



# Making Sense of the Census

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# Agenda



- Why did it take me 35 years to start searching census records?
- How did I do it?
- What did I learn?
- What new questions were raised?
- How did I organize the information gathered?
- How did I share the information with others?
- Recommendations

# The Incentive to Start



- In my early research years (25+ years ago), I was uncertain that the information gained would be worth the effort
- In recent years, I knew it would be a good project but it just never got to the top of the to do list
- The inspiration to start was an NBGS seminar by Mary-Ellen Badeau about N.B. Immigration Records (April 2015)

# Where to Start?



- I decided to start with my original Canadian ancestors
  - Information on that family was reasonably complete but there were loose ends that perhaps census records could answer
- William Cassidy (1797-1886) and wife Jane Milligan (1798-1875)
  - Arrived in Saint John, N.B. in 1819
  - Ultimately settled at Cassidy Lake near Sussex, Kings County in 1823. The lake was called DeForest Lake at that time.
  - William and Jane had 12 children all of whom were born in N.B.
    - William Milligan 1820, James 1822, Jane 1824, Margaret Ann 1827, Thomas 1829, Elizabeth Mary 1831, Francis Edward 1834, Henry 1836, Matilda 1839, Elliner 1841, Richard 1843, Jemime 1845

# Where are the Census Records and What information do they contain?

- Canadian censuses can be found at Library and Archives Canada
  - [www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx)
- For each census year
  - How collected
  - Column headings and interpretation
- 1851 N.B. personal census had only 10 columns of info
- 1901 census had exact date of birth
  - Most others have age only
- 1911 census had 41 columns
- Readability of census records varies from unreadable to excellent

# 1921 Census



- Available free at [ancestry.ca](https://www.ancestry.ca)
- Need an account which is free but...
- Now I am getting junk mail in which they want me to become a paying member so I can do other searches

# Census to Search



- The 1825, 1831 and 1842 censuses did not include Kings County, N.B.
- I needed to search 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921
- United States censuses?

# Three Websites



- All research online using only 3 websites
- All data was free
- [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) (FSO)
- Library and Archives Canada (LAC)
- [ancestry.ca](http://ancestry.ca) (ACA)



# Initial LAC Search Unsuccessful



- LAC Search 1851 Census
  - Surname: Cassidy
  - Given Name: William
  - Province: New Brunswick
- No record!



# familysearch.org to the rescue

- Select: Canada / New Brunswick
- Firstname: William
- Lastname: Cassidy
- Birth Range: 1790-1799 (William born 1797)
- Select Database: 1851 Census
- Success!
  - Wm Casedy
  - Birth: 1797
  - Residence: Sussex, Kings County, N.B., Canada

# Back to LAC



- LAC Search 1851 Census
  - Surname: Casedy
  - Given Name: Wm
  - Province: New Brunswick
- Record found!
- Download and save PDF of census record
- Extract useful information
- Proceed with a series of FSO/LAC searches to find other family members

# How I Organized the Results

- Spreadsheet with a tab for each census year
- Each year requires new categories (columns) because each census is organized differently – typically more information in later years
- Colour code census types (**NB**, **BC**, **US**)
- Show anomalies with our existing family records in **red**. This makes it easier to do the required updates.

# Some Answers

The title 'Some Answers' is positioned at the top left. To its right and extending across the top of the slide are five circles. The first circle is solid light purple. The second circle is white with a light purple outline. The third circle is solid light purple. The fourth circle is white with a light purple outline. The fifth circle is solid light purple.

- Discovered a few new people and added and corrected some birth dates
- Found where some were living at various points in time and their occupation and education
- For some people discovered their country of birth and religious affiliation
- Documented family member movements within New Brunswick and to B.C. and to the U.S.

# More Questions – Two Examples

- Why was Jemime not in the 1851 census? She died October 12, 1851. That date comes from family records (no death certificate found). Is that date wrong? We know the year is right (from gravestone). Was the 1851 census done after October 12?
- Why was James not in the 1851 or 1861 censuses. James was married in Saint John in 1849 and had children there in 1852 and 1853

# The Search for James



- Missing in 1851 and 1861 censuses. Found in 1871 and 1881. Missing from all other Canadian censuses.
- A search of the 1850 U.S. Census reveals a James Cassidy from Canada living in Lowell, Mass. This is probably our James but we can't be positive without more information.
- 1900 U.S. Census shows James living in Saint Paul, Minnesota (new information) with son Thomas and grandson Chester (not in our records). Why did he go there?
- Found James in 1910 U.S. census but details not available for free. An 2005 email from a family member indicates that James died in San Diego in 1912. Why did he go there and with whom was he living?
- We conclude that James travelled frequently to the U.S. and liked living there. Some answers and more questions...

# Sharing the Findings with Others

- Family website [www.cassidys.ca](http://www.cassidys.ca)
- Genealogy database system PhpGedView
- We no longer publish printed genealogies
- Database updated by Brian's brother Peter
- Peter added spreadsheet and PDF census records to the Resources section of our website
- A free account is required to access this information. Mostly we get requests from family members.



# Census Records – Our Experience and Recommendations

- Very useful and rewarding exercise
- Time consuming as with any genealogy research
- The more information you have on your family before you start, the better you will be able to decipher the census records
- Comparing census records over time can provide information about people's movements
- Look at *all the data* in the raw census record, not just names and dates
- Old records can be hard to decipher but worth the effort
- You will find new information – new family members, birth dates, ages, occupations, race, religion, education, ability to read/write etc.

# Census Records – Our Experience and Recommendations

- You will find mistakes in the census records and in your records
- You will get answers and generate more questions
- Organizing the results is critical. That's why I used a spreadsheet.
- Update your records
- Share your research. Using a website makes it easy for others to find your data and experience has shown that they will provide new information.
- This is how Brian and Peter Cassidy made sense of the census