

Winning Essay: 2002 OCAPG Award

Mary Ann Who?

By Linda Murray

The branch of my family tree with ggGrandparents Timothy Livingston and wife Mary Ann, surname unknown, contains little information. Who was Mary Ann? The limited data I have has been taken from Canadian Census returns: 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, and 1901. The census records indicate she was born in Canada West/Ontario between 1825 and 1836. She had at least 9 children including my gGrandfather Timothy about 1867. I can find no information on any of his siblings other than names and approximate birth dates. I have no photographs of Mary Ann and the only official document I can find is her death certificate, which gives little personal information. My gAunt has a brass plate that reads: Mrs. Mary Livingston, Died June 4th 1909, Aged 95 years, B.1814. Even though this data is etched in brass, I suspect both her age and birth year to be incorrect. It conflicts greatly with her ages given on census returns. Perhaps Mary Ann distrusted the census takers or maybe the information given was by a different family member each decade. Whatever the reason, Mary Ann's birth year as taken from the census is listed as 1836, 1831, 1829, 1829, and 1825. In the 1901 Census the exact birth date was given as March 20, 1825. Over the years her origin was given as Scotch, English and Irish. Her religion has been given as Presbyterian, Church of England and Methodist.

I first discovered Mary Ann in the 1871 Census for Dungannon Township, Hastings County (Film C-9994, District No. 62, N. Hastings, Page 21). She was listed as a 40 year old widow with 8 children: Mandy (age 20), George (age 18), Diane (age 16), James (age 13), Jane (age 11), John (age 9), Mary (age 6) and Timothy (age 4). I then turned to the 1861 Census but was told by the reference librarian at the time and by many others that there was no 1861 census for Dungannon Township, probably as it was so remote. It was several years later that I discovered the census for this area. When I next found Mary Ann in 1881 (Film C-13239, N. Hastings, Page 2), she was listed under the head of the household of Frances Pelshaw, a Roman Catholic, French, Quebec born farmer. An additional child, Victoria, age 9 was also listed. This solved a small piece of my family puzzle as Victoria Pelshaw was listed as a witness at the marriage of my gGrandfather Timothy Livingston to Minerva Sager in Dungannon in 1895. Victoria would seem to have been Timothy's half sister. Although I could not find a marriage between Frances Pelshaw and Mary Ann, she is listed as his wife in the 1891 and 1901 Census returns. Frances was also known as Frank and in earlier returns, his surname was spelled Pelcheau.

In yet another attempt to discover Mary Ann's surname, I searched for the birth of her daughter Victoria Pelshaw about 1872 but no record appears to exist (Civil Birth Registration Indexes, Microfilm #1819475). A major difficulty I have encountered is that most of the events I am searching for in this family occurred just prior to the 1869 Civil Registration. The death of Timothy Livingston Sr. must have occurred between 1866 (his youngest child Timothy being born about 1867) and 1871 when the census listed Mary Ann as a widow. I searched the Civil Death Registration Indexes (Film #1819277) but found no record of his death. There also appears to be no birth record for Timothy Jr. born about 1867.

Of Timothy's eight siblings, I can find no trace. I searched the Civil Marriage Registration Indexes for possible marriages 1873-1895 (Film # 1819490) and 1896-1910 (Film # 1819491) with no luck. I paid to have some research done by a librarian with Belleville Public Library. Part of her reply reads "I have checked all relevant sources in our local history collection and in the Hastings County Historical Society archives, but found nothing on this family". Unfortunately, this often seems to be the reply to any query I have sent regarding Mary Ann and family. I have written to Livingston families in the area without finding any

connection. With 8 siblings there must be some cousins out there to help me solve my mystery. I wrote to seven Dungannon cemeteries but received no replies. I have read through the Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS) publications for this area and written to others researching Livingstons with no success. I have read any histories I could find on Dungannon. I have tried to use the Internet without much success. However, through the Internet, I did find the North Hastings Genealogy Society. They were able to tell me that 1861 Census records for this area did indeed exist but were listed under Hastings Road rather than Dungannon Township, Hastings County. This 1861 data (film C-1032) indicated that Timothy and Mary Ann were married in 1852. I then searched the County Marriage Records for this time period but no marriage record for any Timothy Livingston could be found.

My grandfather Timothy Livingston and his wife Minerva Sager had six children born near Bancroft, Ontario (including my Grandmother Lillie in 1898) before moving to southern Manitoba in 1904. They had eight more children born to them in Manitoba, one dying as an infant. The descendants of these 13 Livingstons are now close to 350 individuals. The first Livingston family reunion was held in 1940, then in 1957 and beginning in 1984, a reunion has been held every five years. My objective since 1984 has been to find some Livingston information to pass on to my great aunts and uncles and their families. In 1984, 11 of the 13 aunts and uncles were living. Today, only 3 of the 13 remain. It is still my hope to find some information about their Grandmother Mary Ann and her other 8 children. Maybe someday I will solve the mystery of Mary Ann Who!