

The 2004 OCAPG Award

Part 2: The Report

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This year's winner of our essay contest set us a formidable challenge: Charles William Spriggs, orphan, whereabouts unknown age six through 26. Each year we run our contest we are reasonably confident our professional expertise will allow us to shed new light on the problem described by our winner. But this one caused a few moments of anxiety on our part. Charles was missing for a full 20 years. Worse yet, he vanished at an age when, even in better times, he would have made precious few appearances in the historical record. Much as we might wish otherwise, our work was cut out for us.

One eye on the clock, we launched our investigation, only a few hours being available in which to make some kind of progress. In the end, despite our initial trepidation, we consider the outcome to have been successful. Although Charles's precise location between 1877 and 1897 continues to be a mystery, we have made two contributions. We have demonstrated a technique by which Duane Bell McIlwraith, our winning author, can try to develop a better sense of the situation in which her orphaned grandfather found himself. In quite an unexpected area, we have also discovered significant new information. We only wish it was a happier story. This is our report.

RECAP of the PROBLEM

Charles Spriggs was born to George and Pauline Spriggs of Belleville, Ontario in 1871. His mother died in 1874, his father in 1877, leaving Charles an orphan along with two older brothers, George and Fred. Duane was able to at least partially trace George and Fred in the years that followed. She could also trace Eddie, a half-brother, born to George Spriggs and his second wife, Eunice née Gallishan. But of Charles there was no trace at all until his marriage to Charlotte Wildin, a Barnardo orphan, in 1897.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

After being notified she was our winner, Duane patiently answered a long list of questions arising from her essay. Understandably given the 1,000-word limit, she had mentioned many key events only briefly. It is impossible to give a full account here of all the extra detail provided. Major points are as follows:

- Duane believed her great-grandfather George to be one of at least three children born in England to George Spriggs and Sophia Huckwell. Charles George, a witness at the burial of a Spriggs infant in Belleville, was considered likely to be a brother of Pauline. Little else was known about the families from which George and Pauline descended.
- George Spriggs left no will but Eunice filed for letters of administration to settle his estate, the required bonds being posted by Holden Reed and Albert Deremo of Belleville.
- Charlotte Wildin spent her first years in Canada working in Toronto. In September 1890 Barnardo staff placed her with Marcus Sprague, a farmer on Lot 81, Concession 4, Ameliasburgh Township in Prince Edward County. Three years later Charlotte left to learn tailoring with Mrs. DeLong in the nearby village of Ameliasburgh, also known as Roblin's Mills.
- Charles and Charlotte's marriage registration gives his residence as Ameliasburgh, hers as Roblin's Mills.
- Charles's brother George became a barber and moved to Stratford, Ontario. Charlotte and her children lived there with him briefly after the tragic back-to-back deaths of Fred and Charles.

- Duane sent full transcriptions of all births, marriages and deaths mentioned in the essay, including the names of witnesses and sponsors.
- Citation details missing from the essay were also provided.

REVIEW

When records are missing, genealogists must work harder to draw insight from slimmer pickings. With this in mind, analysis was undertaken of Duane's previous research, including review of the households in which Charles's brothers, George and Fred, were enumerated in 1881. Maps were also consulted so the boys could be located as precisely as possible, the illustrated atlases published by Belden's in 1878 being ideal for this purpose.

Immediately striking was the distance which separated George from Fred. The farm of James Faul, where George was enumerated, lay in the fourth concession of Murray Township, Northumberland County.¹ Fred was 35 kilometres away with Dorland Noxon, owner of 303 acres including Lots 69 and 70, Concession 6, Hillier Township, Prince Edward County.² Dorland was a farmer, vine-grower and wine manufacturer who had won a medal at the International Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876.³ The size of his holdings and apparent enterprise suggested this was a household that could use an extra hand and, indeed, Fred was specifically stated to be a servant.⁴

Charles and Fred also having lived in Hillier during adulthood, we retraced Duane's steps to the 1901 census, extracting the additional detail that Charles lived at that time on Lots 72 and 73, Concession 5. The household where Fred appeared as a laborer was on adjoining Lots 74 and 75.⁵ Remarkably, this was the exact same neighborhood where Fred had been employed by the Noxons 20 years earlier. It was also only a few kilometres through the fields to the Ameliasburgh homes where Charles's wife-to-be Charlotte lived from 1890 onward.

Given the facts, it is reasonable to speculate that when Fred left the Noxons, he found other work in the neighborhood. If so, his absence from the 1891 census could mean the work was temporary, that he moved when and where he was needed, living on the fringes of other people's households. Although concrete evidence is absent, Charles had to be nearby for at least long enough before his 1897 marriage to meet and court Charlotte. The question, of course, is how long?

This stage of the project included a quick look at Duane's idea that Charles might have been erroneously enumerated as nine-year-old Charles Thompson of Belleville, a possibility we ruled unlikely.⁶ We also looked briefly at Eunice Spriggs, locating her in the 1901 census with children from her second marriage and learning that her origin was French.⁷

¹*Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Northumberland & Durham, Ontario* (Toronto: H. Belden & Co., 1878), p. 56.

²*Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Hastings and Prince Edward, Ontario* (Toronto: H. Belden & Co., 1878), p. 40.

³*Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴1881 census Hillier Twp., Prince Edward Co., Ont., district 119, subdistrict E, division 1, p. 14; Library and Archives Canada microfilm C-13237.

⁵1901 census Hillier Twp., Prince Edward, district 109, D-3, schedule 2, p. 1, line 26 (Charles), line 28 (Fred); LAC microfilm T-6493. It is not clear if Charles owned no land or one acre.

⁶The 1901 census index lists two Charles Thompsons in Belleville, one of them 29, enumerated with wife Susie and son Cecil, 7. A marriage registration was subsequently found for Charles Thompson, 23, a Belleville tinsmith, son of William and Margaret Thompson, who married Susan Fisher of Belleville, 30 January 1894. (Ontario marriage 004917 (1894); Family History Library microfilm 1870705.) Further work could be done to confirm that the father of this Charles was the same William enumerated as a butcher in 1881 but, for now, it seemed best to concentrate our efforts elsewhere.

⁷Eunice Reid household, 1901 census Tyendinaga Twp., Hastings East, district 70, E-1, p. 9; LAC microfilm T-6472.

PLAN

Attention now turned to new research we could do. Duane had already searched widely for Charles in census returns; covering the same ground would be pointless. A decision was instead made to expand research beyond immediate members of the Spriggs family to others who had played a role in their lives. Sponsors at baptisms, witnesses at marriages, attendees at burials all had the potential to reveal more about the situation in which the orphaned brothers found themselves. Who were these people? Were any of them relatives? Might any of them have taken Charles, especially before he was old enough to work? Might later participants in the story somehow lead back to years that were lost? Even if no specific mention was found of Charles, our approach would provide greater insight into the Spriggs family and its life in Belleville.

RESEARCH

Wm. H. Frost, sponsor at the baptism of Charles Henry Spriggs, one of George and Pauline's three children who died as infants, 15 February 1869. The family's residence at this time was Thurlow Township.⁸

- Of only four William Frosts in the entire 1871 Ontario census index, the closest lived in Rawdon Township, Hastings County.⁹ A 44-year-old farmer born in England, William was enumerated with wife Thede, 25, and three young children on Lot 15, Concession 13.¹⁰ John Frost, 44, was enumerated with his family immediately before William. George and Sophia Frost, 70 and 73 respectively, were two households later. William and John's wives were both born in Ontario as were all the children in their households.
- Frosts closer to the scene of action included Abraham, 46, a painter, in Belleville, a slightly older Abraham who was a Belleville leather merchant,¹¹ and Henry, a bookkeeper just outside Belleville in Thurlow.¹² But no adult William was enumerated with any of them in the 1871 census. These Frosts were also born in England.

Comment: Sponsors at baptisms were typically family members or good friends, and it would be useful to know if Wm. H. was the former or the latter. But the 40 kilometres from Rawdon seems a long way to travel for a baptism. Careful examination of the Rawdon and Belleville Frosts may be necessary before any conclusions are possible. Charles Spriggs's father George, like Abraham Frost, was a painter but that may or may not be significant.

⁸Transcript of baptism provided by Duane McIlwraith to author, 3 February 2005, citing parish register, St. Thomas Anglican Church, Belleville, p. 357, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Ontario, Kingston, Register 7-B-4. Charles died seven months later.

⁹The 1871 census index is online at Library and Archives Canada, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/020108_e.html. All 1871 census entries referred to in this report were identified with the help of this index, then followed up by consulting the actual records. The step of consulting the index is sometimes not mentioned to save space. Similar use was made of the 1881 census index at www.familysearch.org and the 1901 census index at automatedgenealogy.com.

¹⁰1871 census Rawdon Twp., North Hastings, district 62, A-3, p. 26; LAC microfilm C-9993.

¹¹1871 census Belleville, Hastings West, district 60, C-4, p. 3 and C-3, p. 49; LAC microfilm C-9991.

¹²1871 census Thurlow, Hastings West, district 60, A-1, p. 57; LAC microfilm C-9992.

Widow Hannah Fletcher, sponsor at Charles William Spriggs's baptism in Belleville, 14 January 1872.¹³

- Hannah was not found in the 1871 census index as a household head or stray. Nor was there a Hannah in Belleville in any Fletcher household.
- Anna Fletcher, 43, wife of blacksmith William Fletcher, also 43, was enumerated in Belleville in 1871 with daughters Mary and Ruth, 8 and 4, all born in England except Ruth, who was born in Ontario. The family's religion: Wesleyan Methodist.¹⁴
- A Belleville widow named Hannah Fletcher married John Harrup in Belleville in 1873, according to a published index of Hastings marriages.¹⁵
- The original marriage registration for the preceding entry showed the widow Hannah to be 42 and living in Belleville. She had been born in England to Thomas and Hannah, whose surname was hard to decipher but could be Rolleman. John Harrup, the 48-year-old Belleville groom, was an engineer, born in England to John and Hannah Harrop [sic]. The marriage was witnessed by J.R. and Elizabeth Barston of Belleville.¹⁶

Comment: As Charles's sponsor, Hannah merits special attention as someone who might have taken an interest in him after the death of his parents. It is not clear whether Anna and Hannah are one woman or two, there being only nine months between wife Anna's 1871 enumeration and widow Hannah's appearance at Charles's baptism. Any kind of death record for William would do the trick, church, civil or cemetery. If Anna and Hannah are indeed one and the same, it is interesting to note that the blacksmith's family arrived from England about the same time as the Spriggs.

Holden Reed, a witness when George Spriggs married Eunice Gallishan, 31 December 1876.¹⁷ Two years later, Holden helped Eunice settle George's estate.¹⁸ Court papers identify him as a Belleville merchant.

- In 1871 Holden was enumerated, not in Belleville, but as a farmer in Rawdon Township, where he appeared with wife Adalaid, 28, and children James, 6, Abigail, 4, and Elizabeth, 2. Holden was 28, of English descent but born in Ontario.¹⁹ The agricultural census said he owned 100 acres of Lot 7, Concession 8.
- An 1879–80 directory lists H. Reed, grain buyer, on Belleville's East Bleecker Avenue,²⁰ the same street where George Spriggs lived when he married Eunice.
- Holden's whereabouts in 1881 and 1901 remain unknown.
- On 24 October 1888 at Brighton, Libby Reid, 20, daughter of Holden Reid and Adelaide Langtry married Elvin Elyea, 28, son of David Elyea and Elmira Elvin. Both bride and groom were residents of Murray Township, although Libby had been born in Rawdon.²¹
- Holden remained elusive in yet another search of the 1881 census index, this one focusing on Murray Township.

¹³Transcript by Duane McIlwraith, citing parish register, St. Thomas Anglican Church, p. 425, Anglican Archives Register 7-B-4.

¹⁴1871 census Belleville, Hastings West, district 60, C-1, p. 18; LAC microfilm C-9991.

¹⁵Linda Corupe, *Hastings County (Ontario) Marriages*, vol. 1, 1869–1875 (Bolton, Ont.: L. Corupe, c1999), p. 59.

¹⁶Ontario marriage registration, vol. 30, p. 131; FHL microfilm 1862699.

¹⁷Ontario marriage registration 003622 (1876); FHL microfilm 1862898.

¹⁸George Edward Spriggs estate file 560 (1878), Surrogate Court of Ontario; Archives of Ontario microfilm GS1 reel 1184.

¹⁹1871 census Rawdon Twp., North Hastings, district 62, A-2, p. 18; LAC microfilm C-9993.

²⁰1879–80 *Directory of the County of Hastings* (Belleville: Intelligencer Printing and Publishing, 1879), p. 174.

²¹Ontario marriage registration 008493 (1888); FHL microfilm 1870221.

- The 1881 census shows David Alyea, 50, in Murray with his wife Almira, 49, and four children including Elvin, 20.²²
- Doubling back to the historical atlas last used to locate the James Faul farm where Charles Spriggs's brother George once lived, David Alyea was located in Murray on Lot 12, Concession 5—kitty-corner to the Faul farm on Lot 13, Concession 4.²³

Comment: Holden Reed appears in the Spriggs story not just once but twice. If he helped Eunice sort out George's estate, might he also have helped her place the boys, or kept an eye on them? His daughter's marriage to a neighbor of the Fauls is intriguing but we can't yet say whether this is significant or a coincidence. Future research could include land records for Holden's property in Rawdon and a page-by-page search of the 1881 and 1891 censuses for Murray Township.

Albert Deremo, posted bond along with Holden Reed when Eunice filed for letters of administration to settle her deceased husband's estate. Court papers identify him as a Belleville merchant.

- Albert Derimo, 31, was enumerated in Belleville in 1871 with wife Ellenor, 30, and children William, 8, and Archibald, 2. Albert was born in the United States, his wife in Quebec and the children in Ontario. Albert's occupation was given as potter and his origin as French.²⁴
- In 1879–80, Albert Deremo, a pedlar, lived in Belleville on North Pine.²⁵
- By 1881 Albert, occupation pedlar, was with his family in Norwood, Peterborough County.²⁶

Comment: As she struggled to cope in the wake of George's death, Eunice may have turned to her own friends as well as her husband's. Of all the cast of characters, Albert seems the most likely to have been connected to the bereaved widow, his origin, like Eunice's, having been French. Full-scale research on Albert might lead to a greater understanding of his involvement.

John Patterson of Ameliasburgh, witness to the marriage of Charles Spriggs and Charlotte Wildin, 8 December 1897.²⁷

- John Patterson, 12, was enumerated in Ameliasburgh in 1881, the only child in the home of Charles Patterson, 50, and Catharine, 63.²⁸ Next door is the Widow Delong, with whom Charlotte Wildin studied tailoring.
- An 1897 county directory lists John Patterson as a tenant in the village of Ameliasburgh, Concession R, Lot 5.²⁹
- An 1899 county directory has an identical listing for John.³⁰ Charles Spriggs also appears in this

²²1881 census Murray Twp., Northumberland East, district 123, E-2, p. 42; LAC microfilm C-13239.

²³*Illustrated Historical Atlas of Northumberland*, p. 56.

²⁴1871 census Belleville, West Hastings, district 60, C-4, p. 88; LAC microfilm C-9991.

²⁵*1879–80 Directory of the County of Hastings* (Belleville: Intelligencer Printing and Publishing, 1879), p. 132.

²⁶1881 census Norwood, Peterborough East, district 125, B, p. 25; LAC microfilm C-13240.

²⁷Ontario marriage registration 012613 (1897); FHL microfilm 1870919.

²⁸1881 census Ameliasburgh Twp., Prince Edward, district 119, D-2, p. 7; LAC microfilm C-13237.

²⁹*The Union Publishing Co's. Farmers' and Business Directory for the Counties of Frontenac, Hastings, Leeds, Lennox, Addington and Prince Edward for 1897* (Ingersoll, Ont.: Union Publishing Co., 1897), p. 106.

³⁰*The Union Publishing Co's. Farmers' and Business Directory for the Counties of Frontenac, Hastings, Leeds, Lennox, Addington and Prince Edward for 1899* (Ingersoll, Ont.: Union Publishing Co., 1899), p. 223.

directory, a tenant on Concession R, Lot 78, another village location.³¹

- John has not yet been found in the 1901 census index.

Comment: It can be speculated but not firmly concluded that John witnessed Charles and Charlotte's marriage as a friend of the groom. Being close in age to Charles, it is easy to imagine the two boys as friends. The spotlight here is again on Ameliasburgh but evidence as to how long Charles might have lived in the township remains lacking. Future research could include a search to see if John married about this same time. Might Charles Spriggs have been a witness?

Maud Richardson, also of Ameliasburgh, also a witness at Charles and Charlotte's marriage.

- In 1881, ten-month-old Maud Richardson (born in June 1880) was enumerated in Sophiasburg Township in the household of Thomas and Jane Richardson.³² This Maud has not yet been found in 1901.
- In 1901, a Maud Richardson, age 20 (born 2 April 1880) was enumerated in Sophiasburg in the household of Ellis and Kate Richardson.³³
- An 1899 county directory lists T. Richardson in Ameliasburgh, a tenant on Lot 81, Concession 4, a location previously connected with Charlotte's one-time employer Marcus Sprague.³⁴

Comment: These findings suggest two Maud Richardsons of the same age in Prince Edward County. Thomas Richardson's daughter is of primary interest given the listing for T. Richardson on the Sprague property. A next step could be to see if Maud married between 1897 and 1901.

CONCLUSION

A thorough study of each player in the Spriggs story was beyond the scope of this contest. Yet even the few hours of work described to this point opened several new avenues of inquiry, each of which can be explored more fully using all available genealogical sources. Work can also be done on witnesses we did not have time for, as well as people such as the Thompsons who took in Charles's half-brother Eddie, Fanny's presumed brother Charles George, and Eunice. Charles may or may not turn up as research continues. But one thing is fairly certain: the Spriggs story *will* continue to unfold as each participant's identity and role are revealed.

Investigation of the "supporting cast" in the life of an ancestor is a technique that can be applied to virtually any genealogical problem. As always with genealogy, a solution is not guaranteed. But research on an ancestor's entire range of family, friends, neighbors and associates will surely lead to a greater understanding of that ancestor. The exceptional potential of this method is perhaps most graphically illustrated by our investigation of Dr. Daniel Clark, physician at the death of George Edward Spriggs in Toronto, 8 September 1877.³⁵

The death of Charles's father in Toronto was one of the puzzling aspects of the story told by Duane in her essay. What was he doing in Toronto? one cannot help but ask. Looking for work? Visiting relatives?

³¹Ibid, p. 225.

³²1881 census Sophiasburg Twp., Prince Edward, district 119, H-2, p. 52; LAC microfilm C-13237.

³³1901 census Sophiasburg, district 109, H-2, p. 4; LAC microfilm T-6493.

³⁴*The Union Publishing Co's. Farmers' and Business Directory . . . for 1899*, p. 224.

³⁵Ontario death registration 18685 (1877); FHL microfilm 1853222. Dr. Clark was the physician and informant. George's cause of death was dysentery.

The latter possibility led us to search for Spriggs families in Toronto. Henry Spriggs, a 32-year-old commercial traveller born in England, was found there in the 1881 census with wife Elizabeth and three Ontario-born children.³⁶ Our time almost gone, we were unable to explore whether Henry and George might be related. We instead extended our work on witnesses with a quick search for Dr. Daniel Clark. What, for example, might we learn about Dr. Clark's location in the city?

Most genealogists have experienced a eureka moment, a revealing nugget of information materializing suddenly on the page before them. What followed next was similar although far from joyful. The Toronto city directory for 1877 lists only one Daniel Clark. He was an M.D. and medical superintendent at Toronto's Asylum for the Insane.³⁷ Options for following up on this discovery were outlined to Duane privately. She subsequently confirmed that George did in fact die at the Toronto hospital.³⁸ We otherwise left her to explore the development on her own, the details of whatever illness led to George's admission being of less consequence to this report than the genealogical lesson learned: Clues to the lives of our ancestors lie hidden in the most surprising places. With painstaking research, we can find them.

The 2004 OCAPG award program was conducted by D. Russell Morton, Brenda Dougall Merriman, CGRS, CGL, and Alison Hare, CGRS, with advice from other OCAPG members. For more information about the contest, please visit our website at www.rootsweb.com/~onapg

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³⁶1881 census St. David's Ward, Toronto, York, district 134, B-2, p. 23; LAC microfilm C-13246.

³⁷*Toronto Directory, for 1877* (Toronto: Might & Taylor, 1877), p. 226. Also see, Daniel Clark entry *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 216-218.

³⁸Patient Registers, Queen Street Mental Health Centre, RG10-271; Archives of Ontario MS640 Reel 2.