

Genealogy Basics – How I Handle Inconsistent Information

By Joe Petrie

My software has a Notes section. Among other uses, I use it to identify and discuss how I handle inconsistent information.

Why? The Cape Breton Genealogy and Historical Association (CBGHA) publish my Register Reports. I believe that it is important to tell CBGHA member readers items like: why families that had children that I did not add records for (yet); why a vital field is left blank when there is data available; why one source was selected and another (or others) were not etc.

I will show actual Notes for two cases.

Case 1 - Inconsistent Vital Information from an Official Death Record.

In a recent article on Attribution ([cbgen.org/Records/Research/Genealogy Basics – Attribution](http://cbgen.org/Records/Research/Genealogy%20Basics%20-%20Attribution)), I noted that the December 1922 Official Death Certificate on www.novascotiagenealogy.com for my maternal grandfather, William Richard (Will or WR) Tobin, had a date of birth of March 1870. It conflicted with my aunt's information on grandfather's date of birth of 27 August 1870.

I decided to use my aunt's date? Why? First, the Census of 1921 indicated a birth date of August 1870. Second, I really believe that the information on the Dooley Funeral Home record was the source for the Death Certificate - even though my mother and aunt were listed as the informants. Third, I found that my aunt's story of his birth in Argentia Newfoundland in August 1870 to be more plausible than a March 1870 date because of different weather conditions between March and August. My aunt's question: would an expectant mother travel from Eastern Newfoundland Western Newfoundland in March? As I contemplate it, I believe not! Finally, more importantly, my severely visually impaired aunt as a genealogist was never wrong.

But remember that what is official is official and can't be changed.

The following are paragraphs from the Notes Section of my record for grandfather Tobin.

According to my aunt May Tobin, William Richard (aka Will and WR) was born in Argentia, Newfoundland in August 1870. (The Census of 1911 listed his birth as August 1870.) As she told it, her grandparents were returning via their boat to their home in Channel from visiting family in eastern Newfoundland. Aunt May indicated that her grandmother went into labor. They landed in Argentia Newfoundland where my Aunt May claimed that WR was born.

Interestingly, the Death Certificate and Dooley Funeral Home records indicate that Grandfather was born in North Sydney in March 1870. (I believe that the Dooley record was the source of the Death Certificate.) My mother and Aunt May supposedly were the informants. I doubt that they were because they were in Halifax preparing to travel to Glace Bay when their father passed away.

I think that my Aunt's oral history on his birth place and date is correct. She visited Newfoundland a number of times to collect information. Also the oral information was collected after she discussed the facts with her Tobin grandmother and aunts (Sr. Maria Loretta, SCH and Sr. Joseph Aloysia, SCH.) She learned that her Tobin grandfather was not from St Johns, Newfoundland. She found that the March date of birth for her father and the place of birth were incorrect. She also found that that a March date was not logical because March was not suitable for a pregnant woman to travel. As a result the August birth date is the date that I always use. I do not believe that grandfather's mother would have been visiting relatives in March.

Case 2 - Inconsistent Family Group Information from Two Expert Genealogists

Robert Kim Stevens and Robert Hegerich specialize in Nova Scotia genealogy, especially in the Descendants of the Boutiliers who settled first in Halifax and were first families in Lunenburg. My Boutilier ancestors eventually settled in Cape Breton.

For background, I was introduced to Kim's and Bob's genealogy publications by Charles "Chick" Buchanan when I visited him in Sydney. Chick's friend, John Howie, patiently educated me that evening about Kim and Bob about 30 years ago. At that time, I was a part-time genealogy newbie. Full-time, I was a professional Computer Systems Analyst supporting specialized Administrative Applications for the US Department of Transportation as well as for the Congressional Chrysler Loan Board, the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the US Urban Mass Transit Administration.

John seemed to be amused that I was unaware of Kim and Bob's work on the Boutilier family. What Chick did not tell him was that I really had not even started on my Boutilier roots. Chick had previously told John that both parents were Boutiliers. Thanks to John and Chick, when I returned home to the USA, I was really aware of Kim' and Bob's efforts and had paper copies of Chick's work and John's work on Boutiliers back to Lunenburg (over two thousand records).

That trip may have taught me the importance of being a genealogy gatherer. As a computer specialist since 1960, I was always a gatherer. In genealogy, I started with Xavier McGillivray's Petrie records provided by the late Emmy winning Daniel M. Petrie, a family friend and cousin. In fact, Kim's database was my second large scale gathering. My third was selected Boutilier records in Bob Hegerich's World Connect database from which I still gather records today.

Now to the Case Study: The case in point is James William Boutilier (1862 – 1921) and his wife Jeanetta Louisa Wamboldt (1869 – 1924) of Mushaboom, Halifax County who may have had up to 18 children. In their documents, Kim listed 13 children and Bob listed 18. Until recently, I never had researched the family. (I had only gathered it from Kim.) I had never read Bob's material.

Jay Boutilier from Toronto who has helped me to add and update records indirectly led me to James William's family. He suggested that I add an Obituary that he sent for Verna Vivian Boutilier, wife of Levi Boutilier. I added it and then closely examined Levi's and Verna's records. I concluded that Levi was incorrectly linked to James William Boutilier and his wife Jeanetta Boutilier.

I used Bob's World Connect records to correctly link Levi and Verna. It also showed that Kim's records were incomplete and my database needed to be updated for children and descendants. (It will be postponed until after I return from Florida in April.)

My dilemma: I was inclined to enter the additional records in my database. But I did not until I validated all of them.

When I research, I usually start with Census records. The Automated Census of 1901 enumerated 8 children which I was able to correlate to most of Kim's list of 13 and some of Bob's list of 18. The Automated Census of 1911 validated most of the rest of Kim's records. Also, it validated a number of individuals in Bob's database.

The following is what I have written in Notes for James William Boutilier about the validation..

Sources: Jeannie Boutilier and Peter Boutilier.

Note that Peter has only Gordon Edward on his list.

Web Sites: Automated Census of Canada, 1901, Kim Steven's Boutilier page on the Lunenburg County GenWeb and Bob Hegerich's World Connect.

1901 Automated Census of Canada (for Sheet Harbor)

Boutilier James W.	M	Head	M	May 17	1864	36
Boutilier Jennet	F	Wife	M	Dec 25	1869	31
Boutilier Gordon	M	Son	S	May 14	1889	11
Boutilier Stella	F	Daughter	S	Jan 10	1892	9
Boutilier Ernest	M	Son	S	Apr 4	1894	7
Boutilier Katie	F	Daughter	S	Jul 30	1895	5
Boutilier Essey	F	Daughter	S	Nov 15	1896	4
Boutilier Heldia	F	Daughter	S	Apr 15	1898	2
Boutilier Levia	M	Son	S	May 6	1899	1
Boutilier Calvin	M	Son	S	Jul 16	1900	

Automated Census of Canada, 1911

Butler James WillieMushaboom	M	Head	M	Apr	1864	47
Butler Jannet Mushaboom	F	Wife	M	Dec	1869	41
Butler Gordon Mushaboom	M	Son	S	May	1889	22
Butler Stella Mushaboom	F	Daughter	S	Jan	1892	19
Butler Ernest Mushaboom	M	Son	S	Apr	1894	17
Butler Katie Mushaboom	F	Daughter	S	Jul	1895	16
Butler Emily Mushaboom	F	Daughter	S	Nov	1895	15
Butler Hilda Mushaboom	F	Daughter	S	Apr	1898	13
Butler Levi Mushaboom	M	Son	S	May	1899	12
Butler Calvin Mushaboom	M	Son	S	Jul	1900	10
Butler Jannie Mushaboom	F	Daughter	S	Apr	1903	8
Butler Clyde Mushaboom	M	Son	S	Apr	1904	7
Butler Gerald Mushaboom	M	Son	S	Sep	1905	6
Butler Percy Mushaboom	M	Son	S	Nov	1905	5
Butler William Mushaboom	M	Son	S	Oct	1907	3
Butler Irene Mushaboom	F	Daughter	S	Sep	1908	2
Butler Courtney Mushaboom	M	Son	S	Mar	1911	3/12

Notes on this page: Butler surname should be Boutilier (note added by: June James)

Butler	Essie	F	Daughter	S	Nov	1895	15
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Butler	Georde	M	Son	S	Sep	1905	6
Butler	Anna	F	Daughter	S	Sep	1908	2
Butler	Cortney	M	Son	S	Mar	1911	3/12

Please note that Norman Leander is missing. Also, if I could have found the family in the Census of 1921, only Ted born in 1915 would be added.

Bob Hegerich's List follows: Bob identifies children that are not on Kim Steven's List (I marked them with an asterisk at the end of the line.)

Father: James William BOUTILIER b: 17 MAY 1864 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
 Mother: Jeanetta Louisa WAMBOLDT b: 25 DEC 1869 in Sober Island, Halifax, NS

Children:

- 1 Wilton BOUTILIER b: in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS *
- 2 Gordon Edward BOUTILIER b: 9 MAY 1889 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS *
- 3 Stella May BOUTILIER b: 10 JAN 1892 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 4 Earnest Whitfield BOUTILIER b: 4 APR 1894 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS *
- 5 Kathryn Louisa BOUTILIER b: 30 JUL 1895 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 6 Essie Idella BOUTILIER b: 15 NOV 1896 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 7 Hilda Gertrude BOUTILIER b: 15 APR 1898 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS *
- 8 William Levi BOUTILIER b: 6 MAY 1899 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 9 Calvin Garfield BOUTILIER b: 16 JUL 1900 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 10 Norman Leander BOUTILIER b: 1 NOV 1901 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS *
- 11 Jennie Celeste BOUTILIER b: 19 APR 1903 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 12 Clyde Wilson BOUTILIER b: 7 APR 1904 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 13 George Aylwin BOUTILIER b: 8 SEP 1905 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 14 Percy Wallace BOUTILIER b: 14 NOV 1906 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 15 James William BOUTILIER b: 12 OCT 1908 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 16 Sarah Ann Eldora BOUTILIER b: 19 SEP 1909 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 17 Frederick Courtney BOUTILIER b: 8 MAR 1911 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS
- 18 Theodore Alton BOUTILIER b: 20 SEP 1915 in Mushaboom, Halifax, NS

As of now, Bob's #1 Wilton is a problem. I can't validate it. My solution: I will not add a record for Wilton. Nor can I validate Norman Leander. Maybe Wilton and Norman died young.

Kim's list for the family follows:

James William⁸ BOUTILIER (James⁷, George Frederick⁶, Joseph⁵, Jean George⁴, Jean George³, Guillaume², Nicholas¹) m. Janet WAMBOLDT. Please note that the list is out of order and contains names not on the Automated Census of 1911.) The children not in the 1901 Automated Census of Canada are marked with an asterisk at the end of the line.

Children:

- i. Percy Wallace BOUTILIER *
- ii. Anna BOUTILIER *
- iii. Jennie BOUTILIER *
- iv. Ted BOUTILIER *
- v. Courtney BOUTILIER *
- vi. Essie BOUTILIER
- vii. Kate BOUTILIER
- viii. Stella BOUTILIER
- ix. Levi BOUTILIER
- x. Clyde BOUTILIER
- xi. George BOUTILIER
- xii. Calvin BOUTILIER
- xiii. William BOUTILIER

Note that Levi (Number ix) may have been William Levi and William (Number xiii) may have been James William. Also, note that Gordon Edward, Ernest, Hilda and Norman are missing. I have concluded that Kim simply did not uncover those four children.

In my database, there are undoubtedly other Inconsistent Cases that should be included. You may have one. Please Email me if you have a situation where you'd like input on how I'd handle it or a hint on how to handle it.

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

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