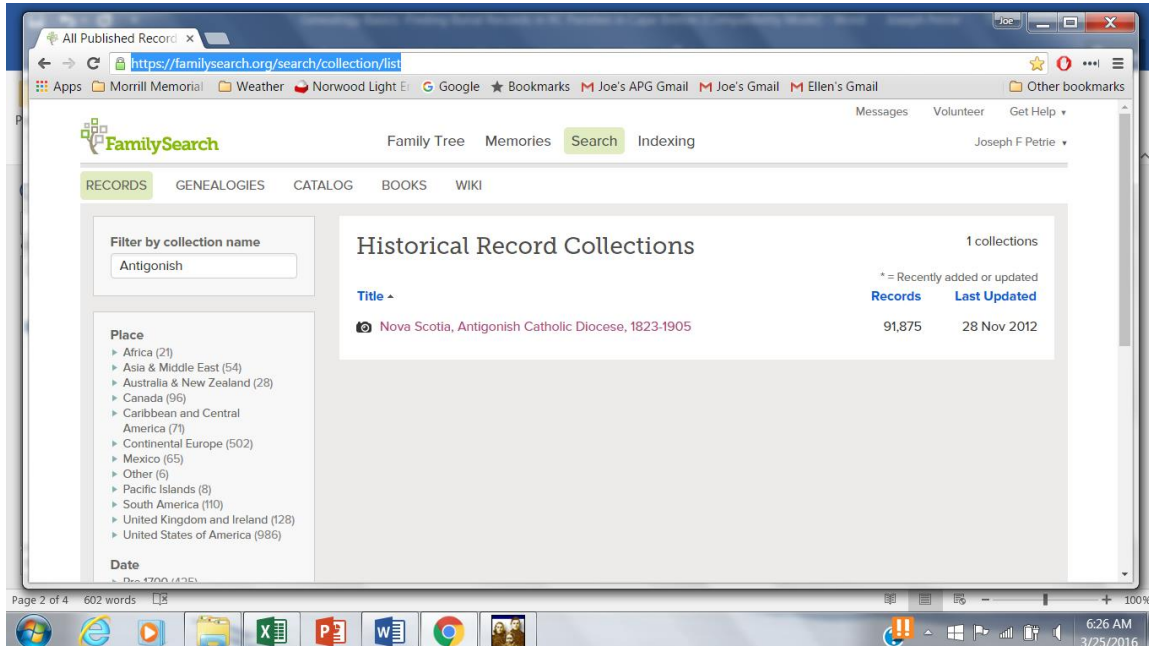
The URL is: <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list>

The following screen print indicates that there are 2076 collections as of Friday, March 25, 2016. There are 96 for Canada. One is for the Antigonish Catholic Diocese.



In the Filter by Collection Name block on the left column, I type Antigonish to get the database.

The following screen print results.



I simply click on the hyperlinked file name to enter search criteria.

For this section of the article, I decided to display the image of the Burial record for Richard Casey, my 3rd great grandfather. I had found Richard's burial record months ago.

In the following screen, I typed Richard and Casey in the Name blocks.

I selected the Death Event. I entered a location of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia Canada and a date range of 1837 to 1837. Then I clicked the Search Block. (I knew that he passed away in 1837.)

Search Collection

DECEASED ANCESTOR'S NAME

First Names: Richard Last Names: Casey

SEARCH WITH A LIFE EVENT:

Birth | Marriage | Residence | Death | Any

Death Place: Cape Breton, Nova scotia, C Death Year (Range): 1837 1837

SEARCH WITH A RELATIONSHIP:

Spouse | Parents | Other Person

RESTRICT RECORDS BY:

Type

☐ Match all terms exactly

Search Reset

VIEW IMAGES IN THIS COLLECTION

Browse through 10,838 images

Two records were found. I selected the first, a burial record from Sacred Heart Parish for a Richard Casey. The second Casey record was for a male who was buried in 1867.

I have no idea why the second record was retrieved. Assume a software design or programming error.

I selected the Image view. The following screen print is the record's magnified Image View.

FamilySearch

Family Tree Memories Search Indexing

RECORDS GENEALOGIES CATALOG BOOKS WIKI

Nova Scotia, Antigonish C...tholic Diocese, 1823-1905 Cape Breton Sydney Sacred Heart Marriage

Image 160 of 166

Print Download Tools

Image Index Information

Name	Event Type	Event Date	Event Place	Age	Gender	Birth Date	Birthplace	Event 2 Type	Event 2 Date
Roderick Mcneil	Marriage	15 Jan 1837	Sacred Heart, Sydney, Cape		Male				

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Please take note of the fact that the audit trail that FamilySearch provides showed that Richard's death was recorded in the Marriage Register. On the next line, the image number is 160 of 166, There were 166 Images for marriages in Sacred Heart Parish. I wonder if somehow I missed Johannah's record in my review of Sacred Heart's Marriage records. I'll probably give it another try when I return home from Naples Florida, (My wife and I are "Snow-Birds"). My desktop PC at home in Norwood MA has more storage than my Notebook.

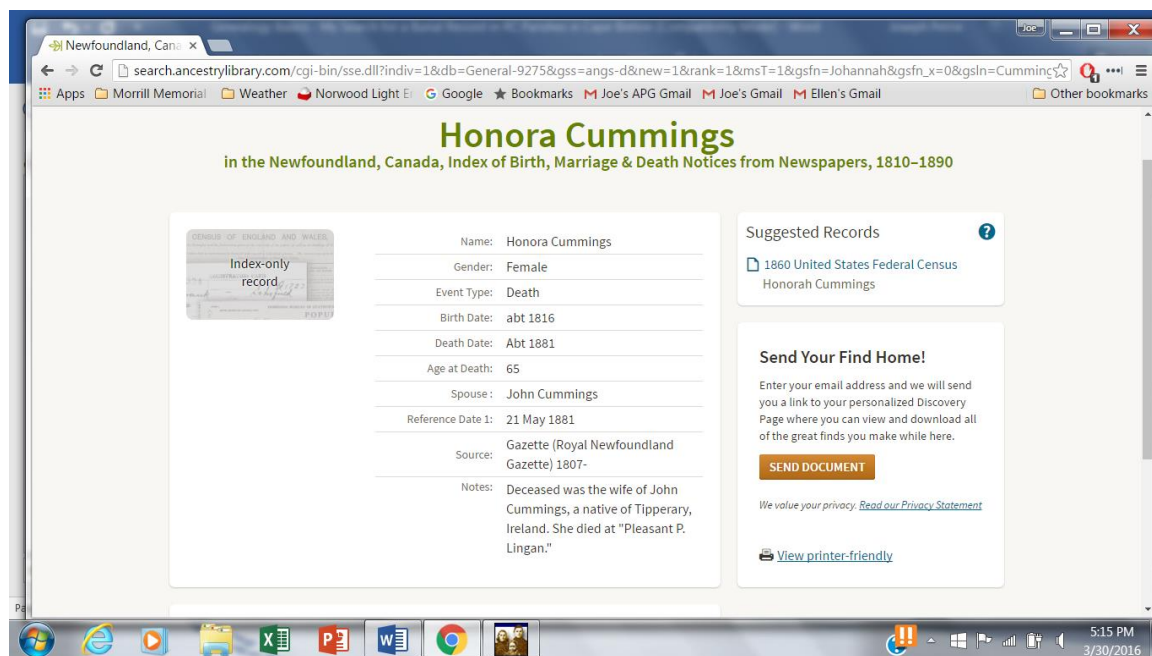
AN ANCESTRY RECORD

The Maritime Library at Memorial University in St. John's published a CD on Births, Marriages and Deaths in Newfoundland by Gert Crosbie, a volunteer at the Library. Years ago, I bought the CD. I discovered an error in a record for Johanna Maher. The newspaper that was cited was incorrect. The Death Notice was published in the local Harbour Grace newspaper. I requested that the record be corrected. (I expected that it would not be corrected because so many CDs had been sold.)

Recently, Ancestry added Gert's work as a database. The record was still incorrect. The Notice was published in the Harbour Grace Standard. In addition, it had Johannah buried in Harbour Grace. I called the Library and asked that the Ancestry record be corrected to conform to the Newspaper Notice.

The record has been changed. The record no longer shows Johannah's burial in Harbour Grace.

The following screen print is the current Ancestry record.



SUMMARY:

In many ways, this was a good news story. I believe that my learning experience will help other researchers.

I am especially pleased that the Maritime Library has gotten Ancestry to correct the record. That is a first!

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Your corrections, comments and suggestions are appreciated. Please Email me at joe-apg@norwoodlight.com.

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