



Stepping Back in Time Bremner Family Genealogy Research

Over the past 10 years I have been able to link my family tree through the generous help of family members and other genealogist. Each time I find a new family member it is like finding a gift. I hope this ebook may be of help to anyone doing their own tree whether you are just beginning or researching already. Get ready for a very exciting time!

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I entered into new territory with genealogy research, which has spanned over the past ten years and still on going. The events you are about to read about, took time and patience. Key words with genealogy is " on going".

I suggest you start your research with the family members you see today and work your way back. One of the most important things to remember is to back up your finding with documentation as much as possible and working with other genealogist ask them for documentation, they should be glad to oblige.

I am going to start you on your way to understanding the steps to take with the steps that I took. Join me on my adventure!

My Grandfather was Frederic M Bremner and Grandmother Grace Branchaud Bremner Cooper. My grandparents separated during the 1930's Great Depression when my father was very young. My father spent most of his life searching for his father with limited information and resources he finally gave up in the 1970's.

When I was growing up I heard my grandmother and aunts talk about my grandfather in bits and pieces being mentioned occasionally. Now, with the Internet available in the late 1990's we had opportunity my father never dreamed of.

First Place to Start? Your Family Members

Ask every family member about the person you are researching. Make notes even if they do not make sense at the time. Keep a journal of the person, where they lived, marriages, births, deaths, children, employment, business they owned, clubs, lodges or churches they belonged to.

We were dealing with a man who only my grandmother and a few relatives knew. Some liked him some did not. Information my parents heard had to be sifted through. By the time I started my research, those who did know him or about him had long passed away, except my mother, father who really knew very little and one surprising man I would come across later in my research.

I knew two things about Frederic from my mom, he was accepted to Massachusetts Institute of Technology and last place he lived was New Hampshire during the depression. I did not know if he was still alive so the first place to go was the (SSDI) Social Security Index at Ancestry.com.

Name Changes and Nick Names

I entered Frederic Bremner and nothing came up. I figured he probably was not alive since my father was in late 60's. Then it occurred to me my father's name was Frederic also and everyone called him Fred. Fred Bremner was in the SSDI, and there were two Fred Bremner's. They were both about the same age. How was I going to determine which was mine? My clue was he attended (MIT) Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I called the college, talked with the archive office and they were able to give me a birth date and where he went to high school. Now, I was able to obtain the correct birth and death date and last known address from the SSDI.

* *Please note as well that many people who came over from Europe to America changed their last names to better suit America for business purposes and to fit in. I noticed that Brimner showed up on some older documents that were actually the Bremner's I was looking for. Make sure you use a name variation and compare closely.

Obituary's Are Filled with Information

I now had a start. I went online and emailed other genealogist of what I had and what I should do next. Obituary's they wrote back. Of coarse! They usually tell you where the person lived, who survived them, churches and other organizations they were involved with and what industry they were in. I had the last know place he lived from the SSDI and started with calling the newspaper offices where there were many helpful people. I was led to a small local newspaper office, who advised me to contact the local library of that town. They had the obituary and faxed it to me right away. It was very exciting, especially to find out that Frederic remarried and had another son later in life.

Frederic has passed away in 1969. I was doing this research 30 years after his death in 1999. I wanted to find the son. The option, was to email everyone with his name in the area my grandfather had lived at his time of death. I put a small note together that I was researching my family tree and wanted to know if they knew a Frederic M Bremner, I included his wife's name I had learned form the Obituary and Frederic's birth and death dates. The next morning I opened my email and had one reply.

He said, " This is my father, I am curious why you need this information?"

I was shocked and thrilled! I emailed him back immediately, letting him know I was researching my family tree on my fathers side and would appreciate him giving me a call. He wrote me back saying he would call that evening, and he thought I was writing from the same state Frederic had passed away and he would be visiting relatives there soon. He told me where they lived and it turned out he was only an hour and half away from us. He called me immediately. He knew information only my family knew about Frederic and my grandmother, where they had lived and the job my grandfather was lucky to have during the depression.

Who knew that all this research would lead to finding a half brother for my father. I had been updating my dad on my findings and this was big! Neither one knew about the other. That Sunday my new Uncle sent over the first picture of Frederic via the Internet. We all waited around the computer for this event. We finally had a face to go with the name.

My father and Uncle met for first time on the 4th of July 1999. What an occasion! My Uncle was only able to give me a bit of information on the family. Frederic has passed away when he was in his early twenty's. My great grandfathers name was Alexander Bremner of New Brunswick, Canada and than moved to Boston where he was a Marine Engineer servicing the big ships that came to port.

Next venture would be to contact the vital records in New Brunswick for Alexander who was born in 1861. They did not have a birth certificate but sent me to the provincial archives in Fredericton. Jack Pot! They sent out all the information they had on Alexander including census reports of his childhood, church records for baptism for him and his father and a will for his wife Helen giving me now the names of Alexander's children and grandchildren and his siblings.

From this I was on a roll again, putting information out on the Internet at various Genealogy sites message boards. A new relative wrote me about Alexander's father John Bremner and John's father Phillip Bremner which gave me more information that led me to more relatives in Canada. Some of these which are living on the same land my great great great grandfather Phillip Bremner purchased in the 1800's.

My journey back in time too me into the late 1700's with the help of many kind genealogist and family. There are still mysteries for some of the people I will continue to search and find more clues on.

Birth, Baptismal and Death Certificates

Birth Certificates

important to verify the parents, to be sure you have the date of birth correct and the city the person was born in. With Frederic's birth certificate I now had the name of his mother.

Baptism records provided you with a verification of the parents and religion. For Alexander Bremner (Frederic's father) I was not able to get a birth certificate, but was able to locate a copy of the Church records from Canada. It gave me his date of Birth, date of baptism and parents name for further reinforcement of researching the right person.

Death Certificates

A top priority for medical history. I was not able to get a death certificate for John Bremner. When I obtained Alexander Bremner's death certificate, it showed he had died in 1919 at the age of 52 of a sudden heart attack.

We learned through Frederic's death certificate and Obituary that he died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 63 in his home. We also found that he had adult onset diabetes.

My father at the age of 52 found out he had adult onset diabetes and at the age of 65 had a massive heart attack which required a quadruple bypass. He survived that heart attack , but 8 years later we lost my dear dad to another heart attack at the age of 73.

Death certificates give you the names of spouses, address where the person lived, occupation on some and medical history that is priceless. We are seeing a pattern in 3 men around the same age of heart failure. The men that follow them should be aware of this to take prevention.

Census Reports

Show further proof of the person you are researching, as well show the other family members at the time it was taken. I have a census report from 1881 in Northcumberland County Census, Parish of Chatham that shows John Bremners family and Alexander was about 18 years old. It starts with John (the spelling of the last name Brimner) his wife and the five children they had at the time. More children were born later. On this particular census it shows the religion, origin (Scottish) , occupation Farmer, Married or Widowed, who was going to school and anyone with infirmities. Please note that sometimes the ages are wrong on these reports. You will better be able to configure ages with birth certificates.

Marriage Certificates

These let you know about both parties. Their age at the time of marriage, address, occupation, birthplace, parents names and who were the witnesses. The marriage certificate I have for Frederic and my grandmother shows all of the above and the one I have for his second wife shows he was divorced before. Another marriage certificate from 1851 for Alexander's grandmother and grandfather Phillip, is hand written and a little hard to read, but shows where they were married, what year and who the witnesses were.

Wills

I was able to obtain the will for Alexander's wife Helen from the archives in Fredericton, New Brunswick in the jack pot of material I had written about earlier. This information gave me the date of her death, surviving children and grandchildren. It also gave me an idea of what she left behind giving me insight to the lifestyle in the early 1900's. As well, it listed the children's occupations.

Tax Records

The tax records are another source of finding a person. Did they have a business, a farm?

Cemetery Records

Cemeteries head stones can include the birth date, death date and other family members may be buried near them. When you go to a cemetery, take an index type card with you including your name and email address. In bold letter write - Researching this Ancestor and the Last name or names. Laminate the card and stick it to a stake and put next to the headstone. (Make sure you check with the head of the cemetery) You never know who may may have information on this person or your family tree!

Land Grants/Purchases

At the web site for Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Canada I found a section called Government Records which too me to Land Petitions. I proceeded to enter the Bremner surname and it came up with Phillip Bremner purchasing land in 1811. There were other names associated with this purchase as well. This is the land that my relatives are still on today.

Old Maps

Historical land sites, schools, shops, farms and more may give you another lead to where people lived and what happened to their towns with progress.

Where do you get all this information?

Birth , Death and Marriage Certificates can be ordered at the vital records office of the city you are researching for your ancestor.

Census, Wills, Church Records or Obituaries can usually be found at the public Library for the city they were born, married or died. It thought the newspapers would archive these but was led to the public library.

For the materials I received from Canada, census, will, church records, that are all at the archives in Fredericton, NB, Canada. Even though I was researching the Miramichi, Chatham area, I found through research and phone calls this was the place for all counties.

Do your research on the Internet for these places by putting in the search box, vital records or library with the city and state and their site should come up. From there they will provide you the information and cost. When I started this many things were free, including Ancestry.com.

There will be frustrating times, when you feel there are no more clues or information. Be patient, you never know what is in the next email or what another researcher is going to offer you next. Use the message boards, I met wonderful genealogist and found so many willing to offer there notes and findings and was glad when I could help solve a puzzle for someone else.

Living relatives on a family tree should be guarded and ask their permission before doing so. Most sites like Ancestry.com or Tribalpages.com offer a password protection to hide living relatives from public view. Be sure to keep folders on your ancestors, and as you get more information and add to the family the organization will be well worth it.

Where will your journey back in time take you?

Enjoy,
Cheryl Cooper

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