

# INTERVIEW WITH OGS

Dana Thorne attended the Lambton Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society meeting on January 8, 2013 to ask a series of questions about the role of women as kin keepers. The responses provided by the members of the Lambton OGS are provided in their entirety here. Portions of these responses are being used in the Lambton Heritage Museum's exhibit Shine: Spotlight on Women of Lambton to explore how women have been involved in sustaining and supporting their families.

## HAS GENEALOGY BEEN INCREASING IN POPULARITY, AND IF SO, WHY?

- Yes, for a number of reasons
- Baby boomers are retiring and many formerly busy, go-getter types now have lots of time on their hands and need a hobby
- Technology - access to records has improved drastically with digitization
- Heavy advertising for Ancestry.com, TV programs like "Who Do You Think You Are?"
- School projects - involves children in the exercise, who in turn get their parents involved in the assignments
- Popularity of "Roots" in 1970s spurred lots of interest
- The challenge of undertaking a never-ending puzzle

## WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF WORKING IN A GROUP LIKE THE LAMBTON OGS TO CONDUCT GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH?

- Networking, advice, able to pick other people's brains
- Other researchers have expertise in certain countries that you may not have researched before
- You can learn from each other's mistakes
- Find out that another genealogist has already completed research for your family!

## ARE MORE WOMEN INVOLVED IN GENEALOGY THAN MEN, AND IF SO, WHY?

- Women were traditionally at home and had the time and opportunity to collect family documents and record family stories.
- Women "remember more than men"
- Genealogy is becoming increasingly more popular with men (perhaps because more men are retiring early, or because men are attracted by the new technologies available to researchers). OGS Conferences now 50/50 men and women; there were more female participants in the past
- In many families one spouse adopts the role of genealogist/researcher, whether that's the man or the woman

## WHO WAS THE KIN KEEPER IN YOUR FAMILY? WHO INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME INVOLVED IN GENEALOGY?

- Many became interested through a mother or aunt
- Some became interested in genealogy through the study of history; others enjoy genealogy but never liked history
- One researcher was discouraged from doing his family history - “you’ll never find anything,” or attitude that you’ll uncover something the family doesn’t like
- Genealogist as “fact checker” - stories/information passed down from grandparents and their siblings, now go back into the records to see what can be proven

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STUDY AND PRESERVE FAMILY HISTORY?

- To preserve the information for the next generation
- For health reasons - to know your genetics
- Gives you something to do when you retire early
- Study of genealogy may help with some of our current social issues - encourages you to get beyond your insular family and make connections with other people around you
- You have to know how to tell your own story and pass it along
- Sometimes the only way an individual’s story will be passed on is through this type of research - otherwise they’re forgotten and there’s no one to remember them

- Orphaned or adopted children can connect with families through research
- Helps you understand the history of the area and wider history, not just the particular family

## HOW WILL THE KIN KEEPER ROLE CONTINUE TO EVOLVE IN FUTURE GENERATIONS?

- By force!
- Actively choose one of your children to be the next kin keeper and retain your records and photographs - somewhere it will be maintained
- As people grow older they seem to adopt an interest in genealogy
- Put your research into a format that other people can use - not family group sheets but in a readable format, maybe a book, that people will be receptive to