

CHARLES DENNEY AND WAHKOOTOWIN: HOW A POPULIST GENEALOGIST
INADVERTENTLY SHAPED METIS IDENTITY IN WESTERN ARCHIVES, 1967-2002

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the genealogical collection held at the Glenbow Archives in Calgary. Curated by Edmonton genealogist Charles Denney and collected from the mid-1960s up until his death in 2002, the collection documented the genealogical data of Metis families. The Denney collection is not merely a repository of information. It actively contributes to the construction of contemporary Metis identities. Denney's collection began with documenting his Metis wife Mildred Sherlock's family history. The collection changed through Denney's 'kitchen table' collaborations with Metis genealogists Clarence Kipling and Pat McCloy, its purchase by the Glenbow archives, and the use of the Denney collection by the Metis Nation to pursue *wahkootowin* (relatedness) and post-Powley section 35 rights. By critically engaging with genealogical records, this dissertation concludes that Denney's archive was guided by the Metis concept of *wahkootowin*. Although these genealogies originated in a colonial concept of white-pioneer narratives, they have transformed into an act of Metis agency that asserts Metis identities and sovereignty. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the creation and curation of archival collections and their impact on the recognition and preservation of Indigenous worldviews.

Dedication

This one is for the boys: my dad Dr. Rod Dolmage, my husband Mark Brownlie, and my brother Ryan Dolmage. Always the smartest men in the room.

Acknowledgements

SIR WALTER ELLIOT, of Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs, changed naturally into pity and contempt, as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century - and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed ...
-*Persuasion*, Jane Austen¹

Auntie Helen

I smelled your bannock, baking
wafting over the suitcase of family photos
kids from the rez would come hungry to your door,
asking "Kokum do you have some bannock?" I was hungry, too, so you said to call you
kokum
a woman
who knew that Love is medicine
- *Medicine Women*, Jennifer Adese²

I've come back to these quotes several times as I conceived, left, returned, and worked through this project. The first quote resonates, not for the character's vanity, which Austen captures beautifully, but the idea of finding comfort in the past, specifically your familial past, a low grade 'archive fever' if you will. I feel this, not just in the academic space with my 'textual friends' as Dr. Rachelle Hole and Dr. Jennifer Gustar called them, but in my wider circle of loved ones, friends, and colleagues.

The second quote is a stanza from *Medicine Women* by *otipemisiwak*/Métis poet and academic Jennifer Adese. The poem talks about the medicine of care and nurturing. The idea of 'Academic Aunties,'³ encapsulates a mentorship, but with warmth, tenacity, humour and generosity. I could not think of a more accurate term for my supervisor Carolyn Podruchny. The relationships which Carolyn cultivates understand that ideas are discussed not just in the office hour, Zoom, or in the lecture hall, but also at the kitchen table, and over a cup of tea. Though this is isolating, exhausting and lonely work, I have had the privilege of never being truly alone and have always been nourished by my textual friends, academic aunties, and my wider community. Thank you to my committee, David S. Koffman, Kathryn McPherson, the late Myra Rutherford, and my externals Marcel Martel, and Jennifer Adese and chair Boyd Cothran for your insight and guidance on this project.

¹ Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, 4th ed. (Toronto: Penguin Classics, 1985), 35.

² Jennifer Adese, "Medicine Women," in *Around the Kitchen Table*, ed. Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 84–86.

³ Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides, eds., *Around the Kitchen Table* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 159.

This dissertation was written on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat Nations. T'karanto is also home to the Métis Nation Ontario Toronto and York Métis Chartered Community, Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaty. My archival research was completed in Treaty 7 which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda. The City of Calgary is also home to Districts 5 and 6 of the Métis Nation of Alberta. I also want to acknowledge my position as a settler and thank my teachers and community from the territories I'm from: Treaty 6, the Métis Nation British Columbia Two Rivers Chartered Community, and the Unceded territories of the Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc, and Syilx Okanagan Nations. Marsi to the Métis Nation British Columbia and Meegwich to the team at Odeyto.

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There are a multitude of people that make up the community to get you across the finish line. Dance parties, hugs and thank-yous to my cheerleaders and accountability squad, Jennifer Judge, Barry Torch and Sarah Howdle. Thank you also to my Seneca colleagues who have been so supportive. Thank you for being on this grad school ride with me, Pamela Tudge, Christine Schreyer, Jennifer Gustar, Mathieu Brûlè, Patti Kmeic, Carly Simpson, Anna Ainsworth, Lynda Daneliuk, Ronnie Morris, Denise Chilton, Janet Melo-Thaiss, Mike Ainsworth, and Crystal Fraser.

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Lastly, to my husband, best friend, copy editor, colleague, chef, entertainment organizer, and co-pet wrangler Mark Brownlie. You were there for each edit, tear, dance party and revision. Thank you for the million things you do and for being the best Beary-Bear there is.

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Table Of Contents

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Table Of Contents</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Abbreviations</i>	<i>xii</i>
Abbreviations used in the Family Files	xii
Genealogical Information	xii
Places	xii
Other	xii
Race/ Ethnicity	xiii
Abbreviations in the Text	xiii
Places	xiii
Metis Organisation	xiii
Other	xiii
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Chapter 1 Introduction: Charles Denney and the Creation of a Metis Family History</i>	<i>1</i>
Charles Denney Collection	6
The ‘Project’	10
Methods	13
Historiography	18
Archives and Genealogy	18
Alberta Politics	43
Metis Historiography	52
Chapter Breakdown	66
Conclusion	69
<i>Chapter 2 Life in Letters: Exploring Denney’s Personal, Professional, and Political Journey</i>	<i>70</i>
Introduction	70
Charles Denney’s Story	72
Denney’s Politics	98
Conclusion	123
<i>Chapter 3 Denney’s Network: Exploring Connections with Genealogists and the Glenbow.</i>	<i>124</i>

Introduction	124
The Collaborators.....	125
Clarence Kipling.....	126
T. R (Pat) McCloy	135
Geoff Burtonshaw	139
Gail Morin	141
The Glenbow Museum and Archives.....	147
The Glenbow Institute	147
Denney and the Glenbow	158
Historical Society of Alberta (HSA)	170
Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS)	175
Conclusion	182
<i>Chapter 4 Genealogy as Historical Practice</i>	<i>184</i>
Introduction	184
The ABCs (or FGCs).....	185
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS).....	195
Professionalism	201
Ethics in Genealogy.....	204
Conclusion.....	214
<i>Chapter 5 Deciphering Denney’s Archive: A Comprehensive Study of the Family Files</i>	<i>216</i>
Introduction	216
The Family Files	219
By the Numbers	219
Geography	226
Race and Ethnicity.....	240
File Organization	249
Correspondence	256
Problems and Rejections	259
Family Files	265
James Flett & Mary Peebles Family File	266
Conclusion	277
<i>Chapter 6 Wahkootowin and Citizenship: The Metis Nation’s Connection to Genealogy.....</i>	<i>279</i>
Introduction	279
<i>Wahkootowin</i>	<i>286</i>
Metis Genealogies	290
Powley, Daniels, and the MNC.....	292
The Powley and Daniels Decisions	293
Citizenship and the Provincial Metis Nations	298
Conclusion	309
<i>Chapter 7 Conclusion: “that neither the rain, frost, lichens, nor vandals will ever destroy...”</i>	<i>310</i>

<i>Bibliography</i>	320
Primary Sources	320
Archival Sources	320
Newspapers, Periodicals and Magazines.....	320
Government Reports and Publications.....	321
Statutes	321
Supreme Court of Canada Decisions.....	322
Unpublished Primary Sources	322
Published Primary Sources.....	335
Secondary Sources	336
Unpublished Thesis and Dissertations.....	336
Conference Publications.....	337
Published Secondary Sources.....	337
Websites	351
<i>Appendix I Charles Denney Publications</i>	355

List of Tables

Table 4-1 Comparison of Documents Pertaining to Valerie Marie Dionne	211
Table 5-1 Categories of Documents that appear in Family Files.....	223
Table 5-2 Genealogical Documents appearing in the Family Files.....	223
Table 5-3 Primary Sources appearing in Family Files.....	224
Table 5-4 Secondary Sources appearing in Family Files.....	225
Table 5-5 Provincial Appearances in Denney Family Files	227
Table 5-6 Locations in Manitoba that appear 10 or more times in Family Files.....	229
Table 5-7 Locations in Saskatchewan that appear 10 or more times in Family Files	233
Table 5-8 Locations in Alberta that appear 10 or more times in Family Files	233
Table 5-9 Locations in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec that appear 10 or more times in Family File	235
Table 5-10 Historic Districts that appear in Family Files.....	236
Table 5-11 States in the USA that appear in Family Files.....	237
Table 5-12 International Locations Outside of North America that appear in Family Files	239
Table 5-13 Race and Ethnicity: Indigenous Appearances in Family Files.....	240
Table 5-14 Race and Ethnicity: White Appearances in Family Files	245
Table 5-15 Metis Markers that appear in Family Files.....	247
Table 5-16 Breakdown of Flett Family File	266
Table 5-17 Coding references including Parent Categories in Flett Family File# 950000	267
Table 5-18 Locations coded in Flett Family File.....	267
Table 6-1 Provincial Governments Citizenship Application Requirements	302
Table 6-2 Provincial Government's Harvesting Card Application Requirements	303

List of Figures

Figure 1-1 Screenshot of NVIVO Showing Race and Ethnicity Codes (graphic tags), Delorme File Family File.....	14
Figure 1-2 Screenshot NVIVO Delorme Family File #1024000 pp. 2.....	16
Figure 1-3 Screenshot NVIVO Delorme Family File #1024000 pp. 10.....	16
Figure 1-4 Screenshot of the ArcGIS map screen showing Canadian Document Locations	17
Figure 2-1 Denney's Teaching Contract 1932, Denney Personal Files M7144/266.....	74
Figure 2-2 'Charles & Mildred Denney. posing on the roof of the school.' 1927 (2022.005.002). Courtesy of Galloway Station Museum and Archives, Edson.....	78
Figure 2-3 Mildred Denney's grave with Extensive Headstone, Tofield Cemetery, Tofield, AB. Photo used with permission.	86
Figure 2-4 Fragment on the back of a July 24, 1994, letter to Pat McCloy.....	97
Figure 2-5 Letter to Betty and Norman Taylor with Anti-Abortion letterheads, Denney Personal Papers.....	119
Figure 3-1 Final Contract for Charles Denney's Archival Materials, (unsigned).	163
Figure 3-2 Certificate to Charles Denney from the Government of Alberta, 1980	175
Figure 4-1 Mildred Sherlock's 'Facts' Page on Ancestry.ca.....	186
Figure 4-2 "Family Group Chart," February 19, 1976, Groat, Malcolm Family File.	187
Figure 4-3 Blank Family Group Record, from Ancestry.com	188
Figure 4-4 Descendancy Chart showing Mildred Denney and her descendants from Angus Fraser. From the FamilySearch.org website.	189
Figure 4-5 Genealogical Chart John Phillbert Laderoute and Marguerite Sansregret. Philbert Family File.	190
Figure 4-6 McKay Family Tree showing the family of John Richards McKay and Harriet Ballenden. McKay Family File #3344.....	191
Figure 4-7 Ancestry, "Charts and Forms: Ancestral Chart," Ancestry.ca, 2023, https://www.ancestrycdn.com/legacy/pdf/trees/charts/anchart.pdf	192
Figure 4-8 Family Tree Mildred Sherlock, from Family Search.org.....	193
Figure 4-9 Ancestor Chart Joyce Jackson, Winter Family File #129000	193
Figure 4-10 Pedigree Chart, From FamilySearch.Org.....	194
Figure 4-11 Birth Registration: Marie Valerie Yon Nov 1st, 1896	209
Figure 4-12 Baptism Entry for Marie Vel��rie Yonne. 2 November 1896.	210
Figure 4-13 1901 Census for Cumberland, ON.....	210
Figure 4-14 1911 Census for Willow Bunch, SK.....	210
Figure 4-15 1916 Census for Assiniboia, SK.	210
Figure 4-16 1921 Census for Weyburn SK.....	211
Figure 4-17 Obituary for Matilda Dionne, Regina Leader Post	211
Figure 5-1 Detail of Obituary and Denney's notes. Delorme Family File #1026000 pp. 56.....	221
Figure 5-2 Map of Canada showing Heat Map of Document Locations.....	226
Figure 5-3 Map of Manitoba Showing Heat Map of Document Locations.....	228
Figure 5-4 Family Chart J.B. Ledoux, Ledoux Family File pp. 2	230
Figure 5-5 Map of Saskatchewan Showing Heat Map of Document Locations.....	232
Figure 5-6 Map of Alberta Showing Heat Map of Document Locations	234

Figure 5-7 Map of BC, NWT, ON, QC and Maritimes Showing Heat Map of Document Locations.....	235
Figure 5-8 Map of Continental USA Showing Heat Map of Document Locations.....	237
Figure 5-9 Map of International locations. Showing Map of Document Locations.....	239
Figure 5-10 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 1	243
Figure 5-11 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 2	243
Figure 5-12 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 3	243
Figure 5-13 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 10	243
Figure 5-14 Detail, Michel Bouvier. Bouvier Family File pp. 1	244
Figure 5-15 Detail, Joseph Cayon, Bolieu Family File pp. 3	244
Figure 5-16 Detail, Paul Cadeau and Elizabeth. Bolieu Family File pp. 5.....	244
Figure 5-17 Detail, Francois Serpant. Serpant Family File pp. 5	244
Figure 5-18 Detail, Allen Cameron. Cameron Family File, pp. 1	246
Figure 5-19 Detail, Andre Gaudry David Family File, pp. 1.....	246
Figure 5-20 Detail, Hugh Ross. Ross Family File, pp. 1	246
Figure 5-21 Detail Dominique Ducharme, Ducharme Family File pp. 2	246
Figure 5-22 Detail of Note in Tate Family File, pp. 51	248
Figure 5-23 Detail of James Tate. Tate Family File, pp. 8.	248
Figure 5-24 Detail Madeline Delorme and Ludger Gareault. Gareault Family File, pp.3	248
Figure 5-25 Mildred Kate Sherlock Card Showing LDS code from FamilySearch.org.....	252
Figure 5-26 Chart showing Denney numbering system. Favel Family File pp. 2	253
Figure 5-27 Chart, Favell and McKay Family File pp.2.....	254
Figure 5-28 Annotated Letter. McKay Family File pp. 20.	255
Figure 5-29 Letter to Murray from Denney, Murray Family File pp. 140-141	257
Figure 5-30 Letter to Moar from Denney, Moar Family File pp. 9.	258
Figure 5-31 Chart of James Pebbles and Elizabeth Morrison, Flett family File pp. 2.....	270
Figure 5-32 Obituary of Jane Flett and Notes, Flett Family File. pp. 3.....	271
Figure 5-33 Chart William Flett and Philomene Chartrand, Flett Family File pp. 4.....	272
Figure 5-34 Notes on Bird Family, Flett Family File pp.5	273
Figure 5-35 Obituary and Chart G.R. Flett. Flett Family File pp. 6.	274
Figure 5-36 Wedding Announcement Margaret Flett. Flett Family File pp.7.....	275
Figure 5-37 Chart of George Flett and Mary Sable. Flett Family File pp. 8.	276
Figure 6-1 Nault, Mathilde; Scrip cert.: form E, no. 3386; claim no 1441.....	283
Figure 6-2 MNBC Application Checklist (May 2024)	303
Figure 6-3 Figure 4 MNBC Personal Information Form (May 2024)	303
Figure 6-4 MNBC Personal information pp. 2 (May 2024)	304
Figure 6-5 MNBC "My Metis Family" Genealogical Chart (May 2024).....	304
Figure 6-6 Oath of Citizenship (May 2024)	305
Figure 6-7 ISC and Personal Information Release Form.....	305
Figure 6-8 MNBC Declaration Form (May 2024).....	305
Figure 6-9 Historic Document Database Screenshot Using patromym "MacDougall" bcmetiscitizen.ca 2018.....	307

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in the Family Files

Genealogical Information

b	Born
bap.	Baptized
bur.	Buried
d.	Died
m.	Married
M1	First marriage

Places

Ed.	Edmonton
Ed'n	Edmonton
Ft Chip	Fort Chipewyan
Ft Ed.	Fort Edmonton
K	Kildoran
Lake Sale	Lac Seul
Man	Manitoba
MH	Medicine Hat
Mont.	Montana
Moose Req	Moose Factory
NWT	North West Territories
PA	Prince Albert
Prairie Fort	Fort Des Prairies
RMH	Rocky Mountain House
RR	Red River
SA	Saint Andrews, MB
Scot	Scotland
SFX	Saint Francis Xavier
SJ	Saint Johns Cathedral (or St James)
Van.	Vancouver
WHP	White Horse Plains
wpg	Winnipeg

Other

CF	Chief Factor
CT	Chief Trader
do.	Ditto
Ft	Fort

HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
H	House
NWC	North West Company
R	River
SLK	Selkirk Settler

Race/ Ethnicity

HB	Half-Breed
Ind	Indian
OWS	Original White Settler
UEL	United Empire Loyalist

Abbreviations in the Text

Places

CA	Canada
BC	British Columbia
AB	Alberta
MB	Manitoba
ON	Ontario
QC	Quebec
NT	Northwest Territories
NU	Nunavut
NS	Nova Scotia
NB	New Brunswick
PE	Prince Edward Island
WA	Washington State

Metis Organisation

MMF	Manitoba Métis Federation
MNA	Métis Nation Alberta
MNC	Métis National Council
MNBC	Métis Nation British Columbia
MNO	Métis Nation Ontario
MN-S	Métis Nation Saskatchewan

Other

AFA	Alberta Foundation for the Arts
AGS	Alberta Genealogical Society
ASG	American Society of Genealogists
CAA	Canadian Authors Association
CAFÉ	Canadian Association for Free Expression

CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
C.G.	Certified Genealogist
COR	Confederation of Region's Party
DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
HBRs	Hudson's Bay Record Society
HDD	MNBC Historical Document Database
HSA	Historical Society of Alberta
IGI	International Genealogical Index
INAC	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada
LDS	Church Of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints, also referred to as Mormons
MAP	Métis Archival Project
MatriX	Métis Aboriginal Title Research Initiative
NAIT	Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
NDP	New Democratic Party
NEP	National Energy Program
PC	Progressive Conservative Party
RAM	Royal Alberta Museum
RSF	<i>Reichssippenamt</i> (State Office for Kinship Research)
RAM	Royal Alberta Museum
SHSB	Société historique de Saint-Boniface
SCC	Supreme Court of Canada
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i> (Protection Squadron)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UofA	University of Alberta
UBC	University of British Columbia
UBCO	University of British Columbia Okanagan
UCP	United Conservative Party
WCC	Western Canada Concept (Party and Publication)

Preface

In 2008, I was a research assistant at the University of British Columbia (UBC) working on a project with the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC). I was training an MNBC Registry Clerk on a database that contained genealogical documents from the MNBC citizens. We decided to upload some of her family documents and index them as practice. While we were working, we started talking about how she traced her Metis ancestry. She said: “Well, you know, we’re in Denney.” She said it so emphatically. I knew about the Metis family collections in the historical society in Saint-Boniface (the Société historique de Saint-Boniface or SHSB) and the work of genealogist Gail Morin, but I didn’t know “Denney.” She showed me some of his charts and explained that Denney was a genealogist and that his papers were at the Glenbow Institute in Calgary.

A few months later, I was doing thesis work in Calgary and visited the Glenbow to see what was there on my research partner, May Barrette’s family. I spoke to the Archivist Doug Cass at the desk, and he suggested talking to Geoff Burtonshaw. In the meantime, he brought me boxes on the Bruneau and Whitford families from the Denney collection. It was a different kind of large archive than I had been in before, a room filled with photographs to browse through, open shelves of books, and filled with staff interested in sharing with the public what was in their collection.

The statement “we’re in Denney,” the families looking at their files, and the warm space stuck with me. I returned to the Glenbow again to do some follow-up work a year or so later,

spent more time with Denney's papers, and knew... there was a project here. Looking at the boxes of documents, two questions emerged. First, I asked myself, "Why? Why was this collection created?" That turned out to be a love story. I could not shake the second question: what does "We're in Denney" really mean for the Metis families who introduced me to this archive? This dissertation is an attempt to answer that question.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Charles Denney and the Creation of a Metis Family History

What makes an individual Indigenous is an ongoing political, legislative, and personal issue in Canada.¹ For many of Canada's Metis, descendants of distinct prairie communities that grew from the 16th and 17th century families of the First Nations and European fur traders, Indigenous heritage was buried by years of outsider racism and denial, particularly after the Resistance in 1885. Many people reframed and whitewashed their family's ancestral identity from "Metis" to "pioneer." However, kinship remained key. According to historian Brenda Macdougall, kinship and its responsibilities, known as *wahkootowin* to Metis, "were part of a Metis worldview that privileged family above all else and directed actions and behaviours in a manner that reflected the values, taboos, virtues, and ideals of this society, which, in turn, were the laws by which people lived. Family or *wahkootowin* was, to borrow an anthropological phrase, the 'style of life' that reflected a shared cultural identity...."² To look for and look out for one's family, including ancestors, was and is part of this cultural obligation and particularly for a diaspora like the Metis nation, requires knowing who your people are, and where they came from. Researchers found Indigeneity in the work of genealogists such as Edmonton's Charles

¹ For a thoughtful examination of the history and contemporary conversation about the terminologies 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' and their intersection with Indigenous communities and Canadian Government see: Jennifer Adese, *Aboriginal TM: The Cultural and Economic Politics of Recognition* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2022).

² Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 6.

Denney, a white, irascible, Protestant man whose Metis wife's family history became his passion. Denney's archive of the genealogical data of Metis families is shaped by his idea of what constituted ethnic identities and families, the way he applied these ideas in thousands of individual cases, the details, papers, and documentation he chose to save, and how these bits of information came together to form a collection at the Glenbow Archives. Although the Glenbow Archives are and were government-funded and promote a Western idea of Canadian nationalism, Denney's genealogies worked on, with, and for the Metis Nation. The work of genealogists has been crucial to defining membership in Métis communities, however, very few scholars have critically examined the meanings, limitations, and biases of the genealogies themselves. Critically engaging in archival research, as anthropologist Anne Laura Stoler notes, moves research from simply accessing archives as a source to approaching archives as a subject.³ She urges us to look at archives as more than a repository of names and dates. Instead, she argues that archives are bodies of work worthy of study and are a site in which identities were formed and power wielded. We should encounter the archive "as something in between a set of documents, their institutions, and a repository of memory - both a place and a cultural space that encompass official documents but are not confined to them."⁴ She echoes theorist Jacques Derrida's idea that the contents of an archive inhabit "this place of election where law and singularity intersect in privilege."⁵ More than archives, genealogical collections were essential to meaning-making. Sociologist Eviatar Zerunavel sees genealogies as "more than mere reflections of nature, but they are also more than mere records of history. By the same token, rather than simply helping us find

³ Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, and Graeme Reid (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 83–84.

⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 49.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3.

out who our relatives are, they are the narratives we construct to *actually make them* our ancestors.” [italics mine]⁶ For the Metis Nation, this act of ‘making them our relatives’ is the process of *whakatoowin* or relatedness.

Perceptions of archival collections, including genealogies, have changed dramatically in the last twenty years, because of interrogations like Jacques Derrida and Stoler. In exciting work coming out of South Africa, India, New Zealand, Canada, and other colonized countries, archival collections are being seen not as neutral parties but as actors influenced by colonial politics and evaluation of knowledge.⁷ Stoler notes that “students of colonialism are rereading those archives... we are no longer studying things but the making of them. Students of colonialisms ... are spending as much time thinking what constituted the colonial archive as they are reconsidering how written documents collide and converge with colonial memories in the postcolonial field.”⁸ Archives, according to writers like Stoler, Antoinette Burton, and Carolyn Hamilton, help to establish and uphold power, control the release of information, and aid in colonizing narratives.⁹

We need to pause for a moment to define colonialism and colonial archives. In its simplest terms, colonialism refers to the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another land and its people. Scholars of colonialism, such as Lorenzo Veracini and

⁶ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community*, Kindle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, and Graeme Reid (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 84.

⁸ Stoler, 84.

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, and Graeme Reid, eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002); Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

Patrick Wolfe, have taught us to pay careful attention to colonizers' intentions, which can vary dramatically from exploiting resources using an Indigenous labour force to clearing away Indigenous peoples to make way for colonial settlements; indeed they cast colonialism and settler colonialism as antithetical.¹⁰ More recently, Nancy Shoemaker has reflected on the many typologies of colonialism, which include planter, extractive, trade, and transport, to name a few.¹¹ How does an archival become colonial? Colonial archives are records and institutions created and maintained by a colonial power in a territory that is not sovereign. They are a product of colonial regimes of power and can include a wide range of materials, such as documents, objects, and stories. The colonial regimes decide what is worth being preserved, how that information is organized, and who gets to see the material, all of which are technologies of power.¹² Denney's collection can be considered colonial because it was generated in the context of the Canadian state exerting control over Metis people. Denney was a representative of this state as a citizen who exemplified its ideals. He was white, male, educated, and supported the structures that disempowered Indigenous peoples. Ironically, the colonial archive he created can be seen as anti-colonial because he created it for his Metis wife, he employed Metis methods, he used Metis-generated materials, and his archive has been used to establish family relations and sovereignty by Metis people.

This dissertation argues that in giving the same treatment to genealogy, we may find spaces where colonialism and nationalism are undermined, with or without intention. To date,

¹⁰ L. Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, 1st ed., Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010); Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

¹¹ Nancy Shoemaker, "A Typology of Colonialism – AHA," <https://www.historians.org/>, accessed January 18, 2025, <https://www.historians.org/perspectives-article/a-typology-of-colonialism-october-2015/>.

¹² For an excellent overview, see E. N. Namhila, "Content and use of colonial archives: an under-researched issue" *Arch Sci* 16, 111–123 (2016).

historians have understood genealogy to be a method of research, and a source of information conducted primarily by amateurs, not professional historians. In spaces like Canada we should push beyond this position to see how knowledge and power is produced in genealogies. In doing so, we need to understand how they are made. We also need to look “against the grain,” as Stoler notes, by looking at Metis genealogies. Although these genealogies originated in a colonial concept of white-pioneer narratives that created and reinforced colonial power, they have transformed into an act of Metis agency. I came to them through my work with the registries of the Métis Nation BC and for me Denney and the Metis Nation are intrinsically linked. I hope to contribute to the discussion about using genealogies in historical research by examining the contents of the Charles Denney Genealogy Archives at the Glenbow Museum.

This dissertation looks at an archive and a genealogist’s collection on Metis people, so a note on terminology is warranted. With a nod to Jennifer S. H. Brown’s and Jacqueline Peterson’s ground-breaking 1985 edited collection *The New Peoples*, it’s important to note the spelling of ‘metis,’ ‘Metis’ and ‘Métis’ are political choices with real implications.¹³ This dissertation uses the capitalized Metis without the accent when discussing the current and historic Metis Nation to indicate that peoplehood includes English-speaking and French-speaking members and to distinguish it from the governmental, legal, and political organizations that use the accented Métis. Lowercase ‘metis’ is used when discussing mixed-race people outside the historic Metis Nation. Whenever quotations or proper nouns are used, the original spelling is preserved. Though uncomfortable and pejorative, the term ‘Half Breed,’ has historic, legal,

¹³ Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, “Introduction,” in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 3–18.

literary, and intra-nation uses. It was the term used by the Canadian government in the 19th century, such as in the 1885 Half-Breed Scrip Commissions, and was used by English-speaking Metis families.¹⁴ It was also the term used by Charles Denney in many of the family trees he created. As such, it will appear in the text only when in context. I also acknowledge that Indigenous language words have variations in spelling and punctuation. As such, I have followed the best practices outlined in *Elements of Indigenous Style* by Opaskwayak Cree editor and professor Greg Younging.¹⁵

Charles Denney Collection

My wider research project focuses on the Charles Denney Archival Collection, currently housed in the University of Calgary Glenbow Collection in Calgary, AB. Denney, who passed away in 2002 at 101 years old, was never a professional genealogist, archivist, or historian. He worked as a teacher, a school principal, an accountant, and, in the Alberta Department of Trade and Industry, as a supervisor of credit unions. He was a dedicated amateur genealogist and a founder of the Alberta Genealogical Society.¹⁶ Ironically, Denney was not focused on his own family tree; rather, he was fascinated by the family of his first wife, Mildred, who was related to the Frasers, a historic Metis family in the Red River colony in present-day Manitoba.¹⁷ While

¹⁴ See Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973); Paul Chartrand, “‘Terms of Division’: Problems of ‘Outside Naming’ for Aboriginal People in Canada,” *Journal of Indigenous Studies* 2, no. 2 (1991): 13; Library and Archives Canada, “Use of Term Half Breed - Métis Scrip Records,” Library and Archives Canada, March 1, 2012, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/metis-scrip/005005-4000-e.html>.

¹⁵ Greg Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples* (Canada: Brush Education, 2018).

¹⁶ “The Family Secret Keeper,” *Heritage Magazine*, February 1983.

¹⁷ Donna Pinder, “Roots: Go Ahead, Rattle a Few Family Skeletons,” *Edmonton Sun*, November 26, 1983, Sunday edition.

researching her family, he was given access to a collection of documents on the Selkirk settlers, which expanded his interest to all the families of the Red River Valley, particularly Metis.¹⁸

Unlike the simplicity and anonymity of today's online genealogical research, usually done through large online genealogical databases like Ancestry.com and Family Search.org, or with the newer movements into DNA genetic testing through companies like AncestryDNA and 23andMe, Denney found his information through lengthy personal correspondences and visits at the kitchen tables of descendants of families throughout Western Canada. His research included gaining access to private information. It required the families to trust Denney enough to share with him their Indigenous ancestry, something that was often seen as (potentially) socially disastrous for those seeking to keep their Indigenous heritage secret.¹⁹ The period in which Denney collected data, 1967 - 1985, is especially important because it was the turning point politically for Metis people. Starting in the early 1980s, attitudes towards Metis people began to change, especially with their inclusion in the 1982 Canadian constitution. Since the turn of the millennium, and the recognition of Metis rights in the 2003 R. v. Powley legal ruling and the 2016 Daniels v. Canada case, more and more Metis people have embraced their heritage, and this includes undertaking genealogical research.²⁰

¹⁸ "Trees: Back Handed Rewards Abound in Albertans' Ancestor Search," *Saint John's Edmonton Report*, April 14, 1978.

¹⁹ Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850-1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Cores and Boundaries: Métis Historiography Across a Generation," *Native Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (2008): 1-18; Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).

²⁰ This is not without its own issues, see Chris Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014).

Charles Denney was a white, Protestant male of Scottish heritage with right-wing Western-populist politics. He amassed a collection of genealogies of over 1200 Metis families and 2600 Family Files collected from the 1960s to the 1980s. His work began with a desire to document his wife's family history in Selkirk, MB, and it grew from there. He was meticulous, difficult, and fussy, and he had a passion for correspondence, some of which he maintained for over 40 years. By contextualizing his wife's ancestors as "pioneers," he was forcing what was a Metis history into a European colonial box of categories. He never intentionally participated in *wahkootowin*. However, it implicitly emerged in his research due to the communities he studied and the researchers with whom he worked. These relationships embedded *wahkootowin* in his genealogical pursuits, which then shaped his archive. He intended his work to be part of the colonizing process, lauding and validating 'pioneer' settlements in the west, which implicitly meant dispossessing and diminishing Indigenous peoples.²¹ However, he ironically became a resource for Metis communities because his detailed genealogical work became necessary for Metis people to claim their membership in Metis political organizations. Metis people learned how to use colonialism to their benefit, with Denney inadvertently helping them in this process. Using Denney's meticulous genealogical records, they could document their family histories to secure recognition as members of the Metis Nation. Membership in the various provincial Metis organizations has increasingly been accompanied by material and social benefits as an effort to redress colonial disadvantages. The contemporary Metis Nation has used Denney's work, intended to highlight whiteness in the west, to fulfil current federal requirements to secure Indigenous rights.

²¹ See Indigenous interactions as part of a constructed pioneer identity in Kathryn McPherson, "Home Tales: Gender, Domesticity, and Colonialism in the Prairie West, 1870–1900," in *Finding a Way to the Heart* (University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 222–40.

Anne Laura Stoler argues that archives are sites of colonial knowledge production, and the large publicly funded archives in Canada are perfect examples. However, genealogical archives may serve a different purpose. By looking at the creation, contents, collaborators, and users, I argue that Charles Denney's archive of Metis genealogies can be viewed as a site of power reclamation, resistance, and *wahkootowin* by exploring how he constructed the histories of the people he researched and how his files are now routinely used as part of the application process to gain Metis citizenship. Understanding Denney's papers requires examining how they were made. The collection, which includes genealogies, correspondence, and personal items, is contextualized in terms of archival practices, genealogy as a discipline, personal relationships, and their connection to the Metis Nation.

This dissertation explores the making of Charles Denney's massive Metis genealogical collection (housed in the Glenbow), which is used extensively by Metis families to trace their family histories. Despite Denney's identity as a white, populist, misogynist male, he inadvertently created an anti-colonial archive of Metis history. The archive is anti-colonial because 1) it was created using kitchen table and *wahkootowin* methods. 2) Denney relied on many Metis collaborators, who used Denney to construct and prune Metis genealogies, and 3) it is used by Metis people to secure rights, which has shaped the value of the archive. This study uses a macro lens to overview his collection of several thousand genealogies and a micro lens to examine his private papers in detail.²²

²² Erin Dolmage, "Genealogy and Métis Identity: An Examination of Charles Denney's Family Histories" (The American Society for Ethnohistory, Winnipeg, 2017); Erin Dolmage, "Examining Charles Denney's Métis Genealogy as Colonial Archive," in *Congress* (The Canadian Historical Association Annual General Meeting, Ottawa, 2015).

The ‘Project’

Denney was an interesting character: opinionated, irascible, socially and fiscally conservative, and fond of writing letters to newspaper editors and politicians. He was committed to right-wing Alberta populism, being an active member of both the Social Credit Party in the late 1930s and 1940s and the Reform Party in the 1990s. Denney only appeared to have two soft spots when it came to government spending: the CBC, which he strongly defended in letters to Reform Leader Preston Manning, and the preservation and accessibility of archives.

The history of Denney’s collection had four major developments. The first was the beginning of Denney’s project when, in 1967, the Rev. John Bompas sent Denney papers on his (then) wife’s Metis family, which initiated Denney’s genealogical research.²³ The second development occurred when Denney began collaborating and building the genealogical collection with other Metis researchers, particularly Clarence Kipling and Pat McCloy, through the 1970s and 1980s. The third development was the purchase and transfer of the collection to the Glenbow Archives in Calgary in the 1980s and 1990s. The fourth occurred when Metis researchers adopted the archive as a resource to explore *wahkootowin* and to find evidence for the genealogical requirements of the 2003 Powley decision to establish Metis heritage and membership in Metis organizations.

Denney had several terms for his collection, but he generally referred to them as “his files” or one of “his major life projects.”²⁴ In one letter, Denney described himself as busy

²³ “Trees: Back Handed Rewards Abound in Albertans’ Ancestor Search.”

²⁴ “The Family Secret Keeper,” February 1983.

“collecting biographical material on our old timers, and sometimes writing it.”²⁵ He mined all of his correspondence for dates and details about the lives of the people he wrote to, usually taking a pen and highlighter to the letters to earmark new data for his family trees. In an insightful series of documents contained in a 1974 Explorations Program grant application, Denney outlined a project that was drawn from his genealogical hobby. Entitled “Half-Breed Identities and Little John Pritchard,” Denney described his project as follows: “Assembl [sic] into one set of records all available data on the families of the Selkirk settlers and the fur trade families into which they married. Many of these were of Red blood. There are bits and pieces of information about these families in numerous homes, archives and libraries. But in very few instances has anyone brought them together to make a central fount of information.”²⁶ Denney emphasizes the public nature of his endeavours, suggesting that publication or making his files available to the public in an archive was the end goal of his project. Seeing his work as a public service, it must be left “in a most serviceable and readable form and to be exceptionally useful to all future generations of writers trying to produce Pioneer Prairie Portrites [sic].”²⁷ However, this may not have been solely a selfless gesture. Denney seemed to be constructing himself as a great chronicler of Western Canada or a ‘Grandfather of History.’ Unfortunately for Denney, he was denied the grant, which did not sweeten his feelings towards the then Liberal Government’s programs and big government spending.

²⁵ Charles Denney, “Denney to Elizabeth Aylen, Edmonton AB,” Letter, December 20, 1997, M - 8981 7, Glenbow Museum and Archives.

²⁶ Charles Denney, “Application for Assistance under the Explorations Program,” 1973, M7144/171 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁷ Charles Denney, “Application for Assistance under the EXPLORATIONS PROGRAM,” 1973, M - 7144-171, Glenbow Museum and Archives.

Denney was drawn into the process of *wahkootowin*,²⁸ the Metis practice of knowing and seeking relatedness and connection. Metis professor Viki Bouvier notes to be Metis is to be *Kaa-waahohtoochik*, the ones that are related to each other. She identifies a way of knowing kin as intrinsic to being Metis, defining Metis as “an individual who self-identifies as Métis, has grown up knowing they were Métis, and is connected to a historical Métis community, which is held and bound to distinct linguistic, political, socio-economic, and kinship convergences that herald specific lifeways.”²⁹ As outlined by Metis historian and geographer Brenda Macdougall, *wahkootowin* is a Metis family structure that privileges connections to land, people, the spirit world and non-human creatures. She explains, “this worldview, *wahkootowin*, is predicated upon a specific Aboriginal notion and definition of family as a broadly conceived sense of relatedness with all beings, human and non-human, living and dead, physical and spiritual.”³⁰ This large-scale data collection that Denney participated in is both an act of Western Canadian nation-building, and a construction of *wahkootowin* by his collaborators, a system of genealogy and kinship. Denney did not understand *wahkootowin*, however his collaborators and the families that shared their family stories with him did. It was the family’s practice and kinship teachings that encouraged them to work with Denney. The collections had value both to the people who found family connections within them and in the larger archives that wanted to house them.

In 1973, the Glenbow Institute approached Denney to photograph his collection to house in their archives. At the time, the Glenbow did not have the financial resources to buy the

²⁸ There are numerous spellings of the word so I have chosen to use the spelling used by Macdougall for consistency unless otherwise quoted.

²⁹ Vicki Bouvier, “Kaa-Waahohtoochik: The Ones That Are Related to Each Other,” in *Around the Kitchen Table*, ed. Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 17.

³⁰ Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, 3.

collection.³¹ This changed by May of 1975 when the Glenbow Archives bought Denney's collection outright for \$25,000.³² Denney deposited the bulk of his papers in 1985. He continued to work for another 20 years, well into his late nineties, he gave a second large set of documents to the Glenbow in the early 1990s.

Methods

The Charles Denney Collection contains genealogies constructed primarily from 1967 to 1985, indexes to the family files, personal correspondence, and additional reference materials.³³ The collection also comprises over 2600 files of family trees. As with all genealogists, Denney inserted his own influence on the construction of the family trees by choosing what to include and what to ignore. However, the families who agreed to work with Denney in creating the family files had at least as much power in creating the trees, as did Denney's Metis collaborators, which makes his collection a significant monument to community memory and collective expression of identity and inclusion. I approach the family files from two perspectives. Firstly, through a micro-lens, I look carefully at Denney's letters and personal papers in an effort to learn about Denney's identity and work habits, the people he worked with, and how the project developed. Secondly, I take a macro view of the family files by looking at their overall makeup, what kinds of documents they contain, and plotting what locations, events and time periods are covered. To do this, I needed to draw a random sample of the individual files. I chose a sample of 365 files from the 2600, which puts the study's accuracy at over 95% with less than a 5%

³¹ Denney, "Application for Assistance under the EXPLORATIONS PROGRAM."

³² Charles Denney to H.F. Chritchley, May 30, 1974, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³³ Glenbow Museum and Archives, Charles Denney fonds and Métis Genealogy Files Finding Aid, 2010, <http://www.glenbow.org/collections/search/findingAids/archhtm/denney.cfm#series3> (accessed December 10, 2010).

margin of error.³⁴ I then copied the selected files from microfilm and scanned copies, organizing them as pdfs under the Family File folders that Denney assigned. I have also retained his numbering system in the filenames. The family files reveal the significant influence of Metis family members in constructing and directing the collections, which are visible in the inclusion of family scrapbook items, such as photographs, letters, excerpts of obituaries, and so on.

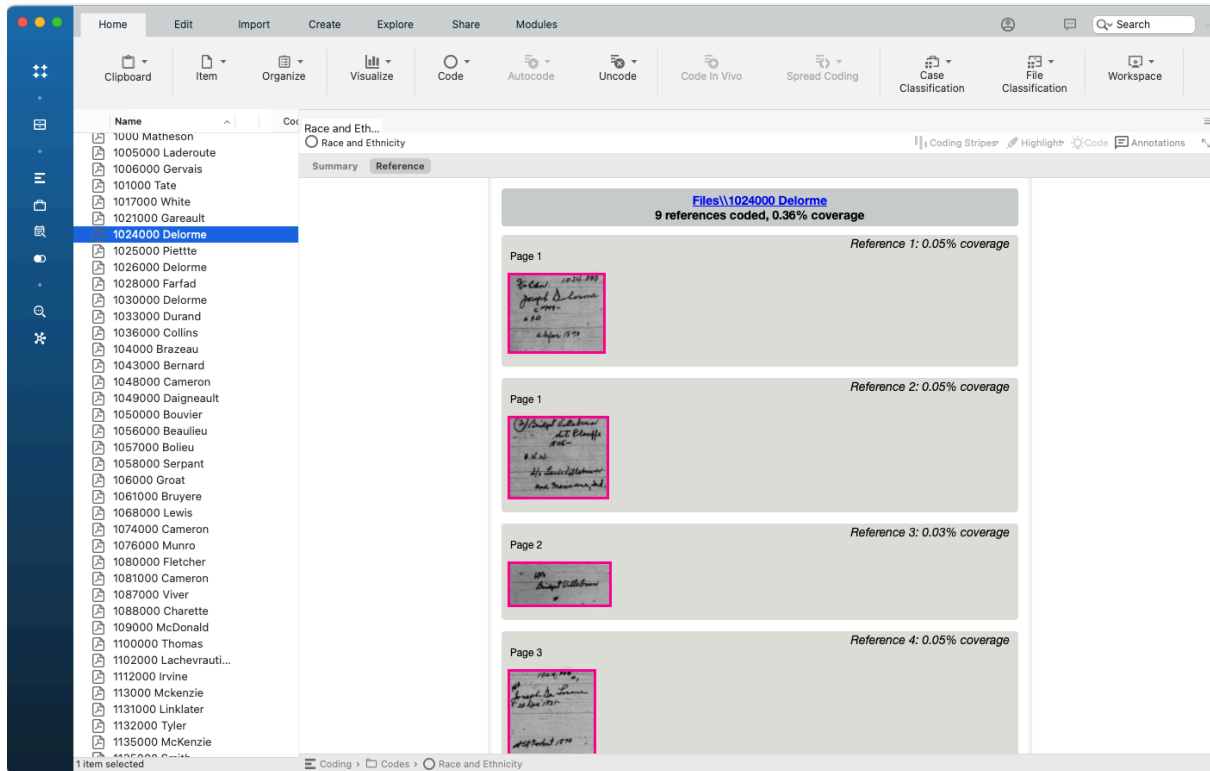


Figure 1-1 Screenshot of NVIVO Showing Race and Ethnicity Codes (graphic tags), Delorme File Family File

Using an NVIVO qualitative data analysis database, the files were then indexed, and the findings were categorized under several headings, including geography, themes pertinent to the Metis, and the types of documents. The NVIVO database allowed me to look at each document

³⁴ To choose the files I would be coding, I used a sample size calculator to see what number of files I would need to meet a statistically accurate percentage (365). I then used a random number generator which produced 365 numbers. I ordered the files from 1-2600 and then copied and coded the files associated with the list of randomly generated numbers. “Sample Size Calculator,” SurveyMonkey, accessed April 28, 2017, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/>; “Random Number Generator,” accessed April 28, 2017, <http://stattrek.com/statistics/random-number-generator.aspx>.

in the identified Family Files and tag the files under document types (Cases) and geographic, thematic, and cultural information (Codes). As most documents were handwritten or extensively annotated, particularly the family trees, having the ability to graphically tag was essential. A list of ethnicity-tagged documents appears above (fig. 1-1). I also kept track of the earliest dates and number of pages of each file on an accompanying spreadsheet. I attached geocodes to all the locations associated with the family trees and have produced maps showing the geography of the Denney collection. Once all the Cases and Codes were coded to the individual documents in the family files, the information was refined. The data was then exported into Excel showing the number of total instances (References), as well as the number of files (Sources). For example, the term Metis/ Half Breed (HB) appeared in 998 total instances across the 365 files (Instances) and in 152 individual files (Sources). I use the sources primarily through this study as Denney tended to repeat sections of the genealogies in the files so that the same individual would be counted several times if they were ancestors to multiple branches of the family.

One example is the Delorme Family File numbered #1024000 (fig 1-2 and 1-3).³⁵ The yellow highlighted sections on the page on the right are the tagged Codes and Cases. They are also listed alongside the document. Page 2 (fig. 1-2) of the family file includes ancestor Bridget Villebrun on the far left and lists her as a “Half Breed” (HB), which is highlighted and coded. On page 10 (fig. 1-3), she appears again as the ancestor to a different branch of the family and is again highlighted and coded as Half Breed (HB). This happens repeatedly in the files, and it would be erroneous to count her more than once. Instead, we counted the document as containing at least one example of the code ‘Half Breed.’

³⁵ Charles Denney, “Delorme Family File,” n.d., M7144/1024000 Delorme Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

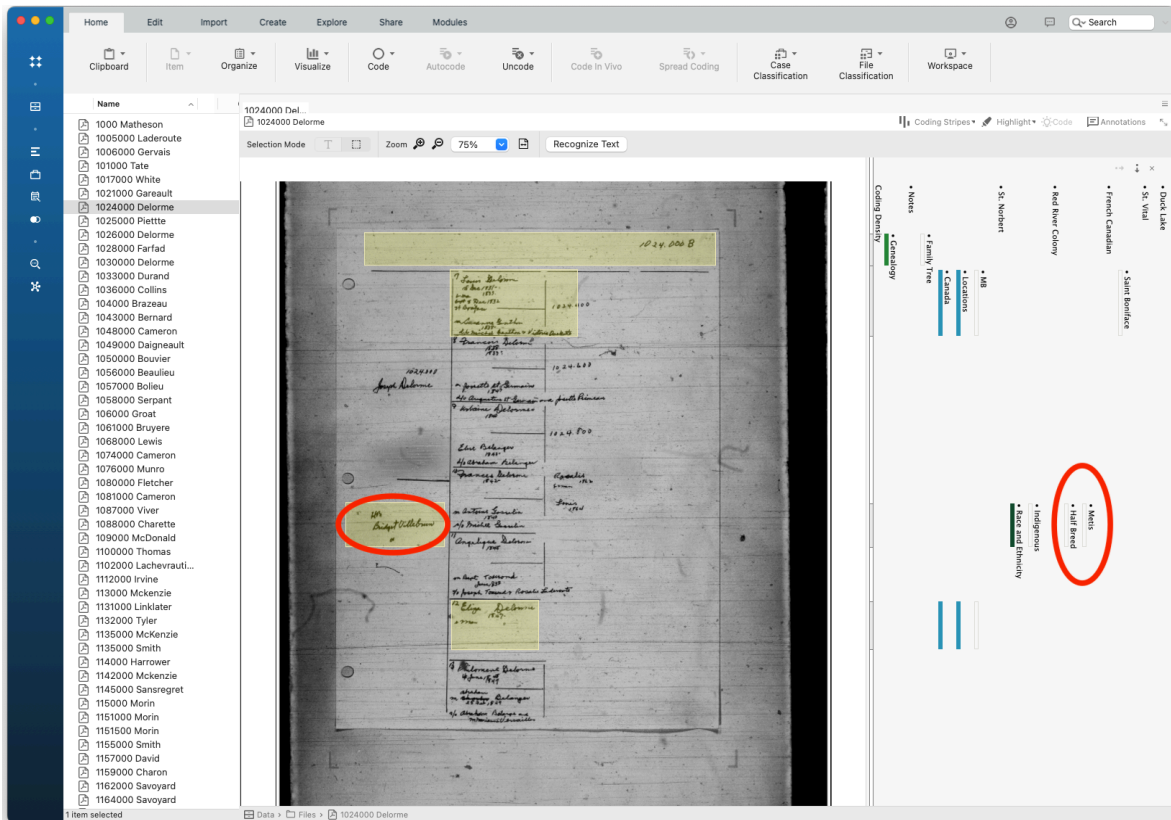


Figure 1-2 Screenshot NVIVO Delorme Family File #1024000 pp. 2

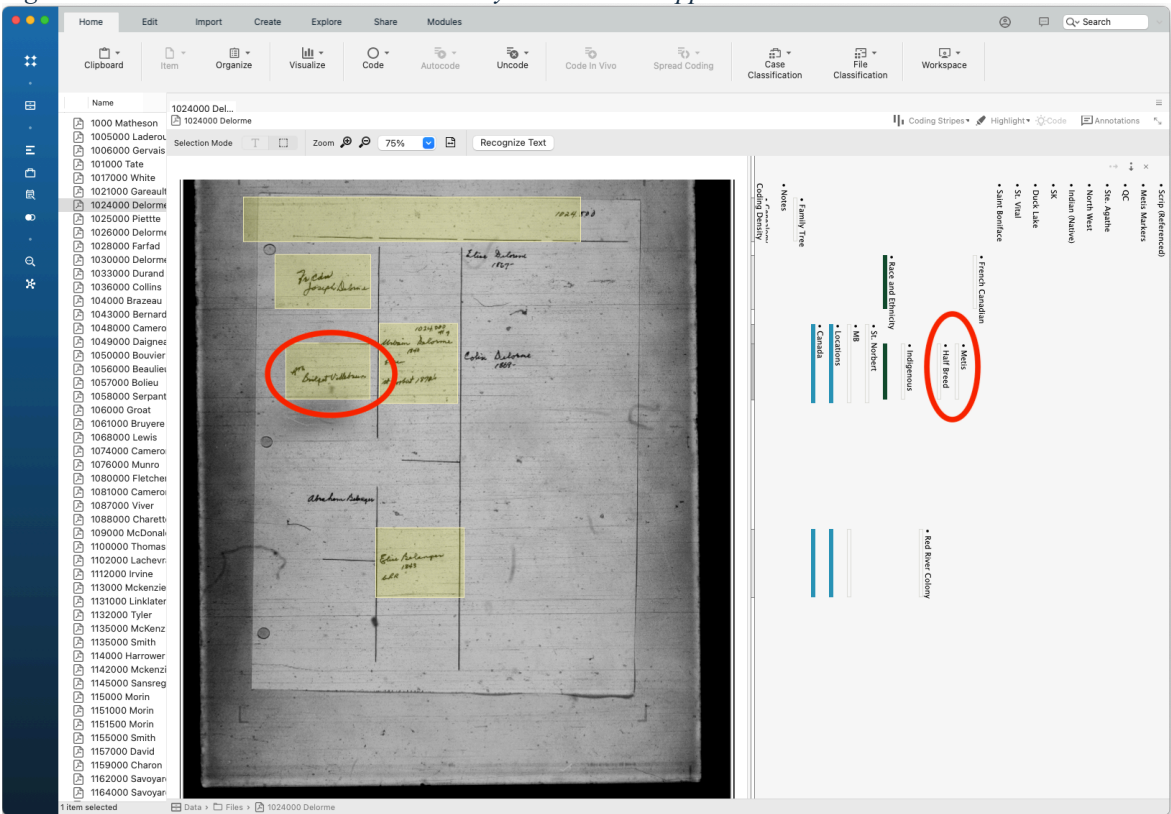


Figure 1-3 Screenshot NVIVO Delorme Family File #1024000 pp. 10

The genealogies were tagged with specific geographic coordinates. Each location was listed as an individual code and then geotagged with latitude and longitude drawn from Google Maps and the Canadian Geographical Names Database.³⁶ The locations were exported from NVIVO into a CSV spreadsheet. The data was then split into geographic areas and uploaded as individual layers to ArcGIS Online software.³⁷ Digital Maps were then produced using the individual layers and exported as images to use in Chapter 5. This screenshot (fig. 1-4) shows a generated map displaying the Canada layer, showing all the Canadian geocoded locations extracted from the Family Files.

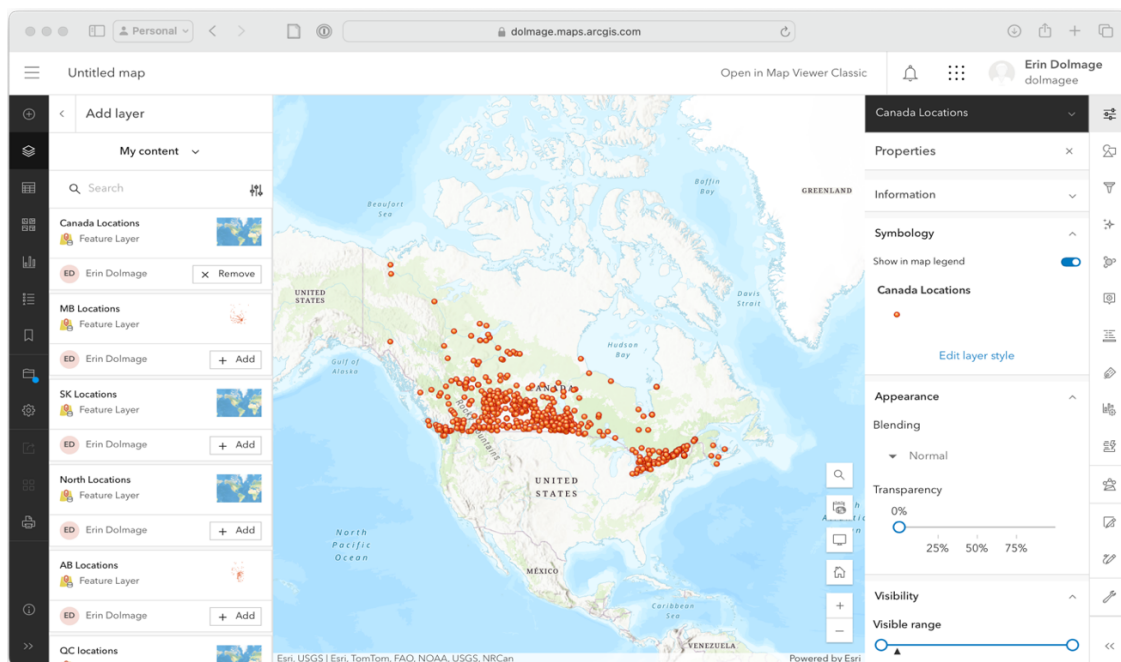


Figure 1-4 Screenshot of the ArcGIS map screen showing Canadian Document Locations

³⁶ “Google Maps,” Google Maps, accessed August 10, 2024, <https://www.google.ca/maps>; Natural Resources Canada: Government of Canada, “Canadian Geographical Names Database,” Government, Canada.ca, February 16, 2021, <https://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/search-place-names/>.

³⁷ “Web GIS Mapping Software | Create Web Maps with ArcGIS Online,” accessed August 10, 2024, <https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-online/overview>.

Historiography

Archives and Genealogy

The Archive

Anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler notes that reading ‘against the grain’ can mean reading histories of resistance and agency ‘from the bottom up.’³⁸ As Liz Gloyn et al. note:

...traditional historical approaches to understanding and valuing archival practices privilege state-driven modes of history-making, formal and institutionalized ways of thinking, and masculine and patriarchal forms of knowledge... the formal record of the national or regional archive, and the apparently rational mode of knowledge it represents, has been viewed as superior to the private archives of “ordinary” people.³⁹

Inspired by this critical analysis of archives, I look to archives as sites of colonial knowledge production but see their collections as places of agency. Denney’s colonial worldview of western Canadian history shaped his collection. Still, the participants in his genealogical project had the agency to shape the family trees. Metis researchers using the archive today have given the Denney collection a whole new level of power in helping Metis families assert their identities and sovereignty.

In *Archive Fever*, critical theorist and philosopher Jacques Derrida discussed the fluid and intentional nature of the archive. He began by deconstructing the etymology of the word archive. The Greek word *Arkhe*, for example, both commands and commences. Derrida writes that *arkhe* embodies “two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, there where things *commence* – physical, historical, or ontological principle—but also the principle

³⁸ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, 2009, 91.

³⁹ Liz Gloyn et al., “The Ties That Bind: Materiality, Identity, and the Life Course in the ‘Things’ Families Keep,” *Journal of Family History* 43, no. 2 (2018): 158.

according to the law, *there* where men and gods *command*, *there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which order is given”⁴⁰ Derrida explained that the Latin word for archive, *archivum*, historically meant a domicile, a “residence of the superior magistrates ... those who commanded.”⁴¹ Derrida’s name play demonstrates the dual nature of the archive that is a residence of power and a place of the commencement and collection of ideas. He noted, “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory.”⁴² This political power does not just reside in the ownership of the physical building but in the very construction of the archival documents and the creation of the official record and official memory. He explains, “The technical structure of *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivation produces as much as it records the event.”⁴³ This is the crux of my examination of Denney’s collections: how have his collaborations with Metis researchers and their explorations and teaching of *wahkootowin* alongside his process of “archivization” created and shaped the collection and its contents? Denney decided what resided in the category of Metis/ Selkirk settler/ fur trade genealogy and built an archive by deciding what to write, what to keep, and what to discard. Through the creation of his archive, he had a hand in producing Metis history.

Stoler teaches us that in questioning colonial archives, we are “no longer studying things, but the making of them.”⁴⁴ She asserts archives are places of knowledge production rather than knowledge retrieval.⁴⁵ She observes that “The pleasures of a well-stocked manuscript room with

⁴⁰ Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, 1.

⁴¹ Derrida, 2.

⁴² Derrida, 4.

⁴³ Derrida, 17.

⁴⁴ Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” 2002, 85.

⁴⁵ Stoler, 85.

its ease of access and aura of quiet detachment are a thing of the past.”⁴⁶ We are now active critics of what was once seen as a neutral space. She writes that creating and maintaining an archive is an act of colonial production: the form of an archive and its methods of classification, and how these change over time and place, signals “the very substance of colonial politics.”⁴⁷ Stoler recommends, as historians Natalie Zemon Davis, Adele Perry, and Carlo Ginzberg have done, to read against the archival grain to uncover the acts of colonial rule and find the stories of the subjugated.⁴⁸ She notes that how archives are constructed is a point of knowledge: “What constitutes that archive, what form it takes and what systems of classification signal at specific times, is the very substance of colonial politics.”⁴⁹ Stoler also notes that historians are now joining archivists and ethnologists in discussions “about documentary evidence, record keeping and archival theory,” describing it as the ‘archival turn.’⁵⁰

Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot reminds us that it is also the absences from records that must be noted, and that census takers are also censors.⁵¹ He writes, “peoples and things are absent in history, that this absence itself is constitutive of the process of historical production.”⁵² Archives are not the result of a passive act of collecting. Like Derrida, Trouillot

⁴⁶ Stoler, 86.

⁴⁷ Stoler, 86.

⁴⁸ Stoler, 88. Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Carlo Ginzberg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Adele Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession and History in Delgamuukwv. British Columbia,” in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 325–50; Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*, Critical Perspectives on Empire (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” 2002, 86.

⁵⁰ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, 2009, 87.

⁵¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 51.

⁵² Trouillot, 49.

sees archiving as an “active act of production that prepares facts for historical intelligibility.”⁵³ You can see this literal act of erasing in Canadian census documents. Metis historian Jesse Thistle’s work on the Timiskaming census in 1881 demonstrates colonial erasure in the census documentation of families in northern Ontario. In the census, the enumerator wrote the ethnicity of the families as “Métis.” However, the men’s Indigenous identity was later crossed out and replaced with European ethnicities.⁵⁴ I touch on this in Chapter 4 when discussing my own Great Grandmother’s presence and erasure in census documents. Likewise, we see that Denney did not just collect data; he also curated it. We can’t know what he threw away, but we can see what he crossed out, what he prioritized, minimized, paid attention to, and what he ignored.

In her introduction to the collection *Archive Stories*, historian Antoinette Burton collected narratives on how archives are created, used and experienced. She observes that archives have dynamic relationships, not just for the past but also for “the fate of regimes, the physical environment, the serendipity of bureaucrats and the care and neglect of archivists.”⁵⁵ Historian Durba Gohsh, in her contribution to the collection, also reminds us that opinions about racism influence how we access documents. In her look at mixed-race families in colonial India, Gohsh encountered an unexpected hurdle from the archivists themselves. In their attempt to uphold a particular narrative that Indian women did not develop relationships with British men, which they saw as “not respectable,” the archivists tried to persuade Ghosh not to pursue her topic and

⁵³ Trouillot, 52.

⁵⁴ Jesse Thistle, “1881 Census of Timiskaming: Examining the Ethnic Corrections and Unearthing an Historic Métis Community,” *Thoughts and the Thistler* (blog), January 9, 2015, http://jessethistle.blogspot.ca/2015/01/1881census-of-timiskaming-examiningthe_9.html.

⁵⁵ Antoinette Burton, “Introduction,” in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 6.

made it difficult for her to find and access documents ⁵⁶ For Ghosh, her struggle stemmed from trying to access “documents that are housed within the archives of colonizing and colonized nations, safeguarded by civil servants whose own relationships to the archive are a central part of the historians’ archival encounter.”⁵⁷ Researching a particularly colonial history, she noted that colonial preconceptions and power relations influenced the histories that she wrote.

Historian Adele Perry has analyzed archives in Canada, specifically the recent land-claim cases in British Columbia. The later-overturned 1997 Delgamuukw decision by Justice Allan McEachern privileged the “documented activities of European men acting on behalf of Nation States,” which was submitted by the crown, over the oral histories of the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en. Perry notes “I cannot pull this kind of history whole from the colonial archive. But I can work with these records to create a history that connects people, places, and lives, and in doing so shifts our view of the imperial world and the local spaces remade by it.”⁵⁸ Perry found that this reliance by the state on historically positioned and developed written archives, like those written by the traders of the Hudson’s Bay Company, early gold prospectors, and the colonial offices, makes archives an “unreliable ally in postcolonial struggles.”⁵⁹

Perry also dives into the sometimes-murky archives of Guyana and British Columbia to reconstruct the lives of British Columbia Governor James Douglas and his wife Amelia Connolly in *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial*

⁵⁶ Durba Ghosh, “National Narratives and the Politics of Miscegenation: Britain and India,” in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 29.

⁵⁷ Ghosh, 28.

⁵⁸ Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 19.

⁵⁹ Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession and History in Delgamuukw. British Columbia,” 326–27.

World. Despite the political power held by the family, the multiracial origins of both Douglas and Connolly make the story “complicated... disjointed... and unique.”⁶⁰ As the absences in the archival records created difficulties in constructing a nation-building narrative, “The questions of where Douglas had been born and who his mother was were especially troubling, carrying with them the capacity to disrupt and destabilize ideals of race and of nation, and Douglas’, and thus British Columbia’s, place therein.”⁶¹ Douglas’ early biographers obfuscated his background, and some summarily ignored the possibility that his mother could have been Creole.⁶² Determining who Douglas’ mother was also complicated by the lack of available evidence about free people of colour in Guyana, as records of enslaved people were more numerous. There is some evidence that his mother was a woman named Martha Ann Telfer, a free woman of colour.⁶³ Perry notes she is working against the grain to stitch this history from the archives, noting that “I can work with these records to create a history that connects people, places, and lives, and in doing so shifts our view of the imperial world and the local spaces remade by it.”⁶⁴ The language in the Caribbean historical record “situated women of colour as “housekeepers” and white men “masters” within an “establishment.” As Perry notes, “These terms emphasized the hierarchy at the core of this form of imperial intimacy, and the significance of labor, and situated these households outside the sentimentalized discourse of domestic space”⁶⁵ and seems eerily familiar to the language around country marriage that fur trade historians Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer S. H. Brown sought to destabilize.

⁶⁰ Perry, 1.

⁶¹ Perry, 13.

⁶² Perry, 13.

⁶³ Perry, 21.

⁶⁴ Perry, 19.

⁶⁵ Perry, 23.

Perry emphasizes the difference between the two colonial worlds' plantation and fur trade economies: "If the intimacies of Douglas' Demerara boyhood were structured by plantation and merchant economies and the all-encompassing practice of slavery, marriage *à la façon du pays* was produced out of the particular economy of the fur trade, and more particularly its mercantilism and dependence on Indigenous economies and trade networks."⁶⁶ It's important to note that although Douglas' parents' relationship and his own relationship with Connolly were both produced partly from empire, what Perry calls "imperial intimacies,"⁶⁷ the impact of slavery, contrasted with Indigenous community's agency in fostering families, must be approached with nuance.

Genealogies

Currently, genealogy is a neglected topic for academic study. However, there have been some significant works to appear in the last decade, such as Francesca Morgan's *A Nation of Descendants*, Julia Creet's *The Genealogical Sublime*, Donald Akenson's *Some Family: The Mormons and How Humanity Keeps Track of Itself*, and François Weil's 2013 *Family Tree's A History of Genealogy in America*, and Eviatar Zerubavel's *Ancestors and Relatives*. Sociologist Anne Marie Kramer writes, "despite the popularity and visibility of genealogical research globally and nationally, the subject is both under-researched and under-theorized."⁶⁸ However, a

⁶⁶ Perry, 28.

⁶⁷ Perry, 29.

⁶⁸ Anne-Marie Kramer, "Kinship, Affinity and Connectedness: Exploring the Role of Genealogy in Personal Lives," *Sociology* 45 (2011): 380. Francesca Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021); Julia Creet, *The Genealogical Sublime, Public History in Historical Perspective* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020); Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, 1st edition (Minneapolis, MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2013); Donald H. Akenson, *Some Family: The Mormons and How Humanity Keeps Track of Itself* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007); François Weil, *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*.

more critical use of genealogy is providing a new structure for the study of family. Kramer sees the wider study of kinship and genealogy to frame how families interacted without the physical or cultural boundaries of individual households. This extended family approach has been increasingly popular in Metis studies, as noted by historian Jean Barman, anthropologist Michael Evans, Erin Dolmage et. al. in their work on Metis families in British Columbia, by Heather Devine's work with the Desjerlais family, Nicole St-Onge's microhistory of Saint-Laurent, and Brenda Macdougall's study of Île à la Crosse.⁶⁹ Denney's records also appear in current Metis Biographies like Madalyn Mandziuk's biography of Victoria Belcourt Calihoo.⁷⁰ Currently no one has examined the larger collections of genealogies that make up archives such as Denney's. Indeed, few academic works in Canada, outside of Metis scholarship have dwelt on the use of genealogy as an analytical tool, let alone trying to understand how the tool was built.

Genealogies are the heart of Charles Denney's collection. The family trees that Denney collected and built were created to follow the families of his first wife, Mildred, and her ancestors from the Selkirk settlement. However, until very recently, genealogy and the publication of family pedigrees were associated primarily with European upper classes or with American founding families. Historian Lawrence Stone notes that it could be a change in eighteenth-century education that encouraged the production of family histories. He writes there has been an:

⁶⁹ Jean Barman et al., "Metis Networks in British Columbia: Examples from the Central Interior," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 403–40; Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850-1914*; Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*.

⁷⁰ Doris Jeanne MacKinnon and Cheryl Troupe, eds., "Remembering and Retelling the Legacies of Métis Women in Alberta: The Life and Memories of Victoria Belcourt Callihoo," in *Métis Matriarchs: Agents of Transition*, by Madalyn Mandziuk (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2024).

... inexhaustible passion for genealogy and ancestor hunting which has gripped large sections of the English upper classes since the sixteenth century. With the huge expansion of the educated middle class in the nineteenth century, and with the growth of university and public libraries, there was at last a large enough market to justify the publication of these rather esoteric and unreadable volumes.⁷¹

Documents, such as *Genealogy: Family of John Webster*, fit into Stone's observation of the middle class's new interest in family history. *Genealogy*, compiled in 1836 by Noah Webster, of *Webster's Dictionary* fame, and written in the first person, gives an overview of the family on their arrival to America, the deeds of several prominent family members and a chart of John Webster's descendants and their achievements.⁷² Pamphlets such as these were both forms of amateur biography and history. By demonstrating a family's attachment to an important settler or historical individual, the genealogist attempted to legitimize or elevate the family's current position. In Webster's case, his ancestor was an early settler in Massachusetts and acted as a local magistrate.

In the last thirty years, interest in amateur genealogy has exploded. Kramer outlines several possible causes outside of the obvious accessibility of information on the internet. She notes that this new interest in the family could be a reaction to depersonalized modernity and our new mobility, a response to living in postcolonial societies, or even a response to a perceived weakening of the traditional family.⁷³ Kramer also notes that in some cases the desire to make connections with others feature prominently for people's reasons in pursuing genealogical research. Denney certainly saw researching his wife's genealogy as a way to stay connected with her family after her illness and death in 1973; this search for connection and power dovetails

⁷¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present* (London: Routledge, 1981), 48.

⁷² Noah Webster, *Genealogy: Family of John Webster* (New Haven, 1836).

⁷³ Anne-Marie Kramer, "Kinship, Affinity and Connectedness: Exploring the Role of Genealogy in Personal Lives," *Sociology* 45 (2011): 380.

with the Metis concept of *wahkootowin*. Denney did not, as a white euro-centric man intentionally seek and explore *wahkootowin*, rather the Metis families and researchers he worked with did, giving him space at their kitchen tables to share their family trees and teach him about their kin. Historian Francesca Morgan sees genealogies as a place of power and self-definition, “Genealogy’s political character and genealogy’s uses for inscribing power relations increased over time.”⁷⁴ Denney and his co-researchers explored family history as a way to revisit and promote the history of the Metis in the prairies. Denney noted in an interview that Morgan points out that events like the television broadcast of Alex Haley’s *Roots* were a turning point in wider communities taking a genealogical interest.⁷⁵ No one yet has investigated the collections of Metis genealogies with a critical eye.

Sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel, in his book *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity and Community*, examines the social concepts and how we ‘envision’ genealogical relatedness.⁷⁶ He notes the book attempts to “uncover the taken-for-granted and therefore mostly ignored cognitive underpinnings of genealogy by examining the way we—experts as well as laypersons—envision ancestry, descent, and other forms of relatedness.”⁷⁷ Zerubavel looks at relatedness, collapsing fields of study to look at human ideas of descent with concepts of kinship, community, critical theory, and biology.⁷⁸ He breaks down what we mean by ancestry and descent by defining family and kinship through parenthood, filiation (children), grandparents,

⁷⁴ Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History*, 2.

⁷⁵ Morgan, 3.

⁷⁶ Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, 11.

⁷⁷ Zerubavel, 11.

⁷⁸ Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*.

cousins and more distant kin. One focus of the book is the cognitive creations that come from researching family lineages as well as the act of agency in constructing a family tree:

Not only are genealogies more than mere reflections of nature, they are also more than mere records of history. Rather than simply documenting who our ancestors were, they are the narratives we construct to actually *make* them our ancestors... By selectively highlighting certain ancestors (and therefore also our ties to other individuals or groups presumably descending from them) while ignoring, downplaying, or even outright suppressing others, for example, we tactically expand and collapse genealogies to accommodate personal as well as collective strategic agendas of inclusion and exclusion.⁷⁹

Rather than simply helping us find out who our relatives are, genealogies are the narratives we construct to make them our relatives. How, why, and who is included in a genealogy is a cognitive choice. In the case of the Metis Nation, creating genealogy was and is not just a cognitive function, but an act of *wahkootowin*, an act of creating relatedness with kinship and family transmitted through oral teachings. Though Denney was unlikely to have been explicitly taught *wahkootowin*, he did see genealogy as a way to know oneself. Denney described this in an interview in 1983, noting, “‘Did you ever notice that when a plant loses its roots, it dies?’ He asks ‘The same is more or less true of people. A person that doesn’t know the forces that brought him to his present state doesn’t understand the significance of his present state.’”⁸⁰ The cognitive creation of a family tree to Denney was a process of becoming a whole person, an idea akin to *wahkootowin*.

The book *Ancestors and Relatives* also examines how we cognitively construct family trees through omission and inclusion. This theoretical framework is essential for understanding the construction and curation of Denney’s collections. Zerubavel identifies eight approaches:

⁷⁹ Zerubavel, 77.

⁸⁰ “The Family Secret Keeper,” *Heritage Magazine*, 1983, January/ February edition.

stretching, cutting and pasting, clipping, braiding, lumping, marginalizing, splitting, and pruning. Stretching includes extending genealogy as long as possible, as a long lineage can be a claim to legitimacy. Zerubavel uses the examples of an ancestral chief's claims to tribal authority or the claims of various royal families. The farther back the ancestral claims, the more valuable they are seen.⁸¹ Cutting and pasting happens to adjust for inconvenient inconsistencies that may threaten a kind of 'genealogical purity.' The pasting refers to a smoothing or padding of the gaps created by the removal of unwanted or inconvenient family members.⁸² Clipping is a deliberate shortening of a pedigree to emphasize recent origins and cutting off research prior to a specific period. It can also mean cutting off the most obvious connection to an ancestor, which is a surname. This often happened with new immigrants anglicizing surnames to shed unwanted ethnic association.⁸³ My Dutch great-grandfather did this when he emigrated to Canada, anglicizing 'Dahmen' to 'Donald' in 1918 to avoid any German associations after the First World War.⁸⁴ Braiding involves acknowledging the multiple strands of descent and multiple ethno-racial communities "as a way of narrating origins, it thus conveys at the same time a sense of both unity and diversity"⁸⁵ This seems particularly relevant to Metis genealogies, and Denney's trees as they intrinsically involve multiple lines and styles of lineage, including French Canadian, Scottish and Indigenous nations. Lumping involves associating lineages to larger groups, clans, and moieties while marginalizing separates members of a lineage as true and lesser. This certainly happens in families that give primacy to ancestors who are white over Indigenous or African descent or in families that include branches that stem from known

⁸¹ Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, 78.

⁸² Zerubavel, 80.

⁸³ Zerubavel, 81.

⁸⁴ Statistics Canada, "Census of Canada," Census (Ottawa, ON, 1931).

⁸⁵ Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, 83.

infidelity.⁸⁶ An example is the fur trade marriages *à la façon du pays*,⁸⁷ discussed later in the dissertation, where the mixed families that resulted from traditional Indigenous marriages were historicized as less legitimate than those that came from white European marriages.⁸⁸ Many of those were part of the Metis ethnogenesis. Pruning involves the removal of unwanted familial branches, primarily by ‘whitening’ one’s pedigrees, which includes removing ethnically diverse branches. This kind of selective editing embroiled Denney in several contentious debates, particularly from family members who were determined to remove any Indigenous ancestry in their trees and from a fellow genealogist who misrepresented her Indigenous family as white. It can also be seen when removing a white ancestor from an African American family tree. Zerubavel notes, “it still remains the ultimate expression of Americans’ obsession with racial purity, as it reflects their deep anxiety about racially ambiguous persons, whose very existence threatens the notion that one is either black or white.”⁸⁹ In the US, Blackness relied on the one-drop rule, which means that if you have a single Black ancestor, you are considered Black. Multi-racial people like Barack Obama and, more recently, Megan Markle and Kamala Harris have complicated popular perceptions of Blackness.⁹⁰

Zerubavel ends his book by examining how contemporary changes complicate our ideas around descendancy and genealogy. He notes changes to family structure, particularly smaller families, fewer siblings, and the changes brought about by divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies as affecting ideas around kinship. Additionally, reproductive technologies, like surrogacy, create

⁸⁶ Zerubavel, 85, 95.

⁸⁷ ‘After the custom of the Country’ were fur trade marriages that followed an Indigenous ritual as European/Christian marriage rites were difficult or inconvenient for traders and their families to participate in.

⁸⁸ See: Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*.

⁸⁹ Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, 101.

⁹⁰ Zerubavel, 61.

new distinctions between gestational and genetic mothers. This is important, for example, in a Jewish religious context where an ethnic or religious identity is conferred matrilineally.⁹¹ He notes, “Genealogy, in short, is first and foremost a way of thinking. Indeed, thinking genealogically is one of the distinctive characteristics of human cognition. As the very objects of our genealogical imagination, ancestors and relatives therefore deserve a prominent place among the foundational pillars of the human condition.”⁹² When revisiting genealogies, like Denney’s, we need to see the patterns and assumptions embedded within them.

Religious historian Donald Akenson, in his monograph *Some Family: The Mormons and How Humanity Keeps Track of Itself*, looks at genealogy from a couple of perspectives while writing with a curious and humorous tone. He carefully traces the history of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) and the theological developments brought by John Smith’s ‘prophetic’ doctrines. He charts the development of the concepts of baptism-after-death, ‘endowment,’ and the ritual of familial ‘sealing,’ and how these translated into a religious requirement for genealogy to ensure the celestial family, indeed the larger the number, the better, after death.⁹³ LDS President Willard Woodruff noted in the 1890s, “We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents and run this chain through as far as you can get it ... This is the will of the Lord to his people ...”⁹⁴ Genealogy, for the LDS Church, is a religious requirement. Akenson also develops a nuanced conceptualization of how to look at genealogy through its narrative structure and its grammar.

⁹¹ Zerubavel, 116.

⁹² Zerubavel, 130.

⁹³ Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007.

⁹⁴ Akenson, 64.

Looking at genealogy as a narrative structure, Akenson uses gravestones as his beginning point of the “kernel narrative” of a family. The kernel is as follows: a surviving child; their parents, usually but not exclusively highlighted by the male line; the dates of birth and death of the parents; and potential information about all their surviving children.⁹⁵ This analysis works well with the gravestone of Mildred Denney, featured in Chapter 2, highlighting her parents, her maternal grandparents and their families, noting specifically the lineage of “our Original Red River Selkirk Settlers”: Catherine Pritchard, John Matheson and Angus Fraser.⁹⁶ Akenson then extends the metaphor of these kernels as atoms, arguing, “The basic atom, the genealogical kernel narrative, is not terribly complicated. Where the complexity arises, ... is when these atoms are formed into molecules. That is an interesting business indeed.”⁹⁷ Akenson further makes the assertion that family narratives are one of the few cultural universals that humans create.

Grammar structures are the next step Akenson takes to create a conceptual framework in which to look at the study of genealogy: “If genealogy-making is as close to being a cultural universal as anything can be, and if a genealogical lineage is a complicated multi-narrator product, then each society needs a grammar that makes the genealogy comprehensible to each succeeding generation.”⁹⁸ He offers several terms. The first is a *couple*, a man and a woman, who produce a child. Next, *line* and *lineage* describe an ancestral connection rather than the more

⁹⁵ Akenson, 79–81.

⁹⁶ Linda, Find a Grave Contributor ID #47353767., Grave of Mildred Sherlock Denney, August 29, 2012, Digital Photo, August 29, 2012, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/96198312/mildred-kate-denney>.

⁹⁷ Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007, 83.

⁹⁸ Akenson, 87.

problematic term 'pedigree.' Third, *patrilineal* and *matrilineal* denote specific gendered lines. rather than the terms 'matriarch' and 'patriarch,' which are positions of leadership rather than lineage. Lastly, he uses the term *ascent* rather than descend, as most lines are charted from the present individual back rather than the ancestor forward.⁹⁹

Akenson makes a clear connection to the national implication of genealogy. He writes:

the most powerful genealogical narratives form seminal patterns that are adapted not only by the framers of other genealogical narratives but by those artists who are engaged in the creation of related cultural goods: legends and, especially, origin-myths... A generative set of genealogical concepts helps to explain to any group of people who they are and why they are a distinct collectivity. Often it traces the group's genealogy back to a tribal god from whom they all are said to descend.¹⁰⁰

Genealogy denotes nationhood. This dovetails clearly with the Indigenous worldviews of clan and family discussed by Brenda Macdougall and others when talking about the Cree/ Metis understanding of *wahkootowin*,¹⁰¹ and the structures set up by the Métis National Council and the Powley decision that require lineage and ascent to a 'Historic Métis Community' to obtain Metis citizenship.

One of the more recent publications is by the English professor and filmmaker Julia Creet. The book, a follow-up to her 2017 film *Data Mining the Deceased: Ancestry and the Business of Family*, talks about the industry of family history. She references her journey as catching 'Archive Fever,' writing "all the things that genealogists and family historians say motivate them: a family secret, the hunt, the feeling that the past will explain something about who we are in the present, and the need to fill in the gaps in family narratives, repair traumas,

⁹⁹ Akenson, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Akenson, 125.

¹⁰¹ Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

search for relatives, living and dead, and, ultimately, find or tell one's origins."¹⁰² Denney recounts a similar desire, though for him, it was his wife's community, "Every time I found a new family, I went looking for them all. You'd talk to one and he'd say you better go and see so and so and off you'd go."¹⁰³ It was the vastness of the hunt that he found so fulfilling.

Crete's book examines at the oldest, the most popular, and the most comprehensive spaces that genealogists mine, such as the records kept by LDS.¹⁰⁴ The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints (LDS), more popularly known as Mormons, encourage a religious zeal to create and innovate their collection of family history. Crete looks less at the religious implications and more at the activity and work the LDS invested in creating the vast stores of genealogical data, best encapsulated, literally and figuratively, in the Granite Mountain Records Vault, a literal mountainside vault that stores most of the records of early modern western civilization.¹⁰⁵ She studies the adaptation of technology, including the Church's investment in and early adaptation of microfilm. In the 1930s the LDS began to reach out through their missionaries to other countries, hoping to add to their collections before a potential second European war began. They reached out to European countries to help film their records, including the German Nazi government, which was already in the business of government-run genealogy. Crete notes that "Nazi and Mormon enthusiasm for genealogy, albeit for different reasons, made them natural collaborators."¹⁰⁶ In 1944, with the warring countries potentially

¹⁰² Crete, *The Genealogical Sublime*, 1.

¹⁰³ Don Thomas, "Tracing the Roots of Western Canada's Metis; His Wife's Curiosity and His Passion for History Launched Charles Denney on an Exhaustive Quest," *Edmonton Journal*, December 29, 1993.

¹⁰⁴ One of the chapters discusses ancient genealogy in China, where the longest recorded tree in antiquity belongs to the philosopher Confucius listing eighty-three generations through his paternal line. She notes this is the beginning of ancestor worship in China with the emergence of Taoism. She notes that Confucius taught that *ren*, "an outward expression of inward ideals, virtue expressed as altruism, particularly toward one's family— parents, children, and siblings" Crete, *The Genealogical Sublime*, 26.

¹⁰⁵ Crete, 63, 71.

¹⁰⁶ Crete, 54.

destroying records, the LDS increased their collecting efforts and, in anticipation of a wealth of new materials, decided to incorporate the Utah Genealogical Society under the auspices of the Church and transform it into a new organization: the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁰⁷ However, the LDS had been working with the Nazis before the Second World War.

One of the instances when the state instituted a Department of Genealogy was in Germany during the Third Reich, in which the LDS provided support as genealogists.¹⁰⁸ LDS Historian David Conley Nelson notes that Mormons and Nazis were both “enthusiastic genealogists,” but for markedly different reasons.¹⁰⁹ Historically, Jewish citizens could convert to Christianity to be recognized as ethnically German and then take up positions in the government. However, by 1933, the Nazi party created a strict racial definition of Germanness, which was converted into a state policy.¹¹⁰ To implement their racist policies, the Third Reich instituted a loose organization, which Jewish historian Deborah Hertz calls the “Genealogy Bureaucracy.” She identifies these as a network of party, religious (Jewish and Christian), academic, and government projects that compiled and aided individuals in tracing family histories.¹¹¹ They did so by collecting primary sources and extensive card files on Jews and other ‘non-Aryans.’ A set of complex procedures was established to classify millions of German citizens by racial categories. Nelson notes that:

When the Mormons brought their genealogical research capabilities to the mission field and taught those techniques to the Germans they converted, they intended to enable

¹⁰⁷ Creet, 55.

¹⁰⁸ For an extensive study of the LDS and its’ work in Nazi Germany see: David Conley Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika: Mormons in Nazi Germany* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁹ Nelson, 106.

¹¹⁰ Deborah Hertz, “The Genealogy Bureaucracy in the Third Reich,” *Jewish History* 11, no. 2 Fall (1997): 53.

¹¹¹ Hertz, “The Genealogy Bureaucracy in the Third Reich,” 53-54.

deceased co-religionists to go to heaven as a reward for a lifetime of faithful, righteous living. Instead, Latter-day Saints stumbled into a life-or-death situation where their skills in the archives could be used to identify "racially inferior" members or to condemn a German congregant of bizarre new kinds of crime: racial betrayal or racial dishonor, *Rassenverrat* or *Rassenschande*.¹¹²

To join elite paramilitary forces such as the *Schutzstaffel* (SS), a family tree had to be provided that included information back to 1750. To qualify as 'White,' most individuals only had to provide "small documentation," information on their parents and grandparents. However, even this required a ream of documents, including seven birth records: one for each grandparent, parent and applicant.¹¹³ The records were collected in an *Ahnenpass*, which was a small passport-like booklet that was compiled by the citizenry and verified with a stamp from the Civil Records office. The state required all non-Jewish citizens to have an *Ahnenpass* to prove that an individual's ancestry was not Jewish, which led to citizens looking to genealogists, including LDS Church missionaries, for help.¹¹⁴ Within the government, the *Reichssippenamt* (RSF or State Office for Kinship Research) became the final arbiter of one's racial designation. The RSF additionally instructed church authorities on how to properly research and document ancestry. They organized the centralized collection of parish and synagogue registers, published a journal and supervised the work of paid genealogy researchers, some of whom were members of the LDS.¹¹⁵

In addition to creating genealogies for German citizens, the LDS took on the task of recording the masses of documents they secured during the Second World War. The masses of personal and military documents led to the LDS embracing technology as a part of their

¹¹² Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 107.

¹¹³ Hertz, "The Genealogy Bureaucracy in the Third Reich," 57.

¹¹⁴ Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 110–11.

¹¹⁵ Hertz, "The Genealogy Bureaucracy in the Third Reich," 60.

genealogical practice. The LDS in Utah invested in increasing their microfilming, so much so that “The society was the second-largest user of Kodak products and had pioneered storage, indexing, and classification systems.”¹¹⁶ Technological advancements continued as computers entered the scene and the American LDS moved their filmed and written indexes onto new digital formats, which helped deal with the massive duplication of records, and introduced the IGI (the International Genealogical Index), a list of all individuals included in the church’s Temple ordinances recorded in a single digital database. Starting as a CD ROM and then temporarily made available to the public on the internet,¹¹⁷ this list is incredibly problematic as it included religiously sealed individuals who were not LDS, and in many cases, not even Christian. This came to light with the work of an excommunicated LDS member Helen Radkey, who began publicizing names of proxy ordinances, including “Joan of Arc, Charlie Chaplin, Hitler, Anne Frank, and Marilyn Monroe.”¹¹⁸ The bad publicity led to the IGI going offline, accessible only to members of the LDS. The church’s online genealogy website, which grew out of the LDS’s genealogy collections and Family History Centres, was kept separate from the IGI and was initially named FamilyTree. It was later rebranded as ‘FamilySearch.’ When it went online in 1999, the site was so popular it immediately crashed.¹¹⁹ FamilySearch was a list of family trees that allowed users to upload and edit their own genealogies. Now it contains multiple databases owned by the LDS and allows users to contribute their family trees. FamilySearch was and continues to be free with a login. Its direct competitor, the subscription site Ancestry.com, also grew out of the LDS church, started by two LDS members, Dan Taggart

¹¹⁶ Creet, *The Genealogical Sublime*, 55.

¹¹⁷ Creet, 61.

¹¹⁸ Creet, 64.

¹¹⁹ Creet, 64.

and Paul B. Allen, and initially containing publicly available vital statistic databases.¹²⁰ Ancestry, which also started as a CD ROM, has grown exponentially, absorbing other sites like the RootsWeb message boards and Ancestry World Tree and sponsoring shows like *Who Do You Think You Are* to become the dominant genealogy database company.¹²¹ Like FamilySearch, the LDS was foundational to the business. Taggart noted, “It is hard to imagine, having started all of this without having some relationship with the LDS Church.”¹²²

François Weil’s 2013 book *Family Tree: A History of Genealogy in America* concentrates on the history of white gentility. Weil notes that early nineteenth-century American genealogists “reveal how Americans relied on genealogy to define and reinforce their individual and collective identities, as well as to situate themselves and their families in time by inclusion and by exclusion of others.”¹²³ He notes, like Francesca Morgan, that through their writing, family trees, notes, and engravings in the family bible, you can see an echo of how class, ethnic, gender, and above all, racial concerns framed their genealogical pursuits. With this, one can also gauge opinions and biases regarding heredity, class and race. This also led to democratization, for some, of genealogy, moving it from the realm of the aristocratic to the middle class, which required a new approach, one that was seen to be grounded in both democracy and science.¹²⁴

This scientific approach upholds whiteness as the ideal. He notes that “racial purity, nativism, and nationalism successfully dominated the quest for pedigree ... the language of race,

¹²⁰ Creet, 71.

¹²¹ Creet, 71–78.

¹²² Creet, 71.

¹²³ Weil, *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America*, 3.

¹²⁴ Weil, 4.

heredity, and later eugenics invaded the genealogical sphere, helping many white Americans describe themselves self-consciously as Anglo-Saxons and claim racial and social superiority over others.”¹²⁵ Racial purity emerged with ideas about Charles Darwin and evolution’s application to humanity. Weil notes, “Within a few years heredity became an obsession, as well as a new rationale for genealogy. Its relation to biology and natural science now stood above its obvious connection with history.”¹²⁶ The 19th-century search for progress had not been without its detractors. Fears of over-civilization materialized in new illnesses such as neurasthenia and in the scientific fear that humans were devolving as a species. Degeneration, according to historian Daniel Pick, was the effect of inferior culture, race and class on 19th-century Europeans and the fear that undue influences were causing Europeans to devolve, both as individuals and as a society.¹²⁷ Genealogy could be one more method to demonstrate the power of racial lines, eugenics and social Darwinism.¹²⁸ Societies that emerged from participation in formative wars, like the Daughters of the American Revolution or the British United Empire Loyalists, used genealogy and kinship to connect themselves to formative events and demonstrate an inherited nationalism.

In *A Nation of Descendants*, Francesca Morgan looks at the broader popularity and deployment of genealogical study and presents it as uniquely American. She notes, “Americans have used genealogy findings to enforce any number of social boundaries, particularly those

¹²⁵ Weil, 6.

¹²⁶ Weil, 116. For further work debunking the nineteenth science of race see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, Rev. and expanded, with a new introduction. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*.

¹²⁷ Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c. 1848-1918* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989).

¹²⁸ Weil, *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America*, 113–14.

interlocking hierarchies of race, class, and religion that placed white Protestants on top”¹²⁹ She describes this as “hereditarian,” the idea that one inherits implicit greatness from one’s ancestors, and explores this in the case of Zerviah Gould Mitchell who pivoted her descendancy from the famous Indigenous leader Massasoit and his second son Metacomet, who was also known as of “King Philip,” into a published volume of family history. She collected paying subscribers and assigned herself an “Indian princess” ancestral claim.¹³⁰ This echoes Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson’s claims as Indigenous “royalty” and her use of pedigree to enter Canada’s literary and performing elite.¹³¹ Morgan’s 2021 study doesn’t look at the veracity of the genealogies discussed; rather, she focuses on the “political ramifications of genealogy practices for descendants, and for the genealogists they hired.”¹³² She notes that the first wider American interest in genealogy in the 1800s accompanied the birth of scientific racism, which was the period François Weil focuses on. The second boom, in the 1970s, occurred with a very different population, African Americans, and followed the broadcast of Alex Haley’s *Roots*, a multi-generational story of a Black family tracing back their lineage through American enslavement and the forced relocation of their ancestors from Africa. A third boom is ongoing, with the advent of online genealogical databases like the International Genealogical Index, Family Search and Ancestry, further spurred on by genetic testing and sites like 23andMe.¹³³ Online genealogical databases are easy to access, but they have a fee. Ancestry.ca’s subscription cost at the time of writing is \$14.99 CAD for Canadian records and \$29.99 CAD a month for full access

¹²⁹ Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History*, 2.

¹³⁰ Morgan, 71.

¹³¹ See: Betty Keller, *Pauline Johnson: First Aboriginal Voice of Canada*, Canadian Electronic Library (Montréal, Que: XYZ Pub., 1999); Carole Gerson, “Rereading Pauline Johnson,” *Journal of Canadian Studies; Toronto* 46, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 45-61, 332. For a deeper look at genetic genealogy see Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA*, 2013; Catherine Nash, “Genetic Kinship,” *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 1–33.

¹³² Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History*, 2.

¹³³ Morgan, 3.

to the “All Records on Ancestry®” level, which gives the subscriber “Access to more than 30 billion records from more than 80 countries including military & church records, passage lists & more.”¹³⁴ Morgan notes there is a tension between the commodification of family tree information and the tradition, primarily encouraged by the LDS church, to freely share information, something I and many historians have taken advantage of in the past.¹³⁵

Morgan echoes Akenson’s observation that historiography of genealogy as a historical practice is thin, as most working historians have seen genealogy as, at best, a hobby and, at worst, an ahistorical and inaccurate practice.¹³⁶ She notes that in the 1970s, a few historical monographs appeared to incorporate genealogy in their work. Still, it’s the more recent work of microhistorians and public historians who “have fostered deep research, using many different types of sources, on surrounding contexts. Such topics deepened dependence on source material that genealogists have also used and, sometimes, generated.”¹³⁷ An example of this new research was co-authored by historian Jean Barman, cultural anthropologist Mike Evans, and three of Evans’s graduate students, including me. The chapter “Metis Networks in the Central Interior”

¹³⁴ Ancestry.ca, “Become a Member: Join Ancestry® Today,” Ancestry.ca, June 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.ca/offers/subscribe>.

¹³⁵ Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History*, 3–4.

¹³⁶ Morgan, 21.

¹³⁷ Morgan, 7. A category I include myself. See Erin Dolmage, “The Exceptional-Typical History of a Métis Elder in Fort St. John” (Kelowna BC, University of British Columbia, 2010), <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0071079>.

For their seminal work on Microhistory see: Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*; Le Roy Emmanuel Laudrie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294-1324* (London: Scholar Press, 1978); Ginzberg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*.

See also: Carlo Ginzberg, John Tedeschi, and Anne Tedeschi, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It,” *Critical Inquiry* 1 (1993): 10–35; Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 1 (2001): 129–44; James Brooks, Christopher DeCourse, and John Walton, *Small World* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2008); István Szijártó, “Four Arguments for Microhistory,” *Rethinking History* 6, no. 2 (2002): 209–15; Richard Brown, “Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 1 (2003): 1–20; Matti Peltonen, “Clues, Margins and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research,” *History and Theory* 40 (2001): 347–59.

was predicated on first building a family tree for the Boucher family using vital statistics records from the British Columbia Provincial Archives and then placing that family geographically, historically and genealogically into a wider Metis context.¹³⁸ Genealogy was the foundation of that research and was a catalyst for this research project.

Morgan also looks at a wide group of genealogists and their practices, including white Christian genealogists who perpetuated “inherited, documented, and racial readings of Americanism.”¹³⁹ At the same time, she looks to other groups, including African American, Indigenous, Jewish, and Mormon genealogists, who would have been seen as outsiders to white, Protestant communities and were working and researching before the civil rights era of the 1960s. She writes:

While working within their own groups and separately from each other, Native Americans, African Americans, and American Jews shared legacies of genocide: European invasions of the Americas followed by numerous epidemics and wars, mass tracking of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic and within the United States, and the Holocaust in Europe. Attempted eradications of populations, channeled through memories that descendants’ communities carefully maintained, added poignancy to the genealogist’s work of listing, naming, and recounting reproduction.¹⁴⁰

These outsider communities were not, as a Jim Crow politician posited, people for whom monuments were built; for these genealogists, charting their communities’ histories was a challenge to the racism of the time.¹⁴¹ Communities directly refuted erasure through the tracing and building of their family histories. For Denney, this process could be seen in the people of the

¹³⁸ Barman et al., “Metis Networks in British Columbia: Examples from the Central Interior.”

¹³⁹ Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History*, 19.

¹⁴⁰ Morgan, 71.

¹⁴¹ Morgan, 85.

West, Indigenous and settler, who felt that they, too, were outsiders in the Canadian story. To counter the process, he built a monument for his wife.

Alberta Politics

The politics that emerged from Alberta play an important role in Charles Denney's writings. Denney was an unabashed populist who participated in several right-wing political movements in Alberta, including the Social Credit Party and the Reform Party. He was deeply influenced by the politics of his province, and they characterized much of his writing. As I discuss later in the chapter, Denney saw the West as a separate political and historical space to which he hoped to contribute and a space with which he directly identified.

The Prairies are a distinct Canadian space, both different from the American Plains and British Columbia. The Canadian Prairies have a markedly Canadian identity which doesn't neatly define itself along provincial boundaries and arguably extends into northern Ontario and the Peace River Valley of northern British Columbia.¹⁴² As historians Heather Devine and George Colpitts note, "Whatever is relationally fixed on one map and purported to be a "state of being" in one coordinate system becomes uprooted when other references are added, certainly when Indigenous experiential mapping complicates the picture. Western Canadian history and literature, then, shifts restlessly as a constant."¹⁴³ Historian Gerald Friesen notes that the prairies are three distinct landscapes: forest, plain and parkland, explaining that "These three landscapes

¹⁴² Erin Dolmage, "The Exceptional-Typical History of a Métis Elder in Fort St. John" (University of British Columbia, 2010), 11, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0071079>.

¹⁴³ Heather Devine and George Colpitts, "Introduction," in *Finding Directions West: Readings That Locate and Dislocate Western Canada's Past*, ed. George Colpitts and Heather Devine, vol. 9, West Series (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2017), 2.

have been bound by economy and history into a single region for most of the past three centuries” bound particularly by a shared economy and history.¹⁴⁴ For the purposes of this dissertation, and due to the differences in economics, geography and Indigenous relations, I do not include British Columbia, west of the Rockies, in this analysis.¹⁴⁵

Western alienation has deep historical roots. Robert J. Lawson explains,

The Riel rebellion of 1870 over control of natural resources in Manitoba, the Progressives' resistance to federal tariffs and freight rates in the 1920s, Social Credit's opposition to a financial system imposed by eastern banks that crippled farmers during the depression, the enforcement of official bilingualism and other parts of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the 1960s, and the imposition of the National Energy Program (NEP) by Prime Minister Trudeau and the federal Liberal government in the 1970s provide but a few of the allegedly potent symbols of the mistreatment of the West as a region by the federal government and elites in "central Canada"¹⁴⁶

These political, economic and cultural symbols are part of a complicated construction of the root of the area's regionalism. Friesen notes that in the post-contact period, the region had several movements: a fur trade which relied on Indigenous participation and labour (1640-1840), a new market economy accompanied by industrial capitalism (1840s-1890s), an agricultural economy (1890s-1940s), and the post-war era. He notes, “From the 1940s to the 1980s, regional distinctiveness was simultaneously destroyed and affirmed; paradoxically, by becoming a neighbourhood in a multinational economy and culture.”¹⁴⁷ The West developed separately with a

¹⁴⁴ Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, Student ed., Books Collection. (Toronto, Ont: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 4.

¹⁴⁵ See: Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd edition., Books Collection. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender Race, and the Making of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Dolmage, “The Exceptional-Typical History of a Métis Elder in Fort St. John”; Arthur J. Ray, “Treaty 8: A British Columbian Anomaly,” *BC Studies* 123 (1999): 5–58; John S. Lutz, *Makúk a New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁶ Robert J. Lawson, “Understanding Alienation in Western Canada: Is ‘Western Alienation’ the Problem? Is Senate Reform the Cure?,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 39, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 4.

¹⁴⁷ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 5.

distinctly different population, economic, and political structure from the metropole of central Canada and has historically seen itself as a recipient of policies that benefitted the metropole to the detriment of the West.

Although the Canadian Prairies and the American Plains, respectively, are ecologically and topographically similar and separated by the 49th parallel, the border has created what Elizabeth Jameson calls “two Wests with different meanings for each nation.”¹⁴⁸ Harold Innis’s “Staples Thesis,” which is a major interpretive framework of Canadian history, and Fredrick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis,” which is widely used to explain the expansion of the United States, became creation stories of the development of the central Plains areas of North America. Both Innis’s *The Fur Trade in Canada* and Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” which lay out their respective theses, attempt to establish a national narrative, with the independent American drive to create a new West compared to the prairie connections to the metropole. Innis’ work was predicated on the idea that Canada developed “because of its geography, not in spite of it,” and that it was the export of specific unprocessed goods like beaver, timber, gold, and fish that pushed economic and political development in what is now Canada.¹⁴⁹ Staples, not people, populated the west for Innis. Conversely, Turner noted that “Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth Jameson, “Two Wests, One-and-a-Half Paradigms, and, Perhaps, Beyond,” in *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, ed. Alvin Finkel, Sarah Carter, and Peter Fortna, The West Unbound : Social and Cultural Studies (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 181.

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Ray, “Introduction,” in *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, by Harold A. Innis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.”¹⁵⁰ The frontier shaped what Americans became. Turner’s frontiersmen become archetypes and, unlike Innis, erase Indigenous participation.¹⁵¹ However, this ‘difference’ may be more hagiography than reality, particularly when refocusing on Indigenous perspectives. Michel Hogue’s *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* looks at the Metis’s cross-border settlement, trade, and presence by centring his focus on the borderlands and the border as a mutable entity unto itself. Hogue describes how the border is a tool or “medicine” rather than an imposition for the borderland peoples.¹⁵² These opportunities created by the border aided in establishing new commercial opportunities in the new transnational market and, conversely, a method to avoid legal entanglements. The border later loses its usefulness when it becomes used as a tool for othering the Metis and for marking the mixed-race families as foreign, both by the American officials when Metis established and maintained their communities south of the border and by the Canadian Scrip commissions when Metis applied for scrip. Scrip was a document, warrant, or certificate that entitled the holder to a certain allotment of crown lands in what is now Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. These allowed the Department of the Interior to grant land without specifying the actual piece of land involved while at the same time erasing Metis title to land.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *Nationalism & Populism (320 BCE-2017 CE)*, ed. David Simonelli, Defining Documents in World History (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2017), 216–20.

¹⁵¹ Jameson, “Two Wests, One-and-a-Half Paradigms, and, Perhaps, Beyond,” 182–83.

¹⁵² Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 4.

¹⁵³ Hogue, 182. Scrip was a type of single payment or land allocation run by the Canadian Government to extinguish Metis Indigenous title. It was set up after the Resistance in 1869. It was a long process that involved significant paperwork and several steps. The two Scrip commissions, the Half-Breed Scrip Commissions and the Northwest Scrip Commissions were offered alongside the Numbered Treaty commissions in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (1870-19and were not offered in British Columbia and Ontario. There was also an ‘Original White Settler’ Scrip given in Manitoba for White Families to establish title. See Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996); Ken Hatt, “The Northwest Scrip Commissions as Federal Policy-- Some Initial

In *Place and Replace*, in the article “Place Politics and Study Western Canadian and Introduction,” historians Adele Perry, Leah Morton, and Esysllt Jones outline the genesis behind the edited collection. The 2010 conference “Place and Replace: A Joint Meeting of the St. John’s College Prairies Conference and Western Canadian Studies” questioned the concept of Western Canada as a geographic locale, a historical space and a cultural-political entity.¹⁵⁴ The essays formed around four metaphorical and physical spaces: farms, methods of transportation, cultural production and natural spaces and municipalities.¹⁵⁵ In her discussion of identity, Professor of Urban Design Beverly A. Sandalak shows that the Prairie town was a particular type of prairie landscape, noting, “Cultural landscapes refer to geographic areas modified by human activity or given special meaning by a group of people resulting in an area that is distinctive or definable in the form it presents or the values it reflects.”¹⁵⁶ Both early historians of western Canada, Harold Innis and George F. Stanley, see the West, geographically, economically and by virtue of the implicit Indigeneity, as a ‘Cultural Landscape.’¹⁵⁷

In a cultural sphere, Prairie authors have been remarkably successful at arguing for a distinctive cultural vision. Poet and literature professor Alison Calder notes, “It was only in the 1970s and early 1980s that ‘prairie literature’ became recognized as a thing, with enough critical

Findings,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3, no. 1 (1983): 117–29; Jeffery S. Murray, “A Guide to the Records of the Metis Scrip Commissions in the National Archives of Canada,” 1994, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/metis-scrip/005005-3110-e.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Adele Perry, Leah Morton, and Esysllt W. Jones, “Place, Politics, and Studying Western Canada: An Introduction,” in *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada*, ed. Adele Perry, Esysllt W. Jones, and Leah Morton (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 1.

¹⁵⁵ Adele Perry, Esysllt W. Jones, and Leah Morton, *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada*, ed. Adele Perry, Esysllt W. Jones, and Leah Morton (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁵⁶ Beverly A. Sandalack, “Prairie Towns: Process and Form,” in *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada*, ed. Adele Perry, Esysllt W. Jones, and Leah Morton (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 271–99.

¹⁵⁷ Perry, Jones, and Morton, *Place and Replace*, 4.

mass to carry anthologies, courses, publishing houses, and writing careers.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the idea of vision, that the prairie, due to its unobstructed view, intimately changes a person’s perspective, is integral. Writer Edna Alford, in her short story “Head,” writes,

For it always seemed to me that if you could see one kind of thing clear and from far off – real things, natural things, trees and stars and such—then you could probably see the other kinds of things too, things you couldn’t touch, ideas and feelings and who knows what, clear and from a long way off, I thought about it for years after I left the prairie, right up to now in fact. And I wasn’t the only one who had that notion. Most of us did.”¹⁵⁹

For Alford, it is the specific geography that informs her ability to see as a writer; in cities, there is no distance vision; on the Prairie, one sees differently. This unique perspective translates not just for literature by politics and protest.

One facet of the West is its distinct, disruptive, and disparate politics. A long line of diverse regional protest parties emerged from the prairies, including farmers’ parties, the Progressive Party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the Social Credit Party, Canada West, the federal New Democratic Party (NDP) Party and the Reform Party. Friesen notes the early “leaders of the prairie west became even more conscious of the region’s identity and increasingly aware of its mission to the nation... residents of the west were made to feel that they resided in a colony controlled by an imperial power.”¹⁶⁰ Historic political diversity is found

¹⁵⁸ Alison Calder, “The Importance of Place or, Why We’re Not Post-Prairie,” in *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada*, ed. Adele Perry, Esyllt W. Jones, and Leah Morton (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 169. There are hundreds of prairie writers W.O. Mitchell, Maria Campbell, Farley Mowat, Robert Kroetsch, Margaret Lawrence, Carole Shields just scratch the surface of the rich literature

¹⁵⁹ Edna Alford, “Head,” in *The Garden of Eloise Loon* (Lantzville, BC: Oolichan Books, 1986), 9.

¹⁶⁰ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 343.

on the prairies despite the similarity in landscape, population and economic base.¹⁶¹ As Jared J.

Wesley notes:

...closer examination of their provincial party systems reveals that prairie Canadians live in three distinct political terrains... each province's party system has its own unique 'tilt' Clear relationships exist between the dominance of conservatism and right-wing parties like Social Credit and the Progressive Conservatives in Alberta, and socialism and the success of the left-wing CCF-NDP in Saskatchewan. The balance between the forces of left and right in Manitoba help to set it apart from its prairie neighbours in this respect.¹⁶²

Manitoba and Saskatchewan tend to move back and forth between the right and left parties. At the same time, Alberta is seen as what political scientist Steve Patten describes as a "one party state," where political change coming from within the various conservative provincial and federal parties in the province, which include Conservative, Reform, Social Credit, Wildrose, Alliance, and United Conservative Party (UCP). Patten notes that Canadian neoliberal parties have done well in Alberta because of their "dogged commitment to highly profitable natural resource extraction, balanced budgets, flat and reduced taxes, unfettered markets, and shrinking of the role of government through privatization and deregulation."¹⁶³ This does not mean there are no left or centre political movements, but rather that when forming governments, it is almost exclusively right-wing neoliberal parties that dominate.¹⁶⁴

Alberta's politics have historically leaned Conservative, with long stretches of right-leaning governments emerging after the early success of the Liberals and the United Farmers

¹⁶¹ Jared J. Wesley and Leah Morton, "Defining Prairie Politics: Campaigns, Codes and Cultures," in *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada*, ed. Adele Perry and Esyllt W. Jones (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 299; David Bright, "The West Wants in: Regionalism, Class, and Labour/Le Travail, 1976-2002," *Labour / Le Travail* 50 (2002): 149-61.

¹⁶² Wesley and Morton, "Defining Prairie Politics: Campaigns, Codes and Cultures," 298.

¹⁶³ Steve Patten, "The Politics of Alberta's One Party State," in *Transforming Provincial Politics: The Political Economy of Canada's Provinces and Territories in the Neoliberal Era*, ed. Bryan M. Evans and Charles W Smith (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 2015), 258.

¹⁶⁴ Patten, 255.

Party, who were defeated by the Social Credit Party in 1935. The Social Credit Party introduced a new kind of political individualism and a rejection of Ottawa's ability to address the economic crash of the 1930s. Political historian Alvin Finkel notes that it was not just economic theory that caused Social Credit's appeal but the engaging in a "participatory democracy," particularly in a province that depended upon the decisions of outsiders to succeed.¹⁶⁵ The Social Credit party, led by William Aberhart and then Ernest Manning, held onto power until Harry Strom lost to the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) in 1971.¹⁶⁶ Changes to the economy, including rising interest rates, the national energy program and the fall of oil and gas prices, weakened the Alberta PC party.¹⁶⁷ From 1971 to left-leaning New Democratic Party leader Rachel Notley's win in 2015, Progressive Conservatives had twelve majority governments. Notley's 2015 win disrupted the PC reign, and the UCP, a coalition of Wildrose and Progressive Conservatives, regained power in 2019.¹⁶⁸ Wesley notes that Alberta's political culture comes from its early influx of immigration of populists from the US and a capitalist focus coming from Alberta's farming and petroleum industries. These industries are also intimately connected to decision-making in Ottawa, leading to resentment of perceived federal overreach.¹⁶⁹

This frustration with the federal government came to a head following the 1968 election of Pierre Elliot Trudeau and his Liberal government. Trudeau was focused on a strong, centralized government, multicultural policies, and a desire to unite Canada under a repatriated constitution. The collection *Western Separatism: The Myths Realities and Dangers* outlines

¹⁶⁵ Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta*, State and Economic Life (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 8.

¹⁶⁶ Wesley and Morton, "Defining Prairie Politics: Campaigns, Codes and Cultures," 300.

¹⁶⁷ Patten, "The Politics of Alberta's One Party State," 260.

¹⁶⁸ Nico Block and Tabitha Marshall, "United Conservative Party," in *Canadian Encyclopedia*, April 18, 2019, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/united-conservative-party>.

¹⁶⁹ Jared J. Wesley and Morton, "Defining Prairie Politics: Campaigns, Codes and Cultures," 299,303.

Trudeau's policies, specifically the National Energy Program,¹⁷⁰ Jean Chretien's Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the eventual repatriation of the Constitution, all of which "gave rise to a to acute ideological anxieties in conservative Alberta where provincial rights and property rights are equally sacrosanct."¹⁷¹ These anxieties led to an anti-Ottawa movement that, in some cases, coalesced into separatist rallies in Western Canada.¹⁷² Opinions of Trudeau's Liberals did vary in the 'West.' However, Alberta, and particularly its long-term Premier Peter Lougheed, led the way in protest against the new federal government, calling it "Ottawa" as a shorthand, emphasizing its distance from Alberta. Political scientist Allan Tupper notes both increased regional anger at the federal government while reducing provincial accountability when it came to unpopular decisions. Later, Prime Minister Stephen Harper (PC) did the opposite, using Conservative party colours and branding the federal government as the "Harper Government," directly associating the federal government with himself as a distinctly 'Western' politician, notwithstanding that he was born and raised in the Leaside neighbourhood of Toronto.¹⁷³ Historian Doug Owsram notes this frustration eventually boiled over into a full-blown Western separatist movement. The complaints ranged from large issues like money and the perceived centralism of the CBC to petty issues like how RCMP cars were marked, which ballooned into proof of Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government's perceived paternalism over the West.¹⁷⁴ This

¹⁷⁰ The National Energy Program was a federal policy from 1980-1985 that sought to ensure Canada could provide a domestic supply of oil and gas by 1990. It was almost immediately dismantled due to western protests and changing global markets. See: Taylor Noakes, "National Energy Program," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, May 28, 2020), <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/national-energy-program>.

¹⁷¹ Larry Pratt and Garth Stevenson, "Introduction," in *Western Separatism: The Myths, Realities and Dangers*, ed. Larry Pratt and Garth Stevenson (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1981), 10.

¹⁷² Pratt and Stevenson, 10.

¹⁷³ Alex Marland, *Brand Command: Canadian Politics and Democracy in the Age of Message Control*, Communication, Strategy, and Politics (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 364.

¹⁷⁴ Doug Owsram, "Reluctant Hinterland," in *Western Separatism: The Myths, Realities and Dangers*, ed. Larry Pratt and Garth Stevenson (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1981), 64-44.

frustration with the central government isn't new. Lawson notes that it emerged with the original disputes with the Metis families in the West.

Metis Historiography

Since the 1930s, historians have been interested in the communities that developed alongside the waterways and the fur trade routes of the North West and Hudson's Bay companies. However, it was not until the 1970s that interdisciplinary scholars moved away from the focus on European-born explorers and voyagers. It was then that the academic gaze shifted away from the fur trade and onto the families and communities in which these men lived and in which Métis history came into its own,¹⁷⁵ Texts written between the 1930s and the 1970s by historians such as H. Innis, A.S. Morton, D.G. Creighton, E.E. Rich, and G.F.G. Stanley, approached Western Canadian history through a metropolitan lens, meaning that they looked at how the fur trade affected central Canada, and vice versa.¹⁷⁶ Scholarship after this period focussed on the events and lives of people in the West, without consideration of far-away elites. The history of the Metis benefitted from this shift.

The focus on the fur trade and the Resistances of 1869-70 and 1885 formed the basis of much Metis scholarship up until the 1980s. Harold Innis's 1930 *The Fur Trade in Canada*, George Stanley's 1936 *The Birth of Western Canada* and Marcel Giraud's 1945 *Le Metis Canadien: Son Role Dans L'histoire des Provinces de L'Ouest* introduced the northwest as a

¹⁷⁵ Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

¹⁷⁶ J. M. S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *The Canadian Historical Review* 35, no. 1 (1954): 1–21.

topic for historical study.¹⁷⁷ W.L. Morton edited two volumes on Riel and the Red River, Alexander Begg's *Red River Journal* (1956) and *Manitoba: The Birth of a Province* (1967).¹⁷⁸ Desmond Morton contributed to work on the Red River with *The Last War Drum: The North-West Campaign of 1885* written in 1972, and co-wrote *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885* also in 1972, and *The Queen v. Louis Riel* in 1974.¹⁷⁹ Biographical texts on the more well-known Métis leaders have been something of a cottage industry, particularly regarding the life of Metis political leader Louis Riel.¹⁸⁰ George Stanley's biography *Louis Riel* was published in 1963, and Tom Flanagan's *Louis 'David' Riel* in 1979.¹⁸¹ Both Flanagan and Stanley were involved in the Riel project (1961-1985), which collected all of Riel's works to mark the centenary of his death. The project published the complete writings of Louis Riel in a five-volume set entitled *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les Ecrits complet de Louis Riel* in 1985.¹⁸² Recently, Riel appeared as the hero of Montreal comic book artist Chester Brown's *Louis Riel: A Comic Strip Biography*.¹⁸³ Riel, as a character, appears so frequently in both fiction and non-fiction that Albert Braz, in *The False Traitor*, collected and contextualized all the different writings and characterizations of Riel and organized them into several 'archetypes.' The

¹⁷⁷ Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); George F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961); Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien: Son Rôle Dans l'histoire Des Provinces de l'Ouest* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1945).

¹⁷⁸ A. S. Morton, *The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939); W. L. Morton, *Manitoba, a History*, 2d ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

¹⁷⁹ Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum: The North West Campaign of 1885*, Historical Publications 5 (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972); Reginald H. Roy and Desmond Morton, *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign, 1885*, Publications of the Champlain Society. 47 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1972); Louis Riel, *The Queen v. Louis Riel*, ed. Desmond Morton, Social History of Canada. 19 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

¹⁸⁰ Donald Swainson, "Reiliana and the Structure of Canadian History," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14, no. 2 (1980): 288.

¹⁸¹ George Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Scarborough; ON: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1985); Thomas Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

¹⁸² Louis Riel, *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, ed. George F. G. Stanley (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985).

¹⁸³ Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic Strip Biography* (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2003).

Red River Patriot, The Traitor, The Martyr, The Go-Between, The Mystic/Madman and the Canadian Patriot (in spite of himself).¹⁸⁴

Studies of the fur trade turned their attention to the everyday people working in the context of the trade. They looked at the lives of the men who left Europe and travelled across the Northwest, establishing families in their wake. We know about these relationships, though sometimes tenuously, as the remoteness of the traders' locations forced literacy through letters and post journals, as "if they had resided in a single community in its usual concrete sense, communications to and about their kin, friends and colleagues would have been largely oral and lost."¹⁸⁵ Many journals written by fur traders, explorers and travellers have survived, giving us their view of the land and the people who lived in it. Figures such as David Thompson, William Butler, George Simpson, and Daniel Harmon, and the journals and paintings of Paul Kane helped to build a largely Eurocentric outsider view of not only western North America but also the Metis communities with which they lived and interacted.

Jennifer S. H. Brown's and Jacqueline Peterson's 1985 collection *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* shifted gears to focus their study on communities and networks of Metis families.¹⁸⁶ *The New Peoples* was significant, not just as an intellectual manifestation of the new importance of the Metis, (not coincidentally through their 1982 inclusion in the Canadian Constitution) but also as redrawing "the boundaries of Canadian métissage by highlighting the connections between Métis of the Great Lakes and of the West and

¹⁸⁴ Albert Braz, *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

¹⁸⁵ Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, xii.

¹⁸⁶ Peterson and Brown, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*.

introducing the possibility of uniquely localized manifestations of Métis.”¹⁸⁷ Brown’s and Peterson’s collection changed the focus from the travels of European fur traders to the settled Métis communities that emerged alongside the fur trade.

The publishing of two seminal works in 1980, Jennifer S. H. Brown’s *Strangers in Blood* and Sylvia Van Kirk’s *Many Tender Ties*, redirected the focus from the men of the fur trade to their families, aided by the relocation of the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives from London to Winnipeg.¹⁸⁸ In previous works, the presence of non-white or Indigenous women in fur trade histories either obscured or downplayed the women’s Indigenous ancestry or treated them as an ethnographic specimen “ensconced in some verbal museum of the past.”¹⁸⁹ Van Kirk and Brown looked at the women that the traders lived with and married, and by doing so, moved Canadian historical scholarship away from the history of the colonization of Canada to a kinship-based history of the mixed-race communities within the new nation.

Brown’s *Strangers in Blood* examined the depth and devotion of relationships between the fur traders and their First Nation and Metis wives, which had been previously and erroneously dismissed by historians as simply transitory.¹⁹⁰ Brown, through the examination of wills, illuminates the processes the men attempted to take to secure their families’ legal, financial and social status. This illuminated the Metis families that resulted from country marriages *à la*

¹⁸⁷ Jean Barman and Mike Evans, “Reflections on Being, and Becoming, Metis in British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 161 (2009): 59.

¹⁸⁸ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*; Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*.

¹⁸⁹ Jean Barman, “Invisible Woman: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed Race Daughters in Rural Pioneer British Columbia,” in *Beyond the City Limits Rural History in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 168.

¹⁹⁰ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, 28.

façon du pays (according to the custom of the country), established that they were important historical subjects, and reoriented how we saw fur trade marriages. Brown quotes a letter in which Frances Bouché, the country wife of trader Joseph McGillivray, was advised by a solicitor to identify herself specifically as a “widow” to legitimize her family’s claim as the beneficiaries of McGillivray’s will.¹⁹¹ Writing that she should “subscribe to her name *Widow* in which case I hope to be able to close the matter without subjecting the estate to the Claims of Legacy Duty.... if she terms herself *Spinster* she as a Stranger in Blood will be liable to a duty of 10 pet which by the before arrangement I hope to avoid.” [italics mine]¹⁹² Reading against the grain moved the academic focus from the men working in the trade and shifted it to the families they inhabited. This shift also legitimized families and Metis kinship as equally important historical subjects to mapmaking and global beaver prices.

Sylvia Van Kirk, in *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, complemented Brown’s work by focusing on the domestic and social roles played by First Nations, Métis, and European-born women, in the development of fur trade society. Van Kirk traces an observation made by Chief Factor and later Governor of British Columbia James Douglas in 1840 that there was a shifting interest in the ethnicity of the men’s wives, particularly for the men in the upper echelons of the fur trade hierarchy. Douglas may have been more sensitive to the complicated discussions around *metissage*, as he himself was mixed race. Douglas’ mother was likely a free woman of colour in Demerara, Guyana, his father was a Scots trader and sugar plantation owner,¹⁹³ and his wife Amelia Connolly was Metis. He observed that

¹⁹¹ Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, 144.

¹⁹² Brown, 144.

¹⁹³ Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 4–5.

attitudes around the acceptability of mixed-race marriages had shifted, stating, “Indian wives were once the vogue, the half-breed supplanted these, and now we have the lovely tender exotic torn from its parent bed to pine and languish in the desert.”¹⁹⁴ Van Kirk’s work not only follows the evolution of these marriages but also the causes of the evolution. She extends her discussion to focus on the larger roles of Indigenous people, particularly women, as “active agents” in their fur trade societies, despite the restrictions of being wife, daughter, mother or worker.¹⁹⁵

Some excellent scholarship in the last 20 years has built on Van Kirk and Brown and has specifically used genealogy as a tool for decentring the metropolitan gaze. Heather Devine reconstructed the genealogy of the Desjarlais family as the basis for her 2004 book *The People Who Own Themselves*. She followed the movement and employment of several generations of the family across Canada, the United States and Mexico.¹⁹⁶ Interestingly, Devine used the Denney archival materials, which Denney had duplicated and left with the Alberta Genealogical Society, to build her family tree that eventually led to her dissertation and monograph. She writes in her dissertation, “I became a regular visitor to that library, meticulously compiling the family tree of Rosine Desjarlais and her numerous ancestors, and learning a great deal of early Western Canadian history along the way.”¹⁹⁷ Devine, in her appendices, notes, “Although there is an abundance of primary and secondary source data for generating genealogical records, this

¹⁹⁴ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Van Kirk, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004).

¹⁹⁷ Heather Devine, “Les Desjarlais: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis and Diaspora in a Canadian Family” (Dissertation, Edmonton, University of Alberta, 2001), 9.

material must be selected and interpreted with care.”¹⁹⁸ She provides a useful discussion on how genealogies can be used in historical writing and the pitfalls of the medium.

In the 2010 *One of the Family*, Brenda Macdougall also uses genealogy, but rather than following a single family, she tracked the numerous Metis families that developed in Île à la Crosse, a community in northern Saskatchewan.¹⁹⁹ Macdougall’s work looks deeply at the conception of family and land as a grounding point for the Metis identity. She uses the concept of *wahkootowin* as her central framing, seeing Metis community and identity imbued within this relatedness as “inseparable from land, home, community and family. They are all one and the same.”²⁰⁰ This concept of relatedness is key and has become the jumping-off point for much Metis scholarship since, including edited collections by Carolyn Podruchny, Brenda MacDougall and Nicole St-Onge in *Contours of a People*, Jennifer Adese’s and Chris Andersen’s *A People and a Nation* and particularly in Laura Forsythe’s and Jennifer Markide’s *Around the Kitchen Table*.²⁰¹ *Wahkootowin* will be returned to in some depth later in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

In *Contours of a People*, Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall brought together a series of articles inspired by Brown and Peterson’s *New Peoples*, but focussing less on how the Metis emerged, instead asking questions around “a Metis *state of*

¹⁹⁸ Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*, 2004, 243.

¹⁹⁹ Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*.

²⁰⁰ Macdougall, 2.

²⁰¹ Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, eds., *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Jennifer Adese and Chris Andersen, eds., *A People and a Nation: New Directions in Contemporary Métis Studies*, 1st ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021); Forsythe and Markides, *Around the Kitchen Table*.

being” [italics theirs].²⁰² It includes articles from a series of perspectives and places, including an article called “Red River Redux” by Jaqueline Peterson, which directly addresses her earlier scholarship on ethnogenesis and the Great Lakes, St-Onge’s and Podruchny’s examination of mobility and kinship in relation to ethnogenesis. A third piece that deals directly with the Metis and genealogy is “Metis Networks in British Columbia,” which, as previously noted, looks at the connections between the Boucher and Ogden families and the communities across the Rockies in the Red River homeland.²⁰³ It was tied into a larger project that I was also a part of with UBC and the Metis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) that developed a database that connected records with place, patronym, and subject areas to help build a case identifying Metis homeland areas in British Columbia.²⁰⁴

Jennifer Adese’s and Chris Andersen’s 2021 edited collection *A People and a Nation: New Direction in Contemporary Métis Studies* engages the work of emerging Metis scholars. It examines the political and social complexity of the Metis Nation and rejects racialized “mixed” narratives, rather framing the Métis Nation as a single ‘people.’²⁰⁵ One particularly intriguing chapter by Robert L.A. Hancock looks at scholarly relationships, many that exist outside of the Metis homeland, and how they are nurtured and challenged by the bonds of peoplehood and the responsibility of *wahkootowin*.” It focuses:

... on the questions of what it means to be Metis outside of those homelands; how we recognize and take care of one another, including how we relate to each other; and how we are to hold ourselves and one another to account. The answers we come to for these

²⁰² Brenda Macdougall, Carolyn Podruchny, and Nicole St-Onge, “Introduction: Cultural Mobility and Contours of Difference,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University Of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 5–6.

²⁰³ Barman et al., “Metis Networks in British Columbia: Examples from the Central Interior.”

²⁰⁴ Barman et al., 362.

²⁰⁵ Chris Andersen and Jennifer Adese, “Introduction,” in *A People and a Nation: New Directions in Contemporary Métis Studies*, ed. Jennifer Adese and Chris Andersen, 3rd–17th ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021), 9.

questions have serious implications for Metis families and communities and also speak to the responsibility of Metis researchers and scholars to ensure that our work engages with our relatives outside the academy.”²⁰⁶

He notes that in using a peoplehood/ *wahkootowin* framework, scholars can guide and shape the work to best honour community and create Metis-specific approaches to scholarship.²⁰⁷

In the 2024 edited collection *Around the Kitchen Table*, Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markide take up this challenge and focus it on the framework of Metis women’s scholarship, using the metaphor of the kitchen table. Caroline Tate notes in the “Foreword” that, “The kitchen table is the meeting place of our people, where we feel most at home, where we visit about the everyday ups and downs of life. Where our stories are shared.”²⁰⁸ The book is split into three parts” Identity, Women in the Academy, and Research Methodology. It includes poetry, art, self-reflection, political analysis, and re-framing how we write and approach Metis Women’s Studies.²⁰⁹ It is deftly tied together through ‘kitchen table’ and ‘sewing circle’ methodology, which prioritizes conversation-building relationships in research, as *wahkootowin* our “relationality, is fundamental to the weave of our methodologies and our writing.”²¹⁰ In the chapter “Metis Research and Relationality: Auntie Governance, the Visiting Way, and Kitchen Table Reflections,” the authors invoke the Indigenous ‘Auntie,’ as a centre of scholarship, inspired by the mentorship of Maria Campbell and her teachings of the *keeoukaywin* or the

²⁰⁶ Robert T.A. Hancock, “The Power of Peoplehood: Reimagining Metis Relationships, Research and Responsibilities,” in *A People and a Nation: New Directions in Contemporary Métis Studies*, ed. Chris Andersen and Jennifer Adese (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021), 40.

²⁰⁷ Hancock, 61.

²⁰⁸ Caroline Tait, “Foreword,” in *Around the Kitchen Table*, ed. Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), xi.

²⁰⁹ Forsythe and Markides, *Around the Kitchen Table*.

²¹⁰ Tait, “Part One,” x.

‘visiting way,’ and Sherry Farrell Racette’s kitchen table theory.²¹¹ These teachings dovetail with my work with May Barrette, a Metis Elder in Fort St. John and an ideal representation of an ‘academic auntie,’ who shared oral histories about her life and the lives of other women in her community at her kitchen table, always with a cup of tea.²¹²

Metis scholar and sociologist Chris Andersen notes in his Blog “Big M Musings” that “there is something violently abstracting (to borrow a term from Derek Sayer) in how many government agencies, many Metis organizations and a depressing number of academic scholars return again and again to nineteenth century events when trying to make sense of the kinds of issues Métis communities and individuals face today.”²¹³ The most closely studied areas of Metis history, as bemoaned by Andersen, were the 16th- and 17th- century fur trade, the 18th-century buffalo hunts and the three political resistances: the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, the Red River Resistance of 1869-70 and the Northwest Resistance of 1885. It is these periods that genealogists and historians have focussed on as a Metis ‘golden age.’ Much of what is now identified as Metis culture, the Assumption Sash, the Red River Jig, and the material goods, such as flower beadwork, come from this period. However, Andersen notes that Metis communities are not stuck in the 18th century, and modern Metis studies are needed.

Anderson’s work is exceptionally valuable as it moves how we conceptualize the Metis Nation, firstly as a modern nation but also through the lens of ‘peoplehood.’ His book *Métis*:

²¹¹ Kristen Lindquist, Sharlene Jobin, and Avery Letendre, “Metis Research and Relationality: Auntie Governance, the Visiting Way, and Kitchen Table Reflections,” in *Around the Kitchen Table*, ed. Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 157.

²¹² Dolmage, “The Exceptional-Typical History of a Métis Elder in Fort St. John.”

²¹³ BigMmusings, “The Strange Disappearance of Mid Twentieth Century Metis,” *Big M Musings* (blog), May 5, 2012, <https://bigmmusings.wordpress.com/2012/05/05/the-strange-disappearance-of-mid-twentieth-century-metis/>.

Race Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood criticizes the ideas of mixedness or racialization about how the Supreme Court's Powley decision and the Canadian census have "relied on startlingly similar racialized depictions of Métis and thus reproduce, in ways distinctive to their field, logics that have come to be widely deployed in other arenas of Canadian social life."²¹⁴ In particular, he shows how the Métis National Council (MNC) used *R. v. Powley* (2003) and the statistical increase of people claiming to be Metis on the 2016 Census/ National Household Survey to their own ends.²¹⁵ Breaking down concepts of hybridity, Anderson notes why it is problematic:

Instead, it represents the space into which we have been shoehorned as part of the Canadian state's growing racial imaginary. Métis are classified as hybrid - with all the denigrating connotations of the term - in ways that deny that which we seek most, an acknowledgment of our political legitimacy and authenticity as an Indigenous people. From this perspective, while hybridity may well offer a midway point between the racial essentialisms of the past and the creative indeterminacy of the future, there is little discussion about how to leap, politically, over the gap between "hybridity" and "wholeness": Métis can't get there from here.²¹⁶

It is this rejection of a liminal identity that leads Anderson to 'Peoplehood' as a more appropriate way to recognize the Metis Nation. Drawing from Benedict Anderson and Robert K. Thomas, peoplehood requires three elements.²¹⁷ First, the existence of Indigenous peoplehood predates a settler state's "intruding claims." Second, peoplehood is an overtly political designation that comes from a group's internal norms and customs. Third, Metis peoplehood, in particular, is explained in terms of its "pre-state" origins and associated historical power, which means it possessed "certain characteristics that clashed with European, state-based understandings of

²¹⁴ Andersen, *Métis*, 7.

²¹⁵ Andersen, 9.

²¹⁶ Andersen, 38.

²¹⁷ Chris Andersen, "Peoplehood and the Nation Form: Core Concepts for a Critical Métis Studies," in *A People and a Nation: New Directions in Contemporary Métis Studies*, ed. Jennifer Adese and Chris Andersen, 3rd–17th ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021), 19.

nationalism, particularly in relation to kinship.”²¹⁸ In his chapter on peoplehood in the collection *A People and A Nation*, Andersen lists Thomas’s peoplehood matrix as emerging from four elements: language, religion, attachment to land, and “a sacred history which tells you who you are and why you must survive as a people.”²¹⁹ This model accepts Indigenous worldview and knowledge as implicit and that relationality and *wahkootowin* are centralizing narratives.²²⁰

Gerhard Ens and Joe Sawchuk also take a broad look from ethnogenesis to the present day, exploring in detail the history and identity of the Metis Nation in their 2016 book *From New Peoples to New Nations*, the title referencing Brown’s and Peterson’s 1985 collection. The book looks at a wide time period of Metis history, breaking this into themes of courts, government policy, economic marginalization, ethnogenesis, and the resistances and genesis of the Metis nation.²²¹ The book is comprehensive, but it does fall into the ‘hybridity’ discussion that Andersen refutes, writing that “The ethnological categories and historical constructions of hybridity that we deal with ... were the contexts within which Métis ethnogenesis occurred.”²²² Ens and Sawchuk explore ethnogenesis through the lens of ‘outside naming’²²³ and how the Metis were perceived by outsiders, as well as detailing Metis history from the insider perspective.²²⁴

²¹⁸ Andersen, *Métis*, 92.

²¹⁹ Hancock, “The Power of Peoplehood: Reimagining Metis Relationships, Research and Responsibilities,” 47.

²²⁰ Andersen, “Peoplehood and the Nation Form: Core Concepts for a Critical Métis Studies,” 20.

²²¹ Gerhard J. Ens, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Metis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

²²² Ens, 13.

²²³ Chartrand, “‘Terms of Division’: Problems of ‘Outside Naming’ for Aboriginal People in Canada,” 1991.

²²⁴ Ens, *From New Peoples to New Nations*, 14.

Several authors look at the political development of the Metis People. Jean Telliet, the lawyer who represented the Powleys, and who is a descendant of the Riel, Grant, and Poitras families, writes an ambitious history of the Metis Nation from the early ethnogenesis, through the resistances, to the 2000s.²²⁵ The 2019 book, *The North-West is Our Mother*, is framed as a series of resistance periods. She calls the Métis Nation “Riel’s people,” and she asserts that the nation was born through conflict. Her ancestral family were at the forefront of several of those historic conflicts, and her work as a lawyer has put her at the forefront of current conflicts.

One and a Half Men by journalist and biographer Murray Dobbin focuses on two Metis political organizers, Malcolm Norris and James Brady, and their challenges trying to work with the provincial government in Saskatchewan in the 1930s and 1940s.²²⁶ What makes this book particularly interesting is the politics of Dobbin and Brady, as they were committed socialists. They occupied two distinct political spaces: “Both men remained close to white socialists. Yet the struggle for socialism was taking place in the white world of Canada, and Brady and Norris’ racial consciousness—their identification with past native struggles—drew them into the colonized native world as well.”²²⁷ The choice by Dobbin to use the lens of class to discuss the achievements of Norris and Brady is an interesting one, expanding the analysis and adding an additional level of agency to the men and their families.

²²⁵ Jean Telliet, *The North-West Is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel’s People, the Métis Nation* (Toronto: Patrick Crean Editions/ HarperCollins, 2019).

²²⁶ Murray Dobbin, *One and a Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Metis Patriots of the Twentieth Century* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1981), 9.

²²⁷ Dobbin, 17.

In his 2007 book *Quiet Revolution West*, John Weinstein charts a similar course as Tellier and Dobbin with a more political focus and an almost journalistic approach to the parties involved. He starts his book at the 1869 Red River Resistance and then skips forward to the 1970s, looking at Métis political and constitutional interventions and the potential for self-government, ending with the failure of the Kelowna Accord.²²⁸ One of the more interesting sections in the book is his look at the backroom (or, in one case, Ed Broadbent's office) dealings and the personalities, such as Elmer Ghostkeeper, Jim Sinclair, Harry Daniels, Clément Chartier, and Yuvon Dumont.²²⁹ Women are completely excluded from the narrative. This is deftly refuted by Jennifer Adese in her chapter "Restoring the Balance," as she highlights Métis women's activism in the same period that Weinstein covers. She also makes an important point that Métis scholarship should service the Métis community, so how could a book, devoid of women's contributions serve the Métis Nation?²³⁰ Adese outlines the contributions of Elders Annie Lavallie and Rose Fluery and their knowledge of organizing in Saskatchewan as executive members and delegates for the Métis Society, and the contributions of Bertha Clarke-Jones who founded the Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society.²³¹ She also notes women were equally driven to organize at the federal level, with organizations like the Women of the Métis Nation, National Métis Women of Canada and the Métis National Council of Women.²³² Adese includes herself and her work with the Métis Nation Ontario (MNO).

²²⁸ John Weinstein, *The Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2007).

²²⁹ Weinstein, 44.

²³⁰ Jennifer Adese, "Restoring the Balance: Métis Women and Contemporary Nationalist Political Organizing," in *A People and a Nation: New Directions in Contemporary Métis Studies*, ed. Jennifer Adese and Chris Andersen, 1st ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021), 16.

²³¹ Adese, 127–29.

²³² Adese, 132.

Metis historiography started like much of early Canadian historiography, with a focus on great men and major conflicts. But over time, mirroring historiography in other fields, it turned to the ordinary lives of everyday people, uncovering and detailing the growth of Metis families and networks. A continuing focus on politics underscores the political nature of Metis identities, especially within the context of developing and changing Aboriginal rights in Canada. No one has yet investigated the processes behind the creation of Metis archives, which have become so politically important to Metis genealogy.

Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation approaches Denney's archive holistically. The dissertation looks at both the genealogical and personal materials Denney decided should be part of his archival legacy. In Chapter 2, I examine Denney's personal, professional, and political life, primarily through documents from his personal papers. These include certificates, vital records, articles, and an extensive collection of correspondence. Denney meticulously kept photocopies of his letters alongside those he received, providing an almost complete conversation to draw from. We explore his multiple career paths, in particular his time as a teacher in the 1920s and 1930s in small-town Alberta. The chapter also looks at his relationships with two significant women in his life: his first wife, Mildred Sherlock, whose Métis family inspired the Denney Genealogical Collection, and his second wife, Elsie Wilson. Denney's life was driven by a very specific kind of right-wing politics. This chapter gives some insight into the perspective of a man in Alberta whose life spanned the entire 20th century. He believed that one's politics and particularities should be integral to any creation, including his own genealogical and historical writing, so we will look closely at his political activities and opinions.

Chapter 3 explores another aspect of Denney's life: his genealogical relationships. Using his personal papers the chapter looks at three important genealogists that Denney corresponded, collaborated and mentored, Clarence Kipling, Pat McCloy, and Geoff Burtonshaw. The chapter also covers the Glenbow Museum, which houses Denney's collection, and the somewhat challenging road it took to acquire Denney's papers. The chapter addresses the Glenbow's unusual history as a museum, gallery, archive and library, established through a personal collection, and its mandate as a museum of the West. The chapter also discusses some of the steps and missteps the Glenbow has taken in relation to the Indigenous community it serves in Southern Alberta. Finally, the chapter looks at Denney's relationship with the Alberta Genealogical Society, which Denney founded. Denney's founding and contributions to the AGS can be seen as his participation in building a kinship record, which provided meaning and power to his archive. The chapter also looks at his participation and leadership in the Historical Society of Alberta (HSA), and some of the government changes Denney, and these organizations opposed.

In Chapter 4, we shift focus from Denney's papers to the practice of genealogy. The chapter discusses the tools of the genealogist, including those used by Denney, to better understand how genealogies are created. It also looks at the major players in genealogy, such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), and how the Church's emphasis on identifying and sealing family members in religious ceremonies translated into a genealogical movement. Additionally, the chapter looks at other players including the massive databases like FamilySearch and the International Genealogical Index created by the LDS and companies like

Ancestry.com. The chapter also looks at the professionalization and obstacles of genealogical research. The chapter concludes with an examination of the kinds of primary source documents on which genealogists rely and the issues with this type of research, particularly with French-Canadian and Metis families.

Chapter 5 looks at the second part of the archive, specifically Denney's Family Files. Given that we are looking at how they are constructed, acknowledging that part of the archive is very large, this chapter looks at the files from a macro perspective. Using data analysis software, we assess several elements to understand the makeup and contents of the files. This includes place, ethnicity, and Metis-specific markers. The individual documents were indicated by type and geocoded to give an overview of the over 2400 files and 1200 families. Denney's file organization is also discussed. The chapter addresses issues that Denney encountered with individuals who were either uninterested or felt threatened by his project and how the possibility of Indigeneity was responded to by a family member and a fellow genealogist. We also look in-depth at one Family File, James Flett and Mary Peebles, #M7144/950000, through a microlens, closely examining the specific details of the family trees and documents included in a typical Family File.

The Metis Nation and their connection to genealogy make up Chapter 6. This dissertation does not aim to define Metis family history. Rather, it looks at why Denney's papers are used by the Metis Nation as an act of cultural and political agency. The Metis Nation's connection to Denney's papers is both cultural and political, and this chapter explores two aspects of Metis family history. Firstly, it looks at the Cree/ Metis concept of *wahkootowin* as a cultural

responsibility to seek out one's ancestral story, told partly through the kitchen table discussion of Metis genealogist Darrell Loyer and his daughter Jessie Loyer. Secondly, this chapter looks at the political needs that emerged from the Metis National Council's (MNC) national definition and the R. v. Powley Supreme Court decision. To obtain Metis citizenship and to exercise s. 35 rights require the citizen to prove a genealogical connection to a Metis ancestor and residence in a 'Métis historic Community.'

Conclusion

Charles Denney's collection explores the history of the Red River families, starting from his late wife's ancestors and expanding to much of the Historic Métis Nation. The Denney papers are housed in Calgary's Glenbow Museum and Archives, which, although not an official state institution as it was grown from a wealthy benefactor's personal collection, is charged with telling the colonial history of the Western provinces. Working alongside other genealogists, Denney's stated intention was to create a definitive resource for those interested in nation-building narratives, "to be exceptionally useful to all future generations of writers trying to produce Pioneer Prairie Portraits [sic]."²³³ Instead, contemporary users of his archive reject the 'pioneer' narrative and use his genealogies to establish their Indigenous identity, specifically to explore *wahkootowin* and establish constitutionally recognized Métis citizenship.

²³³ Denney, "Application for Assistance under the Explorations Program."

Chapter 2 Life in Letters: Exploring Denney's Personal, Professional, and Political Journey

Introduction

In a letter to Eula Lapp of the Ontario Genealogical Society in January 1974, discussing publishing a travelogue he wrote, genealogist Charles Denney notes:

I would be happy to have you put my 1972 Ontario Travels into your Genealogical Library. Indeed I thought you had. But I am afraid I favor leaving in all the blemishes. in the over a thousand books and articles in my den there are many that show the prejudices and the character of the author. Some amuse me; and some annoy me, But I am glad no one edited them out of character.”¹

This dissertation suggests that the Charles Denney Glenbow Archives is a Metis Collection, with *wahkootowin* at its centre, housed in a colonial space. The genealogical files are for members of the public and are of particular interest to the Métis Nation. Denney's Personal Papers are the least accessed half of the archival collection. The Glenbow purchased not just Denney's family trees but his personal documents as well. Denney included in his archival collections not just the genealogical materials but his personal letters and documents. Denney felt it was important not to edit out the 'character' of the creator, and his complete archives echo this. His personal files contain awards, photos, and certificates, but most of the files are letters between Denney and his family, friends, strangers, newspapers, organizations, and even a few prime ministers. This

¹ Charles Denney to Eula Lapp, January 8, 1974, M7144/165 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

chapter interrogates Denney's personal papers to understand who he was and why he created such vast genealogical resources.

Other significant parts of Denney's personal collection demand attention. The Personal Papers are a significant part of the greater collection donated to the Glenbow and are not present in the other Denney collections, such as those at the Alberta Genealogical Society. The inclusion of Denney's Personal Papers makes the Glenbow collection unique. Of particular interest is his relationship with contemporary genealogists, such as Clarence Kipling and Pat McCloy, which will be explored in Chapters 3 and 4. This chapter examines Denney's Personal Papers to build a picture of Denney's personal life, his work as a teacher, and his relationships with his two wives, Mildred Sherlock and Elsie Wilson. Sherlock, in particular, is central as her family, her connections, and her death were the catalyst for Denney's genealogical pursuits. Genealogy is a study of kinship. Understanding Denney's relationship with his kin aids in understanding Denney's files. Additionally, as Denney's fierce political writing makes up a significant part of his archival collection, it is important to talk not just about the man and his life but also about what motivated him. As we will see, Denney's life was driven by a specific kind of populist politics. To this end, we also investigate Denney's political affiliations, the issues that drove him to write, and some of his more questionable opinions and associations. Or, as Denney wrote in a letter to Elua Lapp, "I have no intention of editing out his character nor his prejudices."²

² Denney to Lapp.

Charles Denney's Story

Charles Denney was born in Winnipeg, MB, on the 25th of January 1901, Four years before Alberta's entry into Confederation. In 1917, he moved to Consort, AB, a village southeast of Edmonton, with his parents, Thomas Denney and Margaret Elder, and his three brothers Ralph, Walter, and Frank. His mother ran a restaurant, and his father was, according to Denney, a "carpenter, merchant, farmer and entrepreneur."³ Denney was an average student in school, graduating with strong marks in algebra and physics. However, his low grades in history (57) and English (51)⁴ did not preclude him from entering teacher training at Camrose Normal School, where he graduated in 1923. Denney taught in several Alberta schools in Waskateneau, Edson, Tofield, and New Drayton. Denney taught for sixteen years, eventually becoming a vice principal, principal and president of the local teachers' association.⁵

Denney recounted his teaching days in his letters and published stories. He wrote to his friends Margaret and Cathie Sinclair that teaching in the 1920s was very different from today. He wrote,

In your Christmas letter you mention that Cathie has 15 students in Grade one. That made my mind flip back to 1925 When I had 62 children in seven grades. 23 of them were in Grade three. No library No teacher's aid[e], cold floor. Low salary. And all came out able

³ Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, "Accession Receipt," July 12, 1971, M7144/401900 Edmonds Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Alyson Kydd, "Charles D. Denney: Edmonton's Keen Observer of History Celebrates His 100th Birthday," *Legacy*, 2001; Alberta Genealogical Society and Mrs. WM. R. Hewitt, "Genealogy Questionnaire," February 27, 1981, M8981/265 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴ Alberta, Minister of Education, "High School Graduation Diploma: Charles Denney" (Alberta Ministry of Education, Edmonton AB, November 20, 1931), M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵ Charles Denney, "Charles Denney C.V.," March 1981, M8981/265 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; T.E. Skeith, "T.E. Skeith, Sec-Treas. New Dayton S.D. to Whom It May Concern," July 4, 1939, M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

to read, write, spell, calculate, and know considerable Canadian appreciate good literature, and know considerable Canadian History.⁶

Denney's wages were low: in 1932, they were \$300.00 annually, according to his teaching contract with the school.⁷ The emphasis here on "good literature" and history echoes the early Alberta curriculum. On entering Confederation, Alberta adopted Ontario's school curriculum, with revisions in 1912. The 1912 curriculum was focused on British literature in the upper levels. Canadian history in the junior grades and British and Canadian history in high school. As Denney notes in his letter, "Oh yes, all those Ukrainian and Half-Breeds spoke English." Although Denney's student body was primarily Ukrainian and Metis, historian Amy von Heyking notes, "The early years of Alberta's history, schools reflected an Anglocentric understanding of Canadian Identity common in other parts of English-speaking Canada."⁸ There was a second revision in 1921 that further increased Canadian content while continuing to emphasize Canada's connection to the empire.⁹

⁶ Charles Denney to Margaret Sinclair and Cathie Sinclair, March 1, 1993, M8981/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷ This would be the equivalent to \$6387 CAN dollars today. "Inflation Calculator | Measuring Canadian Inflation Rate & CPI," accessed June 6, 2024, <https://inflationcalculator.ca/>.

⁸ Denney to Margaret Sinclair and Cathie Sinclair, March 1, 1993; Amy von Heyking, "Fostering a Provincial Identity: Two Eras in Alberta Schooling," *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, no. 4 (December 15, 2006): 1127+.

⁹ von Heyking, "Fostering a Provincial Identity: Two Eras in Alberta Schooling."

STANDARD FORM OF CONTRACT
BETWEEN
TRUSTEES AND TEACHER

This Agreement made in triplicate

BETWEEN—
The Board of Trustees of Cassal S. D. 3122
School District No. 3122 of the Province of Alberta, hereinafter called
"the Board" — and —
Charles D. Denney
of Telford, Alberta.
the holder of a Second Class (Insert class of certificate)
Certificate of qualification as a teacher in Alberta, hereinafter called "the Teacher."

WITNESSETH—
That subject to the provisions of *The School Act, 1921*, and the Regulations of the Department of
Education, the Board hereby employs the Teacher, and the Teacher agrees to teach and conduct school
for the Board on the following terms:

1. The annual salary shall be \$300.00 and subject to the following schedule
of increases:

2. The period of employment shall be from and including the 5th day of
September, 1932.

DATED this 11th day of July, 1932
Signed on behalf of the Board (CORPORATE SEAL).
J. G. G. G. Chairman.
E. J. G. G. Witness to Chairman's signature.
Chas. D. Denney Teacher.
Witness to Teacher's signature.
No. of Teacher's Alberta Certificate 160-26
Teacher's Post Office Address: Telford

NOTE—Refer to The School Act, 1921, and Amendments thereto:
For engagement and contract, see Sections 153 to 158 inclusive.
For minimum salary, see Section 161.
For method of payment of salary, see Sections 161 to 164 inclusive.
For method of terminating an agreement, see Section 157.
For information regarding vacation periods and holidays, see Sections 144 and 145.
Teacher should sign with Christian names in full.
In absence of Chairman, any other Trustee may sign (Section 158).
One copy of this Agreement should be retained by the Board, another by the Teacher, and the third
forwarded at once to the Department of Education.

Form 27

Figure 2-1 Denney's Teaching Contract 1932, Denney Personal Files M7144/266

Interestingly, this echoes Denney's later criticisms of Canadian education, in particular, the teaching of history and its importance to an Anglo-Canadian identity. Denney was deeply frustrated with the curriculum changes in the 1980s and 90s, writing in a letter to Heritage minister Shelia Copps, stating, "Even in the rest of Canada, following introduction of the Social Studies Program about 65 years ago, the formal teaching of history was abandoned, and what history students learned was largely left to the caprice of the teachers. So, there is a woeful ignorance of when, how, and why things happened and shaped our development."¹⁰ He blames this lack of history education as a factor in the growth of Quebec nationalism in Canada in the

¹⁰ Charles Denney to Hon. Shelia Copps, July 19, 1996, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

1970s, resulting in the constitutional crisis in the 1980s and 90s. In a letter to the *Edmonton Journal* responding to an article by Michel Auger entitled "Quebec won't fit into Manning's Canadian mould," Denney writes, "Unfortunately, there are a great many of us who have not had an education in Canadian History, either because we are newcomers to our country, or because it has not been adequately taught in our schools."¹¹ For Denney, the solution to the Quebec constitutional crisis was the history he taught in the 1920s and 30s.

New Drayton School, where Denny taught in 1939, was small. A report on the school by the Inspector of High Schools, David Mullway, reports that the school was a 'spacious' three rooms, with one room for the secondary level students in Grades 9-12. There was a separate room for typing, one of the classes Denney taught, and an adequate supply of English texts.¹² There was also a room that, "though dark, could be used at a pinch for science work." Assemblies were held in a separate building. Denney, according to the report, taught writing twice a week and much of the secondary curriculum, which earned him criticism for his too-high teaching load.¹³ Denney wrote a letter accepting an invitation for a school reunion banquet, at which he was to be a guest of honour, "I will also be happy to deliver myself of a few well chosen words. I have some memories to share."¹⁴ Denney contributed several stories about the 'cold floored' schools to be included in a history book.

¹¹ Charles Denney to Letters Editor, *Edmonton Journal*, June 20, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹² David Mullway, "Report of Inspector of High Schools," May 18, 1939, M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹³ Mullway.

¹⁴ Charles Denney to Doris Sokolotosky and Steve Sokolotosky, February 10, 1980, M7144/235 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Denney's short story "The Late School Teacher" reveals how difficult it was to work away from home in a time with slow postal service and limited travel. Denney was hired as a teacher in the Fort Victoria School district in Victoria Settlement, near Smoky Lake, AB. He received a letter indicating he would start teaching on July 3, 1924. However, the letter arrived on July 4, the day after he was slated to begin work. Denney was still in Saskatchewan. He wrote, "You will understand that I was in a panic. You will also understand that I made some immediate and frantic efforts to learn more of the Geography of Alberta, as well as its transportation and communication systems. Then you will understand that I was dismayed to discover I was at least 240 miles away, by dirt roads, as well as several days away by train"¹⁵ After a rush to get bedding, transport, ferries and avoiding the pitfalls of unmarked dirt roads, Denney arrived and introduced himself to the school administration:

At the appropriate door way[sic] I presented myself. Wet, muddy, timid, I knocked upon the door. Tired enough to weep, and thoroughly wet.... a man of medium height, wearing a well trimmed beard (a novelty in those days) presented himself. To him I said "Are you Mr Mitchell?" His reply was severely forceful: "I am!" I was then almost afraid to say "I am C.D. Denney." After an eloquent moment during which he pondered that tremendous information, he raised his eyes and right hand heavenward and exclaimed "THANK GOD!

And so did I.

By what means the word spread I can only guess; However, the next day there were near fifty present, and I really began my career as teacher in Victoria School District #75.¹⁶

Many of the early students were Metis, as the school was on land that once housed a Hudson's Bay Company fort. Denney notes that the Thomson, Anderson, Whitford, Michell, Rasmusson, Howses, and Cromarty families comprised most of the early pupils at the school.¹⁷ These names

¹⁵ Charles Denney, "The Late School Teacher," February 1980, M7144/235 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁶ Denney, "The Late School Teacher."

¹⁷ Charles Denney, "Victoria District #75," February 1980, M7144/235 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

appear in multiple Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) biographies.¹⁸ There were tensions between the older Metis families and the newly settled Ukrainian immigrants,¹⁹ which spilled over into the school. Denney notes that by the time he arrived, the class was predominately Ukrainian, with four or five Metis children.²⁰

The children were not the most important Metis connection Denney made while teaching. At Tofield, Denney taught in the Cereal School District, where he met Mildred Sherlock, a Metis woman from Thunder Bay who he married on New Year's Day, 1927.²¹ Denney recounts first seeing Mildred in an article in *Legacy* magazine; the author Alyson Kydd relays: "His first wife Mildred (née Sherlock), a direct descendant of the 1815 Selkirk settlers, was an inspiration. He loves to tell how he first saw her, 'the most beautiful woman in the world,' on the railway platform at Tofield. To his dismay, she wasn't boarding his train. However, when he went to teach at Waskatenau, she was already on staff.²² In his heavily corrected letter to Mildred's parents asking for their permission to marry, Denney writes:

This is not an application for a position (not for Board and room) but, rather a request that you will favor ~~my~~ the marriage union ~~with~~ between your daughter ^and myself with your blessing. I know I need not ask you for her hand: that you have already granted by

¹⁸ Hudson's Bay Company Archives, "Biographies," Archives of Manitoba, 2024, <https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/index.html>. Joseph Whitford, father of the late Elder and education advocate May Barrette, lived in multiple locations in Alberta and was likely one of the Whitford children at the Fort Victoria school see. Dolmage, "The Exceptional-Typical History of a Métis Elder in Fort St. John," 92.

¹⁹ For Ukrainian immigration and schools see: Bill Maciejko, "Ukrainians and Prairie School Reform, 1896-1921: Ethnic and Domestic Ideologies in Modern State..." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 22, no. 2 (June 1990): 19; Vadim Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers: Ukrainian and Belarusan Immigration From the Russian Empire to Canada*, McGill-Queen's Studies in Ethnic History. Series Two (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

²⁰ Denney, "Victoria District #75."

²¹ "Wedding Certificate" (Government of Alberta, January 1, 1927), M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²² Kydd, "Charles D. Denney: Edmonton's Keen Observer of History Celebrates His 100th Birthday."

making me welcome at your home... Now, however I would like to enjoy your good will and the confidence that the regard of Mildred's parents will inspire me with.”²³



Figure 2-2 'Charles & Mildred Denney. posing on the roof of the school.' 1927 (2022.005.002). Courtesy of Galloway Station Museum and Archives, Edson

was the daughter of John ‘Old Bushy’ Matheson.... And I am Mildred’s husband... have been for 41 years.”²⁷ Catherine Pritchard Matheson and Angus Fraser, Mildred’s grandparents, were part of the early settlers in Manitoba. John Pritchard (1777-1855), Catherine’s grandfather, was a fur trader for XY Company (which merged with the North West Company in 1804) and HBC (which merged with the North West Company in 1821) and was appointed a Councillor of

²³ Charles Denney to Mr and Mrs Sherlock, December 6, 1926, M7144/259 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁴ Province of Ontario, “Birth Certificate: Mildred K. Sherlock,” March 18, 1959, M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁵ Alberta Department of Education, “Department of Alberta Standard Diploma: Mildred K. Sherlock,” October 8, 1910, M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁶ Charles Denney to Leila Brown, February 18, 1968, M7144/34 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁷ Denney to Brown.

Assiniboia by short-served Governor Robert Semple (1815-1816).²⁸ Pritchard's first wife is not named in his HBC file but is identified as either Indigenous or Metis, possibly a woman named Marie Sauvagesse.²⁹ His second wife was Catherine McGilvray. Pritchard was captured in the Metis uprising at Seven Oaks.³⁰

Denney has no issue with his wife's mixed heritage, perhaps surprising given his other politics. He wrote to a family friend, explaining he was writing a book on Mildred's "ten tribes,"³¹ which was her Red River family. He indicated that he received pushback from Mildred's extended family,³² mentioning a cousin who was upset that her genealogy indicated "Indian blood."³³ He writes: "I can become quite emotional about the attainments of some of Mildred's relatives who have Indian background. And isn't it romantic to be able to claim your great, great grandmother was an Okanagan Indian Princess?"³⁴ Acknowledging the problematic

²⁸ Carol Judd, "Pritchard, John," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University Of Toronto/ Université Laval, January 2024), <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?BioId=38262>.

²⁹ Hudson's Bay Company, "Pritchard, John Sr. HBC Biographical File" (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, November 2008), Hudson's Bay Company Archives, https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/p/pritchard_john-sr.pdf.

³⁰ Judd, "Pritchard, John."; The Battle at Seven Oaks (1816), was the first of the three Metis Resistances (the others being Red River Resistance in 1869 and the Northwest Resistance in 1885). Led by Cuthbert Grant, it was also the culmination of the Pemmican Wars and marked the end of the Hudson's Bay Monopoly. For discussions around Seven Oaks and its meaning to the Metis Nations See: Gerhard J. Ens, "The Battle of Seven Oaks and The Articulation of a Metis National Tradition, 1811-1849," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Lyle Dick, "The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1970," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 2, no. 1 (1991).

³¹ Mildred actually had all eight grandparents in the Red River by 1815, not ten, however the allusion to the ten tribes of the Old Testament is obvious. Charles Denney to Friends and Relatives, Christmas 1969, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³² I discuss this correspondence in Chapter 6

³³ Charles Denney to Friends and Relatives, June 21, 1968, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³⁴ Denney to Friends and Relatives. The "Okanagan Princess" Denney refers to is likely Josette Lagacé, who was married to Chief Factor John Work and was the daughter of a Nez Pierce woman and an 'old' Pierre Lagacé, a French-Canadian voyageur. See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, 134. For a discussion of the trope see: Katherine Goertz, "The Mohawk Princess Writes and Recites: How Pauline Johnson Battled Negative Indian Stereotypes through Her Performances and Prose," *The Albatross* 5 (March 30, 2015): 36–51; Dan Blumlo, "Pocahontas, Uleleh, and Hononegah: The Archetype of the American Indian Princess," *Journal of*

“princess trope,” Denney was not in the least uncomfortable with the Indigeneity of Mildred’s relatives. However, he chose to highlight their participation in building the West from a state perspective. Highlighting the ‘hereditarian’ inclinations discussed earlier by Francisca Morgan reveals Denney’s organizing principles in pursuing his research.³⁵ He continues, “some of our most illustrious citizens have Indian background, Leonard Sayers, Assistant Auditor General for Canada in Ottawa, for instance, is descended from John Pritchard through his Indian wife. He has no reason to be ashamed of himself.”³⁶ Denney chose to associate Mildred’s family with the pioneers.

For Denney, Indigeneity was implicit in Western identity. The governance of the fur trade companies and the political, military, and financial power of mixed-race families was part of his Western worldview. Harold Innis noted that “The Indian and his culture were fundamental to the growth of Canadian Institutions.”³⁷ Indigenous people were not as distanced from positions of power as they were in central Canada. Mixed-race families rose to positions of leadership in the western provinces, the most obvious example being the family of BC Governor James Douglas (governor of BC from 1858 to 1864) and Lady Amelia Connolly, Premier John Norquay (Premier of MB from 1878 to 1887), and later Premier Peter Lougheed (Premier of AB from 1971 to 1985), and Wab Kinew (Premier of MB from October 2023 to the present). Even Louis

the Illinois State Historical Society 110, no. 2 (2017): 129+; Susan L. Joudrey, “The Expectations of a Queen: Identity and Race Politics in the Calgary Stampede,” in *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, ed. Sarah Carter, Alvin Finkel, and Peter Fortna, The West Unbound (Edmonton: AU Press, 2010). See also Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century*, 1st ed., School for Advanced Research Resident Scholar Series (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2011); Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*, Kindle, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); McPherson, “Home Tales”; Perry, *Colonial Relations*; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender Race, and the Making of British Columbia*.

³⁵ Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History*.

³⁶ Denney to Friends and Relatives, June 21, 1968.

³⁷ Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 392.

Riel was re-envisioned as a “Father of Confederation, and a champion of western rights.”³⁸ This acceptance may not have carried much outside of the West and does not in any way preclude the class stratification and racism that prairie Metis and First Nations continue to suffer across Canada.³⁹ Starting in the 1890s, the Selkirk settlement took on a new importance. Gerald Friesen notes, “in the pages of western histories of the time, one could find a glorification of the Selkirk settlement and an emphasis on the autonomy of western historical development, and in the pages of western novels, a celebration of the very spirit of the land.”⁴⁰ Selkirk was the historic home of Mildred’s family.

Contact with Indigenous people was seen as a rite of passage for a pioneer experience. In her discussion of women’s narratives, historian Katheryn McPherson included unexpected encounters with Indigenous peoples as a rite of passage.⁴¹ Women occupied a special space or ‘contact zone.’ Historians Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale write, “Women occupied the spaces of colonial encounter between Aboriginals and newcomers as both colonizers and the colonized, transgressing restrictive boundaries and making history”⁴² Mildred Denney occupied a ‘contact zone’ for Denney and other genealogists interested in Metis families.

³⁸ Braz, *The False Traitor*.

³⁹ Jeffery Taylor, “Capitalist Development, Forms of Labour and Class Formation in Prairie Canada,” in *The West and beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, ed. Sarah Carter, Alvin Finkel, and Peter Fortna, The West Unbound (Edmonton: AU Press, 2010); Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900*, Themes in Canadian Social History (Toronto, [Ontario] ; University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁴⁰ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 219.

⁴¹ McPherson, “Home Tales”; Donald Swainson, “Canada Annexes the West: Colonial Status Confirmed,” ed. Don Wright, Bruce W Hodgins, and W. H Heick (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1978), 137–57; Weinstein, *The Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*; Perry, *Colonial Relations*; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender Race, and the Making of British Columbia*.

⁴² Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, “Introduction,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 1.

In their article “Talking to my Daughter about Archives,” Metis genealogist Darrell Loyer and his daughter, University of Alberta librarian Jessie Loyer, talk about why they think Denney collected Metis genealogies:

Darrell. Charles Denney, I met him. I knew him. Back in the day....

Jessie. Who was he?

Darrell. Charles Denney. Just a genealogist person. And his wife was Métis.

Jessie. Oh, so that’s how he knew.

Darrell. That’s how he started, I think. Doing some of her family’s. And then it just went from family to the next family, to the next family and then all of a sudden it went to all of us out here. Because I think she is originally from maybe Manitoba.⁴³

“All of us,” refers to the files and family research shifting to include Loyer and other Metis in Alberta who have since used Denney’s records to trace their families.

Mildred’s family history and her connection to ‘ten tribes’ provided the catalyst for Denney’s genealogical passion. Denney wrote in his Christmas message in 1969 of a trip to Victoria, BC, stating “The occasion was the annual dinner of the Lord Selkirk Society there. As you know, the descendants of the Lord Selkirk Settlers at Red River have a special place in my affection. One of them in particular; my wife.”⁴⁴ Denney goes on to mention that the Selkirk descendants “treated him like royalty” during his trip to Victoria. There was reverent, almost biblical, language here, “princess,” “ten tribes,” and “royalty” indicate a kind of elevated status being associated to Mildred.

Denney felt Mildred’s family was important enough to suggest their artifacts should be included in a museum collection dedicated to the history of Red River families. Mildred

⁴³ Jessie (Cree-Métis) Loyer and Darrell (Métis) Loyer, “Talking with My Daughter About Archives: Métis Researchers and Genealogy,” *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies*, Special Issue: Indigenous Knowledges, 5, no. 1 (2021), <https://kula.uvic.ca/index.php/kula/article/view/140/324>.

⁴⁴ Denney to Friends and Relatives, Christmas 1969.

inherited a rolling pin from her grandmother Catherine Pritchard. The rolling pin was made for Catherine by her great uncle Hugh Matheson as a wedding present and passed down to Mildred.⁴⁵ Denney discussed donating the rolling pin to the Ross House, a museum located in the home of Metis William and Jemima Ross. It was the first Post Office in Western Canada and was run at the time by the Historical Society of Winnipeg.⁴⁶ In a series of letters to museum curator Wilson Green in 1970, Denney asks if they might be interested in the artifact:

When I first met you, you were in the Ross house. And there the Society had a number of interesting artifacts [sic]. At that time you indicated you would like to have more. Now I am disposed to accommodate you in that. ...

What I have in mind is to send you a rolling pin made in 1840 by Hugh Matheson for John Bushy Matheson and Catherine Pritchard on their wedding day. it would be a gift from my wife. Wrapped around the rolling pin I have made a chart which shows my wife's connection to John Matheson and his parents as well as Catherine Pritchard and her parents. I would think this chart would give the rolling pin considerable interest. But I want to be sure that the rolling pin would be on display and that it would be protected.⁴⁷

What's interesting about the donation is that Denney did not see the actual artifact as valuable; rather, it was the genealogical connection. Denney wrapped Mildred's family genealogy around the pin, bestowing it with historical value. As Gloyn et al. note, "objects held in family archives play an important role within the wider landscape of memory and history."⁴⁸ The museum responded that the rolling pin sounded "like a marvellous acquisition, as well as memorial. Please tell Mrs. Denney it will be placed under glass and greatly prized."⁴⁹ Denney sent the pin

⁴⁵ Charles Denney to Leila Brown, November 30, 1970, M7144/34 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴⁶ "Ross House Museum History," Seven Oaks & Ross House Museum, accessed July 14, 2024, <http://www.sevenoakshouse.ca/history.html>.

⁴⁷ Charles Denney to William F. Green and Manitoba Historical Society, January 22, 1970, M7144/120 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴⁸ Gloyn et al., "The Ties That Bind: Materiality, Identity, and the Life Course in the 'Things' Families Keep," 157.

⁴⁹ William F. Green to Charles Denney, January 27, 1970, M7144/120 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

and the genealogy, but there was one issue: Mildred was unaware, as she suffered from advanced Parkinson's disease, diagnosed in 1961.⁵⁰

Mildred's diagnosis of Parkinson's was discussed in many of Denney's letters. He noted that he felt he missed an opportunity with Mildred's illness. He wrote, "I think it is wonderful that so long ago you took an interest in matters concerning the family and made the necessary efforts to record things that would otherwise be forgotten.... Many a time I regret that I wasted so many opportunities to learn and record interesting things about Mildred's family as well as my own."⁵¹ The connection between family, memory, and history, and the fact Mildred suffered from an illness that led to a significant cognitive decline should not be dismissed. Mildred was moved into a home in June of 1968. Denney wrote, "Though her spirit has been strong and her mind as bright as could be expected, as you know, her body has been quite unwell for a long time. Bit by bit her physical condition has deteriorated over the months to the point it seemed wisest that she should have round the clock care of a well staffed nursing home."⁵² In his 1969 Friends and Family Christmas letter, Denney wrote that Mildred's condition had continued to deteriorate, adding "...her thoughts [are] so confused that visiting her is not the pleasant experience it once was."⁵³ Mildred died at 77 years old in 1973 while Denney was away on a genealogy trip to Saskatchewan with William Green, whose museum houses Mildred's rolling pin. Denney wrote about the circumstances of her death to his close friend and correspondent Clarence Kipling:

⁵⁰ Charles Denney to Betty Beattie, December 13, 1970, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵¹ Charles Denney to Ruth Buck, November 21, 1970, M7144/36 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵² Denney to Friends and Relatives, June 21, 1968.

⁵³ Denney to Friends and Relatives, Christmas 1969.

I was away on that trip. We left on the 12th as planned. Then, on the 15th, about two hours after we checked into a planned. I got word my wife had died about five o'clock. I think it would be simplest to say she died of pneumonia. As soon as I could get my wits about me I phoned arrangements for a Memorial Service. Because we had had both exerted ourselves quite a bit that day we were tire[d]. So we drove home on Thursday--a little over 400 miles.

On Friday we had the Service. It didn't give June much of a show: but she and all her family made it up in time. So did my friends Bessie and Lorimer Hunter. Considering my wife's age and her longtime out of circulation there was a really good turn-out for the Service. I was really surprised by some of the people who came. Also by some who didn't make it. Afterward a goodly number came to my suite for a lunch engineered by some of the women. Bless their loving hearts. I was really surrounded by concern and good will....

The next day Mr. Green and I took off again. He had come all the way from Winnipeg for this trip and I hated to disappoint him. I wanted to get away from the phone and the personal calls. My threshold of emotion is pretty low. That has been very obvious since we returned and I am alone. Think I must be made of blubber."

In true Denney fashion, he then tells Kipling details about the trip, where they went, and the information they gathered for his files.

Denney continued to connect Mildred to his research. In his letter announcing Mildred's death, he wrote:

That she has been unable to participate with me in the family research and writing of the last six years in a matter of very great regret to me. She was very fond of her family, and very proud of the historic part played by her forebears on both her mother's and her father's side. Certainly, had she enjoyed good health, she would have rejoiced to help me build a written monument to her Selkirk Settler and other relatives."

Denney equated his love and devotion to his wife of 46 years with his genealogical pursuits. The choice of words, "written monument," seems key here. His entire collection is a monument to Mildred. When he discussed her grave, he noted that he hoped to arrange for a "suitable marker," which seemed far less impactful than his proposed written monument to her family. In the end,

her marker was extensive and references her family's history, listing the Selkirk connections of which Denney was so proud.⁵⁴

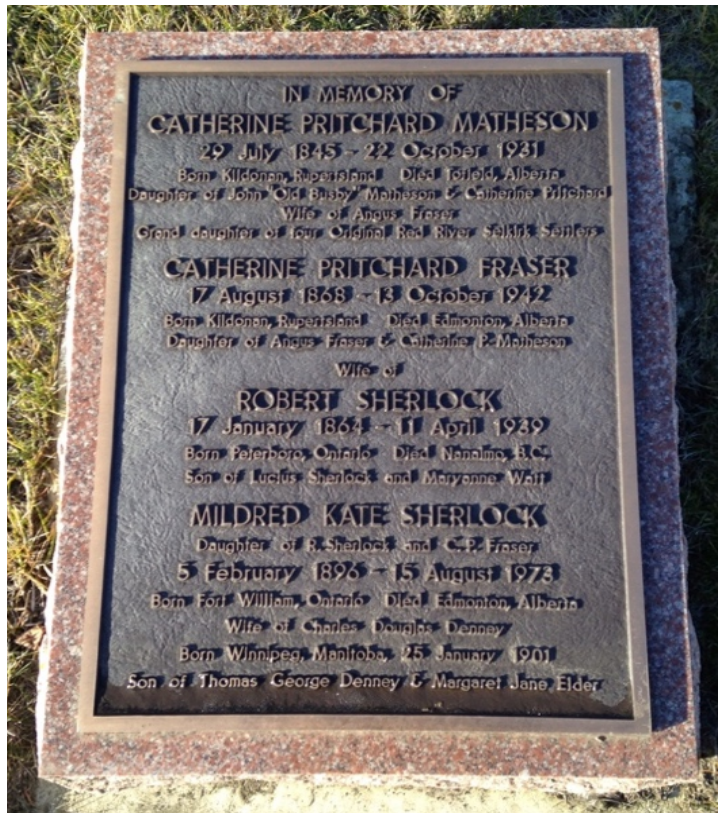


Figure 2-3 Mildred Denney's grave with Extensive Headstone, Tofield Cemetery, Tofield, AB. Photo used with permission.

Denney left teaching in 1939. He had been teaching bookkeeping and taking accounting classes when he moved to a position with the Alberta Treasury Department.⁵⁵ Denney worked in the Department of Trade and Industry for a decade, launching and supervising Alberta's credit unions.⁵⁶ Credit unions were introduced to Canada first in Quebec by Alphonse Desjardins in 1905.⁵⁷ Credit Unions were cooperative, non-profit, and member-owned. During the Great Depression, they became

increasingly popular alternatives to eastern-owned banks. Eastern financial power was an area of colonization resented by businesses in the west and spurred much of the new political movements during the depression.⁵⁸ In 1943, Denney left the provincial government and started

⁵⁴ "Mildred Kate Sherlock Denney (1896-1973) - Find a Grave," Find a Grave.com, November 16, 2015, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/96198312/mildred_kate-denney.

⁵⁵ Charles Denney to Calgary Herald Employment, July 3, 1939, M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵⁶ Denney, "Charles Denney C.V."; A.M. Munro to Deputy Minister W.D. King, March 31, 1943, M7144/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵⁷ Arthur Turner, *Forging the Alternative: A History of the Alberta Credit Union Idea* (Edmonton: Credit Union Central, 1984), 13.

⁵⁸ Turner, 1.

accounting full time, opening his own income tax and accounting firm.⁵⁹ Additionally, Denney served as treasurer in several organizations, including Rundle's Mission historical site and the Amisk Waskahegan [Edmonton] branch of the Historical Society of Alberta (HSA).

Interestingly, Denney neglects to list one board on his CV, nor does he mention it in most of his correspondence. In a letter to Thelma Arbour, he listed his involvement with the United Church associations. Specifically, he mentioned Rundle's Mission, the Church Extension Council, and one board he had not previously mentioned, that for the Indian School.⁶⁰

The "Indian School" was the Edmonton Indian Residential School, run by the United Church of Canada. Denney appears in an article by Jack Danylchuk entitled "A School's Hidden Shame; A B.C. lawsuit dredged up 40-year-old Memories of Abuse at the Edmonton Indian Residential School." The article discusses accusations filed by clergyman Earl Stotesbury in 1960 against the school's chaplain, Jim Ludford, for sexually abusing children in his care. The article, published in 1988, discusses the school and the United Church's covering up of the abuse and their discussions around how to fix the crisis. The abuse was publicly revealed when a former student filed a 1998 lawsuit against the late Ludford.⁶¹ The article interviews people involved with the school including Denney, identifying him as the school advisory committee's Secretary Treasurer. Denney, who was 97 at the time of the interview, said, "I've been wondering if somebody was going to dig that up. We had some wonderful staff there; it's just too bad that Ludford man had to be involved. The school operated from 1923 to 1968, and so far as I know

⁵⁹ Denney, "Charles Denney C.V."

⁶⁰ Charles Denney to Thelma Arbour, February 14, 1996, M8981/5 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶¹ Jack Danylchuk, "A School's Hidden Shame; A B.C. Lawsuit Has Dredged up 40-Year-Old Memories of Abuse at the Edmonton Indian Residential School," *Edmonton Journal*, November 8, 1998.

that was the only incident ever at the school.”⁶² This was, of course, untrue; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recounts a rebellion at the school where students barred the doors to their dormitory to stop the abuse at night. One of the survivors recalled, “We threw a list of demands down to the principal; we wrote on there that we wanted better food, we wanted certain staff people fired that we were suspicious of, and we wanted our clothes back that we came with when we, we got to school.”⁶³ The Edmonton School was, like many of the schools, poor at instruction. In the TRC’s *A Knock on the Door*, they note, “In 1941, Muriel, Doreen, and Kathleen Steinhauer were kept home from the Edmonton residential school because their parents were not satisfied with the progress they were making at the school.”⁶⁴

Other residential schools appear in the Denney’s genealogies as sources or locations of individual events. Denney’s Daniels family file references a 1921 baptism of a 5-year-old Robert Daniel and a 1940 marriage registered at “St M.” school.⁶⁵ It appears that the Daniels family also had connections to One Arrow First Nation, near Batoche, so it’s likely the “St M” school referenced is St Micheal’s School located near the reserve at Duck Lake, SK. There is also a letter in the McKay Family file to Denney from a former St. Cyprian School Residential School teacher. She wrote about her time teaching at the school. She had “19 Indian boys to look after ages 6-21, then I taught 55 pupils ages 5-21 – grades 1 to 8 – for 6 yrs.” She also mentions a

⁶² Danylchuk.”

⁶³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, “The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada” (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Electronic Library, 2015), 164, https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Survivors_Speak_English_Web.pdf.

⁶⁴ Phil Fontaine and Aimée Craft, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Edited and Abridged* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 48.

⁶⁵ Charles Denney, “Family Tree: Family of Patrick Daniels and Marie Catherine Kitchikep,” n.d., M7144/140000 Daniel, William Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

missionary “Vanner” from Surrey, England, who visited the school for the Anglican church.⁶⁶ It is likely that Denney’s involvement in the school had less to do with an interest in the Residential School system and more was an extension of his work with the United Church.

Denney was a lifelong member of the United Church of Canada, signing a letter to the church as an “honorary Elder.”⁶⁷ Denney was a member of several of the church’s activities. He appears in an article about the McDougall Church’s Men’s Club closing in 1975. The article describes the club’s activities, stating, “for 65 years the club provided for the men of the church a twice a week diet of interesting speakers, sing songs, plays, skits, hijinks, and high spirits, most of it provided by the members themselves”⁶⁸ Denney, a member for 40 years and whose photo appeared alongside the article, is quoted: “it’s a tragedy the young men didn’t come in... and it’s a tragedy that men grow old”⁶⁹ The men’s club was also a driving force behind taking care of the church. A letter from Dr. Herb Ashford, the Missionary and Maintenance Department of the United Church, effusively praises Denney’s involvement in the church’s organization. He wrote:

I can’t let you go without thanking you for all you did for me personally and all you accomplished at McDougall. I haven’t a doubt in the world that your regime wrote the brightest chapter ever recorded in the history of McDougall and I make that statement I am not insensitive to the years 1908-1918. Yours were the greatest years.... In any

⁶⁶ Elsie Bray to Charles Denney, February 28, 1981, M7144/33441 McKay, John and Mary Favel: descendants: backup material. Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB. For more information on the Anglican Church “Vanners” see: Dolmage, “The Exceptional-Typical History of a Métis Elder in Fort St. John”; Monica Storrs, *God’s Galloping Girl: The Peace River Diaries of Monica Storrs, 1929-1931* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984); Monica Storrs, *Companions of the Peace: Diaries and Letters of Monica Storrs, 1931-1939*, ed. Vera R. Fast (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1999); and Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2002).

⁶⁷ Charles Denney to Council of McDougall United Church, March 16, 1998, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶⁸ “Historic Men’s Club Folds at McDougall. It Served a Generation, What of the Next?,” *St. Johns Edmonton Report*, December 8, 1975, M7144/401900 Edmonds Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Denney to Council of McDougall United Church, March 16, 1998.

⁶⁹ “Historic Men’s Club Folds at McDougall. It Served a Generation, What of the Next?”

moments of discouragement take a look at the new McDougall – a projection of the faith and courage of Charles Denney.⁷⁰

Likely Ashford was talking about the refurbishment and expansion of the Church buildings that Denney chaired. Denney appears holding a shovel alongside other members of the Church's Executive in a photo in the *Edmonton Journal* for the sod-turning ceremony for the church's new wing. The caption notes C.D. Denney as chairman of the building committee and that the extension will comprise three stories, with offices on the top two floors and halls on the first.⁷¹ The church claimed to be the home of the oldest Protestant congregation in Alberta.⁷² It was built in its current form in 1910 as a Methodist Church, in honour of the McDougalls, a prominent 19th-century Edmonton family. Upon its opening in 1910, the church boasted a 1500-person capacity, with a spectacular view of the river valley.⁷³ The Church was merged with the local Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist congregations after Parliament passed the United Church Act in 1924.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Dr. Herb Ashford to Charles Denney, March 1, 1956, M7144/401900 Edmonds Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷¹ "Start Church Extension: Photo," *Edmonton Journal*, May 22, 1955, M7144/401900 Edmonds Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷² MacDougall United Church, "MacDougall United Church: Our History," MacDougall United Church, 2024, <https://www.mcdougallunited.com/history.html>.

⁷³ Connor J. Thompson, "Bricks, Faith, Community: A History of Edmonton Christianity to 1929," *Alberta History* 66, no. 2 (Spring 2018).

⁷⁴ The United Church was formed with several goals: to amalgamate many of the evangelical churches in Canada, to consolidate their influence through a single place of worship and to become the "national Church of Canada." See MacDougall United Church, "MacDougall United Church: Our History"; Don Schweitzer, *The United Church of Canada: A History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), xi. Both of Denney's marriages were in the United Church, though neither at McDougall, Denney and Mildred were married by Rec. R. Geo Watt, the Tofield United Church minister in 1927, and Denney and Elsie in Knox United (now Evangelical) church in 1974; Charles Denney to Elsie Colby, October 15, 1974, M7144/265 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; "Wedding Announcement Denny-Sherlock," *Unknown*, 1927, M8189/266 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Charles Denney to Miriam Hutchinson, December 19, 1974, M7144/133 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Denney to Council of MacDougall United Church, March 16, 1998.

In the meantime, Denney did not enjoy being single and found companionship soon after his first wife died. Denney's second wife, Elsie Wilson Colby, was also widowed. Before her first husband, Howard Colby, died in 1966, they had three children: Shirley, Joy, and Douglas. She and Denney met and married within a year of Mildred's death, in 1974, when Denney was 73 and Elsie was 58.⁷⁵ In a letter to W.G. Speechley, one of Denney's ongoing correspondents, Denney writes about losing Mildred and meeting Elsie: "You can hardly believe how mixed up my life has been this last year. And, would you believe it? Instead of gaining a hard working secretary I have gained a wife that is determined to feed me so well that I will gain 20 pound[s] in weight."⁷⁶ Denney wrote of their wedding, "Elsie was naturally apprehensive about meeting so many of Mildred's relatives; and it was often awkward when I had to remark on the relationship. But she found herself so universally and joyfully accepted that she is now very happy in the memory... those Selkirk Settler descendants accepted her joyfully."⁷⁷ Born in Sturgeon Falls, AB, she trained as a secretary and worked for much of her life, most notably for the Canadian Authors Association and for the Eastwood United Church.⁷⁸ Elsie's arrival uprooted Denney's life. He complains to Clarence Kipling about Elsie selling her house to move into Denney's apartment, "Every time she parts with something it is like parting with an old friend. And you should see our suite It is piled high with boxes and cartons and 'junk.'"⁷⁹ This may not have been entirely Elsie's fault. Darrell Loyer describes Denney's home: "He has—oh my God, Jessie—he had one of his bedrooms in his little apartment, because I went to his apartment. And so, he has—oh, he had one bedroom that was just packed. Packed! With bookshelves, boxes, paper. All

⁷⁵ "Denney, Elsie E.L. Colby," *Edmonton Journal*, January 1996, sec. Obituary.

⁷⁶ Charles Denney to W.G. Speechly, January 22, 1975, M7144/34 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷⁷ Denney to Hutchinson, December 19, 1974.

⁷⁸ "Denney, Elsie E.L. Colby."

⁷⁹ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, May 18, 1975, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

the genealogy on paper. But he had done phenomenal stuff.”⁸⁰ It’s never explicitly said how Elsie felt about Denney’s ‘monumental work’ and the space it took in her new home. This would have been around the time that Denney considered relocating his full collection to the Glenbow Archives. He writes to a friend in August 1974 that the Glenbow had shown interest in his collection, as the unpublished material, some 70,000 index cards and 100 binders of material, may even be worth more than the published material.⁸¹

Elsie did not share Denney’s genealogical passion despite accompanying Denney on his genealogical adventures. In an article in the *St John’s Edmonton Report* on local genealogists, the writer features both Denney and Elsie, recounting one of Denney’s trips to visit potential family sources: “Two years ago they stopped at Charles Denney’s distant cousin in Casper Wyoming, to discuss family. Realising Mrs. Denney had dropped out of the conversation Alice Jackson began inquiring about her family ‘Springer!’ she exclaimed ‘my husband was a Springer,’ she disappeared into her library and came back with an article on the Springers.”⁸² There are other hints that Elsie was not always on board. Denney noted to Kipling, “... I expect that this year we will mostly just be holidaying. That will be a lot easier on my wife, she gets pretty frustrated while I neglect her to visit people. Unfortunately, she doesn’t have the knack of helping me”⁸³ In a letter to genealogist and librarian Pat McCloy, Denney recounted a three-hour phone call, where “all sorts of families came under a review” however fruitful the information,

⁸⁰ Loyer and Loyer, “Talking with My Daughter About Archives: Métis Researchers and Genealogy,” 5.

⁸¹ Charles Denney to Margaret Allen and Henry Allen, August 16, 1974, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁸² “TREES: Back-Handed Rewards Abound in Albertans’ Ancestor Search,” *St. Johns Edmonton Report*, April 14, 1978, M7144/231 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁸³ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, June 2, 1981, M7144/155 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

the call was “much to Elsie’s disgust.”⁸⁴ These hints indicate Elsie's frustration with Denney’s financial and temporal investment in his genealogical pursuits. Interestingly, an article about Denney in *Legacy* magazine describes Elsie as “another writer with a passion for history. Strolling hand in hand they became a feature of old Strathcona”⁸⁵ This would have been information Denney gave, as Elsie had passed five years prior. However, identifying Elsie as having a passion for history and describing her as a ‘writer’ doesn’t align with the content of Denney’s letters and how Denney describes Elsie’s writing pursuits.

The *Legacy* article calls Elsie “a writer,” and she has a long personal and professional relationship with the Canadian Author’s Association (CAA). Elsie’s obituary notes that she worked for the Association, but it’s clear that this relationship was deeper than just as an employee. As Elsie travelled to multiple CAA events over the years, Denney wrote about attending the annual meeting, “The Canadian Authors' Association is meeting in Winnipeg late in June. While it is really of very little interest to me, Elsie likes to be there, besides, a provides an excuse to go to Winnipeg.”⁸⁶ Both Denney and Elsie wanted to pursue writing, but they did very little to encourage one another. A friend of Elsie’s writes to her in 1975 that they have just finished a children’s story and that “you don’t say whether you are you are writing, I hope that you are.”⁸⁷ Elsie attended a writing group every Friday, but Denney dismissed them, saying, “It doesn’t get her anywhere, but it’s an outside interest.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, August 19, 1989, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁸⁵ Kydd, “Charles D. Denney: Edmonton’s Keen Observer of History Celebrates His 100th Birthday.”

⁸⁶ Charles Denney and Elsie Denney to Florence Baker and George Baker, c1979, M7144/22 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁸⁷ Annette to Elsie Denney, February 11, 1975, M7144/34 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁸⁸ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, February 1985, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Elsie's long-term desire to write predated her marriage to Denney. Elsie's files contain several letters from writer and suffragette Nellie McClung. McClung appears to know Elsie and her mother, expressing regret that she didn't call on her mother when she was in town.⁸⁹ A second letter indicated Elsie asked McClung for direction on how to become a writer. While we don't have Elsie's letter, we do have McClung's advice:

You certainly have had a varied experience, and having a desire to write is an indication of talent. Your letter is well constructed and reads smoothly, showing a good sense of rhythm. You are quite right to look ahead to the time that you have time on your hands and to prepare for it. If you are interested in Missionary work, and I believe it is the most thrilling story of the day. It might be an idea to select one country and inform yourself on it. Say China, or India. Or you might like a subject like the handicrafts of various Countries. People are always interested in that. Or having raised 4 children⁹⁰ you could be a helpful writer on the problems which face the youth of today – above all things specialize. The libraries are full of books. Knowledge hangs on every bough...⁹¹

Nellie McClung was one of Alberta's most famous women. A prolific writer, she published seventeen books between 1908 and 1945, including *In Times Like These* (1915) and her autobiographies 1935s *Clearing the West* and 1945s *The Stream Runs Fast*.⁹² McClung is best remembered now for her work on woman's suffrage as one of the "Famous Five" and herself taking a seat in the Alberta legislature in 1921 with the Liberals, a party Charles Denney abhorred.⁹³ There is no evidence that Elsie ended up publishing, nor does it appear that Charles encouraged her hobby, which is ironic considering how he encourages others' writing pursuits,

⁸⁹ Nellie McClung to Elsie Colby, July 14, 1941, M7144/116 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁹⁰ This is incorrect, Elsie and Howard had 3 Children.

⁹¹ Nellie McClung to Elsie Colby, June 12, 1946, M7144/116 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁹² Nellie L. McClung, *Nellie McClung: The Complete Autobiography*, Broadview reprint ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

⁹³ Veronica Strong-Boag and Michelle Lynn Rosa, "Some Small Legacy of Truth," in *Nellie McClung: The Complete Autobiography*, by Nellie L. McClung, Broadview reprint ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 16.

not to mention his own aspirations. Congratulating his friends Henry and Elizabeth Siemens on publishing their book, he notes, “here I have been working on family histories for over sixteen years without publishing even one... if I were equal to my opportunities I would have published several dozen books”⁹⁴ It’s clear Elsie’s relationship with the Writers Union was significant, as her eulogy was written by Mary Dawe, Past President of the CAA and read by Edmonton humourist and CBC broadcaster Alex Mair.⁹⁵

Second marriages can be complicated, particularly with marriages made later in life. Elsie writes that after her marriage to Denney, she missed her children, particularly around Christmas. She wrote that before she married Denney, she “would go out to them...and my daughter Joy asked us to go out again this year, but Charles won’t go. They don’t mean as much to him as they are not his children”⁹⁶ Denney instead preferred hosting an ‘orphan’s Christmas’ at their home where friends without nearby family were welcome.⁹⁷ He wrote, “For many years even before we [he and Elsie] were married, I had established the practice of having in folk who would otherwise be alone. It was a sort of co-operative venture. ... During the day I would leave the guests to their own devices while I visited with my wife [Mildred] in hospital. After Elsie and I were married, she felt she had to manage the whole event.”⁹⁸ Denney refused to change his Christmas tradition to include Elsie’s family. Elsie, despite being younger than Denney, developed significant health issues in later life. She went blind in one eye from a localized stroke

⁹⁴ Charles Denney to Henry Siemens and Elizabeth Siemens, February 2, 1984, M8199/229, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁹⁵ Denney to Arbour, February 14, 1996.

⁹⁶ Elsie Denney to Betsy, November 26, 1985, M8189/1a Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁹⁷ Denney to Betsy.

⁹⁸ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, January 30, 1987, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

just after she visited her children for her 83rd birthday and received a pacemaker in 1994.⁹⁹ This, coupled with Denney's disinterest in Elsie's hobbies, even when they bisected with hers, and her clear disinterest in his previous wife's genealogy, gives us pause.

In a letter to family friend June Kelley, Denney described Elsie's last years: "Death claimed my Elsie on January 25th, 1996, with a massive stroke. She had not been well for at least three years for she was suffering the beginnings of Alzheimer's disease, and her mind was in considerable unrest. It was a wonderful blessing for her to go, even in struggle, than live to be warehoused in an auxiliary hospital prison."¹⁰⁰ Denney goes on to describe the help he received from a home care worker, Margaret Chalus, who worked with Elsie and stayed with him until he moved into Churchill Manor, a senior's home in 1997.¹⁰¹ There is an odd fragment of writing in the McCloy correspondence file that may indicate that Elsie's children were unhappy with Denney keeping their mother at home. It appears on the back of a copy of a July 1994 letter to McCloy and appears to recount an argument with Denney and one of Elsie's daughters and seems to be written to one of Elsie's other children. Elsie's health began to deteriorate in 1994. The surviving fragment reads, "[Shirley or Joy's] tantrum finally prompted me to tell her that under no circumstances would her mother go to live with her nor to be dominated by her. She [Elsie's daughter] cut off the conversation with the emphatic announcement, 'You are a rat!'

⁹⁹ Charles Denney to June Kelley, March 12, 1997, M8189/100 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, June 10, 1989, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁰⁰ Denney to June Kelley, March 12, 1997.

¹⁰¹ Charles Denney to Beth Leslie, January 28, 1999, M8981/209 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

[referring to Denney] Your mother and I married for better or for worse, until [t]hat one of us..."¹⁰² See below; this is the fragment in its entirety:

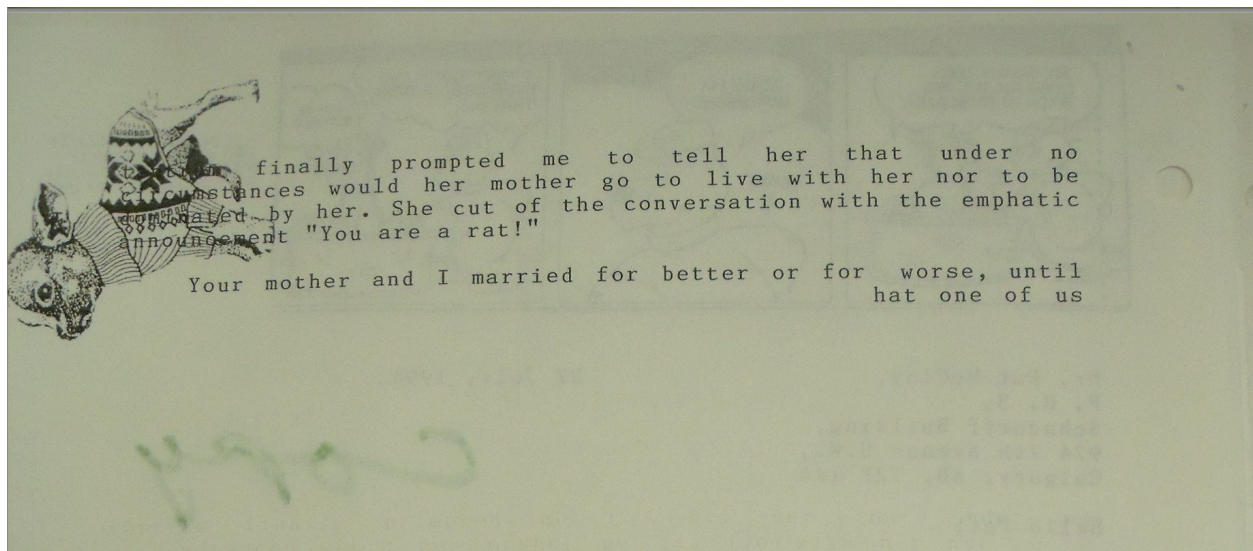


Figure 2-4 Fragment on the back of a July 24, 1994, letter to Pat McCloy

The meaning of the fragment is somewhat clear: Elsie had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1993, and one of her daughters wanted her to be cared for in a facility and not at home by Denney. Another interesting aspect of the fragment is a skewed image of a reindeer that overlaps with the text, so the paper had clearly been reused since Christmas. Denney also wrote in the letter to McCloy that appears on the other side that he is getting used to using his new word processor, so the fragment could have been printed in error, and Denney just reused the piece of paper to copy his letter to McCloy. There's no indication that the fragment was ever sent as part of a letter or if Denney was writing in a diary. We do learn, however, that Elsie's children were unhappy with her living situation near the end of her life. It seems to indicate disagreement between Denney and Elsie's children on where Elsie should spend her last years. Perhaps because of this disagreement, Denney hired caregiver and Registered Nurse Margaret Chalus in

¹⁰² Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, July 22, 1994, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

October 1995 to care for Elsie.¹⁰³ Elsie died the following year and was buried with her first husband on February 1, 1996, in Westlawn Memorial Gardens in Edmonton.¹⁰⁴

Denney continued to employ Margaret Chalus as his own caregiver following Elsie's death. In August of 1997, Denney moved to Churchill Manor. This relationship is unclear, though in a letter of recommendation, he notes that "her cheerfulness, her sociability, and her constant care for my comfort and safety, are adequate reasons for my introducing her to people as 'my Guardian Angel.'"¹⁰⁵ Denney, in his Christmas letter, writes at 98 years old, "he is happily installed, well fed, and after three months on a non-writing project, looking forward to new achievements in writing."¹⁰⁶ Denney died three years later on February 13, 2002, at the impressive age of 101, and was buried with his parents and three brothers on March 16, 2002, in Tofield Cemetery in Consort, Alberta.¹⁰⁷

Denney's Politics

As Charles Denney spent much of his early career working for the provincial government as a teacher and a civil servant at the Treasury Board, he was also a deeply and unapologetically political person. He notes that "all my life I have been politically conscious, and consciously

¹⁰³ Charles Denney to Whom it May Concern, April 21, 1998, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁰⁴ "Elsie Lillian Wilson Colby (1906-1996) - Find a Grave," Find a Grave.com, November 11, 2017, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/148848020/elsie_lillian-colby.

¹⁰⁵ Denney to Whom it May Concern, April 21, 1998; Denney to Leslie, January 28, 1999.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Denney to Shirley Wishart, December 8, 1998, M8189/208 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁰⁷ Aaron Shaw, "Charles Douglas Denney (1901-2002) - Find a Grave..." Find a Grave.com, August 29, 2012, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/96198311/charles_douglas-denney; "Charles Denney," *Edmonton Journal*, February 15, 2002, sec. Obituary.

involved”¹⁰⁸ In a 2001 article about Denney in *Legacy* magazine, the authors note that Denney has an enduring interest in politics, visiting the poll clerks in his retirement residence: “Denney not only told stories about working polling booths himself, but was also a scrutineer when the polls closed. A few days later, he had his pen out and was analyzing the election results riding by riding. At one time, Denney was active in politics himself. In 1935, he spoke for the Social Credit Party in five constituencies.”¹⁰⁹ Much of his later correspondence includes political discussions, as well as an extensive collection of letters to newspaper editors and letters to politicians across Canada. He justifies his new word processor so he can better write to politicians, “I can tell you that I have used the machine considerably writing to politicians telling them what to do about the Constitution and how to run the Country.”¹¹⁰ Denney’s politics were, like much of Alberta’s, right-wing and populist. He was a member of several political parties and openly voiced support for conservative political groups, including the Social Credit Party, the Reform Party, the Confederation of Regions Party, and the Conservative Party. He also donated and fundraised for money to organizations like the National Citizens Coalition, wrote letters supporting social conservatism, and was an avid reader of the *Edmonton Journal*, *Western Canada Concept*, *Dialogues*, and the *Alberta Report*.

Denney wrote about his support for the Social Credit Party in a letter to the Alberta Treasury Branch. The Branch participated in the creation of the book *Treasured Memories*, published by the *Alberta Report* in honour of the Treasury’s 50th Anniversary.¹¹¹ Denney, a

¹⁰⁸ Charles Denney, “‘Sorry Folks, You Don’t Deserve Me’ From Assets to Liabilities,” *Edmonton Journal*, October 4, 1974, sec. Editorial.

¹⁰⁹ Kydd, “Charles D. Denney: Edmonton’s Keen Observer of History Celebrates His 100th Birthday,” 38.

¹¹⁰ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, August 18, 1991, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹¹¹ *Alberta Report*, *Treasured Memories: A Celebration of Alberta Treasury Branches 50th Anniversary.*, North of 52 Collection (Edmonton: Alberta Report Ltd., 1988).

former employee of the Treasury Branch, was one of the individuals who proposed the Treasury Branch system in Alberta. He corrected the publication and sends his story as to how the treasury branch was founded. He wrote:

As with many other school teachers, I was a supporter of the Social Credit Party in 1935. The Province was experiencing very distressing economic times. Though we didn't appreciate it, so was the Government. When the Social Creditors took over, they found that the Province was practically broke.... Out there at Cereal, in the heart of the dust bowl, in 1937, I had an inspiration. To somebody in the Government I wrote to point out that the Provincial Treasurer collects money, pays out money, borrows money, lends money, and generally deals with money. Though his office was in Edmonton, there was no reason why he should not set up branches in all reasonable places and in them borrow money through deposits from people who still had some, make loans when possible and desirable, and supply other banking services. The result was that in 1938 we had Alberta Treasury Branches.¹¹²

The “dustbowl”¹¹³ Denney refers to gave birth to the Social Credit party, which, according to historian Alvin Finkel, rose from the inadequacy of the traditional provincial and federal government’s policies to address the resulting poverty of the Great Depression. To address this, new parties, like the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the Social Credit party, grew from their perceived inaction. The Social Creditors advocated for monetary reform that increased an individual’s spending power. The policy advocated for the distribution of capital, or ‘Social Credit’, and, in Alberta, pushed for provincial control of banking, which was shut down quickly by Ottawa. However, the Social Credit party advocated for a government that hired experts to create monetary policy, rather than policy based on the whims of elected officials. This was government by technical experts, not by legislators.¹¹⁴ Alberta was a largely self-

¹¹² Charles Denney to Darlene Dickinson, July 27, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹¹³ The “dust bowl” or the “Prairie Dry Belt” was an area of Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, where farmers attempted dryland farming and had to abandon the area due to the economic collapse during the drought of the Great Depression. For further information see: David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987); Jones.

¹¹⁴ Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta*, 6.

employed workforce; therefore, “the main economic players were excluded and only forces external to their environment could be accused of fostering economic injustices...blaming their problem on central Canadian financial barons.”¹¹⁵ Albertans felt separated from the people making decisions about their money, which they felt led to the catastrophe of the Great Depression.

Denney wrote to his friend Pat McCloy, “in 1937 the Social Creditors wanted to start a Bank of Alberta but were denied by the Federal Government. That bothered me. Pondering the situation, I reflected that beside collecting taxes, and spending the proceeds, the Provincial Treasurer also borrowed money, and lent money.”¹¹⁶ The *Legacy* article notes that Denney “decided that federal banking systems didn’t understand the needs of the West. What if the provincial Treasurer established a series of branches ... these could operate as banking and lending institutions” providing the concept of the Alberta Treasury Branch.¹¹⁷ The Treasury system of lenders, proposed by Denney, would be run by the province, placed in the largely rural communities, and would support small businesses, which fit neatly into a Social Credit mindset. Denney was a paid member of the Social Credit League in 1971,¹¹⁸ the last year the Social Credit party was in power, losing to Peter Lougheed and the Progressive Conservatives in 1971.¹¹⁹ He was also fêted and given a certificate by the Treasury Branch for his role. He told his friend

¹¹⁵ Finkel, 6.

¹¹⁶ Alberta Treasury Branches, “Certificate: In Appreciation for His Long Standing Support, and Especially for Proposing the Concept That Prompted the Government of Alberta to Establish the System of Treasury Boards by Order in Council No 1069/38 on Aug 29,1938” (Alberta Treasury Branch, July 29, 1992), M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹¹⁷ Kydd, “Charles D. Denney: Edmonton’s Keen Observer of History Celebrates His 100th Birthday,” 38.

¹¹⁸ O.A. Kennedy to Charles Denney, March 15, 1971, M7144/262 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹¹⁹ Wesley and Morton, “Defining Prairie Politics: Campaigns, Codes and Cultures,” 300.

McCloy: “Very few others will ever know. And the only recognition I will ever have is the certificate that hangs on my wall.”¹²⁰

For Denney, politics was an ongoing preoccupation. In a letter to an American genealogist Karen Marsden, whose husband was running for office, “When you get politics behind you, or out of your system, we should have a good time determining what we jointly know about the McLeans. Some of them!!”¹²¹ Denney himself even satirically expressed mayoral political aspirations in an op-ed to the *Edmonton Journal* on October 4, 1971. He wrote in his article that he was encouraged to run due to his organizational skills and attention to detail, but the cost of running for office put campaigning out of reach. He also noted (tongue in cheek) that he didn’t have the glamour to attract publicity, the interest in manipulating statistics, or the seductive abilities to make himself wealthy in office. He noted, “my friends and supporters are of the timid type. Some of them even believe in uprightness and honesty, and gentlemanly conduct and tactics.”¹²² Denney was incredibly hard on politicians who did not meet his standards. In one letter during the 1993 federal election, he celebrated his good blood pressure as “I am burned up that Mulroney, Clark, Bouchard, Man[ley], and a lot of proven incompetents are. still in control of the country. I hope that Peter Lougheed has the decency to blush, if he can’t hang his head in shame. ... so now to get rid of the lying, cheating, bullying crew,”¹²³ He goes on to note that the

¹²⁰ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, October 23, 1993, M8189/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹²¹ K.C. Marsden ran as a republican in the 27th district in the South Dakota SD, coming in second to incumbent Don Ham. Office of the Secretary of State, “Official Election Returns by Counties For the State of South Dakota: General Election Nov 7, 1978” (Government of South Dakota, 1978), <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/assets/historicalelectiondata/1978G.pdf>.

¹²² Denney, “‘Sorry Folks, You Don’t Deserve Me’ From Assets to Liabilities.”

¹²³ Charles Denney to G.K. Crawfoot, November 20, 1992, M8189/20 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Progressive Conservative Party (PC) is no better than the Liberals, and the best outcome would be a Reform opposition.¹²⁴

Denney reserved a particular dislike for Liberal Party leader Jean Chrétien, the eventual winner of the 1993 election. Denney wrote to Chrétien over a number of issues, including income tax, funding the CBC, American encroachment in publishing, and capital gains. Denney intentionally misspelled Chrétien's surname, referring to him as the "Right Honorable Jean Cretien[sic]" in a December 1996 letter.¹²⁵ This misspelling, likely referring to Chrétien as a "cretin," is not an error.¹²⁶ Denney, as a genealogist focusing on the Metis, was far too aware of francophone naming conventions and too careful and consistent about spelling to make this error repeatedly. It's used as an address to the Prime Minister's office in letters addressed to the Chrétien in January 1997 and November 1997.¹²⁷ It also appears in a letter to Metis leader Shelia Genaille. In the letter, Denney congratulates her on her Governor General award and notes, "I was thinking of you when Cretien[sic] named the new Alberta senator. The recipient of honor seems to have been very worthy."¹²⁸ The new senator in question was Thelma J. Chalifoux, a Metis leader from Alberta and the first Indigenous woman appointed to the Canadian Senate.¹²⁹ In the same letter, Denney notes, "I consider the Senate, as now constituted, a distressing waste

¹²⁴ Denney to Crawfoot.

¹²⁵ Charles Denney to Right Honorable Jean Cretien[sic.], December 28, 1996, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹²⁶ Language reminiscent of the more current use of name calling i.e. "lib-tard" and "Tru-dumb."

¹²⁷ Charles Denney to Right Honorable Jean Cretien[sic.], November 6, 1997, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB. Charles Denney to Right Honorable Jean Cretien[sic.], January 29, 1997, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Denney to Cretien[sic.], November 6, 1997.

¹²⁸ Charles Denney to Shelia Genaille, December 1997, M8981/47 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹²⁹ Senate: Parliament of Canada, "Profile - Chalifoux, Thelma," Library of Parliament, accessed May 24, 2024, https://lop.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/People/Profile?personId=12241.

of money.”¹³⁰ Denney, like many in Alberta, saw the senate as another example of Eastern interference and, as such, was attracted to Preston Manning’s Reform Party.

The Reform Party emerged in the late 1980s as a right-wing federal party, founded by Preston Manning, the son of the 8th premier of Alberta, Ernest Manning. Preston Manning sought to pressure federal politicians to acknowledge the West as a political power in its own right, or as the party’s slogan noted, “The West Wants In.”¹³¹ The Reform Party fed into a history of political alienation “rooted in discontent with political representatives, institutions, and procedures for decision-making associated with representative government in Canada.”¹³² They advocated for more provincial powers and particularly focused on a reformed “Triple-E”(equal, elected, and effective) Senate. Denney was a strong supporter of the Reform Party. In 1991, he notes that although Preston Manning was not as “forthright in his approach to Quebec. I think he should tell them what is going to happen to them [Quebec separatists] if they don't smarten up. Otherwise, I think The Reform Party is my choice.”¹³³

However, the party did not take a hard enough stand for Denney’s liking. He was eager for the Reformers to provoke the status quo. Denney, as a long-time member of the party, had an ongoing correspondence with Manning, writing to him several times between 1996 and 1997. In several letters, Denney advocates for a strong, hard-right stance. He writes that in July of 1996, the party did not win 52 seats by “puss-footing” around. He encourages Manning to “Don't be

¹³⁰ Denney to Genaille, December 1997.

¹³¹ Bright, “The West Wants In,” 149.

¹³² Charles Denney to Ruth Buck, December 1996, M8189/47 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB. Lawson, “Understanding Alienation in Western Canada: Is ‘Western Alienation’ the Problem? Is Senate Reform the Cure?,” 127.

¹³³ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, October 23, 1991, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

afraid of epithets[sic] like extreme, radical, vicious, etc. Turn them on the opposition..." Denney then goes on to list causes he feels the party should take a hard line on, including young offenders, capital punishment, and rescinding prison reform.

The party ignored Denney's advice, and in a letter to Edmonton/Strathcona MP Hugh Hanrahan and copied to Preston Manning, Denney questions Manning's leadership, calling him a hypocrite and pointing out that "Manning talked about the party shooting itself in the foot. now he is shooting it in the belly..."¹³⁴ Preston Manning responded to Denney's letter with a lengthy two-page response. Manning writes, "I cannot for the life of me understand why people of conservative persuasion accept a labelling system which constantly relegates them to the sidelines. My own approach has been to avoid the labels of 'right, left, centre,' 'hard, soft, moderate,' 'fringe vs. middle,' etc., etc., and simply to describe Reform in terms of its basic principles."¹³⁵ Manning goes on to say that the party advocates for balanced budgets, lower taxes, and less government, strengthening the traditional family, reducing dependence on the welfare state, pushing for Canada as a union for equal provinces, more direct democracy and an alternative to the Liberals.¹³⁶ Denney, like many of the early members, is unhappy with the Reform party trying to broaden their appeal: "The separatists are traitors to our country. I believe that they should be loudly denounced as such. Moreover, every Liberal and every Conservative is a collaborator. I think you should denounce them as such on every possible occasion."¹³⁷

Denney fully supported Reform's social conservatism and distinct society status for Quebec.

¹³⁴ Charles Denney to Hugh Hanrahan, May 7, 1996, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹³⁵ Preston Manning to Charles Denney, August 12, 1996, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹³⁶ Manning to Denney.

¹³⁷ Charles Denney to Preston Manning, May 10, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Quebec, French language rights, and the looming issue of separatism is an ongoing frustration for Denney. Quebec is a subject that repeatedly appeared in his correspondence, including referenced in a postscript on the crude stationery Denney self-fashioned.¹³⁸ In January of 1997, Denney told Preston Manning that he hoped he would be the next prime minister, as a government “not dominated by the French element” would be a positive change.¹³⁹ Denney wrote to Manning:

A few minutes ago a woman called to make sure that I am going to vote Reform on June 2nd. It is the only Party that refuses to support DISTINCT SOCIETY for Quebec. If Quebec ever gets that in the Constitution, we can be sure of the break-up of Canada. The Separatists contend that Quebec is a NATION, which is utter nonsense. It was a colony of France. In 1760 it became a colony of Britain. And Canada remained a colony of Britain until 1931.¹⁴⁰

This was a consistent point of contention for Denney. He maintained that when France lost to Britain in 1763, that should have been the end of French language and culture. Denney suggested that Quebec’s Bill 101, which established that people in Quebec had the right to speak and use French in the workplace, was so egregious that it should require a show of force. He cited the British government’s military response to the Lower Canadian Rebellion as an appropriate reaction.¹⁴¹ He wrote to Pierre Elliot Trudeau in 1977 complaining about the Quebec Language Act, Bill 101, calling it “wicked.” He suggested that Trudeau’s government should declare the

¹³⁸ Denney used different versions of his homemade ‘stationary,’ one postscript read “PROMOTION OF MULTICULTURALISM IS STUPID It can lead only to social chaos” another postscript read “A nation destitute of the power to assimilate would be in the position of a man whose Flesh had lost the power to heal; in him every wound would remain an open sore; in a nation every batch of immigrants would persist as ‘foreign bodies.’ YUGOSLAVIA! CANADA?”

¹³⁹ Charles Denney to Preston Manning, January 29, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Denney to Preston Manning, May 14, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴¹ Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis, Third Edition*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000). For more information on the rebellions in Lower Canada see: Allan Greer, *Patriots and The People: The Rebellion of 1837 In Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

Act outside the Province's purview and respond as they did in 1837.¹⁴² Denney, no fan of Trudeau, also referred to the colonial government as Trudeau's "predecessor," equating Trudeau's Laurentian Elite to the Château Clique.¹⁴³ In a letter to the editor of *Maclean's* magazine, Denney took umbrage with an article by writer Brian Bergman on the Acadian Deportation, titled "Sad Land of Broken Dreams." The deportation of the Acadians, according to Bergman, was a "sad chapter in Canadian history that saw British soldiers burn Acadian villages to the ground, confiscate rich farmlands and force nearly 100,000 French speaking Maritimers into exile."¹⁴⁴ Denney responded, "It was not shameful! It was necessary. The French were not to be trusted," referring to the issue that the Acadians were disinterested in swearing allegiance to Britain, the rationale given for the forced relocation of the Acadians.¹⁴⁵ He goes on to say, "It is absurd that people like Bergman should have the audacity to use an emotional poem [Evangeline] about two fictional characters to so misrepresent the facts of history. The Quebec Separatists love to be so deluded. For 200 years they have been fed lies and distortions. It is time they were told, and absorbed, the un-emotional truth."¹⁴⁶ He also suggested to Minister of Heritage Shelia Copps that Quebecers should have federal social services, such as the Old Age Pension, withheld until they could develop an "appropriate" Canadian nationalism and honour the Canadian flag.¹⁴⁷ Denney also advocated for a national re-education program.

¹⁴² Charles Denney to Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, August 28, 1977, M7144/259 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴³ For analysis of the "Laurentian Elite see: Darrell Jay Bricker and John Ibbitson, *The Big Shift: The Seismic Change in Canadian Politics, Business, and Culture and What It Means for Our Future*, Trade pbk. ed. (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2014); Michael Cuenco, "The Canadian Ideology," *American Affairs Journal* (blog), May 20, 2022, <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2022/05/the-canadian-ideology/>.

¹⁴⁴ Brian Bergman, "Sad Land of Broken Dreams," *Macleans*, August 11, 1997.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Denney to Maclean's Magazine Letters, August 24, 1997, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB. For more information on the Acadian deportation see John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W Norton & Co., 2005).

¹⁴⁶ Denney to Maclean's Magazine Letters, August 24, 1997.

¹⁴⁷ Denney to Hon. Shelia Copps, July 19, 1996.

Denney saw the teaching of history as a solution to the Quebec problem. He writes to MP Rahim Jaffer, arguing, “One of their troubles is that they have been told so many lies over the years by their politicians [sic] and by the Priests who used to dominate both their social life and their political decisions. Now for some years their school books [sic] are full of lies misrepresenting about their relationship with the British and with the rest of Canada.”¹⁴⁸ A year previously, Denney wrote to Copps suggesting that a good use of her newly established Canadian Information office would be to teach Quebecers a ‘truthful’ and more national history, explaining:

What they don't know, or don't want to believe, is that British policy, or British arms, on five different occasions saved them from losing it, and has actually caused it to be entrenched. That [Quebec nationalism] has to be the result of distortion of history, lack of it, or down-right lies. I haven't seen their present history books, but I understand they are anything but truthful.”¹⁴⁹

In a letter to the *Edmonton Journal* in 1997, he expanded on what he saw as a distorted history, noting that Quebec’s status as a “founding nation of Canada” was a lie that made his blood pressure rise. He wrote that the article, “had the gall to say that [that Quebec was a separate nation] even though Georges Etienne Cartier, a French Canadian Patriot and one of the Father’s of Confederation had proclaimed emphatically in both languages that they were founding a ... a single great nation, a political nationality independent of national origins.”¹⁵⁰ He also suggested to Copps to refute this two nations “myth” and that long-form media, such as dramas, and dialogues on both TV and radio, would be ideal for her new committee to fund. Denney noted Copps would need to be strategic with a francophone audience as “the French are an emotional

¹⁴⁸ Denney to Hon. Shelia Copps.

¹⁴⁹ Denney to Hon. Shelia Copps.

¹⁵⁰ Denney to Letters Editor, *Edmonton Journal*, June 20, 1997.

people. Many of their fantasies are fed and sustained by emotion.”¹⁵¹ Unlike many Reformers, and publications that called the new office “Propaganda Canada” and the “Ministry of Mystery,”¹⁵² Denney also suggested the new office publish a series of history tests in local newspapers and helpfully included his own with questions like “Was Montcalm an Englishman?” and “Is British Columbia the Name of a Country?”¹⁵³ Denney approved of Copps’ new venture and felt that it would dovetail nicely with the mandate of the CBC.

Despite its supposed left-leaning politics, Denney was a supporter of the CBC. He was a paid member of a CBC lobby group, “Friends of Canadian Broadcasting,” and he wrote letters on their behalf.¹⁵⁴ When cuts were discussed, Denney wrote to several members of the government in protest. He wrote to the Prime Minister twice regarding potential cuts in December of 1996 and a month later in 1997. He wrote that the government’s support of the Canada Council and the CBC was a significant vehicle to “foster a distinct Canadian Culture” and that he was dismayed that the government was planning to reduce funding, leaving the CBC in disarray. Denney even criticizes the Reform position, calling it unfortunate, “short-sighted and mistaken.”¹⁵⁵ Denney told Manning, “I am having a hard time trying to understand why the Reform Party is opposed to the Canadian broadcasting Corporation. I listen to CBC Radio all of the time... though I am sometimes annoyed with the socialist slant to programming, I view the

¹⁵¹ Denney to Hon. Shelia Copps, July 19, 1996.

¹⁵² Gunter Lorne, “And Now a Message from Propaganda Canada,” *Edmonton Journal*, July 24, 1996; Michael Jenkinson, “The Ministry of Mystery: Liberals Create a Nebulous Unity Agency,” *Alberta Report*, July 22, 1996.

¹⁵³ Charles Denney, “History Test, Included in Letter to Heritage Minister Shelia Copps,” July 19, 1996, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Denney to Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, January 29, 1997, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵⁵ Denney to Cretien[sic.], December 28, 1996; Denney to Cretien[sic.], January 29, 1997.

CBC as a unifying force in our Country.”¹⁵⁶ Denney saw the need for unification as essential, coming out of a second Quebec referendum in 1993 and multiple attempts by the government to bring Quebec into the constitution with the failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords.¹⁵⁷

However, government funding of progressive causes and the CBC’s ‘socialist leanings’ did not sit well with the profoundly socially conservative Denney. In a letter to Trudeau in 1978, Denney indicated that he opposed the Canada Council¹⁵⁸ funding “sick people who fancy writing filth is the same thing as writing poetry....” He noted that the Canada Council was in a position of doing good but that “it certainly should not be permitted to use our money to destroy us.”¹⁵⁹ It is likely Denney was talking about the controversy surrounding poet Bill Bissett whose poetry and access to Canada Council funds was raised in Parliament in 1977/1978.¹⁶⁰ Apparently, the Arts funding bodies did not heed his warning; in 1997, a new piece of poetry was funded by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA), drawing Denney’s ire. He wrote to the MLA Shirley McClellan, the Minister of Community Development,

Because I don't read junk poetry and salacious literature I was unaware that a man named Anderson writes the vulgar stuff under the title *Neurotic Erotica*. Nor was I aware that he and his publisher are the recipients of substantial grants from the public purse. So I am grateful to ALBERTA REPORT for alerting me that tax payers' money is being used to

¹⁵⁶ Charles Denney to Preston Manning, December 29, 1996, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵⁷ McRoberts, *Quebec*.

¹⁵⁸ The Canada Council is a Crown Corporation that developed out of the 1951 Massey Commission that offers grants, prizes and funding to Canadian artists and organisations. For information on the formation, history and current Council see: Canada Council for the Arts, Canada Council for the Arts, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://canadacouncil.ca/>; Paul. Litt, *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Monica Gattinger, *The Roots of Culture, the Power of Art: The First Sixty Years of the Canada Council for the Arts* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017).

¹⁵⁹ Charles Denney to Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, November 4, 1978, M7144/259 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁶⁰ Ryan J. Cox, “HP Sauce and the Hate Literature of Pop Art: Bill Bissett in the House of Commons,” *English Studies in Canada* 37, no. 3–4 (September 1, 2011): 147.

finance purveyors of perverse, vile, obscene, pornographic, and blasphemous garbage with the pretense that it is poetry.”¹⁶¹

The book of poetry was a front-page story for the magazine *Alberta Report*, a favourite of Denney’s, which at one point held the highest number of readers per copy of any general-interest magazine in the country.¹⁶² The magazine, published by Ted Byfield and succeeded by his two sons Link and Vincent Byfield, made a concerted effort to highlight conservative perspectives. Link declared: “We’re rednecks, were out of the closet, and we’re proud;” this is ironic wording given the magazine’s long-held anti-gay rights position, but in keeping with its tradition of double entendre headlines.¹⁶³ The September 15, 1997 edition of *Alberta Report* has two stories on the offending book, the cover story entitled “Hold Your Nose And Pay: A Government-Funded Celebration Of Sexual And Religious Filth Has Politicians Running For Cover,” and a second story on the legality of the poems “It’s Also Illegal - Not That Anyone Cares (A Lawyer’s Crusade Against Government-Funded Blasphemy Arouses Little Public Indignation).” The article “Hold Your Nose and Pay” focuses on some of the more controversial projects funded by the AFA, including the production of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angels in America* and publishing *Neurotic Erotica*, and sent several poems to politicians to elicit their reactions.¹⁶⁴ “It’s also Illegal,” discusses the erotic poems of Timothy J. Anderson and makes a case that they may be legally obscene and considered ‘Blasphemous Libel’ under the Canadian criminal code.¹⁶⁵ The

¹⁶¹ Charles Denney to Hon. Shirley McClellan, September 16, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁶² Western Report, “Political Incorrectness Sells: A Soaring Readership Makes Alberta Report the Most-Reliably Read Magazine in Canada - ProQuest,” *Western Report*, June 26, 1995.

¹⁶³ Kelly Torrance, “Hold Your Nose and Pay: A Government-Funded Celebration of Sexual and Religious Filth Has Politicians Running for Cover,” *Alberta Report*, September 15, 1997; Kelly Torrance, “It’s Also Illegal - Not That Anyone Cares (a Lawyer’s Crusade against Government-Funded Blasphemy Arouses Little Public Indignation),” *Alberta Report*, September 15, 1997.

¹⁶⁴ Both Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America* and *Neurotic Erotica* attracted negative attention for their clear homoerotic themes and queer characters. *Angels in America* also dealt directly with the AIDS crisis and was awarded a Pulitzer in 1993.

¹⁶⁵ Torrance, “It’s Also Illegal - Not That Anyone Cares (a Lawyer’s Crusade against Government-Funded Blasphemy Arouses Little Public Indignation).”

article must have been a success for *Alberta Report* as there was a follow-up article, “The Friends of Timothy J. Anderson,” that looked at the book’s success in the wake of the controversy. The article included a local bookseller advertising the book with the line, “Alberta Report hates this book--we call that a good review.”¹⁶⁶ Denney goes on to indicate his displeasure with other funded projects mentioned in the article, including “the vulgar homosexual epic *Angels in America*,” and funding a project, not mentioned in the *Alberta Report* article, at the Red Deer Museum, regarding “the history of sodomists in that area.”¹⁶⁷ This study of queer lives in central Alberta, “Lesbian and Gay life in Alberta,” was commissioned by the museum “to gather photographs, taped conversations, interviews and other historical facts as part of a research project into the history of gays in Alberta, particularly the central part of the province, where the museum is located.”¹⁶⁸ The project caused waves when Stockwell Day, the later heir-apparent to Preston Manning, opposed the study because of his fundamentalist Christianity and used his position in the government as Provincial Treasurer to attempt to have the grant rescinded, forcing a provincial review.¹⁶⁹

Denney made his opposition to progressive measures like the pro-choice movement and rights for same-sex couples very clear. In 1986, Denney wrote to Ontario Premier David

¹⁶⁶ Kelly Torrance, “The Friends of Timothy J. Anderson: Arts Supporters Rush to Defend a Book of Perverted Government-Funded Poetry,” *Alberta Report* (United Western Communications Ltd., October 13, 1997)

¹⁶⁷ Denney to Hon. Shirley McClellan, September 16, 1997; Kelly Torrance, “The Friends of Timothy J. Anderson: Arts Supporters Rush to Defend a Book of Perverted Government-Funded Poetry,” *Alberta Report* (United Western Communications Ltd., October 13, 1997); Torrance, “It’s Also Illegal - Not That Anyone Cares (a Lawyer’s Crusade against Government-Funded Blasphemy Arouses Little Public Indignation).”

¹⁶⁸ Brian Laghi, “Alberta Tories Seek to Derail Gay-History Study Money for Red Deer Museum Project Should Be Returned, MLAs Complain,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 16, 1997, 384814989, ProQuest Central.

¹⁶⁹ Laurel L. Bonnett, “Transgressing the Public/Private Divide: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Citizenship Claims in Alberta, 1968-1998” (PhD, Edmonton, University of Alberta, 2006), 96.

Peterson, criticizing Bill 7,¹⁷⁰ which would add sexual orientation to the province's human rights code and bring Ontario into compliance with the Canadian Charter.¹⁷¹ Homosexuality had been supposedly decriminalized in 1969, but what it actually did was add an exception to same-sex relationships that occurred privately. However, as Queer historian Tom Hooper notes, that decriminalization did not sanction same-sex unions, nor did it include provisions for indecent act, vagrancy, or bawdy-house laws, which formed the basis for both the Operation Soap Bathhouse and later Pussy Palace raids in Toronto.¹⁷² As such, the state could not interfere within the bedroom, but it could everywhere else. Denney wrote to Peterson:

To say I am dismayed in to expressing my feelings quite inadequately. Homosexual and Gay are words designed to cloak in some respectability an act that is vulgar and unnatural. The act is sodomy; and those who practice it are sodomites.

Moreover, sodomites are sick people. They do not have a "sexual orientation." They are mentally sick. And, because they are mentally sick, they deserve the same measure of health care as others who are mentally sick, But their sickness should not be enshrined in law as something above reproach and something that can't be cured. Heterosexuals may do stupid and may do sick things; but they are not mentally ill. Sodomites are.¹⁷³

Denney's language and his insistence on the term 'sodomites' was clearly meant to be offensive and demeaning. It also implied a relationship to sin: the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁷⁴

Denney's instance on homosexual men as mentally ill has a long history in Canada ¹⁷⁵ Historian of Queer Sexuality Elise Chenier notes that multiple factors led to this distorted public

¹⁷⁰ Government of Ontario, "Human Rights Code," c. H.19 R.S.O. § (1990), <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/view>; Charles Denney to David Peterson, December 17, 1986, M8981/135 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁷¹ Pamela Dickey Young, *Religion, Sex and Politics: Christian Churches and Same-Sex Marriage in Canada*, Fernwood Basics (Halifax [Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 10.

¹⁷² Tom Hooper, "Queering '69: The Recriminalization of Homosexuality in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (June 2019): 257–73, <https://doi.org/10.3138/chr.2018-0082-4>.

¹⁷³ Charles Denney to Bill Peterson, December 17, 1996, M8981/135 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁷⁴ Sodom and Gomorrah were biblical cites destroyed by God in for sinfulness and wickedness in Genesis 18:23 that later became conflated with homosexuality.

¹⁷⁵ Elise Chenier, *Strangers in Our Midst: Sexual Deviancy in Postwar Ontario*, 1st ed., Studies in Gender and History 32 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442689220>.

perception, including using homosexuality as a political red herring,¹⁷⁶ increased visibility of queer communities, a changing medicalization of sexual deviancy, and linking of homosexuality with other forms of sexual ‘perversion.’¹⁷⁷ In a letter to Preston Manning, Denney wrote, “I am also convinced that the majority of voters is very much against special rights for sodomites. If you are classed a bigoted or extreme for that, take it as a complement, but throw the epithets back at the extremests[sic] who want to coddle sodomists [sic]. Call them what they are.”¹⁷⁸ Denney went on to enumerate all those who could not work with the public. Specifically, he felt atheists, convicts, sodomites, pedophiles, and people who don't dress appropriately, should be fired from the civil service.¹⁷⁹

In a letter to the Council of McDougall United Church, (Denney's own place of worship,) he strongly protested the church performing same-sex marriages. He felt there was an “infinitesimally small number of men and women born with gender defects. The others become homosexuals because of psychological or other reasons, for which they should seek professional help.”¹⁸⁰ He then equated homosexuality with other socially harmful behaviours like shoplifting, drunk driving, and violence. He went on to describe gay men as “deviants” who: “chooses of his own free will to engage in a sodomistic relationship, a filthy and disease producing activity. Pedophiles, frequently sodomists, know very well what they are doing, and fail to control their weaknesses. We have punishments for them”¹⁸¹ He added that the couple who applied to marry

¹⁷⁶ Gary William Kinsman, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation*, Sexuality Studies Series (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Chenier, *Strangers in Our Midst*, 90.

¹⁷⁸ Denney to Hanrahan, May 7, 1996; Charles Denney to Preston Manning, July 17, 1996, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁷⁹ Denney to Hanrahan, May 7, 1996.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Denney, “Denney to The Council of McDougall United Church,” March 16, 1998, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁸¹ Denney, “Denney to The Council of McDougall United Church.”

don't want services; they want the prestige of being married in the McDougall church, a victory that they would exploit to continue blackmailing the provincial government for more rights. Denney allowed that individual homosexuals who repent and live a celibate life should be welcomed as members, "then we heterosexuals, who are not without sin either, can seek redemption together."¹⁸²

The church responded to Denney, writing, "We are aware how deeply you may feel about the meaning of this proposal, and we would like to assure you that your opinion, along with all other responses, was prayerfully and respectfully considered before our decision was taken." However, the decision to perform same-sex marriages is another step in the process of inclusivity regardless of age, gender, race or orientation. The church asked that Denney "accept the challenge of living and working with the diversity in our Church membership as part of God's ministry in the pluralistic world around us."¹⁸³ At this point the United Church had renounced its 1960 statement that homosexuality was a sin. The Church's position echoed in the letter above "encouraged the church and people within it to offer healing for damage done to gay and lesbian persons."¹⁸⁴ The Church published orders of worship and blessing services for gay couples in 1992 and, in 2002, began working towards the civil recognition of same-sex relationships.¹⁸⁵

Denney also was very critical of the pro-choice movement. In a letter to Justice Minister Anne McLellan in support of Robert Latimer, Denney contrasted Latimer's 'mercy killing' with

¹⁸² Denney, "Denney to The Council of McDougall United Church."

¹⁸³ John G. Wright, "John G Wright, Secretary McDougall United Church to Charles Denney," March 24, 1998, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁸⁴ Young, *Religion, Sex and Politics*, 34.

¹⁸⁵ Young, 72.

abortion. Latimer was a Saskatchewan farmer who was convicted of 2nd-degree murder in the 1993 homicide of his severely disabled daughter Tracey.¹⁸⁶ Denney asked McLellan to grant Latimer a pardon, writing: “This is in direct contrast to the foul manner in which numerous doctors every day murder hundreds of unborn, and mostly well developed, infants in the most cruel and unfeeling way. It is a practice that should be stripped of its legality as early as possible; and practitioners of the diabolical procedure punished for their vile murderous deeds.”¹⁸⁷ Interestingly, Denney seemed very sympathetic to euthanasia, as his first wife Mildred’s slow decline due to Parkinson’s was very difficult to watch. Denney wrote, “Fortunately for her, however, she has now been relieved of all her earthly suffering. I am very happy she is no longer a victim of her illnesses. Death can be such a bless[ing].”¹⁸⁸ Denney repeated this sentiment throughout the years when discussing aging and watching his wife suffer a debilitating illness.

Abortion showed up again in Denney’s letters, but this time as part of Denney’s letterheads. In a letter to Betty and Norman Taylor, Denney included three items arranged across the top of the letter. These were a poem that appears to be clipped from a magazine entitled, “If Only you Had Cared,” a clipping entitled “Modern Day Herods” and a typed section that matches the typewritten typeface used in the letter. The poem, written from the perspective of an aborted child, reads:

I could have seen the sunshine, I could have known the spring
I could have watched the robins fly and could have heard them sing.
I could have smelled the flowers, I could have felt the snow
Things you take for granted, are things I'll never know

¹⁸⁶ Edward Butts, “Robert Latimer Case,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, September 9, 2016, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/robert-latimer-case>.

¹⁸⁷ Charles Denney to Hon. Anne McLellan, January 28, 1999, M8981/209 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁸⁸ Charles Denney to Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, October 12, 1973, M7144/145 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

You could have heard my laughter, you could have dried my tears.
You could have watched me playing, and growing through the years.
You could have shown me rainbows. GOD painted the sky
You could have held me in your arms, instead you made me die!

I might have been your daughter, I might have been your son
I might have learned to crawl, and stand and walk and run
I might have felt you hug me, as your milk began to fill me.
I might have called you Moma, but instead you chose to kill me!

They say "Have an abortion! it is your legal right",
They say I'm not a person, I can't put up a fight.
They say that I'm not born yet, I haven't drawn a breath.
My heart beats in my mother's womb, as they sentence me to death!

If only you had loved me, as other mothers do.
If only you'd have given me, what you mother gave to you.
The gift of life, the gift of love, with me you could have shared.
I could have seen the sunshine, if only you'd have cared!

- anonymous¹⁸⁹

The poem's anti-abortion message, "sentenced me to death," is clear. It also refers to Denney's argument in the letter to McLellan, noted above, that he feels terminating a pregnancy is state-sanctioned murder.

The other two pieces are shorter but equally strident. The second posted piece includes several questionable statistics on abortion in Canada:

ABOUT LIFE AND COURTS AND MODERN DAY HERODS

The April issue of the Voice of Freedom Newsletter, published by the B.C. Free Speech League... carries this little "Did you know?" item: "That 30 years of drownings in Canada (1949-1979) totalled 16,749; 30 years of road toll for the same period, 129,009; and 80 years of warfare (Canadian Deaths in the Boer War, WWI, WWII, and the Korean war) totalled 99,449. yet, 8 years of abortion (1972-1979) caused 417,020 deaths (in this country alone)."

¹⁸⁹ Charles Denney to Norman Taylor and Betty Taylor, June 22, 1989, M8981/164 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

These numbers here are, of course, suspect. It is difficult to get a solid number of abortion rates in Canada pre-R. v. Morgentaler. In 1986, Morgentaler was an Ottawa doctor whose clinic performed abortions in violation of the then-criminal statute, which noted that abortions could only be performed if the mother's life was in danger.¹⁹⁰ In 1986, the Supreme Court struck down the previous legislation, noting: "Forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a foetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations, is a profound interference with a woman's body and thus an infringement of security of the person."¹⁹¹ As actual abortion numbers in 1972-79 (the period indicated in the letterhead,) were pre-R. v. Morgentaler, the likelihood of accurate numbers is low. Many women who did not qualify for legal abortions received off-the-books (meaning performed in a medical setting but not recorded – like those in Morgentaler's clinic) or 'backstreet' abortions, which, for obvious reasons, were not in the official records. We do know that a total of 66,251 therapeutic abortions were performed in hospitals in 1988, a rate of 10.6 per 1000 women, and for the reporting period 1970-1988, only 10.4 percent of abortions were performed after 13 weeks.¹⁹² Looking at these

¹⁹⁰ Henry (Henekh) Morgentaler was a holocaust survivor and doctor who opened a clinic in Montreal, and later in other cities, to provide family planning and abortion care. He was an outspoken advocate and unapologetic for openly providing safe abortion care, which was illegal in Canada. He also spoke often about the need for affordable birth control. He was a polarising figure for many. See: Tabitha de Bruin and Angus McLaren, "Henry Morgentaler," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, May 19, 2023, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/henry-morgentaler>; Henry Morgentaler, *Abortion and Contraception* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1984).

¹⁹¹ R. v. Morgentaler, 1988] 1 SCR 30 (Supreme Court of Canada 1988).

¹⁹² S. Wadhera, "Therapeutic Abortions, Canada, 1970-1988," *Health Reports* 2, no. 3 (1990): 229–52.

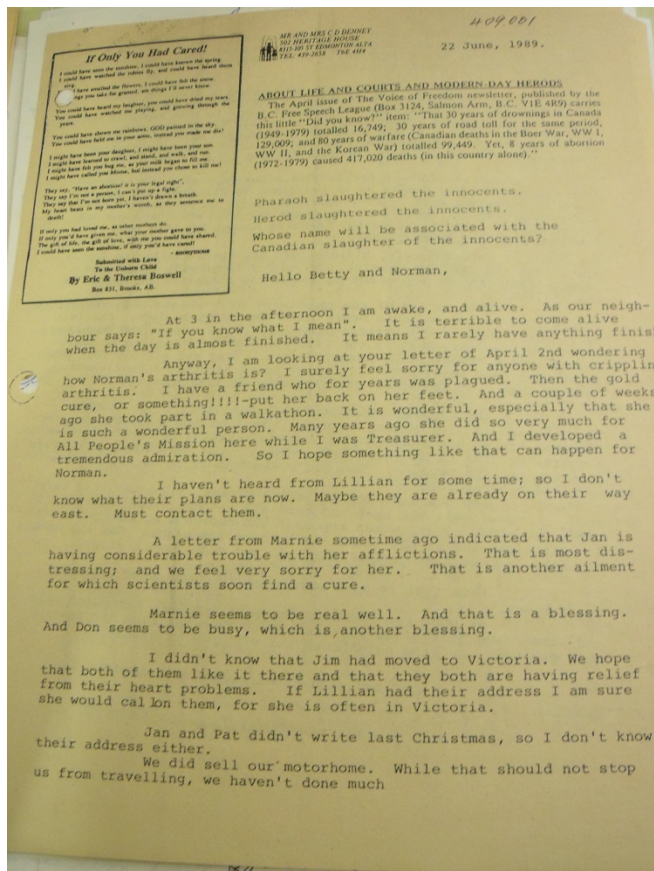


Figure 2-5 Letter to Betty and Norman Taylor with Anti-Abortion letterheads, Denney Personal Papers

reported statistics, the numbers and length of gestation quoted by Denney in his letter to McLennan are wildly inaccurate. The third item on the letterhead is much shorter, “Pharaoh slaughtered the innocents./ Herod slaughtered the innocents./ Whose name will be associated with the Canadian slaughter of the innocents?”¹⁹³ This equates the politicians and the doctors who perform abortions to the biblical murder of children attributed to Pharaoh in Exodus 2:16, and King Herod in Matthew 2:16-18.¹⁹⁴ The

interesting thing about the use of these

pointed letterheads is that nowhere in the letter does Denney talk about abortion; he only briefly discusses politics in a paragraph about a trip by rail he and Elsie took and a comment about Brian Mulroney underfunding VIA rail. The letter discusses mutual friends, Norman Taylor’s issues with arthritis, Elsie’s eye issues, and how the Alberta Genealogical Society is functioning.¹⁹⁵ Nowhere in the extended correspondence with the Taylors is there any indication that Denney’s anti-abortion stance is welcome.

¹⁹³ Denney to Taylor and Betty Taylor, June 22, 1989.

¹⁹⁴ Exod. 2:16; Matt. 2:16-18 AV.

¹⁹⁵ Denney to Taylor and Betty Taylor, June 22, 1989.

Denney, unsurprisingly, claimed to be a strong supporter of ‘free speech,’ subscribing to several right-leaning free speech newsletters, including the previously discussed *Alberta Report*. Denney told a friend who published a letter in *Alberta Report*, “Guess how we know you receive Alberta Report? I liked your contributions, and I am also a Byfield fan. He seems to be having an effect on affairs or is that a pious wish? Another of my heroes is Les Bewley, a resigned Judge in Vancouver, who often takes a slice off free loaders”¹⁹⁶ Les Bewley, a former Judge in Vancouver, known for his “Bewlyisms,” reportedly told the Crown Council, "I'm going to set bail in this case in an amount that I think the Crown's case is worth. Bail will be 10 cents."¹⁹⁷ He went too far in 1977. Women’s groups lobbied for him to be removed from the bench for making sexist comments during a trial: "You know, women don't get much brains before they're 30 anyway, but at the age of 18 or so they make some stupid mistakes, mostly because we males, who know better, lead them into it."¹⁹⁸ Bewley’s writings seemed tame next to some of the work Denney collected and forwarded in his letters.

Newsletters like *the Free Speech Monitor*, published by the Canadian Association for Free Expression (CAFE), which was headed by white nationalist Paul Fromm, appear in the correspondence files. Fromm was a schoolteacher in Peel, ON, who was fired for speaking at Heritage Front events.¹⁹⁹ Denney wrote to Fromm in 1997, noting that he was aware of the “false accusations” and gave Fromm advice to launch “\$50,000,000.00 individual damage suits against

¹⁹⁶ Charles Denney to Henry Siemens and Elizabeth Siemens, December 6, 1983, M8199/229, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁹⁷ Craig Wallace, “In Memory of Les Bewley,” *North Shore News*, December 30, 2009.

¹⁹⁸ “Ex-B.C. Judge Les Bewley Dies,” *The Gazette*, May 30, 1988, 431623665.

¹⁹⁹ Southern Poverty Law Center, “Paul Fromm,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/paul-fromm>.

every individual and every organization involved in the smear campaign” against him.²⁰⁰ This edition of the *Free Speech Monitor* from 1996 included a funding request written by Fromm, asking “Supporter[s] of Freedom” to fund a lobbying effort to stop a grant given to an anti-racist group, where Fromm defends his various organizations, the Edmund Burke Society, Citizens For Foreign Aid Reform, and CAFÉ, as anti-immigration and anti-communist from having neo-Nazi sympathies.²⁰¹ It also includes a colourfully titled article, “The Diversity Front: Witches, Cheating & Penis Snatchers,” an attack on immigration and multiculturalism, and a “Did you know” page which is made up of a list of racist anti-Asian tropes presented as facts.²⁰² The front page article, “Lethbridge Pressures Edmonton Hotel to Cancel 3rd Option Conference” attacks an Okanagan College professor, calling him “David-bare bum-Lethbridge” and accusing him of being the “chief censor” of the *Edmonton Journal* and identifying him as a member of the Communist party.²⁰³ David Lethbridge, who was a member of the Communist party, informed the hotel of the details and potential controversy of hosting the “3rd Option” Conference. The conference, which claimed to be discussing constitutional reform, was to have hosted extreme speakers Ernst Zundel, Jim Keegstra, and lawyer Doug Christie. Due to the protest, the event did not go forward.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Charles Denney to Paul Fromm, March 8, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁰¹ Canadian Association of Free Expression, “Dear Supporter of Freedom Funding Letter,” *Free Speech Monitor*, October 10, 1996, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁰² Some of the list includes: “Did you know → that **world communism** is still the long- term goal of the Chinese Communist Party (according to a high-ranking spokesman)?” and “→ that the Canadian government is the lead donor for the so-called ‘China Council’ in which **globalist luminaries hobnob with Chinese** communist bureaucrats under the pretext of protecting the environment?”[bold theirs]. Canadian Association of Free Expression, *Free Speech Monitor*, October 10, 1996, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁰³ Canadian Association of Free Expression, “Lethbridge Pressures Edmonton Hotel to Cancel 3rd Option Conference,” *Free Speech Monitor*, October 10, 1996, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁰⁴ Joseph M Kirman, “The Boundaries of Free Speech,” *Canadian Social Studies* 31, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 63-63,65.

British Columbia lawyer Doug Christie also appears in Denney's files. In a letter to the *Western Canada Concept* (WCC) newsletter, Denney resubscribed to the magazine and referenced how poorly Doug Christie, the WCC founder and Zundel's lawyer, was being treated by the Law Library.²⁰⁵ Christie was a politician as well as a practicing lawyer. *Western Canada Concept* was originally a western separatist political party founded by Christie that emerged in the 1980s in Alberta and British Columbia. The WCC ran candidates in several elections, with Christie himself running in the 1979 BC Provincial election.²⁰⁶ Denney noted his support for the WCC in a letter to Clarence Kipling, where he asks if Kipling is interested in politics and mentions how pleased he was with the WCC candidate winning in Olds-Didsbury: "I think it is hilarious... so those people are really fed up with the existing parties"²⁰⁷ His confidence appears to be misplaced as the WCC does not keep the seat in the next election. Denney himself voted for the Confederation of Regions Party in 1984, telling Pat McCloy "As someone explained on the radio a couple of days ago, I am NOT going waste my vote, even As though I propose to vote for the C.O.R. Western Party. After how the three main parties changed the ElectionAct [sic] last October to restrict our freedom of speech, I wouldn't vote for any of them under any circumstances. With that vicious declaration uttered maybe I should say goodbye for now."²⁰⁸

Denney references Brian Mulroney's landslide 1984 federal election, which took 211 of 282

²⁰⁵ Charles Denney to Western Canada Concept, February 10, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁰⁶ Denise Harrington, "Who Are the Separatists?" in *Western Separatism: The Myths, Realities and Dangers*, ed. Larry Pratt and Garth Stevenson (Edmonton, AB: Hurtig, 1981), 27, 28.

²⁰⁷ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, February 20, 1982, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁰⁸ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, September 4, 1984, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

seats.²⁰⁹ As for Denney's party? The C.O.R. Western party fielded 53 candidates and received 520 votes in Edmonton North with 0.47% of the national vote.²¹⁰

Conclusion

Charles Denney's life comes through in the documents and extensive correspondences in his letters. His habit of keeping copies of his own correspondence gives a full picture of what he was doing, how he was feeling, and a glimpse into the lives of his wives and friends. Although the personal papers are not the centrepiece of the Denney collection, they give us a window into the various facets of Denney's inner circles. They also give us an insight into what he was passionate about. Denney clearly saw no reason to hide his political opinions, as they became part of his stationery. Knowing who Denney was underscores the idea that Denney knew he was the curator of his collection; he did nothing neutrally. Denney believed in Anglo-western politics, which coloured his communication, research, and conclusions. This is vitally important when we understand how the genealogies would eventually be used, particularly by the Metis Nation, as well as his relationships with institutions and other Metis genealogists.

²⁰⁹ Government of Canada, "General Election Results (1984-09-04)," Parliament of Canada, 2024, https://lop.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/ElectionsRidings/Elections/Profile?election=1984-09-04.

²¹⁰ School of Public Policy, University of Calgary, "1984 Federal Election," Canadian Elections Database, 2024, <http://canadianelectionsdatabase.ca/PHASE5/?p=0&type=election&ID=609>.

Chapter 3 Denney's Network: Exploring Connections with Genealogists and the Glenbow

Introduction

Charles Denney established an extensive genealogical collection with the help of a community. Denney engaged in *wahkootowin* through his late wife, through his colleagues, and through his production of knowledge. His fellow genealogists contributed, facilitated, and brought others to use Denney's collection. This chapter investigates several aspects of Denney's genealogical practice, including his collaborations with other genealogists in the Metis community, including Clarence Kipling, Pat McCloy, Gail Morin, and Geoff Burtonshaw. This chapter also investigates Denney's work with organizations like the Historical Society of Alberta (HSA) and the Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS). Denney's founding and contributions to the AGS involved investing in a colonial framework, which endowed his archive with significance and authority. Additionally, we will look at the Glenbow Museum, which became the eventual home for his papers. The collaboration between Denney and other Metis researchers marks the second development of Denney's archive, which moved from Mildred Denney's family to the families of other Metis, guided by Denney's writing and research-sharing relationships first with Clarence Kipling and later Pat McCloy, Geoff Burtonshaw, and Gail Morin.

The third movement occurs when the archive moves to the Glenbow, changing from a personal archive to a community archive in an institutional space. There was a central tension between the institution that holds the archive and the collection itself. The Glenbow was and is a colonial space, and though not a government archive, it is provincially funded, and it retains its mandate of Western Canadian history boosterism. Archives like the Glenbow often reflect colonial knowledge production, particularly large publicly funded ones in Canada. However, genealogical archives might serve a different role. By examining their creation, contents, collaborators, and users, I argue that Charles Denney's archive of Metis Genealogies represents a site of power reclamation, resistance, and *wahkootowin*. Its history and shifting relationships with the Indigenous peoples of Treaty 4 are explicitly colonial at worst (see the example of the Calgary Olympics) and sharing power with the community at best (such as with the Siksika Hair Shirt project).¹ The Glenbow values Indigenous participation in their genealogical collections, of which Denney's was the first. Their genealogical collections are explicitly advertised as Indigenous/ Metis, and work to help Metis complete *wahkootowin* obligations, as well as apply for citizenship with the provincial Metis organizations. To understand the Charles Denney Collection, it's essential to look at the contributors, the home, and the practices the collection embodied.

The Collaborators

Denney understood intimately how important others were to his research, and many of these researchers became friends and long-term correspondents. Denney acknowledged this

¹ These projects are discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

when he wrote to Pat McCloy in 1994: “Your help and Clarence Kipling's help went a long way to making those papers possible. Now Geoff [Burtonshaw] appears to be doing a fantastic job.”² Without the painstaking research of Clarence Kipling, the insider insight of Pat McCloy, and the later support of Gail Morin and Geoff Burtonshaw, all members of, or married to, the Metis nation. Denney could not have created this collection.

Clarence Kipling

Denney’s oldest and longest collaboration was with Metis genealogist Clarence Kipling. The correspondence between Kipling and Denney began in 1968 and continued until Kipling died in 2001. Most of the writing between 1968 and 1983 corresponded to Denney’s most productive genealogical years. Kipling was an interesting man. He was proudly Metis, opening the first Calgary Métis Local #87 with future Senator Thelma Chalifoux in Calgary in 1962. She recounted, “We had a really good and active local and we opened a little thrift store in downtown Calgary with our own women working there.”³ Kipling, the youngest of ten children, did not work or finish high school. Instead, he spent most of his adult life caring for his parents, researching his family history and keeping their home in Calgary.⁴

In a “Tribute to Clarence Kipling,” Denney wrote that Kipling inherited his drive to collect family history from his parents. Although he has not named it explicitly, Kipling spent his

² Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, December 5, 1994, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³ DonnaRae Paquette, “Senator Loves the Trenches,” *Windspeaker*, January 1998.

⁴ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, April 4, 1985, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

adult life engaging in *wahkootowin*, as both his parents came from fur trading Metis families. The family of his mother, Mary McGillis, came to Alberta from St François Xavier, MB. Her great-grandfather Angus McGillis was posted at Fort Dauphin in 1804, and Marie's great-aunt was the wife of Cuthbert Grant, Jr., the leader of the 1816 Metis resistance at Seven Oaks (in present-day Winnipeg, MB).⁵ McGillis encouraged her son to record the history of their families.⁶ Kipling spent much of his time and energy collecting and organizing information on index cards, which contained information transcribed primarily from the Manitoba censuses and Red River parish records. Kipling donated the cards to the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa which are listed as 1.13 metres of textual records.⁷ Kipling also donated a genealogical collection of papers and photographs to the Glenbow.

Denney and Kipling were constantly exchanging information, suggestions, books, and documents, as well as index cards. Huge volumes of material were mailed back and forth between Calgary and Edmonton. An example of a typical letter exchange from Denney and Kipling from November 1972 follows:

I
24/11/1972

Dear Mr. Denney

Just a few lines to enclose this, Obituary and writeup of the late Donald L MacDougal, and also an obituary for a Rondeau, I noticed in the obituary that Mr. Joseph Cleopas was born in St. Leon Manitoba and his sister Lillian was a Mrs. R Desnayeys of Bonnyville. I know the Desnayeys were an early French-Metis family, so I cut this out, and also writeup on Mrs. Dorothy Meade a descendant of Capt. James Cook, English explorer.

Please keep all of the above items, as I have other copies.

⁵ Government of Manitoba, "Province of Manitoba: This Week in History," January 28, 1966, <https://www.ancestry.ca/mediaui-viewer/tree/116020087/person/270161655528/media/96168c7d-97ae-4583-8ff5-ed7671efd1b4>.

⁶ Charles D. Denney, "A Tribute to Clarence Kipling," *Relatively Speaking*, November 1993, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷ Library and Archives Canada, "Kipling Collection," November 25, 2016, <https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=115305>.

Had a letter from Robert Salois in Montana, he writes a good letter for being 83 years old. He still is trying to get me his old pictures at his nieces[sic.] place
On the 1900-1 Metis Scrip were there any Salois descendants?

II

About Dubuc, it seems he doesn't want to be involved at the present time, with anything, except publishing 2 or 3 books on early French communities, all written in French, and would be no value to us, but after he completes publishing these books. He plans to gather some material and come to Calgary.

I sure wish I felt like coming to Edmonton, as I know I enjoy myself going through the Metis Scrip 1900-1 pages But what families you know I am interested in possibly you could loan them for me to copy. I thought of loaning the papers from the Metis Script Dpt., Or could you loan me so many at a time, so I could copy them, I could get some of my family to help me copy and then I wouldn't have to keep them too long. But I hope you'll let me know about this, as I am anxious to see them.

In Saskatchewan somewhere, Father Dubuc has records on the Prichards, the Metis family.

Well, I must close, Tuesday I have to go to the doctors. Hoping you are keep well.
Don't work too hard.
Regards C. Kipling.⁸

Denney responds to Kipling's letter from November 21, 1972:

Dear Clarence,

24/11/1972

When I got your note of Nov 21st I sat right down and extracted Laveille info from the 1900 Scrip lists. Now I am sending you copies of what I found. These lists are quite mixed, so it means looking carefully to be sure nothing is missed. And the girls are frequently under their husbands name.

Now I am returning:

1. The F.P 1911 story on the Battle of the Blackfeet it is very interesting, but awful hard to read. Not much genealogy data in it.
2. The F.P. 1912 story on Joe McDonald. That, too is very interesting & somewhat helpful
3. Obituary story on Miss Mary Wright – with typed copy both F.P. and Tribune
4. Obituary story (Tribune) on Archibald Wright
5. Pembina census of September 15, 1850
6. Aa letter from Minnesota historical Society Re: Red River, British and Red River Canada
7. Elizabeth Henderson story on Miss Mary (Rosemary) Wright and a typed copy
8. 3 pages Political Manual of Manitoba 1887
9. 4 *do.* Documents relating to the Can. N.W. – Oliver
10. Obituary notice for Donald Hardesty F.P. 18 72
11. Letter from city of Montreal re W.L. Hardesty 30/8/19 72

⁸ Clarence Kipling to Charles Denney, November 23, 1972, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

12. Your negative of Abm. Salois & John Pritchard
& Also I am sending you two pages dealing with William Sinclair – including his will –
which I hope is been correctly copied.

2

Mrs. Jackson has not sent me anything on Oulettes. So when you have that family
in order, I would like your sheets to copy. Oh – I see you did send me a couple of pages
one time. But you will be having a lot more. Oh Lord – there are over seven pages of
them in the 1900 scrip record. I wish I had time to copy them for you but a glance seems
to indicate you already have the info.

These scrip (1900) records weigh “a ton.” So you will have to come here to see
them. The fare won’t cost as much as express. And I can see where I am going to need
them here constantly – at least until I travel again.

Received the Prairie Fort baptism cards they are good to have. My cheque for
\$75⁰⁰ Enclosed. I hope it is adequate. Do you think you have them all? And what about
marriages? And burials?

I am surely sorry you were not well and I hope exercise – and your pills – are
going to put you back on your feet. I hate to suggest it – but perhaps what you need is a
complete change of work for a few weeks. How about a course in accounting? Or one in
English writing? Or art?

Myrtle has come and gone we had some good visits and I hope she will come
back again before too long.

3

I have mail piled all over here – including a letter from Mrs. Jackson and I have a
hundred things else that I want to do— besides get out my Xmas letters. I surely need a
helper. And I think I’m going to see if I can’t find one. Maybe I can get a combination
housekeeper and helper. That might be wonderful – for I don’t enjoy making meals and
dusting, etc.

Did I tell you on November 4th I had a brief visit in Battleford with Fred Light–
Father of Douglas Light? Fred has a huge collection of all sorts of guns, books, clocks,
bones, rocks, birds, someday I hope to have a good visit with him.

Oh I forgot to say that I am very happy. Mr. Speechly sent out all that material on
the McDonald’s. And I hope he sends you much more. One of the Wright stories is by
Beth Henderson, recently deceased sister of Ann Henderson.

That’s all! For sure Bigash!
Charles D.⁹

These letters have several commonalities. They contain extensive lists of materials
exchanged by mail and information about names being researched. They also include future
research avenues, mentioning the obituaries, for example. The letters check on who in the

⁹ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, November 24, 1972, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis
Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

community the other had been in contact with and advise on roadblocks in research. They included small references to family and health, but they almost exclusively contained itemized lists of information and requests for documents. Both men received benefits from their partnership. Denney paid Kipling well for his work and often sent him on indexing tasks. Denney regularly sent Kipling cheques of hundreds of dollars at a time to compensate him for materials and postage, and he also shared equipment like film readers and document copiers. Without Denney's patronage, Kipling simply would not have been able to afford his genealogical pursuits. For Kipling, Denney was a financial avenue to *wahkootowin*. For Denney, Kipling was a gateway into the Metis community. Denney also encouraged Kipling to continue to educate himself, and when Kipling went to college to finish his high school diploma with the hope of eventually getting a job at the Glenbow, Denney was a vocal supporter, writing to him and to mutual friends to encourage him.¹⁰ Denney also complemented Kipling on his research abilities:

Don't think for a minute of giving it up... If you don't drive yourself too hard you will ultimately develop files and materials that will be so valuable that Archives will be around to see you... Without you, your files are not worth so much. With you, they are significant. Your organisation, but most of all your analytical ability, and your memory and your energy, are what you are most of."¹¹

Denney consistently praised Kipling's research skills and included him in his networking with other researchers, including well-known Metis genealogist Gail Morin.¹²

Kipling provided Denney access to the Metis community after the death of Mildred and included interesting anecdotes in letters that relate to his family's Metis background and

¹⁰ Denney to McCloy, September 4, 1984.

¹¹ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, July 12, 1969, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹² Charles Denney to Geoff Burtonshaw, December 30, 1996, M8981/20 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

community. Kipling's family had deep roots in the prairies. In a letter about working on the aforementioned Metis scrip records with his father (Denney does eventually loan them), Kipling noted: "I get a great kick out of them [Scrip], especially the Calgary Metis 1900-1 oldtimers, as I read the names to Dad and he remembers a great many of those early settlers."¹³ There is a fun exchange when Denney and Kipling were approached to do some research the Metis background of Lady Lougheed Isabella Hardisty, the premier's grandmother.¹⁴ The premier's staff, Gail Armitage, noted that when "the premier receives inquiries concerning his Indian ancestry," the premier wanted to answer the inquiries as accurately as possible. His office was directed to Denney and Kipling by the Glenbow for answers.¹⁵ Kipling told Denney that he would find him a clipping about his grandfather dancing the Red River Jig with Lady Lougheed when she was in Calgary.¹⁶ This was a personal connection between the families of Lougheed and Kipling. The two sent their research to the premier's office, and Kipling received a letter from the premier himself thanking him.¹⁷ Denney revisited this research when negotiating with the Glenbow, noting, "Similarly. I have heard some pretty silly stories about the identity of Lady Lougheed. But my records, again, leave no doubt."¹⁸ Denney knew their research was sound.

¹³ Clarence Kipling to Charles Denney, December 19, 1972, M7144/157 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴ "Lady Lougheed" was Isabella (Bella) Hardisty. Her father William Lucas Hardisty, was the Chief Factor for the HBC Mackenzie River District and both parents were Metis. Well-educated, she was well known in Alberta a patron of the Arts and hosted the Prince of Wales in Calgary 1919. Her husband James Lougheed was knighted in 1916. For more on Lady Lougheed see Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, *Métis Pioneers: Marie Rose Delorme Smith and Isabella Clark Hardisty Lougheed*, First edition. (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: The University of Alberta Press, 2018); Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, "Hardisty, Isabella (Belle)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University Of Toronto/ Université Laval, 2019), http://brixton51.biographi.ca/en/bio/8937?revision_id=30682; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*.

¹⁵ Gail Armitage to Charles Denney, March 8, 1976, M7144/172 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Charles Denney Collection, Glenbow Archive, Calgary AB.

¹⁶ Clarence Kipling to Charles Denney, February 18, 1976, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁷ Kipling to Denney.

¹⁸ Charles Denney to H.F. Chritchley, June 13, 1974, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

In some cases, Kipling's community connections helped people to open up about their ancestry. He wrote to Denney, stating, "I hesitated before calling Mrs. Blachan as some people are quite fussy about giving out family information, after I told her my father was a friend of Neil McKay she was real friendly afterwards. I think some people with the same kind of blood are more at ease, she knows about the Metis scrip some of her elders got."¹⁹ Kipling's Metis connections benefited him and by extension Denney, when he reached out to others for family information. Being Metis himself, the potential for problems or racist responses was, especially in 1977, lessened. Kipling was quite strident when talking about his family's heritage but understood not everyone was. He wrote, "There are so many people with a strain of Indian blood and they don't know it, who have and we are not ashamed of it, as there are so many of our own kind of people, it is gradually going away this Indian blood so people keep marrying into the English, Scotch etc."²⁰ There is pushback even from within Kipling's family. His sister destroyed a family heirloom because it indicated their Indigenous heritage. Kipling told Denney that the Metis museum in Batoche had been looking for artifacts and contacting him for donations, but he was not interested. It's worth pausing to note why Kipling was uncomfortable giving his heirlooms to a museum. It's unclear if it was the institution that he was uncomfortable with, even in a museum that was primarily focused on Metis culture, or that he was simply too attached to the items. Kipling noted that he had some important artifacts in the home, including a Cree Bible that was given to the family by Father Albert Lacombe (1827-1916), a French-Canadian missionary who evangelized among the Nehiyaw (Cree) and Siksika (Blackfoot). He also notes

¹⁹ Clarence Kipling to Charles Denney, February 8, 1977, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁰ Kipling to Denney.

that they had “an old ^purple velvet moss bag that belonged to my grandmother, but my older sister didn't want this around, so they must have burnt it, they didn't like having Indian blood, but things are so bad as they used to be, I guess that's why all my family married into the white race, to try and let the Indian blood fade out.”²¹ Kipling was against editing out unwanted family members, so he was unlikely to trim or prune the trees he created. Interestingly, Kipling never married. Clearly, losing the family heirloom stuck with Kipling. Kipling also kept a thimble with a rabbit's foot from his grandmother. It was purported to be lucky, but when he took it to bingo, it didn't seem to help.²²

Kipling and Denney also exchange practical information, such as the price of card stock, letter paper and the benefits of mimeograph machines and microfilm readers. Kipling notes: “I cannot tell you how much time I spend copying from the reader and making cards.”²³ Denney

²¹ Clarence Kipling to Charles Denney, May 3, 1975, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

The moss bag was a traditional baby swaddling, laced in the front and included dried moss for insulation and warmth. They could be quite simple, just fabric with a laced closure or quite elaborate. The ROM has a beautiful example of a purple velvet moss bag with an attached cradleboard. Made by Elizabeth Katt Petrant (Ojibwa) in 1919, it is decorated with decorative leaves and elaborate flower beadwork. See: Elizabeth Katt Petrant, *Cradleboard and Moss Bag*, 1919, Wood, cotton cloth, glass beads, metal, 65x27.5 cm, 1919, ROM, <https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/237758/cradleboard-and-moss-bag>.

²² Kipling to Denney, May 3, 1975. Rabbit's feet, though ubiquitous now, do have Indigenous connections to the Anishinaabe trickster Nanabozho, who often took the form of a Rabbit. The Gabriel Dumont Institute Métis Museum includes a section on Superstitions which discuss Rabbit's feet. “*Pichiwapusawan*: Mammals that have multiple offspring in their litters sometimes give birth to a fetus which has absorbed the fetus of a sibling while in the womb. The fetus is then born with its sibling preserved under its skin. Similarly, an ectopic pregnancy will produce the same result in the mother rabbit. In rabbits, this unborn fetus is called a ‘pichiwapusawan’ by the Cree Métis. Trappers check freshly snared rabbits for these and carry them for good luck. Ed Head says that his father told him that when setting a rabbit snare, one should always throw the pichiwapusawan through the snare loop, and this would ensure that one would catch a rabbit in that snare.” See: Lawrence Barkwell, “Metis Superstitions,” Gabriel Dumont Institute: Virtual Museum of Métis Museum and Culture, September 22, 2015, <https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/148229.Metis%20Superstitions.pdf>; “NANABUSH AND THE THUNDERBIRD,” *Storytime*, November 2023; Jaime Cidro, “Nanabush Storytelling as Data Analysis and Knowledge Transmissions,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 32, no. 2 (2012): 159–69; Daniel Morley Johnson, “(Re)Nationalizing Naanbozho: Anishinaabe Sacred Stories, Nationalist Literary Criticism, and Scholarly Responsibility,” in *Troubling Tricksters: Revisioning Critical Conversations*, ed. Deanna Reder and Linda M. Morra, Indigenous Studies Series (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010).

²³ Clarence Kipling to Charles Denney, June 24, 1974, M7144/155 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

also gave Kipling a copy machine, but not without an ulterior motive: “Please don't send back the copier? I really don't want it. Would much rather you had it. Then you can make the odd copy for us.”²⁴ This was technology at the time (1970s) that would only be found in libraries, universities, family history centres or archives. It’s unclear where these machines came from, but Denney owned his own accounting business, so it’s possible he bought equipment through his business contacts. However, having viewing and copying equipment meant that the pair could accomplish significant research from home, funded and supplied by Denney.

Denney wrote a tribute in the AGS’s magazine *Relatively Speaking* when Kipling retired from genealogy:

At the age of 60, he doesn't have his eyes, and too little appreciation, financial, and otherwise from those he so generously tried to help, have had a deteriorating effect on his health. While he retains his interest, treasures his records, and still cheerfully helps some people, he has mostly turned his attention to other activities less demanding, like visiting the sick or the shutins[sic].

I applaud him. I wish more people could know him and appreciate him. Calgarians, Albertans and many other people, should be proud of him. Certainly, all genealogists should.²⁵

The material which he and Denney collected, was given to the Glenbow in 1989 alongside Kipling’s collection of photographs.²⁶ Denney wrote to Pat McCloy: “I was happy to give tribute to Clarence Kipling. And I am very sorry that he has not had more recognition, as well as opportunity, and support. Thank you for including him in your acknowledgments, and for including me. I appreciate that.” Kipling passed away on May 9, 2001, at 68 years old, after

²⁴ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, November 23, 1970, M7144/159 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁵ Denney, “A Tribute to Clarence Kipling.”

²⁶ Glenbow Archives, “Clarence Kipling’s Genealogical Collection - Archives,” University of Calgary Library, 2024, <https://searcharchives.ucalgary.ca/clarence-kiplings-genealogical-collection>.

years of poor health.²⁷ Although Kipling retreats later in his life from frequent correspondence, Denney has no lack of people to write to, and the one who takes on real importance is Pat McCloy.

T. R (Pat) McCloy

Pat McCloy was another of Denney's Calgary correspondents, and an important one. Unlike Kipling, McCloy was educated and a member of the middle class. As Kipling shaped the papers, McCloy was instrumental in getting them to the public. McCloy was the inaugural librarian at the Glenbow archives and a close colleague of Hugh Dempsey, the long-term archivist for the Glenbow.²⁸ McCloy, like Kipling, was Métis, descended from the fur trade families of whom Denney was so enamoured. McCloy came by his love of books and history naturally. McCloy's great-great-grandfather was John McKay Sr., a Scots Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trader, and Mary Favel, his Métis wife.²⁹ His son, John Richards McKay, settled in the Red River colony and opened a school. McCloy's great-grandfather, William Traill, was also a fur trader and was the son of well-known author and naturalist Catherine Parr Traill.³⁰ 'Pat' was a nickname given to him from his father's Irish ancestry, noting to Denney, he was cousins with Derek Bell of the Celtic band, The Chieftains.³¹

²⁷ "Kipling, Clarence," *Calgary Herald*, May 16, 2001, sec. Obituaries.

²⁸ Brian Brennan, "Book Lover Helped to Build Top Library," *Calgary Herald*, June 3, 1996; Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, March 30, 1985, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Métis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁹ Lawrence J. Barkwell, "McKay, John Richards," Gabriel Dumont Institute: Virtual Museum of Métis Museum and Culture, December 13, 2013, <https://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/14411>.

³⁰ Brennan, "Book Lover Helped to Build Top Library."

³¹ Pat McCloy and Doreen McCloy to Charles Denney and Elsie Denney, Christmas 1993, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Métis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

McCloy went on to study history at the University of Saskatchewan and did his graduate work at the University of Toronto. Eventually, he spent three years at the National Library in Ottawa and, in 1956, moved to Calgary to become Chief Librarian at the Glenbow Museum and Archives Library. Hugh Dempsey noted, “On the Library side, no one could beat Pat McCloy for working well with the public.”³² This was an essential skill in the early days of the library, as McCloy, like Dempsey, was sent out to collect items for the new library and archives. Erick Harvie, the founder and funder of the Glenbow, had instructed the staff to “go out and collect like a bunch of drunken sailors.”³³ McCloy did this, collecting some rare and valuable volumes for the library. One of those valuable collections was a twenty-volume collection, *The North American Indian*, by Edward Curtis, sold by the Glenbow in 2003 for a million dollars.³⁴ The money funded an endowment named for McCloy, to re-employ a full-time librarian and fund acquisitions.³⁵ Funding these positions became a serious issue once McCloy and Dempsey retired and the Glenbow underwent a major restructuring. The Glenbow’s financial issues will be discussed in depth later in the chapter, but McCloy was furious at the government’s defunding of the library in the 1990s. He wrote to Denney:

Then as Glenbow's government funding has been reduced they were forced to make big staff cuts, but I think the director showed very bad judgement in his decisions... The staff of the library and archives is very good but none of them has the background knowledge

³² Hugh A. Dempsey, *Always an Adventure an Autobiography*, West Series, Number 3 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 169.

³³ Dempsey, 138.

³⁴ After the sale there are two original sets of the Collection remaining in Alberta, one at the university of Calgary, one in Edmonton. Edward Curtis’ printed collections of paintings and photographs are extremely valuable and was the most money ever spent on a work on paper for the Swann Auction house, when the complete collection of *The North American Indian* sold in 2012 for 1.44 million. See Alexandra Burroughs, “\$1M Book Sale Endows Library,” *Calgary Herald*, January 17, 2003; Swan Gallery, “\$1.44 Million for Edward S. Curtis’s The North American Indian,” *Swann Galleries News* (blog), October 5, 2012, <https://www.swanngalleries.com/news/photographs-and-photobooks/2012/10/1-44-million-for-edward-s-curtis-the-north-american-indian/>; Mike Hanlon, “Edward S. Curtis’ ‘The North American Indian’ Fetches \$950,000,” *New Atlas*, July 2, 2021, <https://newatlas.com/collectibles/edward-s-curtis-the-north-american-indian-auction-950k/>.

³⁵ Burroughs, “\$1M Book Sale Endows Library.”

and special abilities that Len had, and the library and archives are left without a head and are greatly understaffed... I feel very bitter about it."

The sale of the Curtis books helped restore the library to a state that McCloy would have approved.

Pat McCloy and Denney began their correspondence in 1975 and were in close contact until McCloy died in 1996. Denney wrote to a friend, "Pat McCloy had a marvelous collection of materials, that now no doubt in Glenbow... We also, carried on a long correspondence, I have all our correspondence still."³⁶ Denney and McCloy talked about family, the Glenbow, their children, as well as sharing materials. At one point, Denney proposed they work on a book together on the McKay-Favel family, but like most of Denney's long-form writing pursuits, it didn't progress past an initial discussion.³⁷

McCloy helped Denney with his relationship with the Glenbow administration. His history with the Glenbow and his understanding of the personalities involved helped inform Denney what was really happening behind the scenes and to curb Denney's worst impulses. For example, when Denney had a new group of papers destined for the Glenbow, he duplicated them to leave a copy with the Alberta Genealogical Society, which he had done with previous parts of the collection. He made copies for two reasons. First, Denney felt a strong connection to the Genealogical Society, and second, he wanted a copy of the papers in Edmonton where he could easily access them. The Glenbow upper management started to complain and in retaliation, Denney threatened to not sign and return a new loan agreement that the Glenbow Archivist had

³⁶ Denney to June Kelley, March 12, 1997.

³⁷ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, May 5, 1974, M7144/155 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

asked him to sign (Denney had a previously signed contract with Glenbow in 1974, which should have covered these new documents) or finish giving the Glenbow the remaining collection. In his frustration, Denney wrote: “No longer is there any gentleman-ness in respect of an agreement.”³⁸ McCloy empathized with Denney, and, while trying to organize and pack for a trip to Ireland, responded to Denney in a long letter. He wrote that the Glenbow staff were also frustrated with the organization: “He [archivist Bill McKee] and other department heads at Glenbow are greatly embarrassed by the stupid red tape in which administration is seeking to entangle them. I think he considers it meaningless garbage.” He then encouraged Denney to continue what he was doing.³⁹ Denney did not sign the new agreement and, after sending in his last batch of materials, lamented, “What I was saying is that I feel my usefulness in the field of genealogy is now at an end. When I receive information practically about a Favel, or Laframbois, or an Anderson, I can no longer reach out for a book and relate the information to it.”⁴⁰ McCloy consoled Denney and reminded him of his continued relevance: “Parting with our papers takes detail out of your reach, but the general picture is still in your mind. I know you are right not having your files to refer to, and I regret that you parted with them so soon. But that is water under the bridge now. But surely it is not the end.”⁴¹ McCloy’s level-headedness and insider knowledge were essential to the Denney papers being deposited in the Glenbow.

³⁸ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, April 4, 1984, M8981/46 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³⁹ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, April 11, 1984, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴⁰ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, August 22, 1985, M8189/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴¹ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, August 31, 1985, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Geoff Burtonshaw

One of the largest users of Denney's papers, once they finally arrived, was Geoff Burtonshaw, a genealogist and volunteer at the Glenbow Archive Reading Room. In a letter to a friend, Denney described Burtonshaw as:

A person who has become greatly involved in Metis research is Geoff Burtonshaw in Calgary. He used to live among a settlement of them south east of Dauphin, and formed a great attachment for them. Now he has built up a great correspondence with people needing help. XXX He travelles[sic] to all sorts of 'reunions' to meet people and learn from them. When he is home he goes each Wednesday to Glenbow to help researchers in my records an in others.⁴²

Burtonshaw was not Metis like McCloy or Kipling, but like Denney, his wife and children were.

In an article on the 50th anniversary of the Glenbow, Burtonshaw was featured as one of the reasons the Glenbow was different than other archives:

Every week, people come to see Geoff Burtonshaw at the Glenbow Museum Archives. Metis families especially. They're searching for their own pasts, and for the past of their relatives. They need what Burtonshaw has in his 91-year- old head, and they need the photos and letters and artifacts in the archives. If, like them, you come looking, Burtonshaw will guide you. With a bit of luck, eventually you will lay your hands on a piece of your own history."⁴³

I met Burtonshaw in October of 2008 while working on my MA research, looking at records in the Peace River Area. Burtonshaw was holding court at 'his' table on the 5th floor reading room.⁴⁴ He took some time to show me his papers and binder, which was made up of lists of contacts for different surnames, where he pointed out the Bruneau and Whitford contacts for me, the surnames I was researching at the time. It struck me later that he had created a proto-social

⁴² Denney to June Kelley, March 12, 1997.

⁴³ Harry Vandervlist, "Our Friendly Archive Turns 50," *Calgary Herald*, May 5, 2006.

⁴⁴ To recognise his years volunteering Burtonshaw was honored with a table with his name.

networking list for Metis genealogy. Burtonshaw used these lists as the audience for his Metis Newsletter.

Burtonshaw was well known for his newsletter, which Denney describes as a “mine of information.” The newsletter included surname searches, Dad jokes, and reunion information, many of which Burtonshaw attended personally.⁴⁵ Burtonshaw emphasized connection and relatedness in his work, but like Denney, he entered the Metis world through his family, specifically his wife and their children. The newsletters added to Burtonshaw’s impressive personal library.⁴⁶ In an article written about him in the *Calgary Herald*, he notes, “I’d like to see the Metis given credit for their role in Canadian history. The Indian lady was the backbone of this whole set-up,” explaining the early traders “native wives taught them everything they needed to know to survive.”⁴⁷ He also helped his eldest daughter research and receive her Metis citizenship⁴⁸ and was lauded for his academic achievements by “Alberta’s International Year of Older Persons Committee” in 1999.⁴⁹

Burtonshaw was the person Denney envisioned working with his papers, a lay historian, passionate about his wife’s people. Archivist Jim Bowman described Burtonshaw as “quite a scholar, quite an intellectual... his spelling is atrocious, but he has a very scholarly approach.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Susan Scott, “Metis History Fills Cupboards, Head and Heart,” *Calgary Herald*, November 19, 1993, sec. Neighbours.

⁴⁶ Ryan Taylor, “Metis Newsletter Is Full of Information,” *The Record*, October 1, 1994.

⁴⁷ Scott, “Metis History Fills Cupboards, Head and Heart.”

⁴⁸ Scott.

⁴⁹ Monte Stewart, “Oldest and Dearest Honored,” *Calgary Herald*, October 2, 1999.

⁵⁰ Sherri Zickefoose, “Heritage Hunter: The Passionate Calling of Geoff Burtonshaw ...,” *Calgary Herald*, September 19, 2002.

McCloy told Denney that Burtonshaw was doing “useful work.”⁵¹ Burtonshaw regularly sent Denney updates on who was coming into the archives, his adventures indexing McCloy’s papers, how Denney’s materials were being used, and reporting on the material’s popularity.⁵² Burtonshaw died in 2012, and following the examples of Denney, Kipling and McCloy, he donated his papers to the Glenbow for the next generation of researchers.⁵³

Gail Morin

Gail Morin published some of the best-known and most referenced Metis genealogies: Genealogist Darrel Loyer references Morin when discussing his research. She is the only genealogist, other than Denney, that he mentions by name, “Oh, what’s her name does good work, that Gail Morin’s books and stuff. She puts out lots of good genealogy.”⁵⁴ Gail Morin was a teacher, mayor of Elmer City, WA, and genealogist based in the Pacific Northwest. A member of the Cour d’Alene Tribe of Idaho, Morin, like Burtonshaw and Denney, became interested in her spouse’s genealogy.⁵⁵ His family was based in the Metis settlement in the Turtle Mountain area in Belcourt, North Dakota.⁵⁶ She notes that she started her database when a family member found a copy of the St. Francois Xavier Roman Catholic Church records and the St. Boniface Catholic Church records at the Portland Genealogical Forum. Spurred on by the church records,

⁵¹ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, October 24, 1992, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵² Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, September 11, 1995, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Geoff Burtonshaw to Charles Denney, 1997, M8981/20 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵³ “Geoff Burtonshaw 1916-2012,” *Calgary Herald*, November 14, 2012, sec. Obituaries.

⁵⁴ Loyer and Loyer, “Talking with My Daughter About Archives: Métis Researchers and Genealogy,” 17.

⁵⁵ “Gail Morin Obituary - Grand Coulee, WA,” Dignity Memorial, accessed June 23, 2024, <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/en-ca/obituaries/grand-coulee-wa/gail-morin-11577084>.

⁵⁶ Mary Mae McCammy, “Introduction,” in *Métis Families: A Genealogical Compendium: Volume Five Quinn to Zace*, by Gail Morin (Orange Park, FL: Quintin Publications, 2001), vi.

Gail Morin then went to the U.S. National Archives and located records for the Lake Superior Chippewa and for the Turtle Mountain Chippewa.⁵⁷ Many American Metis called themselves Chippewa (another term for Anishinaabe) to gain federal recognition. Morin entered all the data into her 1994 database and continued to research, compiling a vast and comprehensive collection of Metis families. The Archives of the University of Alberta and the Glenbow contain a comprehensive genealogical database of 65,434 Metis ancestors based on her research. Her book *Métis Families* contains lists of families drawn from American and Canadian censuses, St. Francis-Xavier Church registers, Hudson Bay Registers and the research of Denney, Kipling and Burtonshaw, among others. By the time of her death in 2023, she had published over 100 books and compiled the *Manitoba Scrip*, *North West Half-Breed Scrip 1885, 1900 Scrip*, and *Metis Families* editions from her research.⁵⁸

Denney and Morin were in contact, and she credits him in the introduction to her book *Métis Families*, noting that the Glenbow lent her Denney's microfilmed collection for her research.⁵⁹ The introduction to *Métis Families* notes:

This work has been aided and abetted by the generosity of people, in Canada and state side, who were willing to share their information, read film, make copies, and who kept a look out for additional sources. The 1870 Manitoba census, the Hudson Bay Red River census, scrip records, Charles Denney Papers, and other church registers were located, sent to us, and all duly entered by Gail into the database.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Gail Morin, *Métis Families: A Genealogical Compendium: Volume Five Quinn to Zace* (Orange Park, FL: Quintin Publications, 2001), i. For more information on the Metis in the area see: Verne Dusenberry, "Waiting for a Day That Never Comes: The Dispossessed Métis of Montana," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 119–36; Michel Hogue, "The Montana Metis and the Shifting Boundaries of Belonging," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University Of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 364–402; Gregory S. Camp, "The Dispossessed: The Ojibwa and Métis of Northwest North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 69 (2002): 62–79.

⁵⁸ "Gail Morin Obituary - Grand Coulee, WA."

⁵⁹ Morin, *Métis Families*, i.

⁶⁰ McCammy, "Introduction," vi.

Denney wrote to Geoff Burtonshaw: “You mentioned Gail Morin one time, ot[or] two. What a wholewind [sic] she must be I now have the two volumes of genealogy she has compiled from mine and other records. It is a tremendous work. I am glad that she credited Clarence Kipling as well as me. Also you and several others for giving her help.”⁶¹ Denney did have one complaint: the book did not have a surname index, something Morin solves in later editions.⁶² However, outside of the Glenbow lending Morin the microfilm, Denney and Morin do not collaborate or maintain any extensive correspondence.

Denney stepped in to help Morin when she ran into bureaucratic issues with the Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS) over a request to draw data from an *Index of Alberta Births* that the AGS had compiled. The AGS was apparently upset about Morin drawing data from the book, feeling their copyright was being violated and held multiple meetings to discuss the issue. Morin gave her copy of the book to Burtonshaw and cut ties with the organization.⁶³ Denney was, unsurprisingly, unimpressed with the AGS interfering with Morin’s research and sent a letter on her behalf. In his defence of Morin, he reminded the AGS that sharing data is the crux of genealogical research. His papers were made available, at his expense, to the AGS with the expectation that they would be available to researchers. He reminded them that he had not put stipulations on his research being copied or used and that the Glenbow made the microfilmed copies of his files available to Morin with no restrictions.⁶⁴ For Denney, AGA gatekeeping

⁶¹ Denney to Burtonshaw, December 30, 1996.

⁶² I remember going into the registry at MNBC, and there was a complete set of Morin’s compendium, set in a three-ring binder on a lectern in the middle of the room; I joked it looked like a bible on a pulpit; the registry noted, for them, it pretty much was. Erin Dolmage to Laurel Katernick, “Personal Correspondence,” c2007.

⁶³ Gail Morin to Charles Denney, April 6, 1998, M8981/128 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶⁴ Charles Denney to Claudene Nelson, February 24, 1998, M8981/134 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

geological data from someone he respected as much as Morin was completely out of line. They eventually came around and permitted Morin to copy the index, but it was too little, too late. Morin had moved on.⁶⁵

On July 20, 1985, Denney wrote, “Well, the deed is done. Bill McKee and Douglas Cass came on the 17th and got all the originals of my genealogies, all sorts of supplemental research materials, boxes of correspondence, etc. and gave me a receipt that I have completed my obligation to Glenbow. So that is that.”⁶⁶ The Denney Family files now had a permanent home at the Glenbow Museum and Archives in Calgary. The first deposit, christened with the accession number M7144, was the culmination of years of discussions, negotiations and not a small amount of handwringing on both sides.

It’s notable that of Denney’s correspondents that his deepest and most long-term epistolary relationships were exclusively with men. He writes to Gilbert Johnson,

I am also happy to be able to address you as a man. My typist must long since have decided that all of my acquaintances are women. While that is not altogether true, the evidence is pretty strong. One of the reasons is that the men are such poor letter writers; and another is that, by and large, the women are much more interested in family history than are the men.”⁶⁷

Denney was delighted to have another male correspondent. Denney was a voracious letter writer, sending thousands of letters each year to family, friends and other genealogists.⁶⁸ However, no relationships with women, including those with accomplished genealogists, like Gail Morin,

⁶⁵ Claudene Nelson to Gail Morin, February 26, 1998, M8981/128 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶⁶ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, July 20, 1985, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶⁷ Charles Denney to Gilbert Johnson, December 1, 1972, M7144/145 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶⁸ “The Family Secret Keeper,” 1983.

were as significant to Denney as his male relationships.⁶⁹ Denney's relationships with his female correspondents were either familial or transactional. They were rarely collegial or collaborative. Once Denney had the family tree information he was looking for, he rarely extended his correspondence beyond group family-and-friends Christmas letters or updates about the collection. Denney and Morin, though meeting over the years and Denney being credited in Morin's books, never worked together and only exchanged a limited number of letters. Morin's use of Denney's papers was facilitated by the Glenbow, not Denney, as they lent her their copy of the Denney Family Files microfilm. Although he deeply respected Morin and stood up for her with the AGS, he did not connect with her the way he did with his male correspondents.⁷⁰

There are long-term women correspondents, like Shirley Wishart, with whom Denney discusses genealogy, but it doesn't feel like a conversation between equals. Denney's first letter to the Wishart's didn't even address Shirley, as the letter was addressed to "Dr Vernon [Wishart] and his peaches and cream wife." Her presence is an afterthought. Denney encouraged Vernon to join the AGS, adding, "if you join your wife will also qualify. I am not sure how much you will get out of it in addition to the HONOR."⁷¹ He did trade some genealogical work in the 1980s with Shirley Wishart, exchanging several letters about Vernon's family, the Spences, but he never engages with her as he does with Kipling or McCloy. Eventually, he sent her elsewhere for help on her trees, saying he could not help, citing his files being at the Glenbow.⁷²

⁶⁹ We will discuss Gail Morin and her contributions more in depth in Chapter Six.

⁷⁰ Charles Denney to Gail Morin, October 26, 1997, M8981/128 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷¹ Charles Denney to Vernon Wishart, January 28, 1976, M7144/255 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷² Charles Denney to Gail Morin, April 16, 1998, M8981/128 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Denney did cultivate a warm relationship with a female genealogist, Shelia Hayes, who worked with the Edmonton Branch of the AGS as a volunteer and president. Hayes, a member of the Metis Nation, worked closely with Denney. Denney writes to McCloy about Hayes,

I meant to tell you a bit about Sheila Hayes. She is unmistakably Metis: a very large woman, quite self assured but not pushy, extremely capable, very helpful to the Society(got us our present library space in the McLeod Bldg.) and a wonderful person to know. When the Manitoba Society holds its seminar in October she is on the program to tell them about Metis research. One of my favourite people.⁷³

She was instrumental in Denney getting a copy of his genealogical files to the AGS. He had originally hired Hayes to make photocopies of his files for the AGS before the originals were permanently moved to the Glenbow. However, when he tallies up the cost of the copying, \$3300 CAD, Denney noted, "I surely didn't overpay Shelia."⁷⁴ Hayes reappeared in Denney's correspondence the following year; as the chapter president, she held an event to celebrate the papers being installed at the AGS.⁷⁵ He also mentioned that she wanted to fundraise to microfilm the collection, a complication with the Glenbow we will discuss later in the chapter.⁷⁶ Clearly, Denney liked Hayes, and when he wrote about her, he was clearly fond. Denney was never as comfortable with working with women as he was with men. However, her role was not as a collaborator; rather, it was in service to Denney, photocopying, celebrating and caring for the collection. At no point did Denney say she worked *with* him; she only worked *for* him. However, we should note that Hayes was not without agency in this. Denney's papers served her interests and that of the AGS. Her work collecting and preserving Denney's papers at the Genealogical

⁷³ Denney to McCloy, July 20, 1985.

⁷⁴ Denney to McCloy.

⁷⁵ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, April 3, 1986, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷⁶ Denney to McCloy, January 30, 1987.

Society Centre in Edmonton served her and, by extension, her Metis community, not just Denney.

The Glenbow Museum and Archives

The Glenbow Institute

The Glenbow Museum was and is a unique institution in Canada. The largest museum in Western Canada, it was founded in 1954 by Eric L. Harvie to house his personal collections with the condition the province would build, staff and fund the museum in perpetuity. In 1966, the museum was given to Alberta as a centennial gift and became the Glenbow Institute, holding a unique collection of fine art, museum collections, and archival material.⁷⁷ In 1976, the Glenbow Museum, Art Gallery, and Archives were brought together under one roof. Glenbow's mission was to provide an understanding of the history and heritage of Western Canada through the collection and preservation of art, objects (including some large antique farm equipment), Indigenous artifacts, and archival documents.⁷⁸ The original Glenbow was separated into several divisions: the Library, Archives, Art Collection and Historical Research Divisions. The research division was primarily focused on fieldwork and acquisitions. Additionally, photography, anthropology, geology, military and natural history departments were established.⁷⁹ This was an ambitious project and was eventually narrowed to four areas of focus: Museum, Art Gallery, Archives and Library. When the University of Calgary started exploring a Western Canadian

⁷⁷ Sheilagh S. Jameson, "The Archives of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute (Calgary)," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire Urbaine* 6, no. 3 (1978): 71; Clare Cotton, "Glenbow Museum," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, April 8, 2015, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/glenbow-museum>.

⁷⁸ Jameson, "The Archives of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute (Calgary)," 69.

⁷⁹ Jameson, "The Archives of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute (Calgary)."

stand-alone archeology department to train graduate students, Eric L. Harvie from the Glenbow stepped in. He promised fellowships, library material, facilities, and funds for fieldwork. In 1964, the University of Calgary established an archeology faculty, and the Glenbow's archeology department and Glenbow staff, including archeologist Dick Forbis, and the Glenbow's facilities moved to join the university.⁸⁰ This would not be the last time the Glenbow and the University of Calgary shared resources.

Hugh Dempsey, the original archivist for the Glenbow, noted on the 50th anniversary of the institution that most of the collections were donated by families and institutions, like Denney's. Dempsey tells a story of helping the daughter of well-known settler Reverend MacDougall,

Dispatched from her nursing-home room to collect Ms. Graham's sweater, Dempsey found himself in the basement of her soon-to-be- demolished house. Boxes everywhere. Like any archivist would, he started "poking around." The boxes were full of docketts, folded- over files of letters from the 1860s and 1870s. "As I rummaged through, I thought, Here I am standing in history, with all of these documents destined to go out into the garbage," he says. "She hadn't given them to us, but I thought, if necessary, I'll steal them."⁸¹

Dempsey eventually gets the letters, which were as important as he initially thought. The letters spoke of establishing a trading post in what is now Calgary. The article notes that in 2005, the shelves of archival documents collected by Dempsey would have reached five kilometres, end to end.⁸²

⁸⁰ Jameson, 70; Richard G. Forbis, "A Brief History of the Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary," *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 3, no. 1 (May 1, 1993), <https://doi.org/10.5334/bha.03102>. Dempsey, *Always an Adventure an Autobiography*, 155.

⁸¹ Vandervlist, "Our Friendly Archive Turns 50."

⁸² Vandervlist.

Dempsey was a self-trained archivist. He fought for archives to be publicly accessible.⁸³ Dempsey also had a particular connection to Alberta's Indigenous Nations through his father, and Dempsey was made an honorary Chief of the Kainai First Nation in 1967.⁸⁴ Dempsey wrote biographies of Indigenous leaders, including Mistahimaskwa.⁸⁵ He also used his past working with the Kainai to locate and collect correspondences at the Indian agencies.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, this did not go as Dempsey planned, as the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) destroyed much of what they did not want to take. Dempsey understood that Indigenous artifacts and papers were too important to leave only to the government to retain and that the DIA may not have had Indigenous peoples' or the public's interest in mind when choosing what to save and what to destroy. As the DIA did not manage to destroy everything, Dempsey salvaged some important items for the Glenbow, such as copies of the Reserve Pass books which were ordered destroyed by the DIA when the quasi-legal Pass System program was phased out in the 1930s and 40s.⁸⁷ These were the kinds of records Dempsey wanted to save.

⁸³ Dempsey, *Always an Adventure an Autobiography*, 127.; James Cullingham, "Historian Had A Deep Connection To The Indigenous Community: Through The Glenbow Museum And Archives In Calgary And His Own Writing, He Became An Interlocutor In Relation To The First Nations Of Alberta," *The Globe and Mail*, June 17, 2022.

⁸⁴ The Kainai nation periodically give honorary Chief designations to individuals who have contributed to the Nation in some substantial way. In 2011 there were 40 living Individuals who had been given the honor including Prime Minister Stephen Harper and two past presidents of the University of Lethbridge. Wayne K. Spear, "The Derelict Honourary Chief of the Blood Tribe," *Wayne K Spear* (blog), July 12, 2011, <https://waynekspear.com/2011/07/12/the-derelict-honourary-chief-of-the-blood-tribe/>.

⁸⁵ James Cullingham, "Historian Had a Deep Connection To The Indigenous Community," *The Globe and Mail*, June 17, 2022; Hugh A. Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet*, Canadian Lives 53 (Halifax, N.S: Goodread Biographies, 1988). Note that I have used the Indigenous names for these leaders. Although they may be better known by their English names, Big Bear and Crowfoot, I've chosen to honor and normalise the use of Indigenous-language names here. I also acknowledge that Indigenous names have variations in spelling and punctuation. For more information on best practices, see Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples*, 72.

⁸⁶ Dempsey, *Always an Adventure an Autobiography*, 128.

⁸⁷ *The Pass System*, Film (Tamarack Productions, V-Tape, 2015).

The Museum and The Spirit Sings

The Glenbow experienced missteps in its relationship with Indigenous peoples. Museums are foundationally colonial, and Indigenous collections were often suspect and sometimes outright stolen from the peoples they were intended to represent. Museums put Indigenous heritage on display for primarily white middle-class audiences, like the Pacific Northwest artifacts collected by anthropologist Franz Boaz for exhibition at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair that later became part of the permanent collection in the Field Museum in Chicago.⁸⁸ The 1988 Olympic exhibition *The Spirit Sings*, headed by Glenbow's Director Duncan Cameron, was meant to be "An act of social responsibility, addressing an international issue through the medium of the museum and, in this case, the significance and importance of the preservation of aboriginal cultures," however, it reproduced colonial norms by acquiring and exhibiting Indigenous artifacts without meaningful consultation or cultural safety with the communities that created them.⁸⁹ Staged for the 1988 Calgary Olympic Games, Cameron saw an opportunity to spotlight not just Canadian but also the Indigenous collections housed around the world, seeing the Olympics as a chance for international cooperation between international museums and North American Indigenous collections. He then established a committee of six experts, each with an emphasis on what he described as the six Indigenous linguistic and "cultural areas in Canada," to research and arrange to borrow items from European collections.⁹⁰ This included

⁸⁸ See: David Hurst. Thomas, *Skull Wars Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Michelle A. Hamilton, *Collections and Objections Aboriginal Material Culture in Southern Ontario, 1791-1914*, McGill-Queen's Native and Northern Series 63 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Amanda J. Cobb and Amy Lonetree, *The National Museum of the American Indian Critical Conversations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

⁸⁹ Duncan Cameron, "Preface," in *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*, ed. Glenbow Museum (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 7.

⁹⁰ Cameron. For a discussion on collections in the UK, See Laura Peers' work on artifacts in the Oxford Pitt Rivers museum" Laura Peers, "'Many Tender Ties': The Shifting Contexts and Meanings of the S BLACK Bag, The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archeology* 31, no. 2 (1999): 288-302. Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown,

\$600,000 to fund the exhibition. None of the curators came from the communities they were hired to represent, nor were the communities consulted on how their artifacts would be exhibited.⁹¹

This was not the only insertion of ‘indigeneity’ into the games. In 1976, a version of Indigenous representation was included in the Opening Ceremonies. As Indigenous Studies scholar Jennifer Adese notes, the Olympics are a kind of “celebration capitalism” where: “Olympic ceremonies provide cities and their nations with the opportunity to market a version of themselves, essentially putting on display a highly crafted narrative of the nation that they believe will enhance their public image.”⁹² In the case of Calgary, the opening ceremonies were crafted to sell Calgary’s ‘Western’ hospitality and featured three figures that were seen to best represent Calgary: ‘the Mountie,’ ‘the Cowboy’ and ‘the Native’.⁹³ In reality, many Indigenous people were involved with farming and ranching, and the RCMP did have Indigenous members, but the committee felt that leaning into Hollywood-style tropes would highlight what they were trying to sell about Calgary.⁹⁴ There was even a suggestion that there could be a staged attack and wagon burning by Indigenous actors during the opening ceremony, referencing racist Hollywood Westerns like *Stagecoach*, that was rejected by the organizing committee.⁹⁵

Visiting with the Ancestors: Blackfoot Shirts in Museum Spaces, 1st ed., Campus Alberta Collection (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2015); Cara Ann Krmpotich and Laura L. Peers, *This Is Our Life: Haida Material Heritage and Changing Museum Practice*, 1st ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013).

⁹¹ Lee-Ann Martin, “Anger and Reconciliation: A Very Brief History of Exhibiting Contemporary Indigenous Art in Canada,” *Afterall Journal* 43, no. Spring/ Summer 2017 (March 7, 2017).

⁹² Adese, *Aboriginal TM*, 72.

⁹³ Adese, 81.

⁹⁴ For more on Indigenous Tropes in film see *Reel Injun* (National Film Board of Canada; Rezolution Pictures Inc., 2010); *Red Fever* (Les Films du 3 Mars, 2024); Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal, 1992).

⁹⁵ Adese, *Aboriginal TM*, 82.

There was an immediate response to the Olympic shows, particularly the *Spirit Sings*, with public protest and boycotts by local Indigenous groups, like the Lubicon Lake Cree First Nation, who had lost their traditional lands to oil companies in the 1970s. The Glenbow exhibition's main sponsor, Shell Oil, had taken these lands.⁹⁶ The overall lack of consultation with Indigenous peoples spilled into the exhibition. Items were displayed without cultural safeguards, including sacred and ceremonial items. The genesis of the exhibition, to bring together international and domestic collections, spurred conversations about ownership and the return of stolen items. Mohawk curator and writer Lee-Ann Martin describes her reaction to hearing about the exhibit:

I was angry and frustrated to learn that the curatorial committee included no Indigenous curators. My anger was exacerbated by the fact that the exhibition would include only historical objects, without regard to contemporary realities – typical of the exclusionary practices of museums that had amassed significant collections of Indigenous historical objects while denying intellectual and physical access to the objects by the very communities from which they were taken.⁹⁷

Martin's awareness of the exhibition was through Indigenous protest, that of the Lubicon Cree and an art installation titled *Artifact #671B* by Anishinaabekwe artist Rebecca Belmore, which was mounted three days before the Olympic exhibition was opened.⁹⁸ Outside an art gallery in Thunder Bay, Belmore surrounded herself with hand-painted signs reading "Glenbow Museum~ Presents~," "~the Spirit Sings sponsored by...," and "artifact #671b 1988." Belmore also wore the Shell Oil logo over her chest and positioned herself within the signs as if she were being exhibited in a museum.⁹⁹ The exhibition, after closing in Calgary, moved to the National Gallery in Ottawa, where further consultation led to the creation of a task force on "Museums and First

⁹⁶ Ann Davis, "Learning through Museum Controversies Three Canadian Examples/Aprendizaje a Través de Las Controversias Del Museo Tres Ejemplos Canadienses," *Complutum* 26, no. 2 (2015): 67–76.

⁹⁷ Martin, "Anger and Reconciliation."

⁹⁸ Martin.

⁹⁹ Rebecca Belmore, "Artifact #671B – Rebecca Belmore," Rebecca Belmore, 2024, <https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/artifact-671b/>.

Peoples,” chaired by museum staff, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous. Unlike the exhibition, the task force opened and closed with ceremony and involved elders and local cultural participation.¹⁰⁰ Archivist Anthony Rees called *The Spirit Sings* the end of an era at the Glenbow.¹⁰¹

The mistakes made by the Glenbow led to some tangible changes in Canadian museums’ colonialist approach to Indigenous exhibitions. Indeed, the Glenbow was involved in groundbreaking and culturally sensitive work in the 2000s with professors Alison Brown and Laura Peers. Peers, then at Oxford University, and Brown at the University of Calgary, worked with the Pitt River Museum, the Glenbow and Blackfoot Elders Herman Yellow Old Woman, Frank Weasel Head, and Allan Pard, to allow Blackfoot Hairlock Shirts, or *aawahkaotsiisoka’sim*, from the Pitt River to visit Glenbow where the shirts were made accessible to the Blackfoot Nation.¹⁰² The shirts were made of hide, horse and human scalp and hair and were decorated with paint and quillwork.¹⁰³ The shirts are rare as they were often well-worn and not ceremonial, so they weren’t collected by Canadian museums.¹⁰⁴ The shirts in the exhibition were made between the 1820s and the 1930s and gifted to George Simpson and Edward Hopkins of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) in 1841.¹⁰⁵ Frank Weasel Head and Andy Blackwater visited the shirts at Oxford and asked “if the shirts could come home for a visit,” which was the genesis of The Blackfoot Shirts project.¹⁰⁶ The project was collaborative

¹⁰⁰ Davis, “Learning through Museum Controversies Three Canadian Examples/Aprendizaje a Través de Las Controversias Del Museo Tres Ejemplos Canadienses,” 69.

¹⁰¹ Anthony L. Rees, “The Glenbow Archives. - 1966-2016: A History of Design and Circumstance,” *Archivaria* 35, no. Spring (1993): 175–89.

¹⁰² Peers and Brown, *Visiting with the Ancestors*.

¹⁰³ Peers and Brown, 38,56.

¹⁰⁴ Peers and Brown, 62.

¹⁰⁵ Peers and Brown, 47.

¹⁰⁶ Peers and Brown, 11.

and innovative, bringing the shirts back to Alberta, even if the move was temporary. They were housed at the Glenbow and gave members of the Blackfoot Nation unprecedented access to the shirts, including being able to handle and examine the artifacts in small groups. The entire project coincided with a permanent Blackfoot co-curated gallery at the Glenbow, called “*Niitsitapiisinni: Our Way of Life*,” which was curated by the four Blackfoot Nations.¹⁰⁷

The Glenbow Museum went through a significant period of growth in its relationship with southern Alberta’s Indigenous peoples, from the lack of consultation with the Olympic exhibition to the careful and thoughtful programs put on by the Siksika (Blackfoot) with Laura Peers and Alison Brown. The Indigenous nations were not part of the building or invited as patrons in the early exhibitions. This back and forth is reflected in the development of the Library and Archives under the care of Hugh Dempsey and Pat McCloy and the shift when Metis genealogical collections like Denney’s were purchased for use.

The Archives

The Glenbow Archives, in contrast to the Glenbow Museum, were unusual. Unlike many collections of similar size, the archives were designed as much for active public access and use as they were for housing and preserving archival material.¹⁰⁸ The collection was also diverse. Glenbow archivist Anthony Rees notes it is more “like the proverbial small-town historical society or museum, replete with anything and everything which could even be remotely considered to be of historical interest.”¹⁰⁹ There was tension in the Glenbow’s large mandate and

¹⁰⁷ Peers and Brown, 78.

¹⁰⁸ Vandervlist, “Our Friendly Archive Turns 50.” This was certainly my experience in my numerous visits to the 6th Floor Reading Room where archivists bent over backwards to help visitors start and deepen their research.

¹⁰⁹ Rees, “The Glenbow Archives. - 1966-2016: A History of Design and Circumstance.”

multiple departments, and there have been ongoing struggles over priorities and funding allocations.

The Glenbow was run by a foundation and funded through government and private donations. The archives were rarely the recipients of financial assistance because they did not have the glamour of the museum collections. They were, however, popular. In 1993, they were open five days a week with over 7000 researchers a year, and they received an equal number of written requests per year. They also produced 8000 photographic prints that year; the Glenbow housed one of the finest photographic collections in Canada.¹¹⁰ Rees notes one of the issues in the 1990s was the marketing of the Glenbow as primarily a museum:

The emphasis on the promotion of Glenbow as a *museum* was a legitimate marketing tactic but while the Archives managed to maintain its particular identity among the various outside user-groups, such was not the case within the institution itself. Large numbers of staff had joined Glenbow since the new image was developed, and for many the idea that Glenbow was more than just a museum would have come as a surprise. For many employees (including some at senior levels), the success and therefore relative importance of certain departments were measured in terms appropriate solely to museums.¹¹¹

This marketing is discussed at length between Denney and his friend Pat McCloy. McCloy had deep ties to the Glenbow as its first professional librarian. In a series of letters about the state of the Glenbow, Denney wrote,

So Duncan Cameron has left Glenbow.... I got the impression that he put an undue emphasis on the Museum and not enough on the archives and library. But then, I am out of joint with both the Provincial Museum and Glenbow's. Both of them have far too much hidden in the basement. And I can't see what business they have putting on "art" exhibits that have little to do with history."¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Rees, 176.

¹¹¹ Rees, 176.

¹¹² Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, January 20, 1989, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

McCloy responded: “you are right in saying the Library and Archives have not had the support they deserve... that lies more with the Board of Governors.... I am sorry to say the emphasis on western history seems to have become a secondary consideration. It would be wonderful if the Library and Archives could be set up as a separate institution.”¹¹³ Western history was the central focus of both McCloy and Denney. Hugh Dempsey added an insider view, noting that the headache from *The Spirit Sings* had left Cameron with no choice but to leave after a particularly contentious meeting with the Glenbow’s board of directors.¹¹⁴ McCloy adds in a separate letter, “They have announced a new director for Glenbow. Following Cameron will be a tough job but I wish him well. I hope he [the new director] will have a greater interest in keeping Glenbow closer to its basic Western Canada interest, the purpose for which it was originally founded.”¹¹⁵ The varied interests of the Glenbow’s founder Erick Harvie, which included a large Asian art collection which was part of the original bequeathment,¹¹⁶ did not keep with the Western Canadian focus. Additionally, the wide mandate of Museum, Archives and Library had left the Glenbow with a lack of focus and funding.

The underfunding and over-extending of the Glenbow, particularly the Library and Archives, continued in the 1990s with the end of the oil boom and the drying up of public funding. The Glenbow was not alone in Alberta in seeing its public funding vanish.¹¹⁷ Historian

¹¹³ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, January 24, 1989, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹¹⁴ Dempsey, *Always an Adventure an Autobiography*, 360.

¹¹⁵ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, March 18, 1989, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹¹⁶ The “Many Faces Many Paths: Art of Asia Exhibition” which had taken up much of the Second Floor of the Glenbow is an example of this. As of 2018 it has been retired and a new contemporary Indigenous gallery has been installed. Sammy Hudes, “‘It’s Time to Revisit That Space’: Glenbow to Close Art of Asia Exhibit after 30-Year Run,” *Calgary Herald*, May 24, 2018, <https://calgaryherald.com/entertainment/local-arts/its-time-to-revisit-that-space-glenbow-to-close-art-of-asia-exhibit-after-30-year-run>.

¹¹⁷ Rees, “The Glenbow Archives. - 1966-2016: A History of Design and Circumstance,” 177.

Alvin Finkel outlines this retraction of funding by Ralph Klein's provincial government as a "new way of viewing the state and its relationship to citizens... it's programs themselves that the government wishes to downgrade or abolish."¹¹⁸ Finkel notes that Klein's government acted in contradictory ways, giving less support while increasing control. Indeed, this happened to the Glenbow. Robert Janes, the former director who shouldered the restructuring of the Glenbow organization in response to the cuts, outlined this conundrum. He writes that the government had limited funding, turning down a multi-year grant proposal while attempting to control the Glenbow from Edmonton.¹¹⁹ McCloy pointed this out to Denney, writing, "Glenbow is suffering from underfunding and is causing problems for the new director. If the Government would stop building unnecessary museums like the one at Cochrane they could give sound established ones the money they need to do a good job, but political expediency outweighs practical considerations."¹²⁰ These cuts put the future of the Library and Archives in real jeopardy, and eventually, the Glenbow threatened to close the Archives and Library to the public.¹²¹

This threat led to a real crisis for researchers, and for contributors like Denney and McCloy, who donated their documents with the caveat that they would be able to continue to use the materials at the archives. As McCloy told Denney when the files were first picked up: "the child of your labours will have a good home in a spot where it will be available to many who come seeking information, and where it will be greatly appreciated."¹²² Closing the archives

¹¹⁸ Alvin Finkel, "The Klein Revolution," *Canadian Dimension* 28, no. 5 (November 1994).

¹¹⁹ Robert R. Janes, *Museums and the Paradox of Change: A Case Study in Urgent Adaptation*, 3rd edition. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 29,76.

¹²⁰ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, May 2, 1990, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹²¹ Rees, "The Glenbow Archives. - 1966-2016: A History of Design and Circumstance," 177.

¹²² Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, July 17, 1985, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

would have been anathema to Denney, McCloy, Geoff Burtonshaw and Charles Kipling, who all left their research papers specifically for other family history researchers, particularly Metis researchers, to use. The Glenbow never fully recovered from the cuts of the 1990s and 2000s, and McCloy and Denney got their wish for a separate institution in 2019, when the Library and Archives received a large private donation and was permanently moved to a new space in the University of Calgary, in the new Glenbow Western Research Centre in 2019.¹²³ The new location's capacity for better scanning, long-term storage and preservation marks a shift from the open fonds, rows of photographs and wooden tables on the 6th floor of the Glenbow. It also moved the archives from a public space, the Glenbow building in downtown Calgary, to an academic one, the University of Calgary Library.

Denney and the Glenbow

Denney's choice of the Glenbow to house his legacy was not an obvious one. In a letter to the editor, responding to the posthumous tribute "Chronicler of Metis Culture Honored," E.A. Harris writes:

I knew Charles Denney ("Chronicler of Metis culture honoured," *Journal*, March 16), liked him, admired him, enjoyed his humour and was in awe of his mental capacity at such an advanced age. He will be missed.

However, I was stunned and puzzled that he donated his histories to the Glenbow Museum.

Why would a man who had spent 63 years of his life in Edmonton, having made his livelihood here and been such an active member of the community, not deposited it either in the Edmonton Archives or the Provincial Archives?¹²⁴

¹²³ Libraries and Cultural Resources Staff, "Glenbow Library and Archives on the Move to University of Calgary: Relocation of Massive Collection of Western Canadian History Now Underway," *UCalgary News* (blog), March 13, 2019, <https://ucalgary.ca/news/glenbow-library-and-archives-move-university-calgary>.

¹²⁴ E A Harris, "Why Glenbow?," *Edmonton Journal*, March 22, 2022.

Harris is correct. Denney was a proud Edmontonian and felt deeply about his city. Denney deposited papers in archives both in and outside Edmonton. He donated a collection of photographs from his time as a teacher to Chris Bryldt, who donated the photos to the Edson, AB archive on Denney's behalf.¹²⁵ He donated all his parents' personal papers to the Provincial Archives of Alberta and much of his personal library and copies of papers to the Alberta Genealogical Society, much to the Glenbow's consternation.¹²⁶ In many ways, it was not that Denney chose the Glenbow, but rather that the Glenbow pursued him.

Denney was keenly aware that his collection had educational and monetary value. In a letter to Clarence Kipling in 1969, Denney mentioned that a genealogist they knew had arranged for her files to be sent to the provincial archives in Winnipeg. He gave Kipling advice about the value of the work they had done together: "Of course, I have no desire to sell anything I have gathered. I have this as a hobby. And I expect it to go on for years yet... If you don't drive yourself too hard you will ultimately develop files and materials that will be so valuable that Archives will be around to see you. You won't have to go to see them."¹²⁷ Representatives of the Glenbow came to Denney, as he notes to friends Betty and Ralph Beattie in 1974, "For months now I have had several people helping me with my research. Decided leaving money behind had no virtue. So I am having what pleasure I can get from it. Now it appears that my collected works here may be worth a nice sum to one of the archives."¹²⁸ Denney was correct, and the Devonian Group,

¹²⁵ Archives Society of Alberta, "Charles Denney Collection: Edson 19," Alberta on Record, accessed July 5, 2024, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/charles-denney-collection>.

¹²⁶ Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, "Accession Receipt."

¹²⁷ Denney to Kipling, July 12, 1969.

¹²⁸ Charles Denney to Ralph Beattie and Betty Beattie, August 16, 1974, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

established by Eric Harvie as his charitable foundation,¹²⁹ had approached Denney in May of 1974 to see if he was interested in the foundation purchasing his archives for the Glenbow.¹³⁰

Denney wrote in response to the inquiry to H.F. Critchley at the Devonian Group to outline his materials:

Now, after thousands of miles of travel, after interviewing hundreds of people, after writing about 4,000 letters, after acquiring a considerable library of books, pamphlets and documents, and after spending about \$30,000, I have a body of genealogical and historical information which is the envy of all who know it. The 27 foolscap pages have grown to over one hundred three-ring Loose-leaf binders full to bursting with information on over 500 families. My personal office has grown from nothing to include three desks, two typewriters, two large cabinets of statistical data on some 60,000 index cards, and two large cabinets full of correspondence.¹³¹

The foundation was initially unsure, noting that “genealogical material is somewhat beyond our normal terms of reference.” However, they found his letter compelling and believed that his collection may “chart new ground for the Foundation.”¹³² It did, and the Glenbow would continue to acquire more genealogical collections, with a particular focus on Metis families, becoming some of the most popular items in the Archives. These include the collections of Denney’s friend and research partner Clarence Kipling, Gail Morin’s database, and the genealogical collections of Geoff Burtonshaw, Walter K. Miles, Robert Allan, Ellen Perrault, Warren Sinclair, and Pat McCoy.¹³³

¹²⁹ Fred M. Diehl, *The Family That Gave It All Back: Entrepreneurs in Philanthropy--the Devonian Foundation* (Calgary: Devonian Foundation, 1989).

¹³⁰ Charles Denney to Jane C. Weaver, May 31, 1974, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹³¹ Denney to Critchley, May 30, 1974.

¹³² University of Calgary Digital Collections, “Digital Collections,” University of Calgary Library, accessed June 6, 2024, <https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/>.

¹³³ Kim Gerdali, “Library: Glenbow Library and Archives: Home,” accessed July 5, 2024, <https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/c.php?g=735505&p=5294800>.

The Glenbow sent out an initial contract to Denney in November of 1974, laying out the terms of the transaction. The Glenbow would take on the care and copyright of all of Denney's papers for an undisclosed sum, take possession of the collection on November 1, 1977, and a copy of the records on microfilm would be made for Denney's use.¹³⁴ Denney made a counteroffer on the initial terms, asking for more time to turn over the documents, and proposed a second date for any additional items to be added to the collection so he could continue working on the files, noting, of course, that Denney was nearly 74 years old at the time of writing the letter.¹³⁵ He also asked that the microfilm copy that was promised in the contract be provided to the Alberta Genealogical Society directly, as Denney wished them to have a complete copy of his collection, with the understanding the copyright remained with the Glenbow. He also asked that his writing remain under his copyright so that he may be able to publish in the future. In a further letter, Denney thanked Hammond, the vice president of the Glenbow, and accepted the offer of \$25,000 for the collection, which would be just over \$150,000 in 2024,¹³⁶ noting that it left him with a greatly increased "sense of security and satisfaction."¹³⁷ Though the price had been settled, the handover date had not, and Denney continued to push back, moving the date from three years to five, feeling that three years was too short under the circumstances and asked again to hand over the collection in installments.¹³⁸ Denney wrote to Pat McCloy, quoting the Glenbow's response to extending the date, "The arrangement proposed in our clause 2, giving

¹³⁴ Glenbow-Alberta Institute, "THIS AGREEMENT Made as of the Day of __ GLENBOW-ALBERTA INSTITUTE with Head Office in the City of Calgary, Province of Alberta, (Purchaser) -and- CHARLES D. DENNY, Retired Gentleman of the City of Edmonton, Province of Alberta, (Vendor)," 1974, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹³⁵ These later acquisitions are is what is marked as the M8189 series.

¹³⁶ "Inflation Calculator | Measuring Canadian Inflation Rate & CPI."

¹³⁷ Charles Denney to H.F. Chritchley, May 5, 1975, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹³⁸ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, February 10, 1975, M8981/46 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

you three full years to work on the collection after it has become our property, is a very considerable concession. etc.!” Denney asked: “Would I make a fool of myself if I told him I am no longer interested?”¹³⁹ It’s unclear if Denney was serious, irascible, or was actually having cold feet, but delaying delivery of the files does become a sticking point. He wrote to Chritchley:

Now I don't know what to do. I would like Glenbow to have the material. But I also want to have the use of it for as long as I am able to carry on.

My present inclination is to tell Mr. Hammond that I am not prepared to enter into a contract that does not permit that.

While personnel and circumstances both may change within the next two or more years, is it not likely that the collection will be just as valuable in three years as it is now? In money, I mean. If I can keep working on it, it should be worth much more.

The problem is, of course, that I could use the money now.¹⁴⁰

The threat worked. Another staff member at the Glenbow, M.S. Evick, took the issue to the President, H.W. Meech. Denney got his five years, and the contract was signed. Hammond wrote: “Our mutual friends in the Devonian Group are most persuasive, and I am now writing to confirm that Glenbow will accept possession of the Denney Papers five years after the signing of the agreement to purchase.”¹⁴¹ Denney was to hand over the collection March 1, 1980. The final (unsigned) contract follows:¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Denney to McCloy.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Denney to H.F. Chritchley, February 10, 1975, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴¹ J. Allan Hammond to Charles Denney, February 12, 1975, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴² Glenbow-Alberta Institute, “THIS AGREEMENT Made as of the Day of 1975 GLENBOW-ALBERTA INSTITUTE with Head Office in the City of Calgary, Province of Alberta, (Purchaser) -and- CHARLES D. DENNY, Retired Gentleman of the City of Edmonton, Province of Alberta, (Vendor),” 1975, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

- 2 -

sets over the collection to the Purchaser and such grant, conveyance, assignment and setting over shall be deemed to have been done by the Vendor on the date of this Agreement without any further action on the part of the Vendor and the entire right and title unto the collection shall be vested in the Purchaser on that date.

2. The Vendor shall keep the - and - in his possession until March 1st, 1980, or until the death of the Vendor, whichever first occurs. The Purchaser shall take possession of the collection on that date and pack it for shipment to the Purchaser at the Purchaser's expense.

WHEREAS the Vendor is the lawful owner of those assets described in Schedule "A" attached hereto located at the Vendor's residence in the City of Edmonton, Province of Alberta;

AND WHEREAS the Vendor wishes to sell to Glenbow-Alberta Institute and Glenbow-Alberta Institute wishes to purchase the collection;

AND WHEREAS the Purchaser wishes the Vendor to continue research and add to the collection;

NOW THEREFORE WITNESSETH that in consideration of the sum of Twenty-five thousand (\$25,000.00) Dollars paid by the Purchaser to the Vendor the Parties hereto agree as follows:

(1) The Vendor hereby grants, conveys, assigns, sells and

- 2 -

sets over the collection to the Purchaser and such grant, conveyance, assignment and setting over shall be deemed to have been done by the Vendor on the date of this Agreement without any further action on the part of the Vendor and the entire right and title unto the collection shall be vested in the Purchaser on that date.

2. The Vendor shall keep the collection in his possession until March 1st, 1980, or until the death of the Vendor, whichever first occurs. The Purchaser shall take possession of the collection on that date and pack it for shipment to the Purchaser at the Purchaser's expense.

3. The Vendor shall, for and on behalf of the Purchaser, make additions and corrections to the collection from time to time while it is in his possession and any such additions and corrections shall be the property of the Purchaser.

4. The Vendor shall permit access by the Purchaser to the collection at reasonable business hours to enable the Purchaser or its agents to microfilm or do any other work on the collection. One copy of the microfilm or microfiche of the collection will be made available to the Vendor upon completion of the work.

5. Any copyright that the Vendor may have in the collection is hereby conveyed and transferred irrevocably to the Purchaser.

6. The Vendor represents and warrants to the Purchaser that:

- 2 -

sets over the collection to the Purchaser and such grant, conveyance, assignment and setting over shall be deemed to have been done by the Vendor on the date of this Agreement without any further action on the part of the Vendor and the entire right and title unto the collection shall be vested in the Purchaser on that date.

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5. Any copyright that the Vendor may have in the collection is hereby conveyed and transferred irrevocably to the Purchaser.

6. The Vendor represents and warrants to the Purchaser that:

- 3 -

(a) He is the sole lawful owner of the collection and has legal right to grant and convey title to the collection.

(b) The collection is free and clear of all liens and encumbrances.

7. This Agreement supersedes all other agreements, documents, writings and verbal understandings between the parties and no amendment or variations of the provisions of this Agreement shall be binding on either party unless it is evidenced in writing executed by the parties.

8. The parties hereto shall provide such further documents or instruments as may be reasonably necessary or desirable to effect the purpose of this Agreement.

AND WHEREAS the Vendor wishes to sell to Glenbow-Alberta Institute and Glenbow-Alberta Institute wishes to purchase the collection;

AND WHEREAS the Parties hereto agree to the collection;

NOW THEREFORE WITNESSETH that in consideration of the sum of Twenty-five thousand (\$25,000.00) Dollars paid by the Purchaser to the Vendor the Parties hereto agree as follows:

(1) The Vendor hereby grants, conveys, assigns, sells and

Charles D. Denney

GLENBOW-ALBERTA INSTITUTE

Per: _____

Per: _____

Figure 3-1 Final Contract for Charles Denney's Archival Materials, (unsigned).

With a contract and cheque in hand, Denney wrote to Clarence Kipling to let him know that the deal was done. He wrote:

Before I left Calgary I arranged that my collection of books and documents[s] will ultimately be deposited there. Was able to make arrangements with Devonian Foundation to help me finance my further research and writing; It will be helpful to know that my material will have a home; and it will also be helpful to have a bit of extra money. One of these days Glenboy [sic] is going to microfilm my material so that if I should loose [sic] my “books” [he’s referring to his binders of material, not his library] in a car accident or by fire or water, they will have that much at least. I am glad of that. They seem to like my system of making charts, as well as my many thousands of index cards.¹⁴³

As Kipling was in Calgary, it meant he would have more access to the charts he helped research, echoing Denney: “I am sure it will be a great help for future generations.”¹⁴⁴ For Denney, it was as much about his legacy. However, even this early in the process, being separated from his materials was irksome to our genealogist.

However, there was a hiccough. Although Denney has letters explaining that someone is coming to start filming his papers, the Glenbow did not complete a full microfilm copy of the files in Denney’s possession, partly because Denney kept adding to them. Denney wrote to Kipling in 1978 about the rapidly growing files:

As you well know there is in it a great deal that you supplied. Also I hope you name is on all of it. It is to be done [filmed] again in another year or so. By that time it will be greatly added to. I understand Glenbow has had many calls on it. ... When it is done again [microfilming] I am to have a copy for myself. Ultimately it will go to the genealogical society”¹⁴⁵

The microfilming, however, was not completed by the time Denney had to hand over the papers, and this left Denney with the possibility of losing access to his papers in Edmonton. Even though

¹⁴³ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, February 25, 1975, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴⁴ Kipling to Denney, May 3, 1975.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, February 23, 1979, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

it was part of the final contract, and Denney had clearly stated his intentions to the Glenbow about giving a copy to the Genealogical Society, this caused frustration with the new director.¹⁴⁶

Denney's papers garnered significant attention at the Glenbow, which underscored their importance. The lack of a full microfilmed copy became a serious, and expensive, conservation issue. McCloy wrote to Denney,

... your papers get a lot of use, more than is good for them in their present state. Unfortunately, the archives is not in a position to do much about it, and the papers do get as good care as they would anywhere else. The basic problem is that governments give no priority to money for care and preservation. They seem to think collecting is all the preservation heritage materials all need."¹⁴⁷

Denney thought he may have a solution. The Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS), which Denney founded and was conveniently closer to Denney in Edmonton, had photocopies of all Denney's genealogical material and wanted to fundraise to microfilm them.¹⁴⁸ Seeing no ongoing microfilming of his files, Denney proceeded with creating the photocopies for the AGS and informed the Glenbow after the fact. Denney had an ulterior motive. If a copy of the papers were located in Edmonton, they would be much easier to access, and he could consult them if need be. He wrote in 1985,

Yes!! it is my ambition to turn over to Glenbow about 15th July all the originals of my research on some 1292 families. Yes, If I could work at the project for another 18 years I expect there would be that many more. I am just bothered that some of the work could be so much better. For months I have been striving hard to complete copies of it all ... These copies I hope to have in the Genealogical library here. So it looks as if that is from where I will have to operate... Anyway, I have to put it all in some order while I am able. At age 84 I am threatening to "retire". Elsie thinks I should have retired long ago.

¹⁴⁶ Glenbow-Alberta Institute, "THIS AGREEMENT Made as of the Day of 1975 GLENBOW-ALBERTA INSTITUTE with Head Office in the City of Calgary, Province of Alberta, (Purchaser) -and- CHARLES D. DENNY, Retired Gentleman of the City of Edmonton, Province of Alberta, (Vendor)."

¹⁴⁷ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, January 10, 1987, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴⁸ Denney to McCloy.

Thus, in the end, the papers being in Calgary was less of an issue than Denney predicted, as he notes to a Yale family member that giving the material to the AGS would facilitate regular visits to the library to continue working. Yet, he wrote, “I have had time to discover that I am not going to,” noting that it was not his age, at 84, but his laziness that kept him from going to the library to use the copies for which he paid out of pocket.¹⁴⁹

The microfilming by the Glenbow did happen, but not for several years. Denney ran into Glenbow Archivist Tony Rees at a history and archival conference, where “he boisterously told me what a wonderful job they have done microfilming my paper. When I expressed surprise, he exclaimed, ‘they were being beaten to death!’ that makes me both sad and glad.”¹⁵⁰ Denney asked the Glenbow if the AGS could microfilm the papers and got a negative response. This put the Glenbow into a quandary. They didn’t want the AGS holding an original microfilm of what was their property, but they didn’t have the funds to copy it themselves. Pat McCloy commiserated with Denney,

In you last letter you asked about copying (microfilming) your genealogical records. I am very unhappy about this whole business. Glenbow went back on its contract with you when it did not microfilm and give you a copy for your personal use. That was not the fault of the Archives, and they somewhat reluctantly gave you permission to photocopy your records for your own use. They were somewhat dismayed when they found out you had turned these photocopies over to another institution [the Alberta Genealogical Society] and I cannot say I blame them. I cannot say how they will react to your request.

I think however, the approach should be to as to microfilm the original records in Glenbow, leaving the negative to Glenbow and taking only a positive copy for the Society. I hope such a request would be favorably considered, for they should be microfilmed before they suffer too much from use.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Charles Denney to Mary Lou Stathers, October 17, 1985, M8981/490000 Yale Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵⁰ Charles Denney to Shirley Wishart, July 6, 1985, M8189/201 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵¹ Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, February 15, 1987, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Apparently, with this request and the likelihood that Denney would again just do what he wished with the AGS archive, the Glenbow changed its mind. McCloy wrote to Denney that the Denney Papers were being addressed by the archivists because of the amount of use they've had. Denney replied: "I am curious as to what they are doing to them 'to get them in better shape for use.' to my great surprise he [archivist Doug Cass] mentioned that they are going to be microfilming the papers this summer 'so that we can make it more accessible.' That makes me wonder if they propose to share them with other archives. It would not hurt my feelings."¹⁵² Denney did what he set out to do: he built a monument to Mildred that lived on at the Glenbow and at the AGS.

The collections at the Glenbow became a focus for Indigenous and Metis researchers. Denney told McCloy, "There a cousin of my late wife's was delighted. She had been to Glenbow and got copies of the material in my papers on her family... Maybe here is a good place to say that I have heard from some others who were very happy with what Glenbow had been able to give them from my papers."¹⁵³ Denney had never felt that the Glenbow fully appreciated his work and the standard he set for future genealogical collections. After Denney handed in the final deposit of papers, he wrote to McCloy, "I wanted you to see what Mr. Cameron said in respect to my papers. that is why I am writing on the other side of a copy of his letter. He says I am 'to be congratulated.' That is an interesting way to have a great work dismissed."¹⁵⁴ What Duncan Cameron actually wrote was:

Our Archivist Bill McKee, has reminded me that our long association with you in collecting the genealogies of fur trade families has now been completed. On behalf of Glenbow, I want to express our appreciation for the time and effort you have put into this

¹⁵² McCloy to Denney, May 2, 1990.

¹⁵³ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, July 24, 1986, M8189/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, May 19, 1990, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

most worthwhile project. I know that hundreds of researchers already have made use of the microfilm copies here and I am sure that over the years the Denney Papers will constitute a very important part of our holdings.

I believe it is through the efforts of people like you, who are wholly dedicated to projects such as this, that we are able to be so successful in preserving the records of the past. You are to be congratulated.¹⁵⁵

The letter is much more gracious than Denney portrays. It speaks more to Denney's sadness at giving up his life's work to the archives, which may not, in the end, have been his first choice.

McCloy replied: "you can still be very useful in the field of genealogy, for you have a general knowledge of the early western families which is not in your records, and I certainly hope I can continue to draw on that knowledge...The Denney papers will always be associated with your name, and in Glenbow you will not be forgotten."¹⁵⁶

Unsurprisingly, Denney received positive feedback from the users of the materials. Susan Scott, who wrote a piece on Geoff Burtonshaw for the *Calgary Herald* in 1994, wrote to Denney, "It's quite extraordinary how everyone doing work on Metis family histories is always mentioning you and your papers and all the spadework you did earlier on. I thought it might be interesting for you to hear from a mere outsider just how important you are to the [Metis] community in Calgary."¹⁵⁷ Denney responded with thanks, stating, "Life is full of surprises. Thank God and all His angels them are like the surprise I experienced when I receive[d] your letter of 27th of January. I really can't express to you how pleased I am that you took the time from your work to tell me, a perfect stranger, how important my records at Glenbow are to so many people." However, Denney couldn't seem to contain himself, ending the letter with: "It is

¹⁵⁵ Denney to McCloy, August 22, 1985.

¹⁵⁶ McCloy to Denney, August 31, 1985.

¹⁵⁷ Susan Scott to Charles Denney, January 27, 1994, M8189/148 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

interesting that no one at Glenbow has ever bothered to tell me that.”¹⁵⁸ Geoff Burtonshaw reported to Denney that his papers made up 188 of 500 searches in the Archives; 37% of all the requests were for the Denney papers, and they had five times more researchers than the next item in 1994.¹⁵⁹ This continuing popularity was evident when I made copies of his private papers in 2013. I noticed that a number of the researchers in the reading room were looking at Denney’s materials. When I mentioned this to Archivist Doug Cass, he confirmed that Denney’s papers were by far the most popular items in the Archive.¹⁶⁰

Denney’s papers became a focus for a shifting Glenbow. They single-handedly changed the Archives’ attitude towards pursuing and purchasing genealogical collections. The Denney Papers quickly came to dominate the Archives’ user base, and they provided a new focus for the Archives. They even pushed the Archive to refocus shrinking funding into preserving and sharing these papers by microfilming. The Glenbow became a place that Dempsey imagined as accessible to everyone, embracing Alberta’s sometimes contradictory maverick and Indigenous self-understanding. Denney’s papers made the Glenbow more popular with Indigenous users, where *wahkootowin* was privileged and accomplished by its Metis users.

¹⁵⁸ Charles Denney to Susan Scott, February 1, 1994, M8189/148 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵⁹ Denney to McCloy, September 11, 1995; Denney to McCloy, December 5, 1994.

¹⁶⁰ Doug Cass to Erin Dolmage, “Personal Correspondence,” June 13, 2013.

Historical Society of Alberta (HSA)

Denney was understandably proud of his long association with the Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS) and the Historical Society of Alberta (HSA). He was the president of the Edmonton branch and on the executive board of the HSA, a responsibility he loudly regretted.

The Historical Society of Alberta was founded in 1907 by the government of Alexander C. Rutherford, the first premier of the new province.¹⁶¹ Rutherford, a lawyer by profession, attended McGill University and was called to the bar in Ontario in 1885.¹⁶² After visiting the very raw town of South Edmonton in 1894, he moved with his family from Kemptville to Edmonton and was elected to the new legislature in 1905.¹⁶³ Education was one of Rutherford's priorities, including building schools and introducing the 1906 bill to found the province's first university. The Edmonton location of the new University of Alberta was a serious issue with the city of Calgary, where residents felt that they had been passed over for the provincial capital.¹⁶⁴ Rutherford was involved in several organizations, and in 1919 he was elected president of the Historical Society of Alberta, hosting meetings at his home. He held the position until his death in 1941.¹⁶⁵ His biographer Douglas Babcock notes: "His concern for history, expressed in his own generously shared library and in his establishment of the university, the Historical Society of Alberta, and the public library system, made Rutherford more than anyone the founder of a historical tradition in Alberta."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Douglas R. Babcock, *Alexander Cameron Rutherford: A Gentleman of Strathcona* (Edmonton: Friends of Rutherford House, 1989), 89.

¹⁶² Douglas R. Babcock, "Alexander Cameron Rutherford," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, December 16, 2013, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/alexander-cameron-rutherford>.

¹⁶³ Babcock, *Alexander Cameron Rutherford*, 1989, 5–6.

¹⁶⁴ Babcock, 35–36.

¹⁶⁵ Babcock, 89, 107.

¹⁶⁶ Babcock, 133.

Denney wrote about the history of the society in a letter in 1973, stating that in 1907, the society was primarily staffed by members of the Alberta government and stayed small throughout the two world wars and the depression. He noted, “during the last few years, however, the fortunes of the Society have been improving. Back about 1954 Jim McGregor, Bruce Peel, and Hugh Dempsey breathed new life into the organization.”¹⁶⁷ He goes on to note their success in publishing the Alberta Historical Review and increasing the society’s membership to around 2000, with 600 alone in Denney’s home chapter in Edmonton.¹⁶⁸ Dempsey writes about founding the journal in 1953 in his memoir. He had just finished a book for the government, *Historic Sites of Alberta*, writing, “For many years, Alberta had been languishing in the backwaters of Canadian historical publishing, even though there was considerable local interest in the subject.”¹⁶⁹ The success of the book led to an introduction to Jim McGregor, the chairman of the Alberta Power Association and then president of the society, who wanted to publish a quarterly academic journal. The government had agreed to fund the printing of four hundred copies, “and so began the Alberta Historical Review.”¹⁷⁰

Denney joined the esteemed ranks as president of the Amisk Waskahagan chapter of the HSA in 1973, just after Mildred entered care full-time. He was a less enthusiastic president than member. He wrote to Kipling complaining about the workload and how it interfered with his own research, complaining, “I am doing practically nothing. Taking on the Historical Society job

¹⁶⁷ Charles Denney to W. Ashton, May 30, 1973, M7144/16 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁶⁸ Denney to Ashton.

¹⁶⁹ Dempsey, *Always an Adventure an Autobiography*, 88.

¹⁷⁰ Dempsey, 89.

was a great mistake. I think I won't carry it on beyond this year. Of course, it shouldn't be so much work another year. If I were prepared to just let things drift it wouldn't be so hard even now. But I see so much to accomplish. Think I am doing it, too.”¹⁷¹ Some of the work Denney refers to involved decisions on what projects the HSA should lobby the government for funding to preserve.

A collection of letters between Denney and members of the society details a disputed historic site; part of the society's work was validating what was of historical importance. A particular trail used by the Klondike gold hunters was deemed to be a fur trade trail for Fort Assiniboine. However, members questioned if the trail, in its current state, was even the original.¹⁷² Letters from a local historian, who claimed he had studied the site for 60 years and published a book about it, argued for the fur trade trail but made little impact on the committee.¹⁷³ Denney suggested they hear him out:

Allen makes some pretty desperate statements. Some of them make one wonder about the veracity of anything he might say. On the other hand, the guy has done a lot of reading, and research. So considerable of what he has written must be authentic.... I don't like his abuse. But some people can't help being like that. And some get over it when they find others do care about their pet project. This man is pretty conceited about his project; so it may be difficult to get him to talk rationally. But would it not be worth a try. If he had the floor for 3/4 of an hour he might run out of sulphur.”¹⁷⁴

This is good advice: let the person speak, acknowledge their work, and move forward. Denney himself had similar qualities about his pet projects and was quite vocal when they weren't

¹⁷¹ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, October 3, 1973, M7144/156 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁷² Charles Denney to Roger Armbruster, July 31, 1972, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁷³ W.G.P. Allen to Charles Denney, July 27, 1972, M7144/16 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁷⁴ Charles Denney to Allen, August 8, 1972, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

supported as he saw fit. The other letters do not indicate if the committee changed their mind about the project. Still, Denney outlined what he felt the society's mandate should have been: "Over the years we have been terribly negligent while the evidences of our heritage have been destroyed one after another. This was due to our terrible lack of numbers and manpower, as to our lack of organization." He went on to note change going forward and celebrated some real successes, "In this respect, the new Alberta Heritage Act is a direct result of our activity. We have every reason to hope that it will be a tremendous help to us - and that means you - in our efforts to preserve and develop our historic sites."¹⁷⁵ The Act was a significant achievement as it gave the government tools to manage resources, including archeological, architectural, and Indigenous sites. It also created the first stand-alone provincial department to oversee this work. According to Todd Kristensen of the Archaeological Survey of Alberta and Dan Spivak from the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, the "Act has led to the documentation of over 42,000 archaeological sites, 110,000 historic structures, 7,200 palaeontological sites and 2,400 historical Indigenous traditional use sites"¹⁷⁶ Denney was correct, the Heritage Act was a significant long-term achievement.

Denney's participation in the HSA, a professional organization, gave credibility to his endeavours. Though genealogical work was not generally done in professional historical circles, Denney gave his genealogical work a sheen of respectability through his membership and participation in the Society, likely what led the Glenbow to approach Denney the following year. He extended his work to publishing academic papers and advising on boards. He participated in

¹⁷⁵ Denney to Ashton, May 30, 1973.

¹⁷⁶ Todd Kristensen and Dan Spivak, "Designation and Protection: 50 Years of the Historical Resources Act (Part 1)," *RETROactive* (blog), December 8, 2023, <https://albertahistoricplaces.com/2023/12/08/designation-and-protection-50-years-of-the-historical-resources-act-part-1/>.

the executive administration of the largest chapter of the Society, which included patrons from the University of Alberta's faculty and the Alberta government. This work provided his papers with the authority the Glenbow wanted from its acquisitions, while his work with Metis researchers gave the papers a community buy-in for their use. The HSA gave credibility to Denney's opinions on public and historical topics and was cited as a credential in Denney's interviews. Denney made a name for himself as a public historian (not simply an amateur genealogist) because of the HSA.

After stepping down as president, Denney remained active in the society. This included publishing articles in *Alberta History*, including "Hot heads and Cold Feet" in 2000, "Snow Storms and Winters to Talk About" in 1997 and "A Strathcona Pioneer" in 1995.¹⁷⁷ In 1990, Denney won the society's annual award. Denney told McCloy: "I am happy to be able to tell you that the Historical Society on May 12th at its annual bash made me the recipient of its annual award for my contribution to Alberta's history. Though the printed text on the document says nothing to excite future generations, I wonder if former recipients were more fortunate."¹⁷⁸ This was Denney's second time being awarded an honour for services to the province. The first was in 1979 in honour of Alberta's 75th anniversary. The invitation letter read, "You are invited to a dinner being held in the Clerk's Quarters at Fort Edmonton Park at 6:00 p.m. on September 27,

¹⁷⁷ Charles D. Denney, "Hot Heads and Cold Feet," *Alberta History* 48, no. 2 (2000): 26–28; Charles D. Denney, "A Strathcona Pioneer," *Alberta History* 43, no. 1 (1995): 23–; Charles D. Denney, "Snow Storms and Winters to Talk About," *Alberta History* 45, no. 2 (1997): 15–; Todd Kristensen and Dan Spivak, "Designation and Protection: 50 Years of the Historical Resources Act (Part 1)," *RETROactive* (blog), December 8, 2023, <https://albertahistoricplaces.com/2023/12/08/designation-and-protection-50-years-of-the-historical-resources-act-part-1/>.

¹⁷⁸ Denney to McCloy, May 19, 1990.

1979, at which time we will be pleased to present you with a scroll recognizing your contribution to our heritage.”¹⁷⁹ The ‘scroll’ is below. They did, unfortunately, spell his name incorrectly.

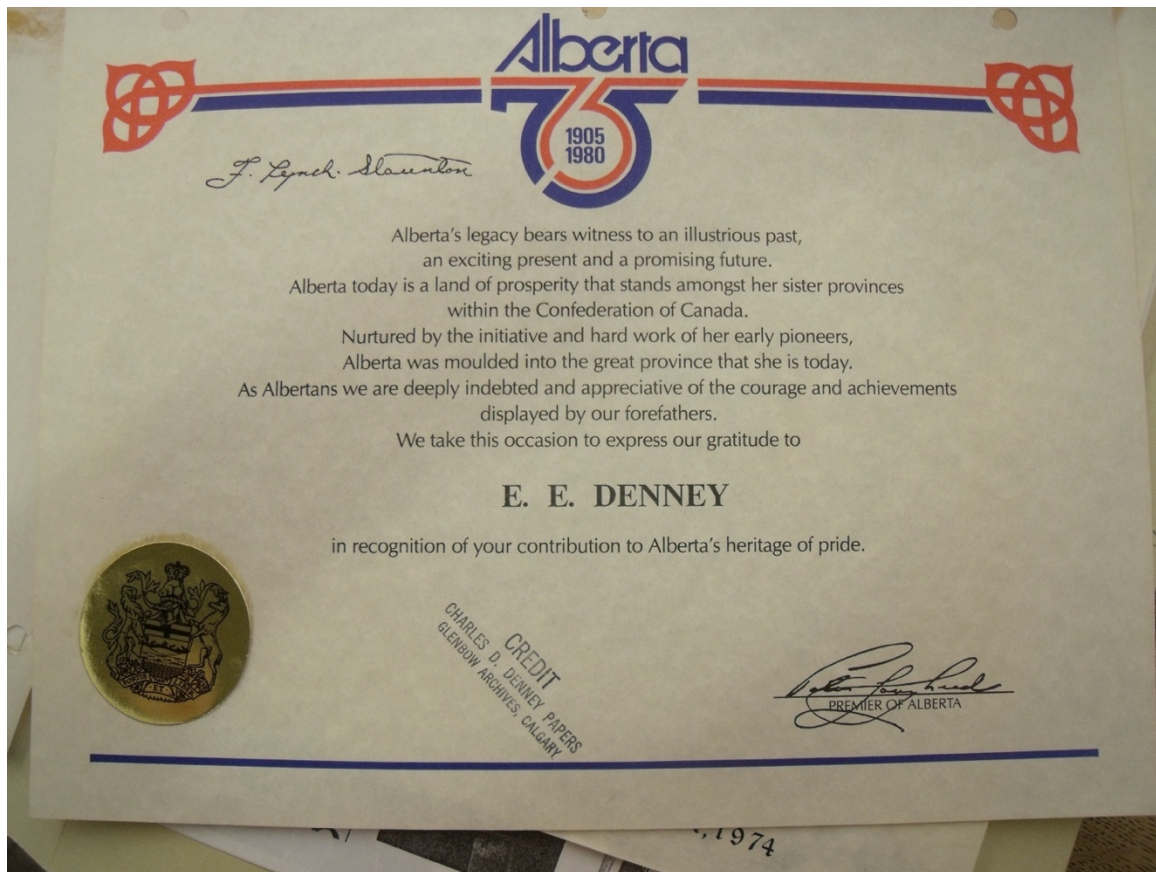


Figure 3-2 Certificate to Charles Denney from the Government of Alberta, 1980

Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS)

While the HSA was both a professional organization and a place for amateur historians, the Alberta Genealogical Society (AGS) was more directed to hobbyists. Denney was much more effusive regarding his relationship with the AGS. Perhaps because the organization was born in his living room in 1973. He wrote to Kipling about the new enterprise, saying, “Last

¹⁷⁹ John W. Chalmers to Charles Denney, September 1, 1979, M7144/165 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

night we decided - 9 of us - that we are the Alberta Genealogical Society. We propose to become incorporated. After that we hope to go after lots of members.”¹⁸⁰ He then recruited Kipling to join a new Calgary chapter, telling him, “Frank Easton will be in Calgary shortly and will be trying to get some of you together to form a chapter or branch of the Genealogical Society. I hope you can be with the group.”¹⁸¹ A year later, Denney reported that the AGS was doing well, mentioning that it continued to grow and was holding four- and six-week genealogy courses at the YWCA. He wrote, “But it pleases me to see people interested in their family history-especially enough to start writing it down.”¹⁸² Although Denney’s letters do not reveal the number of members in his time, the AGS celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023, had ten branches, reopened a branch in Calgary, and had over 9000 members.¹⁸³ They continue to sponsor speakers, maintain a genealogical library which Denney contributed, and print a quarterly journal, *Relatively Speaking*, for their members.

The Genealogical Library in Edmonton was a particular love of Denney’s, as it was the chief recipient of Denney’s files, aside from (and in some ways despite) the Glenbow, but also of Denney’s extensive library of books.¹⁸⁴ He writes to McCloy that the AGS doesn’t compare to the Glenbow Library, but,

The new president of the Edmonton Branch of the Genealogical Society is so impressed with the copies I have placed in the library that she is planning a recognition gathering on the afternoon of May 10th. She did much of the copy work, so she has a good idea of

¹⁸⁰ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, January 19, 1973, M7144/156 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁸¹ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, October 5, 1973, M7144/156 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁸² Charles Denney to Betty Beattie, August 16, 1974, M7144/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁸³ Alberta Genealogical Society, “2023 Annual Report: Presented at the Annual General Meeting,” Annual Report (Edmonton, April 27, 2024), <https://www.abgenealogy.ca/uploads/files/2024%20AGM/2023%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf>.

¹⁸⁴ Denney’s personal papers are not part of the AGS collection.

what is in there. She hopes to have local archivists, and maybe the minister of culture there.”¹⁸⁵

The AGS library was especially useful to historian Heather Devine as she was compiling the Desjarlais genealogies, which eventually became the basis of her dissertation and book *The People Who Own Themselves*. Devine writes in her dissertation:

As it turned out, there was a local chapter of the Alberta Genealogical Society (A.G.S.) in the city of Edmonton, where I lived. Edmonton was also the home of the founder of the A.G.S., Mr. Charles Denney.... His extensive collection of genealogical records, compiled from parish records, scrip affidavits, and historical documents, and supplemented with correspondence from descendants throughout Western Canada, now resides in the Glenbow Archives, to which it was donated by Mr. Denney in the 1980s. Mr. Denney continued to work on Métis genealogy after the bulk of his collection moved to Calgary, however, and he kept the working copies of the collection at the Edmonton Branch Library of the Alberta Genealogical Society, housed in Edmonton. I became a regular visitor to that library, meticulously compiling the family tree of Rosine Desjarlais and her numerous ancestors, and learning a great deal of early Western Canadian history along the way.¹⁸⁶

Getting these files to the AGS did require maneuvering on Denney’s part. As already discussed, the Glenbow was unhappy that Denney was sharing his material with the AGS. Denney notes to McCloy:

I am amazed that Glenbow folk were upset when they learned I had deposited my copies of my documents with our Genealogical Society Library... at that time it was well understood that when I would no longer be active in developing the project, the microfilm (fiche) would become part of the Genealogical Library holdings. Surely no one could expect that I would dump it all into the garbage bin when I became inactive.¹⁸⁷

Denney goes on to say of his books, “I should dispose of my library, but I just can’t bring myself to do it, for I need it so much for some of the writing I am trying to do. Anyway, if I die, or become incapacitated, I have indicated that I want it to go to the Genealogical library. Maybe I

¹⁸⁵ Denney to McCloy, April 3, 1986.

¹⁸⁶ Devine, “Les Desjarlais: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis and Diaspora in a Canadian Family,” 9.

¹⁸⁷ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, February 16, 1987, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

will live long enough to send it there myself...”¹⁸⁸ He moved his books to the AGS when he moved into his retirement home in 1997 but managed to keep accumulating papers, telling a friend:

Missing your books is something I can understand. Quite some time ago I turned my huge library over to the library of the Genealogical Society in the Prince of Wales Armories. Since then I have found that I have more books to turn over. All history type. Many bits and pieces of family history in them. Also I have a [sic] great number of loose-leaf binders full of biographical material, and still more of correspondence.”¹⁸⁹

The AGS was clearly richer for it, with researchers like Devine benefiting from the resources and the library of books Denney collected and left to the AGS.

In one of his group update letters, Denney talked about going to an AGS special meeting celebrating its 25th anniversary in January 1997 where he was honoured for his contributions:

“Since it started in my living room and I was the principal promoter, I am a sort of Father Figure.”¹⁹⁰ This reflection is significant. Denney took particular pride in his paternal role in the AGS, and in the role of genealogy in the province. His wife’s Metis family were founders of western Canada, and he was the chronicler of their lives. He goes on to describe the event,

While all others assembled [sic.] I was segregated from the others so that Malcolm McCrimmon could use his skill as he piped me into the meeting. It was all very regal, and I am sure that the hundred or more present were suitably impressed. At an appropriate time, I was invited to deliver a few well chosen words... they even laughed again when I announced that, though I am 97, I still have my marbles, and supported the statement by waving a bag of them as proof.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, May 19, 1990, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁸⁹ Charles Denney to Joyce McLaren, December 17, 1997, M8981/122 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Denney to Ed Zaraska and Peggy Zaraska, February 20, 1998, M8189/207 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁹¹ Denney to Zaraska and Zaraska.

In another letter, he wrote that the AGA also had a public event and dinner to celebrate their 25th anniversary, and Denney was also honoured there, “Again Malcolm McCrimmon piped me in through the crowd to the head table.... There, several times during the evening, my status as the principal founding member was acknowledged. A real good evening, with a good dinner. It was a bit long, and hard on the bum.”¹⁹² There was no word on whether Denney got to use his marbles joke again.

Denney’s involvement with the HSA and AGS and his prodigious letter-writing skills were mobilized when the City Clerk made public plans to fire the City Archivist in the Edmonton City Archives as a cost-cutting measure in 1997. Denney wrote several letters to newspapers and politicians opposing the move. In a letter to the Editor that they unsurprisingly didn’t print, Denney decries their lack of coverage: “Though you have mentioned City Manager Bruce Thom's proposals for streamlining the City administration, you have given precious little detail. ... if your paper is worth the price of subscription, you will expose the shallow, indecent, shortsighted, and downright stupid proposals being put forward.”¹⁹³ The measure suggested combining the Corporate Records Centre and the Archives and moving both under the auspices of the City Clerk and the Corporate Services department. It also noted that the Archives’ role as a community museum would be under further review to see if other agencies could fulfil the role.¹⁹⁴ Denney wrote to the Mayor and City Council, and after a few well-placed insults about

¹⁹² Charles Denney to Shirley Wishart, April 17, 1998, M8189/201 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB. Note there is a typo on the Letter incorrectly giving the date as 1988. The 25th Anniversary was in 1998.

¹⁹³ Charles Denney to Letters Editor, Edmonton Journal, July 9, 1997, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁹⁴ City Clerk Office, “City of Edmonton - City 97 Program: Phase III - Stream X - Detailed Descriptions” (City of Edmonton, 1997), M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

their intelligence, he stated, “After spending millions of dollars to develop a most praiseworthy City Archives, you are now depriving it of its professional head, as well as placing it under the responsibility of a City department that has no experience whatever in protecting and preserving our heritage records of the historical past.”¹⁹⁵ Denney and others were successful in preserving the City Archives, and it appears the Archives stayed in their historic location in the former armories and maintained their role as a historical resource.¹⁹⁶

Denney had a second fight regarding Archives the following year when the Province of Alberta proposed moving the Provincial Archives not to a different department but to a different municipality, the town of Stony Plain. Moving the archives (and knowledge, control, and connectivity with the past represented in the sources) would have restricted amateur and professional researchers’ access to the archives and effectively made the Alberta Provincial Archives an inward-only repository. Moving to Stoney Plains would limit the archive’s role as a historical access point for Albertans. What was the government’s reasoning for the move? The archives had outgrown their multiple current locations, the government wanted to house everything in one location, and Stoney Plain had an empty building already owned by the province. The building, the former Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) satellite campus was in the riding of the PC government’s Public Works minister Stan Woloshyn.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Charles Denney to Mayor Bill Smith and Councilors of the City of Edmonton, July 9, 1997, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁹⁶ City of Edmonton, “City of Edmonton Archives,” [edmonton.ca](https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/edmonton_archives/city-of-edmonton-archives), 2024, https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/edmonton_archives/city-of-edmonton-archives.

¹⁹⁷ Jack Danylchuk, “Archive Location a Hard Sell,” *Edmonton Journal*, September 3, 1998, M8189/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Denney was an outspoken critic of the idea. Moving the Archives outside the city would mean losing not just the researchers, but their volunteers. He was quoted in an *Edmonton Journal* article discussing how this would impact volunteers and the fiscal health of the archives, “‘Certainly they've [the volunteers] added to the value of the archives by doing sorting for which taxpayers would otherwise have spent money,’ said Charles Denney, the 97-year-old former president of the Edmonton Branch of the Historical Society of Alberta.”¹⁹⁸ The public response was equally critical. Why would the Provincial Archives not be in the provincial capital? Researchers were unimpressed, touring the building that was 45 minutes away by car and had no transit service, noting “it might make a ‘wonderful home’ for Alberta's provincial archives - - but for one shortcoming. ‘It's in the wrong place.’”¹⁹⁹

Denney published a letter to the editor criticizing the potential move. He points out that: “Edmonton is the cultural, educational, and business center of north central Alberta. This is the focal point for a million or so residents. No one would consider for a moment the idea that the Legislature or Government offices should be moved to Stony Plain... They belong where they can be the most convenient for the most people.” Denney suggests the new provincial archives should be built next to the City Archives and the AGS downtown.²⁰⁰ Denney also adapted his letter to the paper and sent copies to several politicians, including Premier Ralph Klein, Edmonton MLA Raj Pannu, and City Councillor Jim Taylor. Pannu, who was a member of the NDP, wrote to Denney in a rare agreement that,

¹⁹⁸ Note Denney’s expertise as a former HAS President is highlighted here. Jim Farrell, “Moving Archives to Stony Plain ‘Terrible Idea,’ Prof Says,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 7, 1998.

¹⁹⁹ Danylchuk, “Archive Location a Hard Sell.”

²⁰⁰ Charles D. Denney, “Wrong to Move Archives From City,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 2, 1998, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

I put ‘proposed’ in that form because it appears the move is a *fait accompli*, for all intents and purposes. Other than filling an empty building in the constituency of the Minister of Public Works, we do not see what purpose this move is to serve. There is no logic in having the provincial archives sixty or seventy kilometres from the Provincial Museum and Government House.”²⁰¹

In the end, it appears that the lobbying worked. Edmonton kept its archives, though not in the location lobbied for by Denney.

Conclusion

Denney’s community of genealogists, particularly Clarence Kipling, Pat McCloy, and Geoff Burtonshaw, was incredibly important to him personally and in his genealogical research. Their contributions as family members to the Metis nation enriched and directed the second stage of Denney’s research. The sheer volume of correspondence between Denney and his community shows the time and energy Denney’s ‘hobby’ took. Denney spent years collecting, compiling, and organizing the information obtained from correspondents during kitchen table visits, during interviews, and in documents. He built his archive knowing that it would be a resource for others. The papers assumed a new significance once they arrived at the Glenbow, and it was how others used his archive as a pursuit of *wahkootowin* that was especially important. He felt that Metis families like his late wife’s deserved to be the centrepiece of an Alberta archival collection, and he fought for it to be taken seriously as historically rigorous. The organizations Denney worked with were the focus of his attention post-retirement, and Denney took immense pride in his role in founding the AGS. This pride appears throughout his papers. In a letter to friends, the Allens, he mentions for his 89th birthday, he went out with friends to an AGS

²⁰¹ Raj Pannu to Charles Denney, August 4, 1998, M8981/227 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

meeting: “There I am something of a celebrity, for both the society and the Branch began in my living room.”²⁰² Denney’s relationships with other organizations, primarily the Glenbow, were complicated, but ultimately, he was thrilled with his papers becoming the centrepiece of the Archives.

²⁰² Charles Denney to Margaret Allen and Henry Allen, February 3, 1990, M8981/3 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Chapter 4 Genealogy as Historical Practice

Introduction

Genealogy is a type of historical practice based on constructing detailed family histories, usually practiced by hobbyists like Denney. Genealogy is an inherently charged act of meaning-making; as Gloyn et al. note, “objects held in family archives, curation practices, and intergenerational narratives reinforce a family’s sense of itself.”¹ Additionally, Zerubavel notes genealogies are also founding narratives, stating: “Pedigrees and family trees are therefore partly products of the choices we make about which ancestors to remember.”² No conversation about genealogical practices, archives or websites can be had without discussing the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) on all facets of genealogical practice, including ownership of websites like familysearch.org and FamilySearch centres. To better understand the Denney Family Files, this chapter looks at the specific documents that genealogists use, the influence of the LDS church, issues around primary source genealogical research, and genealogists’ professionalism.

¹ Gloyn et al., “The Ties That Bind: Materiality, Identity, and the Life Course in the ‘Things’ Families Keep.”

² Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, 77.

The ABCs (or FGCs)

Genealogy is a historical practice involving specific charts, forms, and diagrams.

Catherine Nash notes that: “Within Western traditions of genealogy family trees are the formal, written records of the ‘facts of kinship’, charting the transfer of biogenetic material from parents to offspring, and extending back in time in bilateral lines of ancestry and descent.”³ These specialized documents exist throughout Denney’s personal and family files. Denney regularly sent out blank charts with his letters in the hope that families would fill them out and return them to him. It’s essential to understand the forms he used to properly parse the family files. They also help untangle what may seem an unconnected or confusing set of documents.

Family Tree Magazine suggests anyone doing genealogy should have ten essential forms. Some of these are for transcribing information from historical documents, like a census or a ship’s log, or checklists of possible sources, most being American-focused and outside of this discussion. The main charts *Family Tree Magazine* suggests are a Five-Generation Ancestor Chart, the Family Group Sheet, the Ancestor Research Worksheet, a Family Relationship chart, and a Surname Variant chart.⁴ Denney used all these forms in his work except for the name variant chart. The genealogy website Ancestry.ca provides downloadable Four Generation Ancestral Charts, Family Group Sheets, as well as research sheets and a calendar to organize notes.⁵ Familysearch.org also has similar charts to Ancestry, but they include boxes to record the church-specific baptismal, ordinance and sealing information which is recorded in the

³ Nash, “Genetic Kinship,” 5.s

⁴ “Free Genealogy Forms: 10 Essentials,” *Family Tree Magazine*, accessed June 8, 2024, <https://familytreemagazine.com/freeforms/>.

⁵ Ancestry, “Charts and Forms: Ancestral Chart,” Ancestry.ca, 2023, <https://www.ancestrycdn.com/legacy/pdf/trees/charts/anchart.pdf>.

International Genealogy Index (IGI). The IGI, maintained by the LDS church, records anyone who has been baptized and sealed by the church, both in-life and posthumously.⁶ Most of the online charts from the major websites, FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.ca, can create these charts for users from their databases. These are the same basic resources Laurel Katernick, former Director of Registry at the Métis Nation British Columbia, and I used in the 1990s in Kamloops, when we were just starting our own genealogical inquiries, and that Denney used for over 40 years.

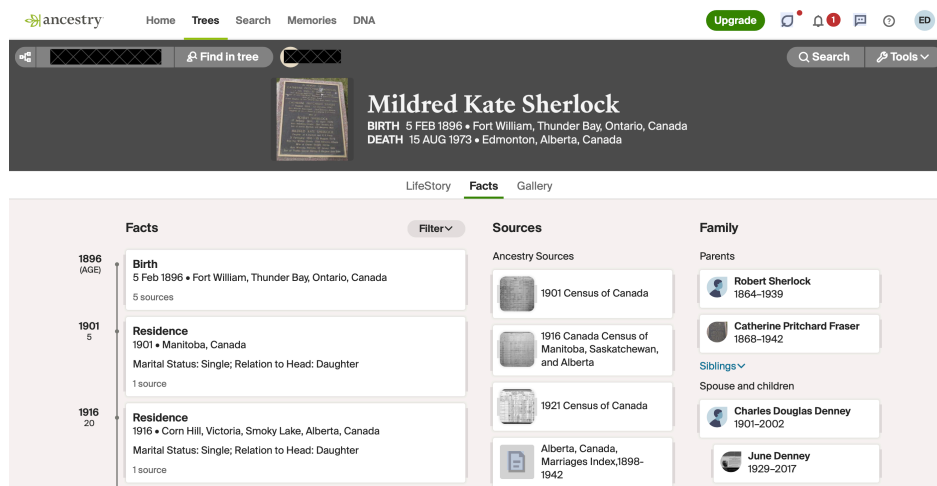


Figure 4-1 Mildred Sherlock's 'Facts' Page on Ancestry.ca

Denney's Family Group Sheet focuses on a single-family unit. It contains information on the parents at the top and lists siblings and their spouses in a column below. This version includes places to note if there is a will, church associations, cemetery records and other vital statistics. Denney included Family Group sheets in his letters for his families to fill out. An example from Denney's files, as well as a Family Group Record from Ancestry.com, is below (fig. 4-2 and fig. 4-3).

⁶ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "International Genealogical Index," Wiki, FamilySearch Wiki, February 13, 2024, https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/International_Genealogical_Index. Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007.

106 140

FAMILY UNIT

Chart No. _____

Note: Record complete names whenever possible.
 Record nicknames whenever possible.
 Record complete date whenever possible. e.g. 2 May 1867.

HUSBAND Alexander Eric Lucas
 Born when 1872 Where EDMONTON Married when 1898 Where EDMONTON
 Died when 1952 Where VANCOUVER BC Buried where VANCOUVER BC
 Husband's father Malcolm Mother Margaret Ann
 Husband's other wives NONE Wife's other husbands NONE

WIFE Arabella Matilda Eccles (Bell)
 Born when 1846 Where Port Henry Died when 1944 Where VANCOUVER BC
 Buried where VANCOUVER BC Mother Jane Eccles
 Wife's father Thomas Eccles

CHILDREN	BORN	DIED	MARRIED
1 <u>Lillian Margaret Louise</u>	When <u>Aug 1894</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u> <u>AKED</u>	When <u>Jan 1969</u> Where <u>VANCOUVER</u> Bur. at <u>VANCOUVER</u>	When <u>Burton Atkins</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u> Buried <u>1914</u>
2 <u>Harry Alexander</u> <u>AL</u>	When <u>4 April 1896</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u>	When <u>30 June 1975</u> Where <u>VANCOUVER</u> Bur. at <u>VANCOUVER</u>	When <u>Edith Mabel</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u> Buried <u>1919</u>
3 <u>Alice Mary Jane</u>	When <u>Sept 1898</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u>	When <u>11/11/1957</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Bur. at <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>John W.C. Burns</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u> Buried <u>1927</u>
4 <u>Alice Agnes</u>	When <u>Nov 1900</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u>	When <u>1900</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Bur. at <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>HENRY T. Bennett</u> Where <u>UNCL 1905</u> Where <u>VANCOUVER BC</u>
5 <u>Robert Malcolm</u>	When <u>Feb 1902</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u>	When <u>JUNE 1971</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u> Bur. at <u>EDMONTON</u>	When <u>Violet May</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u> Buried <u>1930</u>
6 <u>John Ernest</u>	When <u>3 Aug 1903</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u>	When <u>1903</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Bur. at <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>Maudie Pendray</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Buried <u>1903</u>
7 <u>William Eric</u>	When <u>Nov 1911</u> Where <u>EDMONTON</u>	When <u>March 1969</u> Where <u>VANCOUVER</u> Bur. at <u>VANCOUVER</u>	When <u>Eleanor Thompson</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Buried <u>1934</u>
8 <u>(3) S. Harold Knott 1910</u>	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Bur. at <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Buried <u>1910</u>
9	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Bur. at <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Buried <u>1910</u>
10	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Bur. at <u>Edmonton</u>	When <u>1910</u> Where <u>Edmonton</u> Buried <u>1910</u>

This chart prepared by Arabella Matilda Eccles (Bell) Date 8/3/1976
 Sources: C. D. Denney, 502 Heritage House, 815-105 Street, Edmonton, Alberta. T6G 4K4

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 CHARLES D. DENNEY PAPERS
 GLENDAW ARCHIVES, CALGARY

Figure 4-2 "Family Group Chart," February 19, 1976, Groat, Malcolm Family File.

Family Group Record

ancestry.com

Prepared By _____ Relationship to Preparer _____

Address _____ Date _____ Ancestral Chart # _____ Family Unit # _____

Husband		Occupation(s)				Religion								
Date—Day, Month, Year		City		County		State or Country								
Born														
Christened						Name of Church								
Married						Name of Church								
Died						Cause of Death								
Buried		Cem/Place				Date Will Written/Proved								
Father		Other Wives												
Mother														
Wife (maiden name)		Occupation(s)				Religion								
Born														
Christened						Name of Church								
Died						Cause of Death								
Buried		Cem/Place				Date Will Written/Proved								
Father		Other Husbands												
Mother														
•	Sex MF	Children Given Names	Birth			Birthplace			Date of first marriage/Place		Date of Death/Cause			Computer I.D. #
			Day	Month	Year	City	County	St./Ctry.	Name of Spouse	City	County	State/Country		
		1												
		2												
		3												
		4												
		5												
		6												
		7												
		8												
		9												
		10												
		11												
		12												

NOTE=Direct Ancestor Form # F106 <http://www.ancestry.com/save/charts/familysheet.htm> © 2007 The Generations Network, Inc.

Figure 4-3 Blank Family Group Record, from Ancestry.com

Although Denney used these to collect information, these were not the charts he preferred. Denney used a modified version of a *Descendant Chart* to build his genealogical library, which he just referred to as a ‘Chart.’ A Descendant Chart operates like a reverse traditional family tree. Instead of starting with the most recent individual, a Descendant Chart starts with the earliest known ancestor and builds forward from them. They can either be displayed as a horizontal list or in a vertical tree-style format. Usually, the earliest ancestor is on the left and the descendants expand to the right or from top to bottom in a list from oldest sibling on the top to youngest. If there are more siblings then space the chart is reproduced on a new page starting with the next sibling. Here is a ‘list style’ Descendant Chart, created by

FamilySearch.org, starting with Angus Fraser, showing four generations to Denney's first wife, Mildred Sherlock Denney (fig. 4-4).

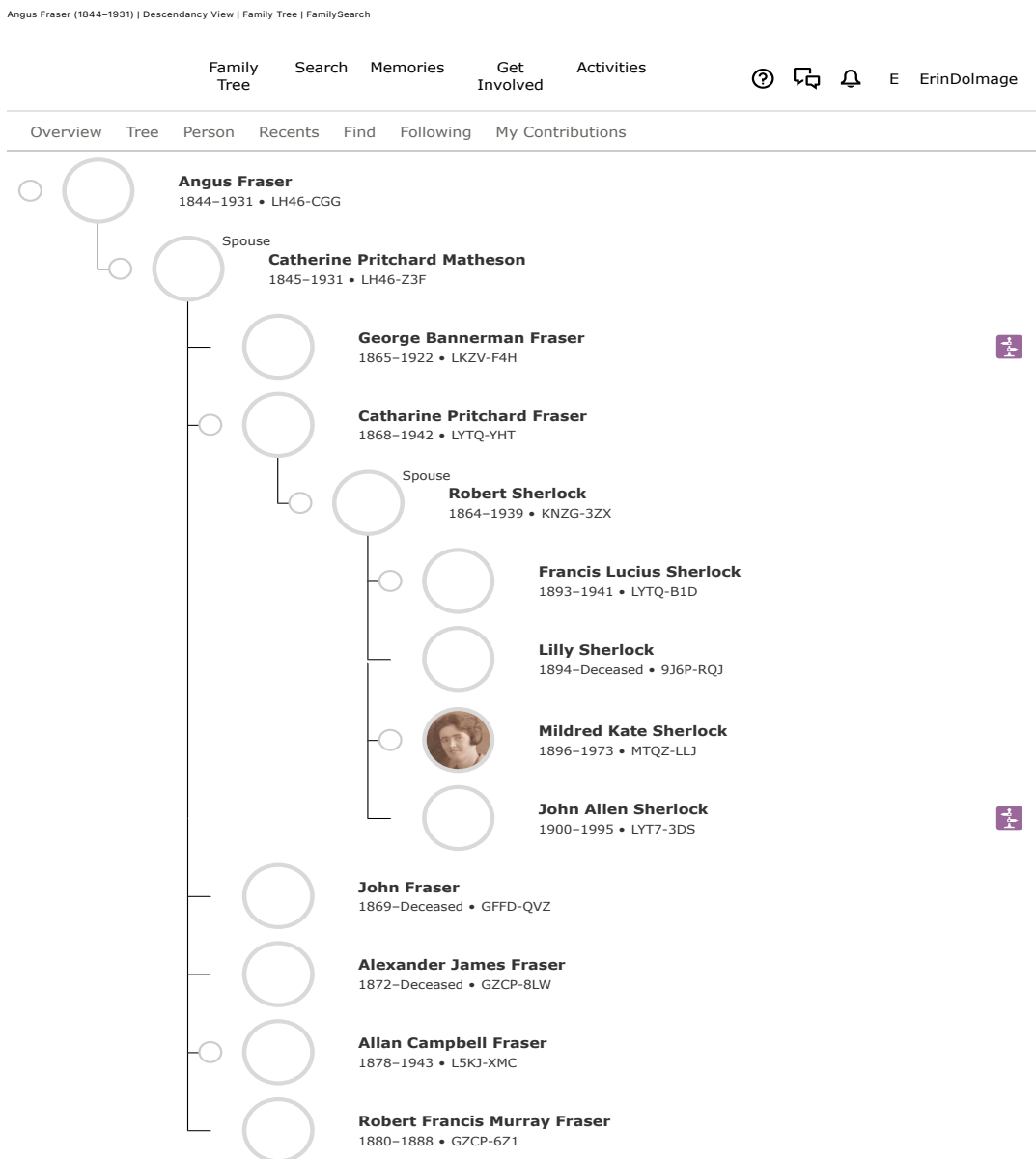


Figure 4-4 Descendancy Chart showing Mildred Denney and her descendants from Angus Fraser. From the FamilySearch.org website.

Denney's charts tended to include multiple generations and were heavily annotated, and we will discuss the annotations in the following chapter. This example shows his favoured

hybrid design. The chart (fig. 4.5) descends from four individuals (two couples): John Philbert Laderoute and Marguerite Sanregret, and Jean Rochebrune and Josette.

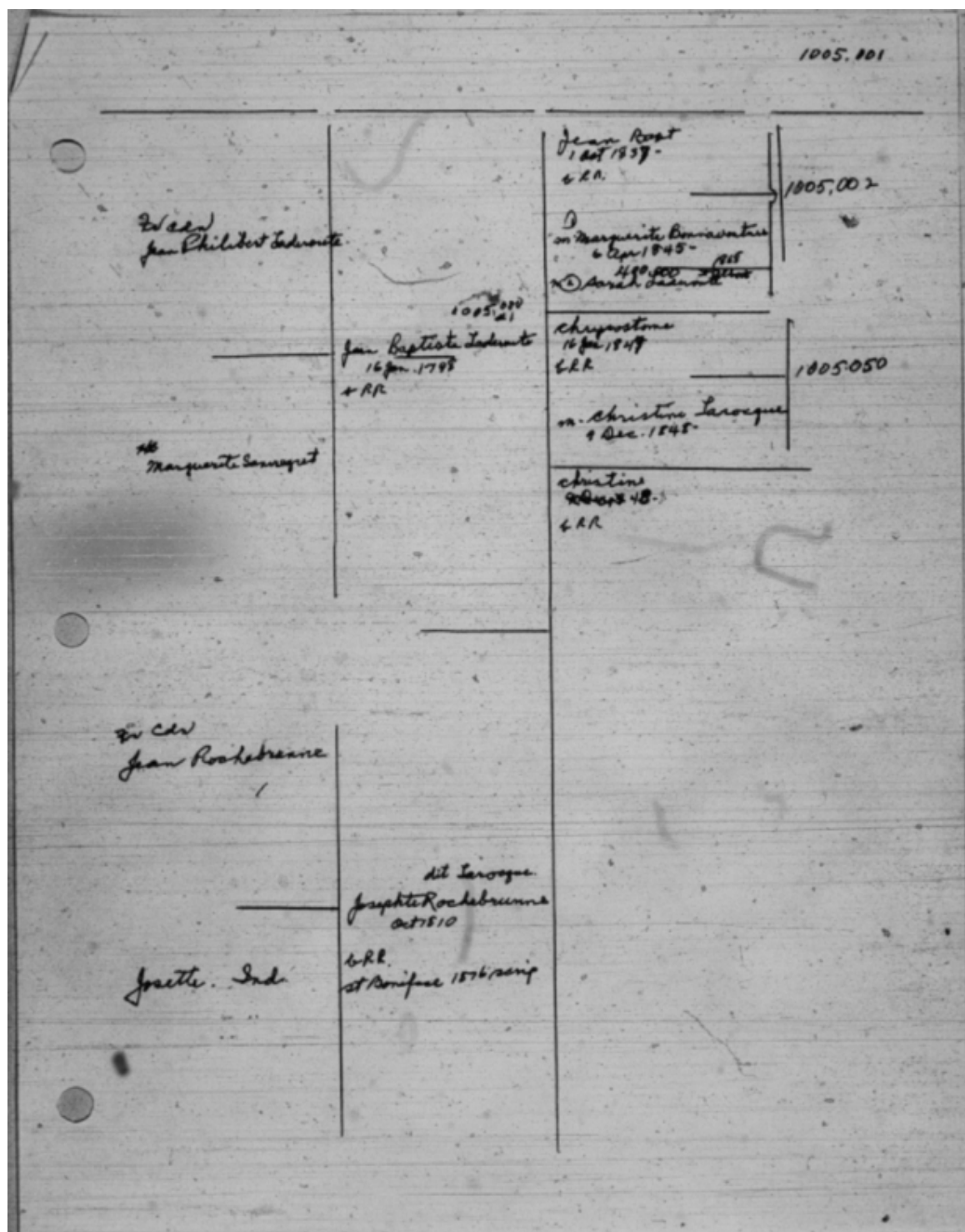


Figure 4-5 Genealogical Chart John Phillbert Laderoute and Marguerite Sansregret. Philbert Family File.

Here is an example of an illustrated family tree-style Descendants Chart, likely donated by the family and included in Denney's family files, showing the McKay/ Ballentine family.

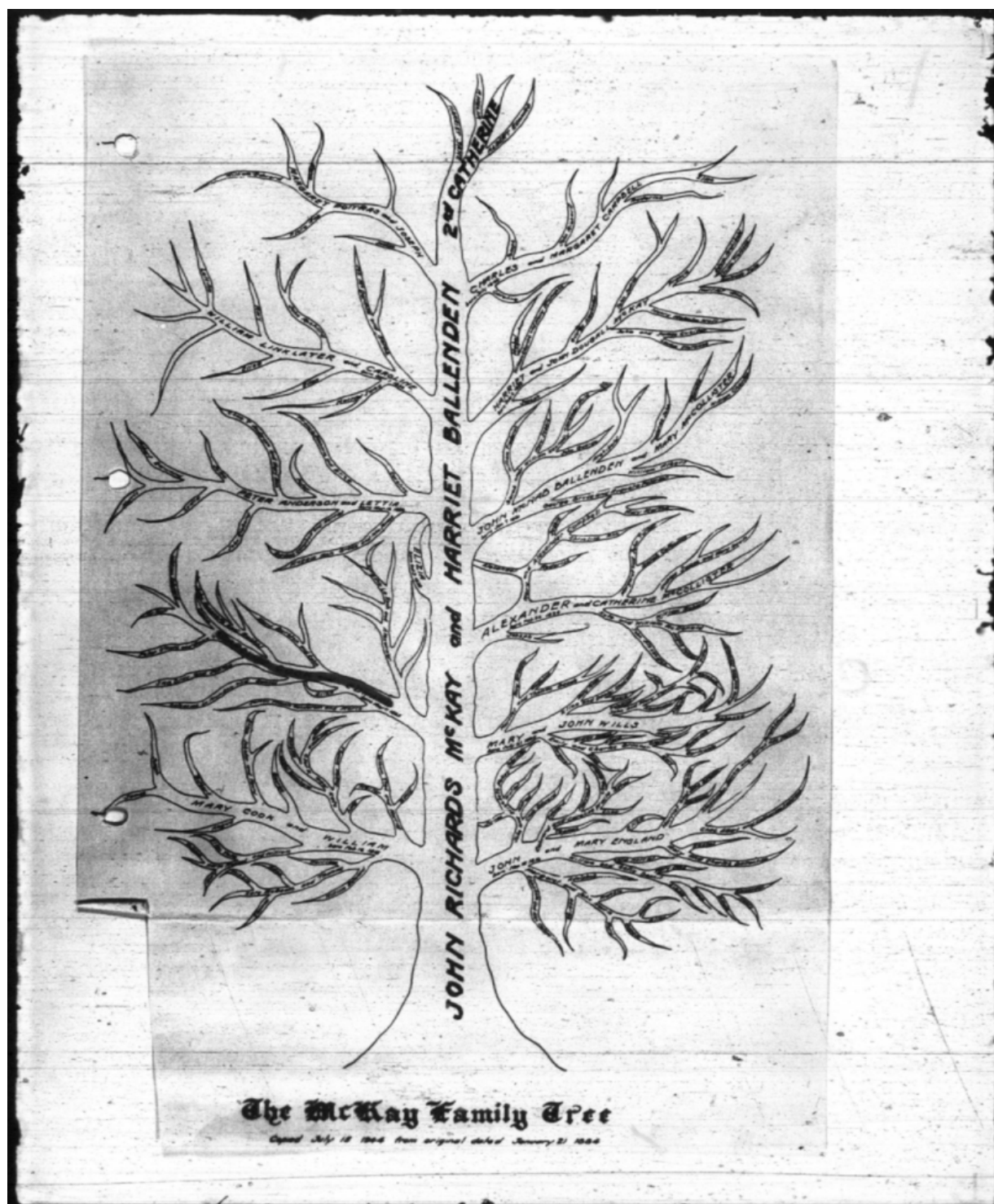


Figure 4-6 McKay Family Tree showing the family of John Richards McKay and Harriet Ballenden. McKay Family File #3344.

Ancestral Chart

No. 1 on this chart is
the same person as No. _____
On Chart No. _____

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

NAME OF SPOUSE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

BORN
PLACE MARRIED
PLACE DIED PLACE

Chart No. _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

Form # F120 <http://www.ancestry.com/save/charts/anchart.htm> © 2007 The Generations Network, Inc.

The chart shows four generations, the youngest person, their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents running left to right. This is like the traditional ‘family tree’ which would show the individual at the bottom of the page with the parents, grandparents and great-grandparents spreading above. The following version (Fig 4-8) was generated by the familysearch.org website for Mildred Sherlock and Charles Denney and shows the parents and grandparents of the couple.

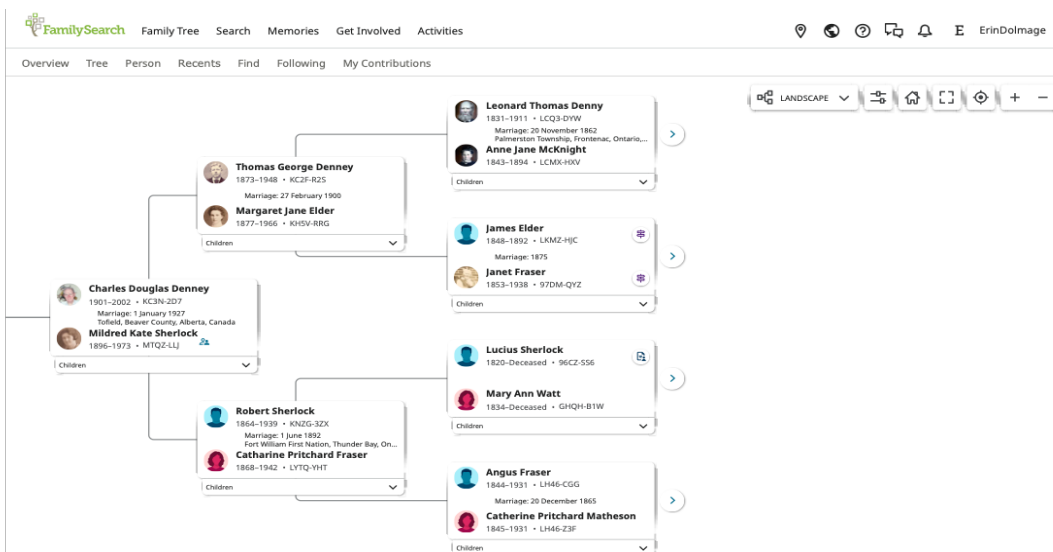


Figure 4-8 Family Tree Mildred Sherlock, from Family Search.org

This is an example of a filled-in ancestry chart for Joyce Jackson, filled out by Denney, from the Winter family file.⁷

Figure 4-9 Ancestor Chart Joyce Jackson, Winter Family File #129000

⁷ Denney, Charles, "Ancestor Chart: Joyce Jackson," n.d., M7144/129000 Winter, Wesley Family File Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

The blank LDS version of the Pedigree Chart, downloaded from the Family Search website, is similar. It shows the same L-R setup, but it also includes boxes showing LDS ceremonial requirements: baptized, endowed, sealed to parents, sealed to spouse, and children's ordinances. It also notes if there is a family group sheet for each family, which would include siblings and their spouses. The chart is not conducive to non-heterosexual families, as 'Father' and 'Mother' designations are indicated on the tree. This is a major issue with much of the LDS-organized genealogy resources; non-traditional families are rarely accommodated.

Pedigree Chart

No. 1 on this chart is the same as no. _____ on chart no. _____.

Chart no. _____

Mark boxes when ordinances are completed.

- ☐ B Baptized
- ☐ E Endowed
- ☐ SP Sealed to parents
- ☐ SS Sealed to spouse
- ☐ F Family Group Record exists for this couple
- ☐ C Children's ordinances completed

1 (Name) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where (Spouse) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS	2 (Father) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where	3 (Mother) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS When born Where When died Where	4 (Father of no. 2) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where
5 (Mother of no. 2) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS When born Where When married Where When died Where	6 (Father of no. 3) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where	7 (Mother of no. 3) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS When born Where When married Where When died Where	8 (Father of no. 4) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where
9 (Mother of no. 4) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS When born Where When married Where When died Where	10 (Father of no. 5) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where	11 (Mother of no. 5) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS When born Where When married Where When died Where	12 (Father of no. 6) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where
13 (Mother of no. 6) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS When born Where When married Where When died Where	14 (Father of no. 7) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS ☐ F ☐ C When born Where When married Where When died Where	15 (Mother of no. 7) ☐ B ☐ E ☐ SP ☐ SS When born Where When married Where When died Where	

Your name and address

Telephone number _____ Date prepared _____

Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 3/96. Printed in USA, 31826



Figure 4-10 Pedigree Chart, From FamilySearch.Org

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS)

To talk about any genealogical organization, one must acknowledge the presence, theology and involvement of the LDS Church. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' approach to genealogy has significant religious implications for their practitioners, or 'Saints.' The Temple ceremonies of baptism, sealing and endowment are required as part of LDS religious practice and are indicated in genealogical charts or on LDS websites.⁸ 'Sealing' comes from the LDS' concepts of marriage's continuation after death, or a 'celestial marriage.' Sealing is what, according to Prophet Joseph Smith, makes the familial bond exist after death. He wrote "And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed."⁹ For Smith, a conventional, legal marriage is not enough, and "Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world."¹⁰ For a marriage to be recognized in heaven, it must be also performed and sealed by the Temple.

⁸ Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007, 203.

⁹ Joseph Smith, "Revelation, Nov 1, 1832 [D&C 132:7]," in *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, The Prophet: With Some Additions By His Successors In The Presidency Of The Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/eng/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/132>.

¹⁰ Joseph Smith, "Revelation, Nov 1, 1832 [D&C 132:15]," in *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, The Prophet: With Some Additions By His Successors In The Presidency Of The Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/eng/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/132>.

Polygynous marriage increased the holiness of the family unit.¹¹ Historian Donald H. Akenson writes, “[i]f a single temple-sealed celestial marriage made a man (and his wife, but that was always a sidebar for the Prophet), into a god, then how much bigger and better a god would that man be in the celestial world of eternity if he had several celestial marriages?”¹² The larger the family, the more people married to one another, the better that they can serve God after death.

The imperative to study genealogy, for the LDS, is a theological one: to find and seal ancestral family has heavenly rewards. Akenson explains, “Sealing dead souls, especially one’s own ancestors, for all eternity is a good way to spend earthly time.”¹³ This can be considered spiritual colonialism because the practice ignores consent. Wilford Woodruff, president of the church, facing pressure from Utah’s newly accepted statehood, ended the practice of plural marriage and redirected the church from performing widespread proxy baptisms to encouraging members to exclusively focus on their own family lines, with the goal to seal and endow only direct ancestors. He also encouraged the establishment of the Genealogical Society of Utah to help train and house records for the benefit of the church. It was later incorporated and reabsorbed as part of the church in the 1940s.¹⁴ Proxy-baptisms were, and are, a real issue. After the Second World War, the Church was permitted to look for records, and they found a store of Jewish documents in a salt mine in Stassfurt and a second collection in Rothenburg Castle. The castle records were recovered and recorded by LDS missionaries, which was celebrated as a

¹¹ Donald H. Akenson, *Some Family: The Mormons and How Humanity Keeps Track of Itself* (Montreal QC: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 56.

¹² Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007, 68. For more on polygamist marriages and the Canadian west see: Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008). Also, for a more recent look at polygamist LDS groups that have split from the main church see: Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*, 1st Anchor Books ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 2004).

¹³ Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007, 58.

¹⁴ Akenson, 61.

great win by the church. This was reconsidered when Gary Mokotoff, a Jewish genealogist, uncovered what had been done with the records. The LDS had posthumously baptized victims of the Holocaust into their church.¹⁵ The church backtracked, apologizing and agreeing to purge the 360,000 posthumous baptisms from the International Genealogical Institute (IGI) of any individual that that did not have an ancestor in the church. Historian of American genealogy Julia Creet notes that this didn't happen, "In reality, the church did not remove the names, hiding the ordinances from public view instead."¹⁶ It is important to note that the church encouraged the ritual sealing of people who are not (and could not) be members of the LDS church, including performing proxy-baptisms on non-Christians. This is a deeply problematic practice. Genealogy is itself invasive, but baptizing the long dead with no association to the church was another level of amorality, reminiscent of the skull wars of the 19th century when Indigenous bodies were dug up and taken by museums without the consent of descendants and stakeholders.¹⁷

Mormons acted as colonizers of Indigenous peoples in the North American West and they had complex ideas about race. When the Mormons were moving/ being moved across North America, eventually settling in Utah, they echoed the American concept of manifest destiny, the 19th-century doctrine or belief that the expansion of the US throughout the American continents was both justified and inevitable.¹⁸ Religious scholar Donald Akenson notes: "Eventually, as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints moved westward, it wavered: Indian lands were

¹⁵ Creet, *The Genealogical Sublime*, 54–55.

¹⁶ Creet, 55.

¹⁷ Thomas, *Skull Wars Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity*.

¹⁸ For some work specifically on the LDS and Colonialism see: Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018); P. Jane Hafen and Brenden W. Rensink, *Essays on American Indian and Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008).

taken, but, whenever possible, compensation was paid; Indians were denominated in the Mormon scriptures as morally inferior, yet the same scriptures implied that they could be raised to the level of white Mormon civilization.”¹⁹ One important issue doctrinally and practically with Mormonism is race. Akenson notes, “Most white Americans of Joseph Smith’s time were both fascinated by the Native Americans and deeply hostile to them. The Book of Mormon straddled that same line, but in a more conciliatory fashion than was usual.”²⁰ The religious text The Book of Mormon specifically assigns a religious history to North American Indigenous peoples as a brother race to the white “Saints.” Indigenous peoples and Mormons were, according to Joseph Smith, the descendants of the Hebrew tribe of Joseph. The Book of Mormon says that Indigenous peoples descended from Manasseh, who was the brother of Ephraim, the tribe from which the Mormons claim descent.²¹ There is another scriptural discussion of race within the Mormon faith. The Book of Mormon tells the story of a white race in North America called the Nephites, who followed Christ when he appeared in North America after his crucifixion and were, according to Smith, killed in 421 CE. They were killed by a dark-skinned people called Lamanites, who “survived intact and became the ancestors of the Amerindians who, by the time European explorers encounter them, have forgotten that they were ultimately part of the tribe of Joseph and therefore among the Chosen People.”²² Indigenous people were targeted by missionaries, and some converted to the LDS Church, but ideas around religiosity and racial differences remained: “When some of the dark-skinned Indians converted and were baptized, Mormons were disappointed that they did not emerge from the waters as ‘white and delightful

¹⁹ Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007, 38.

²⁰ Akenson, 38.

²¹ Akenson, 38.

²² Akenson, 35.

people.”²³ This attitude was even more pronounced with the church’s approach to people of African descent. Initially, according to Smith’s Book of Abraham, they were called the descendants of Ham, and, therefore, cursed and not permitted to join the LDS.²⁴ This policy persisted until 1978 when it was reversed, likely as Mormons had begun to send missionaries and gain conversions in South America and the African continent.²⁵

Denney had several interactions with the LDS church. He wrote to Clarence Kipling about the family history centre that moved into Edmonton: “The Mormon church is establishing a “library” here. No doubt we will work closely with it for that will give us access to their vast store of facts from all over the USA, Canada, Britain & France. Not to mention lots of other countries. They have copies of British Wills!!!!”²⁶ They had much more than that. Family History Centers were established as branches of the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and their Salt Lake City Family History Library. No organization had the breadth of genealogical documents the LDS Church collected, facilitated by the church’s early adoption of microfilm and later computer databases. As Julia Creet explains, “The availability of microfilm duplication and the computer records generated by the extraction program allowed the library to branch out.” From Salt Lake City and the first Family History Center, which opened in 1964, an additional 75 branches opened in the next four years and the

²³ Akenson, 38. For a further conversation on whiteness and conversion see: Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field*; Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (UBC Press, 1998); Jean Barman, “Invisible Woman: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural Pioneer British Columbia,” in *Beyond the City Limits Rural History in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 168–88; Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c. 1848-1918* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979).

²⁴ Akenson, *Some Family*, 2007, 43.

²⁵ Akenson, 55.

²⁶ Denney to Kipling, January 19, 1973.

LDS claims that there are more than 5400 worldwide as of 2024.²⁷ The Centers were open to everyone, hence Denney's enthusiasm, and had an in-house collection of microfilms (usually local census and vital stats records), and microfilms could be ordered from the Family History Library for an in-house interlibrary loan. Many of these centres, now rechristened Family Search Centers, were part of the local Temple building. The Family History Centre where I worked in Kamloops was in the Temple Building but accessed through a side entrance. The Family Search Centre in Kamloops boasts that it "is one in a worldwide network of more than 5,000 Family Search Centres devoted to assisting you in your ancestral search. You are welcome to visit when the FSC is open; our resources and services are free to all."²⁸ The Centre has now digitized its resources and has seven computers with "free access to twelve premium Family History sites" as well as volunteers to help.²⁹ The Centers offer "special access to images of historical records that are only available in centers."³⁰ The Centres are strictly for genealogy, and no missionary conversion work occurs there; however, access to the IGI and the temple records are restricted to LDS members in good standing.³¹

The centers monopolized resources and manpower in genealogy circles. In a letter, Denney asked Pat McCloy about an event being held at the family history centre in Calgary, noting he was unfamiliar with it. McCloy responded to Denney that there are some politics around the different family history groups in Calgary. Answering why there was no Alberta

²⁷ Creet, *The Genealogical Sublime*, 64.

²⁸ "Family Search Centre," Kamloops Family History Society, accessed June 9, 2024, https://www.kfhs.org/genealogy_toolbox/family-search-centre.htm.

²⁹ "Family Search Centre."

³⁰ "About FamilySearch Centers," accessed July 16, 2024, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/centers/about>.

³¹ Creet, *The Genealogical Sublime*, 52.

Genealogical Society in Calgary, an organization Denney helped found, McCloy discussed a Family History ‘turf war.’ He writes:

The Family History Centre is the Mormon Church Genealogical centre in Calgary, situated in the St[a]ke house on 17th Ave S.W. The Family Histories Society, which is not restricted to Mormons, is very closely associated with the Centre. the Mormons have wanted to control the Alberta Genealogical Society, and when they could not they broke away and formed the Family Histories society. That is why we do not have a branch of the A.G.S. in Calgary - most of the numbers of the old branch here were Mormon's.³²

Although Denney did not work specifically with the LDS, it’s very likely many members of the Alberta Genealogical Society and the Historical Society of Alberta, in which Denney was deeply involved, did.

Professionalism

Historians have historically been suspicious of, or outright hostile to, genealogy as a practice. Historian John Sedgwick notes this tension in his *New York Times* Op-Ed “The Historians versus the Genealogists” when he encounters an ancestor in a historical text that it is uncomfortable: “As a historian, I couldn’t take the story past the facts. But as Gold’s relative, I felt I could hear her brother’s shrieks and imagine what she must have felt while fleeing Cornwall and entering a strange new land full of rising tensions. The whole lot of it. For a historian, such a leap of imagination amounts to malpractice.”³³ For professional historians, a family historian is a layperson who looks at history as a hobby, not as a trained professional. However, there are innumerable crossovers in searching for family. As Sedwick notes, “that history can’t depend on genealogy. But History shouldn’t scorn it either,” as genealogy provides

³² Pat McCloy to Charles Denney, October 24, 1992, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³³ John Sedgwick, “The Historians Versus the Genealogists,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 2018, sec. Opinion.

an empathetic power that historians can harness.³⁴ The activities of a professional biographer or microhistorian also intersect with the work of genealogists looking for personal stories in the archives.

Heather Devine discusses her own journey beginning as a genealogist and later moving into the role as a professional historian in her article “Being and Becoming” in the edited collection *Gathering Places*. Devine discusses the uneasiness of the practice of life writing, with its ethical issues of privacy and potential for self-aggrandizement but comes around to it as a form of ethical deliberation. She notes,

On reflection, it occurred to me that the practice of history, like life writing, is also a form of moral deliberation intended to establish ethical relationships to the past, present, and future. Maybe that is why I gravitated to history as a way to explore issues of personal and collective identity in the first place, because history is about trying to understand why past events transpired as they did, how the course of the past has affected our lives in the present, and how the past might influence her decision making in the future.³⁵

Devine came to history through her Metis mother’s story. Her mother was adopted and was initially unaware of her birth family’s background. In the 1970s, Devine’s mother started to research her birth family, eventually reconnecting with her birth mother [Devine’s grandparent] and her late father’s family, the Desjerlais, in the Qu’Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan. Inspired by the reconnection and intrigued by the family’s Metis heritage, Devine then began to research her great-grandparents, starting with baptismal records from Lebret.³⁶ This became a preoccupation for Devine: “A small handful of names and a healthy curiosity and interest in the past started me on a quest that soon became an obsession that occupied most of my free moments

³⁴ Sedgwick.

³⁵ Heather Devine, “Being and Becoming Métis,” in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 182.

³⁶ Devine, 189.

and caused my family no end of puzzlement and, at times, consternation.”³⁷ This is where Devine encountered the Charles Denney papers at the AGS library.³⁸ At the AGS, Devine also met University of Alberta (UofA) professor John Foster, who was giving a guest lecture and encouraged Devine to take her passion for genealogy and move it to an academic setting.³⁹ She did so, taking his course and using it as an opportunity to research her Klyne family line, which eventually culminated in her PhD work on the Desjarlais family. Devine describes the process of studying to become a professional historian: “What I did not realize until much later was how instrumental the literature actually was in enabling me to make sense of Métis ethnicity – not just my own developing identity but the diversity of Métis social and political identities throughout history.”⁴⁰ This emerging identity, stemming from her family history research, supplied Devine with her research questions and the spaces she wanted to study. She discusses that her research, her professional historical practice, and her identity as a Metis woman are intertwined, noting that:

I would be dishonest if I said the discovery of my Métis heritage did not affect how I approached my research. In fact, I realize now that I would not have become an academic at all had I not become so absorbed with trying to answer the numerous questions that arose as I delved deeper and deeper into the study of western Canada, the fur trade, and the social and political legacy of Louis Riel and the Indian Act on the experience of Métis people. Because I have been trained as an academic, I have tried to frame my inquiries so that the observations and the conclusions have historical and cultural relevance for a broad audience. At the same time, the process of researching and writing has become, for me, a way to reach a new understanding of my identity, which has been irrevocably altered by my mother’s rediscovery of her family.⁴¹

³⁷ Devine, 189.

³⁸ Devine, 189. Devine discusses Denney’s activities briefly in her article; however, she notes that Denney had been an Archivist at the Provincial Archives, this is incorrect. This position does not show up in any of Denney’s personal papers, letters, or on his CV. Additionally, he was largely retired when working on his collection. He may have volunteered at the provincial archives and was a member of several historical boards and archival committees which may have led to the misattribution. Charles Denney, “Charles Denney Curriculum Vitae,” March 1981, M8981/265 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³⁹ Devine, “Being and Becoming Métis,” 190.

⁴⁰ Devine, 201.

⁴¹ Devine, 201–2.

She notes that when she started as a genealogist, studying her family felt like a “psychological comfort zone,” but it was her historical training that gave her the context to position that genealogical research into a broader historical context. She notes that it’s a topic’s relevance and utility to her family that partly directs her research interests. The impartiality that she started her genealogical pursuit with became irrelevant once she experienced ‘being and becoming Metis.’⁴²

Metis scholar Brenda Macdougall asks how kinship studies are different from genealogies. Kinship studies are a cornerstone of anthropologists and were primarily used as the methodology of “Indian scholarship” in the 19th century.⁴³ Macdougall points out, “While there are no kinship studies of the Metis, there has long been an element of family history embedded within the historiography... ethnographic excavation of historical records to locate family information and, more recently, genealogical reconstruction.⁴⁴” So what makes genealogy, as opposed to genealogical construction, different? Professionalism is part of the issue.

Ethics in Genealogy

The practice of ethics in genealogy is a murky conversation, and we’ve already discussed the inappropriate behaviour of the LDS Church in mining documents to seal individuals who have no association with them, and in its most problematic form, the proto-baptisms of 320,000 victims of the Holocaust. Genealogists experience the same ‘archive fever’ as the historian. Julia

⁴² Canadian Historical Association, “Statement on Research Ethics: History of Canada,” <https://Cha-Shc.Ca/> (blog), 2024, <https://cha-shc.ca/about/statement-on-research-ethics/>.

⁴³ Brenda Macdougall, “Speaking of Metis: Reading Family Life into Colonial Records,” *Ethnohistory* 61, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 28.

⁴⁴ Macdougall, 29.

Creet describes the excitement of: “a family secret, the hunt, the feeling that the past will explain something about who we are in the present, and the need to fill in the gaps in family narratives, repair traumas, search for relatives, living and dead, and, ultimately, find or tell one’s origins.”⁴⁵ However, professional historians have ethical requirements to their respective professional associations, and ethics boards that they must report to if they work with living subjects, while genealogists do not.⁴⁶ Francesca Morgan writes that professional historians have seen genealogy as, at best, a hobby and, at worst, an ahistorical and inaccurate practice.⁴⁷

There was an attempt to professionalize genealogy in the 1940s at the American Historical Association conference, where a professional organization, the American Society of Genealogists (ASG), was formed. The group was, according to Morgan, “a small, invitation-only group that intended to ‘elevate the profession.’ The group limited its membership to illustrious, much-published fellows, and it solicited new members only after fellows died or left the group.”⁴⁸ They took their role seriously, suing researchers who they felt provided shoddy work to clients. One example was the Media Research Bureau, which sold genealogies typically ‘abstracted from a number of published works on usually unrelated people of a common surname.’ Their business model was selling genealogies through advertisements and by soliciting people with the surname of one of their prewritten genealogies.⁴⁹ However, the exclusivity of the ASG just led to more groups being formed and fewer agreements on a professional standard of practice. Seminars were held across the country regularly after 1950 to train professional

⁴⁵ Creet, *The Genealogical Sublime*, 1.

⁴⁶ Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics Government of Canada, “Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2022),” January 11, 2023, https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html.

⁴⁷ Morgan, *A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History*, 21.

⁴⁸ Morgan, 145.

⁴⁹ Morgan, 145.

genealogists and develop a standard of practice. This led to the Board for Certification of Genealogists, which accredited graduates with the C.G. (Certified Genealogist) designation.⁵⁰ This addressed some of the issues with professionalization, but genealogy was most often done by family historians, not professionals, who would be unlikely to enroll or even be invited to these organizations. There was also an issue for the LDS researchers, who had been creating unsubstantiated and unsourced work for years. Noel Stevenson, a lawyer and member of the LDS, published genealogy how-to manuals in the 1950s. At the same time, the famous Mormon institution Brigham Young University began offering postsecondary-level classes, feeling that they needed to embrace professionalism and hire experts from which students could learn.⁵¹ The editors of *The American Genealogist* in 1976 created a ‘Hall of Shame’ to highlight the worst quality work and to warn genealogists away from reading and referencing them. They also created a Hall of Fame for those who reinforced the profession’s ethos.⁵²

Catherine Nash notes that there is a current movement, spurred by the intersection of science and genealogy, to distance genealogy from its “elitist, patriarchal, prestige-hungry and fabricated genealogies of the late nineteenth century.”⁵³ She points to the importance of the adoption of genealogy as a tool of local histories and, by extension a tool for women’s family history and “other political projects of historical recovery and demarginalization,” making these new systems of relatedness impactful on the study of race, gender, and nation.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Morgan, 160.

⁵¹ Morgan, 146.

⁵² Morgan, 162.

⁵³ Nash, “Genetic Kinship,” 6.

⁵⁴ Nash, 6.

FamilySearch.org cites the online course from the International Institute of Genealogical Studies, which provides certification for the Association of Professional Genealogists, as their source for ethical guidelines. Their rules are as follows:

1. Promote a coherent, truthful approach to genealogy, family history and local history.
2. Present research results and opinions in a clear, well-organized manner; fully and accurately cite references; and refrain from withholding, suppressing, or knowingly misquoting or misinterpreting sources or data.
3. Promote the trust and security of genealogical consumers.
4. Advertise services and credentials honestly, avoiding the use of misleading or exaggerated representations; explain without concealment or misrepresentation all fees, charges, and payment structures; abide by agreements regarding project scope, number of hours, and deadlines and reporting schedules; keep adequate, accessible records of financial and project-specific contacts with the consumer; and refrain from knowingly violating or encouraging others to violate laws and regulations concerning copyright, right to privacy, business finances, or other pertinent subjects.
5. Support initiatives that preserve public records and access to them.
6. Be courteous to research facility personnel and treat records with care and respect; support efforts to locate, collect, and preserve the records by compiling, cataloguing, reproducing, and indexing documents; refrain from mutilating, rearranging, or removing from their proper custodians printed, original, microfilmed, or electronic records.
7. Promote the welfare of the genealogical community.
8. Give proper credit to those who supply information and provide assistance; refrain from (or avoid) knowingly soliciting established clients of another researcher; encourage applicable education, accreditation, and certification; and refrain from public behaviour, oral remarks or written communications that defame the profession, individual genealogists, or the Association of Professional Genealogists⁵⁵

Credit and sourcing are often the most difficult to manage as the ‘Family Bible’ or an Ancestor Chart made by an uncle in the 1970s that provides a list of names and a few death dates are not always accurate, nor do they cite their sources.⁵⁶ The Denney papers are rife with this problem. Although a family file may include a page from a book and a Descendants Chart, it’s unclear how they may be related. Denney wrote to McCloy: “One of the weaknesses of my work is that too frequently I have no confirmation of where I got my information. A visit with someone, and

⁵⁵ “Genealogical Ethics - International Institute,” FamilySearch Wiki, April 27, 2023, https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Genealogical_Ethics_-_International_Institute.

⁵⁶ This was my starting point when I embarked on my paternal genealogy.

information filled in, without record.”⁵⁷ It’s unclear if a name on a tree comes from another tree, word of mouth, a letter, or the meticulously researched and written out reference-card catalogue created by Denney and Kipling from church, scrip and census records. Ironically, Denney’s work gained a veneer of reliability when it officially became an archive, likely through his associations with organizations like the Historical Society. His notes and charts became primary sources.⁵⁸

The primary sources used by Denney and other genealogists are themselves from a historical space. The birth certificate rose to a place of importance in the United States as a widely accepted form of identification starting in the 1830s. This was due to a push by social reformers who aimed to convince authorities that accurate and standardized birth certificates could be a source of public health data and a requirement for proof of age to access social programs like pensions or school registration. They also convinced families that a birth certificate should become an honoured keepsake.⁵⁹ Birth certificates displaced older versions of record keeping and attempted to equate the government-issued documentation with a baptismal entry or a notation kept in family bibles. Susan Pearson notes, “The single act of registering a birth thus serves two functions: it creates real-time population knowledge and a technology for personal identification.”⁶⁰ This has led to a reliance on and trust in vital statistical documents. However, they can be a much slipperier source.

⁵⁷ Charles Denney to Pat McCloy, March 14, 1986, M8981/115 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵⁸ The veracity of sources, like Denney, when submitted by potential citizens is gauged by the central registries. The Registries keep a record of families which are fact checked so most serious errors have been weeded out on the registry side. Laurel Katernick to Erin Dolmage, “Personal Correspondence,” c2007.

⁵⁹ Susan J. Pearson, *The Birth Certificate: An American History*, e-book, North Carolina Scholarship Online (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2023), 7.

⁶⁰ Pearson, 8.

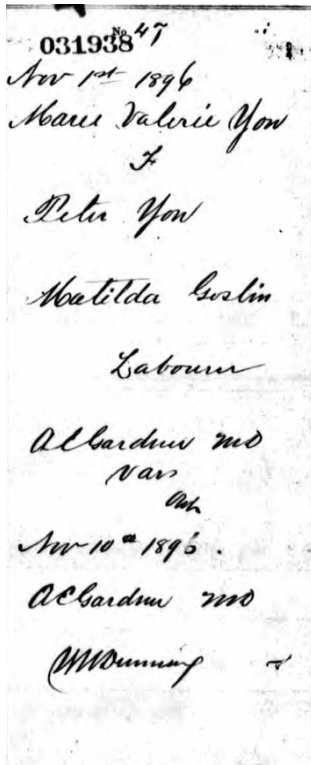


Figure 4-11 Birth
Registration: Marie Valerie
Yon Nov 1st, 1896

Census, baptismal and scrip records are only as good as the person writing them. They can often lead to contradictory and confusing records, particularly if one is researching French Canadian or Metis families, as was Denney. Perhaps some of the inconsistencies are not only from poor research practices but also from the irregularity of documentary evidence. Heather Devine notes that genealogical sources are to be approached with caution and, at best, cross-referenced when possible. She notes, “In most cases, however, there is no documentation on the methodology employed by researchers to compile genealogical data. In the genealogical community, horror stories abound of people who have either concocted totally fictitious genealogies or have inadvertently

incorporated faulty genealogical data into otherwise accurate material.”⁶¹ This is the danger of genealogical research and the ostensible reason many historians have eschewed it.

An example from my family tree illustrates this well. My great-grandmother Marie Valerie Dionne, or ‘Nana Bert,’ appears in different forms on all her official documents. According to her birth registration (fig. 4-11), Marie Valerie Yon was born on November 1, 1896, and was registered on November 10 in Russell Cumberland, ON. It lists her parents as Peter Yon and Matilda Goslin and was recorded by the physician A.E. Gardiner.⁶²

⁶¹ Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*, 2004, 211.

⁶² Province of Ontario, “Birth Registration: Valerie Marie Yon: Schedule A Births Russell County Cumberland ON 428,” November 10, 1896, Ontario, Canada Births, 1832-1917, https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/8838/images/ONMS929_134-0352?pid=467095.

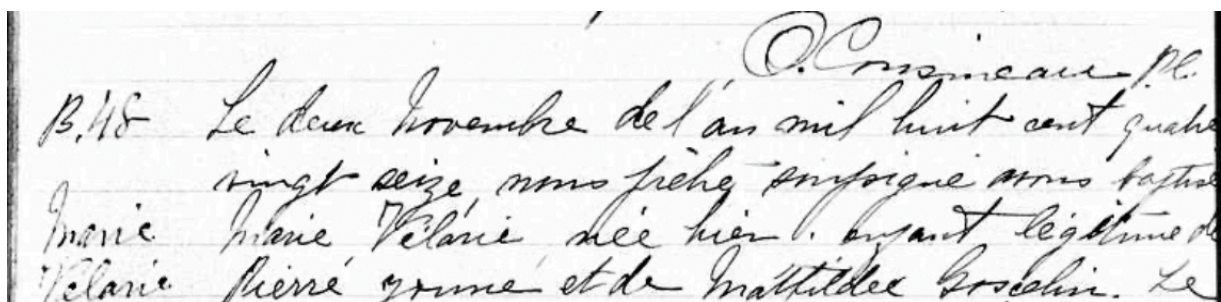


Figure 4-12 Baptism Entry for Marie Velarie Yonne. 2 November 1896.

Her baptism (fig. 4-12) notes she was baptized on November 2, 1869 (she would have been one day old) as Marie Vélarie, the legitimate daughter of Pierre Yonne and Mathilde Goscelin in Sarsfield, Ontario, Canada (likely at the Paroisse Saint-Hugues).⁶³

1788	178	Marie Yonne	Head	June 9	1867	38	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
1789	179	Matilda	Wife	July 9	1870	26	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
1790	180	Valerie	Daughter	Nov 2	1869	1	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
1791	181	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
1792	182	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse

Figure 4-13 1901 Census for Cumberland, ON.

In the 1901 national Canadian census (fig. 4-13) for Cumberland, Ontario, she is listed as Valrie Yone, French-speaking and Roman Catholic, daughter of Peter and Matilda Yone.⁶⁴

38	100	Valerie Yone	Head	June 9	1867	38	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
39	101	Matilda	Wife	July 9	1870	26	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
40	102	Valerie	Daughter	Nov 2	1869	1	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
41	103	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
42	104	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
43	105	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
44	106	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
45	107	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
46	108	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse

Figure 4-14 1911 Census for Willow Bunch, SK.

In the 1911 Census for Willow Bunch, SK (fig. 4-14), she is listed as Valerie Dionne, born in Ontario. Her parents are Pigne and Matilda Dionne, French origin, Roman Catholic, and French-speaking.⁶⁵

100	100	Valerie Dionne	Head	June 9	1867	38	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
101	101	Matilda	Wife	July 9	1870	26	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
102	102	Valerie	Daughter	Nov 2	1869	1	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
103	103	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
104	104	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
105	105	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
106	106	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
107	107	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse
108	108	Yvonne	Daughter	Oct 4	1878	2	O. N.	French	Roman	R. C.	Paroisse

Figure 4-15 1916 Census for Assiniboia, SK.

⁶³ Ottawa Roman Catholic Archdiocese, "Baptism of Marie Vélarie Yonne, Baptism, Marriage, Burial, Confirmation; Sarsfield; 1873-1913" (Ontario, Canada, Roman Catholic Baptisms, Marriages and Burials 1760-1923, November 2, 1896),

https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/61505/images/FS_005070856_00283?pId=608624.

⁶⁴ Statistics Canada, "Census of Canada," Census (Ottawa, ON, June 8, 1916).

⁶⁵ Statistics Canada, "Census of Canada," Census (Ottawa, ON, 1911).

Polina & Gilbert Williams	York St	.	Head	M	M 36	Manitoba	Went	Man	Irish	—	Canada	Irish	English	1	1	1
Polina & Marie May	.	.	Wife	F	M 30	Ont	Ont	Ont	Irish	—	Canada	Irish	English	1	1	1
Polina & David Williams	.	.	Son	M	S 11	Sask	Man	Ont	Irish	—	Canada	Irish	English	1	1	1
Polina & Corilla Gilbert	.	.	Son	M	S 10	Sask	Man	Ont	Irish	—	Canada	Irish	English	1	1	1

Mrs. M. Dionne

Mrs. Matilda Dionne, 72, of Willowbunch, died Monday.

Funeral service will be held at Holy Rosary Cathedral Wednesday at 9.30 a.m. with Rev. Father A. J. Phelan officiating. Burial will be in Regina cemetery.

Mrs. Dionne is survived by two sons, Edward and Rene, Willowbunch and seven daughters; Mrs. Valerie Dolmage, North Battleford, Mrs. Minnie Gaudry, Assiniboia, Mrs. Valica Brunneau, Willowbunch, Mrs. Emelia Dupperreault, Welland, Ont., Mrs. Jeanne Paquin, 1337 York street, Mrs. Alma Lawby, 24 Braemar apartments, and Mrs. Victorine Tessier, 3125 College avenue.

A native of the Ottawa district, Mrs. Dionne came to Willowbunch with her husband Peter, 38 years ago. She was predeceased by Mr.

In the Canadian national census of 1921 (fig. 4-16), she appears as Valerie Mary Dolmage, Methodist, 30 years old, married to Gilbert William, born in Ontario. Her racial origin is listed as French, and her mother tongue is listed as English. She has two sons, Donald and Orville, and a daughter Lauraine.⁶⁷ The birth registrations of her sons Orville (February 7, 1916) and Donald (September 3, 1914) my grandfather, list her as Valerie Mary You[n], and Valerie

as Matilda Dionne and her daughter as Valerie Dolmage.⁶⁹ Valerie's obituary, written by her grandsons, my father and uncle, lists her as Valerie Marie Dolmage. To me, she was Nana Bert.⁷⁰

Record	Given Name	Surname	Father's Name	Mother's Name	Religion	Language Spoken
Birth Registration	Marie Valerie	Yon	Peter Yon	Matilda Goslin	n/a	n/a
Baptism	Marie V�larie	Yonne	Pierre Yonne	Mathildee Goscelin	Catholic	n/a
Census 1901	Valrie	Yone	Peter Yone	Matilda Yone	Catholic	French
Census 1911	Valerie	Dionne	Pigne Dionne	Matilda Dionne	Catholic	French
Census 1916	Valerie	Dolmge	n/a	n/a	Presbyterian	French

⁷⁰ Rod Dolmage and Jay Dolmage to Erin Dolmage, “Personal Correspondence,” July 14, 2024.

Census 1921	Valerie Mary	Dolmage	n/a	n/a	Methodist	English
Birth Registration” William 1914	Valerie	Yon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Birth Registration: Orville 1916	Valerie Mary	You	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Obituary Matilda 1946	Valerie	Dolmage	Peter Dionne	Matilda Dionne	Catholic	n/a
Headstone/ Obituary Valerie	Valerie Marie	Dionne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

What can we glean from this? Firstly, who is doing the recording is important. This is a significant point when assessing Denney’s collection. Dionne’s registration is written by an anglophone, and it shows English spellings: Mary Valerie. The baptism records, written in French by a francophone, give her first name as Marie Vélarie. Unlike later records, her Christian name in both cases is given as Marie, and her middle name is Valerie. Marie was the Christian name of all her female siblings, so it’s likely, given her mother’s obituary, that all the children went by their middle names. Also, spelling variations are in evidence. In many cases, the enumerator was working on phonetic pronunciations, hence the odd spelling of Pierre in 2011, Dolmage in 1916 and Goscelin in 1896. They also shift her first language from French to English and her religion from Catholic to Presbyterian and Methodist. The Dolmage line has been Protestant since Luther. They became early converts to Methodism after John Wesley preached to a group of the Palatines in Dublin in 1747.⁷¹ Valerie Dionne, however, was not a Protestant. She remained a (lapsed) Catholic after marriage and until her death.⁷² Likely, this

⁷¹ Palatine families, sometimes also known as the Pennsylvania Dutch and the Palatine Irish, are a group of Protestant refugees that were taken from the Palatinate after the War of Spanish Succession. Queen Anne brought eight shiploads of immigrants, out of the Palatinate and some settled in and around Limerick choosing to ‘Irishize’ their names, i.e. Dolmetsch to Dolmage. Eunice (Stutt Davis) Streeter, “The Seeking Vine: Stutt: Irish Palatine Family 1709-1918,” *North Irish Roots* 12, no. 2 (2001): 20–24.

⁷² Dolmage and Dolmage to Dolmage, “Personal Correspondence,” July 14, 2024.

erasure was a case of the enumerator asking, “What’s your religion?” and whoever spoke to the enumerator didn’t differentiate between the religion of Gilbert, his children, and Marie. This erasure is common and a byproduct of the textual and archival biases that give primacy to men’s families and identities.

The biggest change in the documents is her maiden surname, which shifts from Yon, Yone, Yonne, and Dionne (I have also seen it as Vionne and Dion). This is likely a result of a particularity in French Canadian surnames. Most French-origin names are hagionymic, like Saint-Pierre, while many French-Canadian names originated from ‘bynames’ or “*dit*” names.⁷³ Historian Heather Devine notes that *dit* names also show up regularly in fur trading families:

The term “dit” was used by the French as a means of differentiating between non-related families sharing identical surnames, or to differentiate between descendent branches of the same family. A family would have their primary surname, and then a secondary surname would be attached by the word “dit” to differentiate the specific branch of the family from other branches. This was a necessary strategy, given that there might be several branches of a family living in one area, and that many of the adults and children from different branches could have identical given names.⁷⁴

Many French-Canadian surnames shifted from more traditional French surnames to names associated with a place, physical characteristics, moral characteristics, trades, places of origin, first names of ancestors and actions.⁷⁵ Dionne/ Yon is an example of a *dit*/byname and may have come from the given name Antoine, possibly from Antione Dionne dit Sansoucy dit Diaume dit Guyonne, who was born in France c1641 and died 1791 in New France.⁷⁶ In New France, where

⁷³ Marc Picard, “Hagionyms In North American French Surnames,” *Names* 63, no. 1 (March 2015): 38.

⁷⁴ Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*, 2004, 224.

⁷⁵ Library and Archives Canada Blog, “The Nicknames and ‘Dit Names’ of French-Canadian Ancestors,” *Library and Archives Canada Blog* (blog), January 30, 2014, <https://thediscoverblog.com/2014/01/30/the-nicknames-and-dit-names-of-french-canadian-ancestors/>.

⁷⁶ “Antoine (Dionne) Dionne Dit Sansoucy Dit Diaume Dit Guyonne (Abt.1641-1721),” WikiTree, accessed June 14, 2024, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Dionne-61>.

multiple branches of families lived in one area, and multiple members had the same given names (i.e. all of the Dionne children were named Joseph and Marie), *dit* names were used to help differentiate between families.⁷⁷ *Dit* names appear regularly in Denney's trees, are referenced by genealogists like Darrel Loyer, and in fur trade records, like the Tellier/LaFortune fur trading family at Michilimackinac and Fort Langley.⁷⁸

Conclusion

The historical practice of genealogy is murky in many ways, particularly because it relies on complex records and shifting surnames. There are issues with privacy and professionalism. *Dit* names are an example of how primary source-based genealogical work can be complicated. The publishing of birthdays, death dates, family skeletons and connecting families through DNA markers is, for many, an invasion of privacy. Conversely, there is benefit, as educator and genealogist Martin Robb points out, in creating microhistorical/ biographical spaces to study the 'hidden histories' that are imperative for feminist and bottom-up scholarship, like my great-grandmother and her shifting identity.⁷⁹ Catherine Nash sees genetic genealogy as a new path for feminist and marginalized family histories.⁸⁰ As a historian of early America, Jill Lepore encourages the writing of "history of 'hitherto obscure people...[which] concentrates on the intensive study of particular lives' to reveal the 'fundamental experiences and *mentalités* of

⁷⁷ Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*, 2004, 246.

⁷⁸ Library and Archives Canada Blog, "The Nicknames and 'Dit Names' of French-Canadian Ancestors."

⁷⁹ Martin Robb, "Hidden from Family History: The Ethics of Remembering.," *Genealogy* 8, no. 51 (2024): 1–8.

⁸⁰ Nash, "Genetic Kinship," 5.

ordinary people,”” In the case of Charles Denney, his monument to Mildred’s descendants reveals significant histories that would otherwise remain hidden to us today.⁸¹

⁸¹ Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” 131.

Chapter 5 Deciphering Denney's Archive: A Comprehensive Study of the Family Files

Introduction

Denney used several terms for his collection, calling them, "his files" or one of "his major life projects."¹ In an article entitled "Roots: Go Ahead and Shake a Few Family Skeletons," Denney was interviewed about when he caught his "archive fever,"

He really got started in 1967 when he was visiting a United Church Minister in Victoria who proudly showed him 27 foolscap pages identifying individuals of the Selkirk settlement Mr. Denney persuaded the man to let him photocopy the document, but the crippled 83-year-old minister insisted on accompanying him all the way downtown, using two canes, to the photocopier. All the while he jealously gripped the years of research under his arm. The copies cost \$14.00 and at the time Mr. Denney thought he'd been "rash." Since then, he has spent thousands of dollars on postage, his own photocopier, a library full of books and made many trips through the United States and England.²

This collection was his life's work. The genealogical Family Files were the centrepiece of Denney's collection. Including over 1200 families, and totalling 2600 Family Files, the collection was massive and comprehensive. As discussed in Chapter 3, most of the collection was transferred to the Glenbow in the mid 1980s, and Denney added to it until his death in 2001.

¹ "The Family Secret Keeper," February 1983.

² Pinder, "Roots: Go Ahead, Rattle a Few Family Skeletons."

This was not his original plan; Denney wrote numerous letters where he discussed the books he hoped to write using his research. In 1968, he wrote to his friend Ruth Buck about his detailed writing plans, stating,

Now I would like your suggestions about what should be in the book. At the present time I see it as having several sections with the general history of the beginnings and ends. The first will deal with the general history of the beginnings and development of the settlement. it will include the names of all the earlysettlers [sic], stories of their travels, letters, diaries, reports, maps, map of the lot distribution, and all background information I can find. the next section will include the genealogies of the ten families named above, interleaved with anecdotes and interesting and data and history of the individuals named in the immediately preceding pages (such as the one enclosed). Somewhere through this section will likely be horizontal charts to assist the reader to trace and connect the various families and branches of families. Then will come a section dealing with the genealogies of families of a different name which have developed out of the ten original families.³

In his friends and family letter in 1968, he wrote “I have not decided to sit and do nothing.

Indeed, the threat I made to write a book on the ten tribes of Mildred's Red River family is no longer just a threat; for I am working at it. It may not be a very good book, and it may never be published but little by little I am getting genealogical data.”⁴ There is no draft of the book or even notes in his papers. He did occasionally send drafts of short pieces in his letters but he does not include them consistently.⁵ He even applied for funding to write a book on Mildred’s ancestor John Pritchard. In his 1974 Explorations Program Grant, Denney outlined a project, “Half-Breed Identities and Little John Pritchard,” he was hoping the local initiative program would fund. In his application, Denney describes his project as follows:

Granted enough time energy, and money, as well as help, it is my purpose to prepare for publication a series of books or monographs dealing with the genealogies and the personal histories of the families under study. Failing that, the total work should form a valuable reference library, in one or more archives, for other people who wish to write books or monographs or articles --- or simply to trace their family background, enterprise

³ Charles Denney to Ruth Buck, January 8, 1968, M7144/36 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴ Denney to Friends and Relatives, June 21, 1968.

⁵ Denney to Sokolotosky and Sokolotosky, February 10, 1980.

which has become very popular in recent years..... Now I would like to have help in writing their story.⁶

Unfortunately, he does not get the grant, to which J. Hammond at the Glenbow commiserates, as they, too, were turned down.⁷

Denney wrote to the Glenbow, stating, “So far I have not mentioned that It was my original intention ^however and it is still my desire ^to publish most extensively indeed, if I am favoured with an adequate number of years of good health and mental vigour, and my financial resources will permit, I propose to publish many personal and genealogical histories.”⁸ In fact, one of Denney’s reasons to sell his collection was to fund his future books. He noted that he wanted to “write from fact,” hoping his library will be an accurate and comprehensive resource at the Glenbow from which he and others could draw.⁹ He wrote to Kipling, “Besides I like to think that you and I are going to produce a work of lasting benefit. A library of genealogical data that archives all over the place are going to consult and refer to much the way people now refer to the MacMillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography or the publications of the Champlain Society.”¹⁰ It was a lofty goal. Denney did publish some small pieces over the years in *Alberta History* and published at least one article on a Pritchard family member in 1971 in *Saskatchewan History*¹¹. Denney did not include copies of his published articles in the archive, though he kept copies of most of his letters to the editor and articles where he was interviewed in his personal files. The *Saskatchewan History* article discusses Mary Rose Pritchard, who witnessed the events

⁶ Denney, “Application for Assistance under the Explorations Program.”

⁷ J. Allan Hammond to Charles Denney, January 2, 1975, M7144/78 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁸ Denney to Chritchley, May 30, 1974.

⁹ Denney to Chritchley, June 13, 1974.

¹⁰ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, October 16, 1970, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹¹ See Appendix I for Denney’s Published Papers

at Frog Lake in 1885.¹² He told a friend that “my wife's family connections seemed so much more glamorous than mine, that I have devoted most of my time to following them.”¹³ Denney wrote in another letter to a Mrs. Houser, “it is true also that none may see my finished product. It is a staggeringly large job. If I could concentrate on family, perhaps it would not be so bad. But the Selkirk families and the Fur Trade Families became so interwoven that even to understand one family requires an intimate knowledge of all the others.”¹⁴ This was prescient, as he never completes his series of books, instead, returning to his ever-expanding collection of genealogies.

The Family Files

By the Numbers

Evaluating an archive requires examining how the archive was constructed. As anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler reminds us, “What constitutes that archive, what form it takes and what systems of classification signal at specific times, is the very substance of colonial politics.”¹⁵ In this case, the Glenbow is a large publicly funded archive with a history in colonial knowledge production. Denney’s genealogical archives might serve another purpose. By looking at the Family files, I argue that Charles Denney’s archive of Metis genealogies is a site of power reclamation, resistance, and *wahkootowin*. This process does not involve measuring the “Metisness” of Denney’s archive, i.e. the gaps between Denney’s and the Metis Nation’s vision

¹² Charles D. Denney, “In Memory of Mary Rose (Pritchard) Sayers,” *Saskatchewan History* XXIV, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 63–72. For Denney’s published articles and letters see Appendix I.

¹³ Charles Denney to Alethea Burgess, December 14, 1971, M7144/9 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁴ Charles Denney, “Murray Family File,” n.d., 141, M7144/38000 Murray Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁵ Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” 2002, 86.

and use of the papers. Rather it breaks down the elements of the files and acknowledges the agency inherent in Metis' use of these documents, whether for citizenship or to fulfill *wahkootowin* responsibilities.

The full archive, measuring 41.3 metres of textual records, 2600 individual folders and 1200+ families, is a massive, unwieldy collection.¹⁶ The Family Files specifically reference the Glenbow Collection numbered M7144/1,000 to M7144/1294,000. It's hard to grasp exactly what they contained at first glance as the files appear randomly organized, with different types of documents, articles, obituaries, and notes found amongst the genealogical charts. Any original order of the documents is long lost from consistent use by Glenbow patrons. To get an overview of the collection, I coded 365 files using NVIVO (qualitative data analysis software) to location, theme and document type (Chapter 1 explains my methods in detail).

The Family Files were also coded for elements like size (number of pages), dates, and kinds of documents. The Files include several different kinds of materials, but genealogical data, family trees, family group sheets, and pedigree charts make up the bulk of the material. For the purposes of this analysis, "Files" refers to the collection of documents for a specific family (designated by a number), organized into separate file folders by Denney and the Glenbow. A "document" is a single item inside the File. An example of a document is a family group chart or an obituary. A "chart" is a descendency chart created by Denney. Additionally, one page could include two document types. For example, a photocopied obituary with accompanying notes would be both a newspaper clipping/ obituary and genealogy/ notes. An example is figure 5-1

¹⁶ "Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy Files - Archives," accessed June 30, 2024, <https://searcharchives.ucalgary.ca/charles-denney-fonds-and-metis-genealogy-files>.

from the Delorme Family File, showing the obituary of Eliza Russel and accompanying genealogical notes listing biographical information and a list of family members.¹⁷

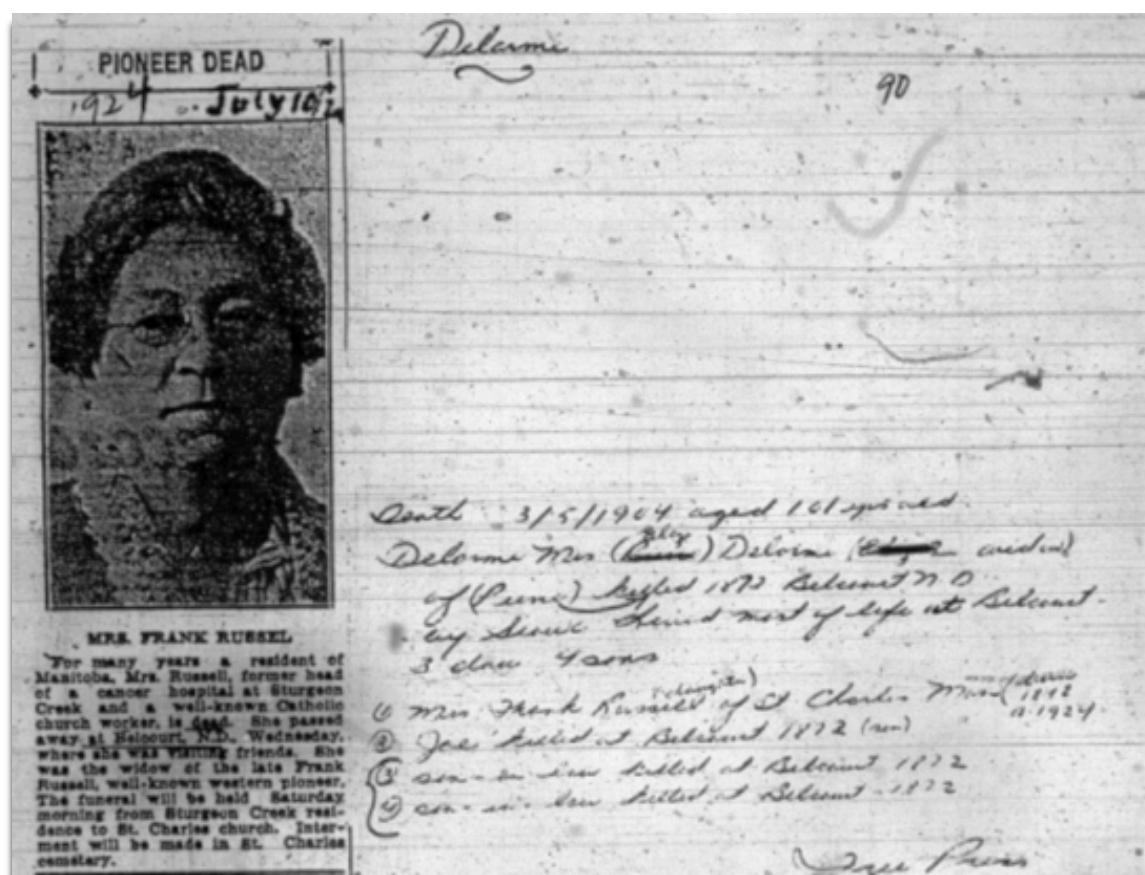


Figure 5-1 Detail of Obituary and Denney's notes. Delorme Family File #1026000 pp. 56

The files vary considerably in length and time period. The longest coded file was 213 pages, the smallest (excluding empty folders) was 1 page, and the most frequent was a chart. The average length of a family file was 16 pages, the average starting date of the files was 1810, and the earliest birth/ death date mentioned in the documents is 1657, in an entry on John Pritchard of Shrewsbury, listed as 1657-1737.¹⁸ This was the great-grandfather of John Pritchard, Mildred's ancestor, who started Denney on his genealogical journey.

¹⁷ Denney, "Delorme Family File."

¹⁸ Charles Denney, "Pritchard Family File," n.d., M7144/12000 Pritchard Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

There were 23 empty folders in 365 coded files. Some were named by Glenbow in the File list without any accompanying file; some were empty folders with a family name assigned. There are multiple reasons this might have happened; the contents of a file were sometimes moved by Denney into another established Family File when connections were made. An example of a file with just a name but not documents is Mills 904000 Family File. In this case, only the family name and number are written on the folder, but no documents are present. Denney does not note having empty files in his writing. Empty files may have been cases where he saw a potential family he wanted to investigate but never followed through on researching them. I have chosen to keep these files in the analysis as they remain valid data points.

File Types

The files contain several different types of documents, including genealogies, notes, book excerpts, newspaper clippings, and primary sources like scrip, letters, and archival material. The largest number of items in the files are genealogical documents, appearing in 310 or 85% of the files. Secondary sources appear in 265 files. Primary sources appear in 132 files. Written correspondence appears in 67 of the files. Some of this correspondence is also copied in the Personal Papers. As noted in Chapter 4, Denney's 'Charts' were adapted Descendent charts, which place the oldest ancestor(s) at the left-hand of the page and build the family left to right from them. They are often successive. Charts will be built out of one family. What makes Denney's charts different is they can build from multiple descendent lines, while the traditional Descendent chart stems from one individual or couple.

File Categories

Table 5-1 Categories of Documents that appear in Family Files

Document Category	File Appearances	% of Total Files
Primary Sources	132	36%
Secondary sources	265	73%
Genealogical Documents	310	85%
Denney Correspondence	67	18%

Genealogical Documents

Table 5-2 Genealogical Documents appearing in the Family Files

Document Type	File Appearances	% of Total Files
Genealogy (All)	310	85%
Descendant Chart	7	2%
Family Group Chart	38	10%
Chart (Denney Style)	290	79%
Generation Chart	10	3%
Illustrated Tree	2	1%
Index Card	3	1%
Notes	161	52%

Most documents are Denney's own charts and notes. There are occasions where someone has supplied family information, for example, the McKay illustrated Family Tree included in Chapter 4. Most genealogical material is in the Denney-style of a hybrid Descendant Chart, and for clarity's sake, we will refer to these as Charts.¹⁹ Denney's genealogical notes take several forms. In some cases, they include an ancestry chart, dates relating to the family, notes on an obituary, or a transcribed document. They are handwritten and not presented as a complete document. Instead, they are background material for a Chart.

¹⁹ "McKay Family Tree: Copied July 18, 1944 from Original Dated January 21, 1884," n.d., M7144/33441 McKay, Jemima and John Henry Greshorn Bray Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Primary Sources

Table 5-3 Primary Sources appearing in Family Files

File Types		File Appearances	% of Total Files
All		132	36%
Census		3	1%
Church Documents		7	2%
Diary/Journal		2	1%
Government Papers/ INAC		2	1%
Gravestone		2	1%
Historical documents	All	42	12%
	Selkirk Papers	2	1%
	HBCA	24	7%
	LAC	1	0%
	Letters	18	5%
	Petition	1	0%
	Will	1	0%
Photos		33	9%
Scrip		7	2%
Transcriptions		36	10%
Vital Stats	All	4	1%
	Death Registration	3	1%
	Marriage Registration	2	1%

Primary sources make up a smaller number of documents, comprising 35% of documents in the overall files. In most cases, Denney, or more likely Clarence Kipling, examined the document and created an index card using the data; the information was added later to the appropriate chart. You can see this in the original files. Often, charts have different colour ink showing additions to the chart. As Denney and Kipling borrowed materials from archives and other genealogists, they made a card and then returned the films they were copying from, rather than keeping a copy of the original document.²⁰ Most of the index cards were shared back and forth between Denney and Kipling, and many make up Kipling's collection in the Library and Archives Canada (LAC).²¹

²⁰ This may have a technological answer, a photocopying microfilm reader would likely have been too costly an item for Denney and Kipling to own at home. Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, March 29, 1976, M7144/154 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²¹ Library and Archives Canada, "Kipling Collection."

Secondary Sources

Table 5-4 Secondary Sources appearing in Family Files

Secondary Source	File Appearances	% of Total Files
Secondary Sources (All)	265	73%
Biography	48	13%
Book	96	26%
Book Excerpt	59	16%
Champlain Society	11	3%
Encyclopedia Excerpt	3	1%
History Monograph	29	8%
Memoir/Exploration Narratives	14	4%
Local History	49	13%
Journal (Academic)	4	1%
Magazine Article	23	6%
Map	6	2%
Newsletter	3	1%
Newspaper Clippings	139	38%
Anniversary Announcement	2	1%
Birth Announcement	3	1%
Engagement Announcement	2	1%
Articles	74	20%
Obituary	118	32%
Wedding Announcement	21	6%
Misc. Documents	4	1%
Funeral Program	2	1%
Other	2	1%
Pamphlet	4	1%
Photos	33	9%
Scrip	7	2%
Transcription	36	10%
Vital Stats	4	1%
Death Registration	3	1%
Marriage Registration	2	1%

Secondary sources are much more common in the Family Files. Denney often included pages from books, copies of magazine articles and newspaper clippings. I call the material from magazines and newspapers secondary rather than primary sources because they are journalistic reports of people and events based on primary sources. Usually, in the case of a monograph or a Champlain Society publication, only a page or two is included, and very rarely are there more than a couple of pages. Some secondary source-only files exist for the larger, multi-file families,

like the McKays, Leterndres, and the Dumonts. Denney marked them “*Family Name – Sundry*,” which refers to secondary source documents and notes.²²

Geography

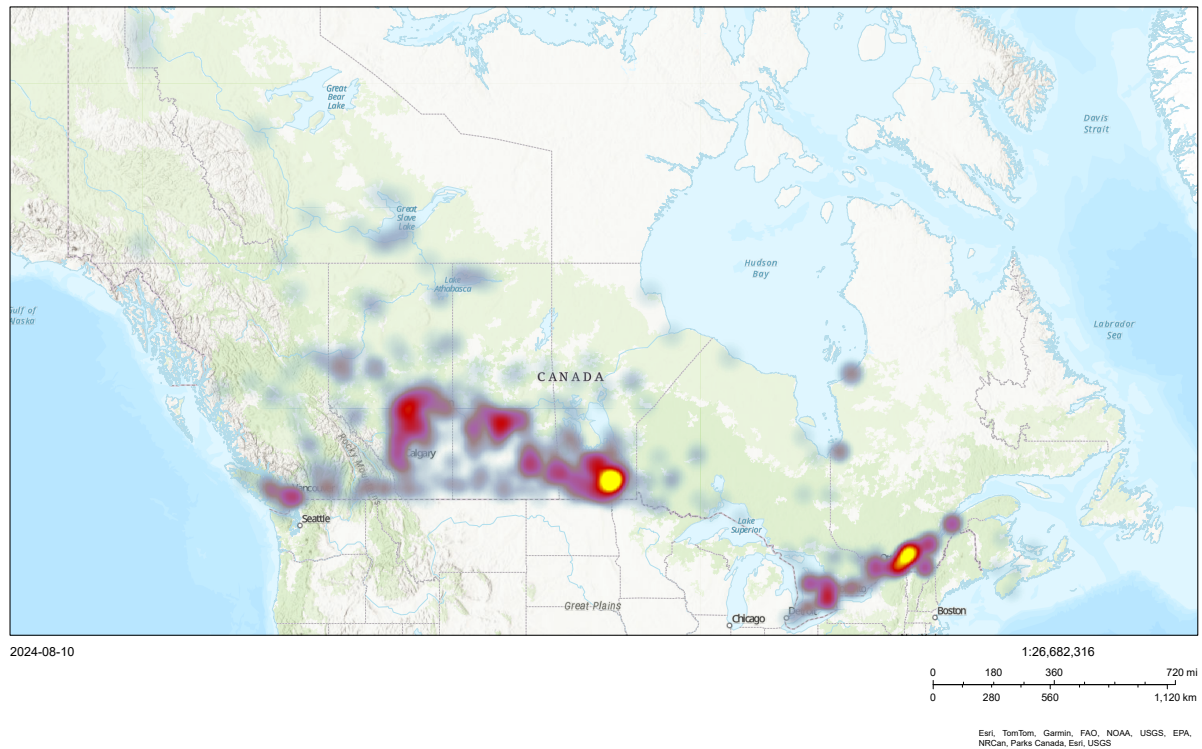


Figure 5-2 Map of Canada showing Heat Map of Document Locations

To ascertain the locations of Denney’s families, all places were referenced and geolocated from Denney trees, a description of this process is in Chapter 1. As place is an essential marker in Metis families, and Denney’s archives are, for all intents and purposes, a “history of the Metis nation, family by family.”²³ Denney’s charts are concentrated in what is known as the Metis homeland. In particular, the three prairie provinces appear most often, along

²² Two examples: Charles Denney, “McKay (Sundry) Family File,” n.d., M7144/328000 McKay Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB; Charles Denney, “Halket (Sundry) Family File,” n.d., M7144/357000 Halket Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²³ “Died: Charles Denney,” *Alberta Report*, April 15, 2002.

with some references to Ontario and British Columbia. As many of the families were involved in the fur trade out of the Red River, the historic Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) Districts are also referenced in the trees.

The provincial breakdown reflects this pattern:

Table 5-5 Provincial Appearances in Denney Family Files

Province	File Appearances	% of all Charts (310)	% of all Files (365)
Canada	297	96%	81%
AB	131	42%	36%
BC	67	22%	18%
MB	262	85%	72%
NB	3	1%	1%
NS	3	1%	1%
NT	16	5%	4%
ON	91	29%	25%
PEI	1	0%	0%
QC	61	20%	17%
SK	156	50%	43%
YK	5	2%	1%

Manitoba is referenced more than any other province; it appears in 262 Files, 85% of all the genealogies (310), and 72% of all the Family Files (365). This is followed by Saskatchewan, which appears in 156 files, half of the genealogies, and 43% of all the Files. Alberta follows with 131, 42% of the total trees, and 36% of all files. Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia all appear in between 20 and 30% of the trees, followed by the North and Maritimes.

Manitoba

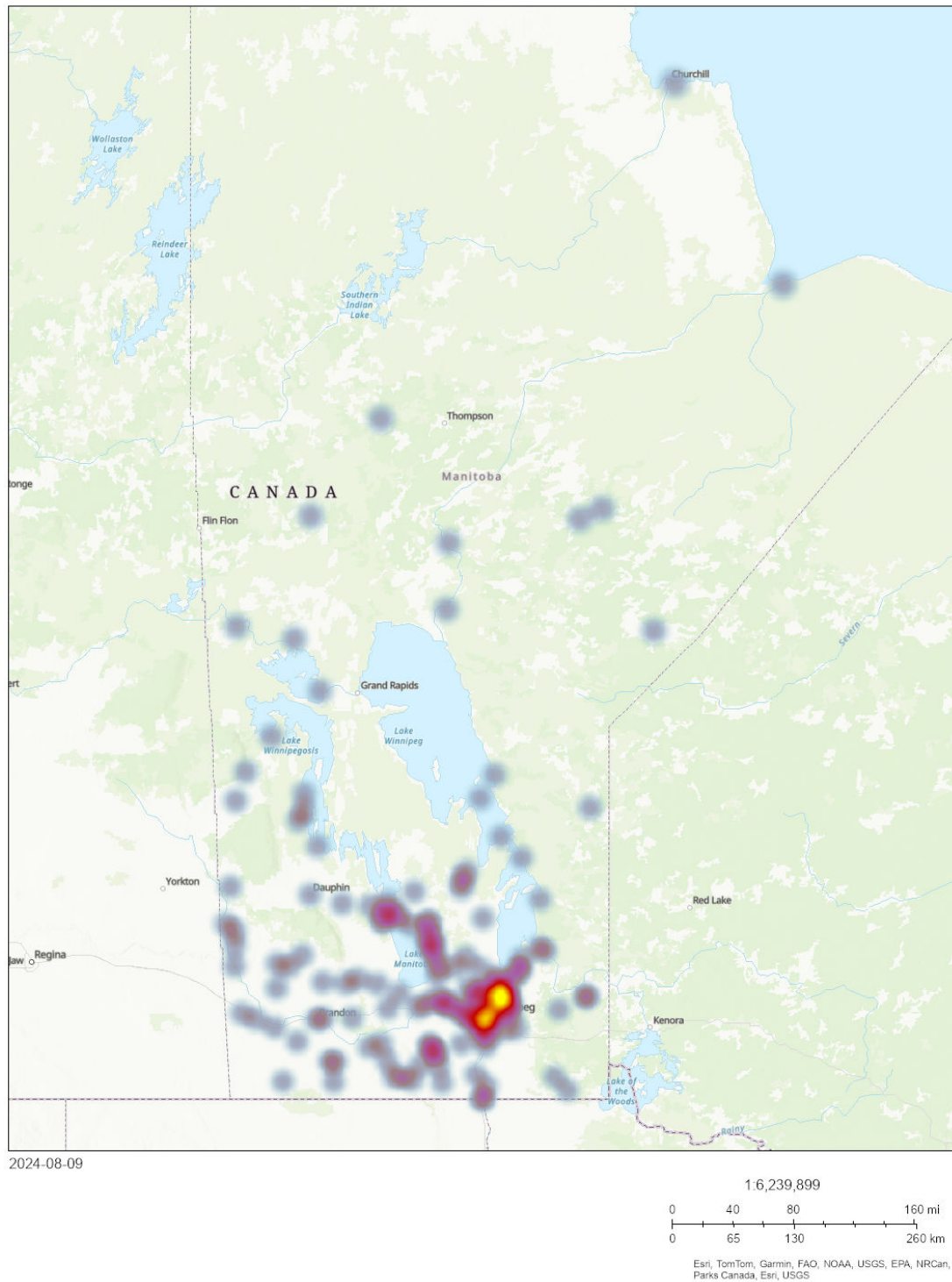


Figure 5-3 Map of Manitoba Showing Heat Map of Document Locations

Table 5-6 Locations in Manitoba that appear 10 or more times in Family Files

Locations	File Appearances	% of all Charts	% of all Files
Winnipeg	209	67%	57%
Red River Colony	114	37%	31%
St. Andrews	77	25%	21%
Saint François Xavier	73	24%	20%
Saint Boniface	65	21%	18%
Portage la Prairie	49	16%	13%
Kildonan	47	15%	13%
St. Peters Settlement	44	14%	12%
Selkirk	39	13%	11%
Little Britain	22	7%	6%
Poplar Point	22	7%	6%
Norway House	20	6%	5%
York Factory	20	6%	5%
Fort Ellice	19	6%	5%
Headingley	19	6%	5%
Brandon	17	5%	5%
Ste. Agathe	16	5%	4%
St. Eustache	15	5%	4%
Baie St. Paul	14	5%	4%
Fort Alexander	12	4%	3%
Swan River	11	4%	3%
Clandeboye	10	3%	3%
High Bluff	10	3%	3%
Ste. Anne	10	3%	3%

In the province of Manitoba, 24 locations appear in ten or more files. Unsurprisingly, the top two are Winnipeg and the Red River Valley. Depending on the file, individuals could be indicated as both Red River (RR) and Winnipeg proper. Additionally, a Winnipeg reference could be a more specific location in the city, often a church or historic neighbourhood. For example, St. James Cathedral in Winnipeg is referenced 105 times. The information was probably sourced directly from the church register, likely by Clarence Kipling.

Areas with important parishes also appear often. The number of Saint Francois Xavier references may indicate a settlement, but it also indicates the importance of the church. People would travel from their homes to have their children baptized there.²⁴ The Ledoux Family File

²⁴ For further information of Religion and the Metis Nations See: Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Diverging Identities: The Presbyterian Métis of St. Gabriel Street, Montreal," in *The New Peoples, Being and Becoming Metis in North*

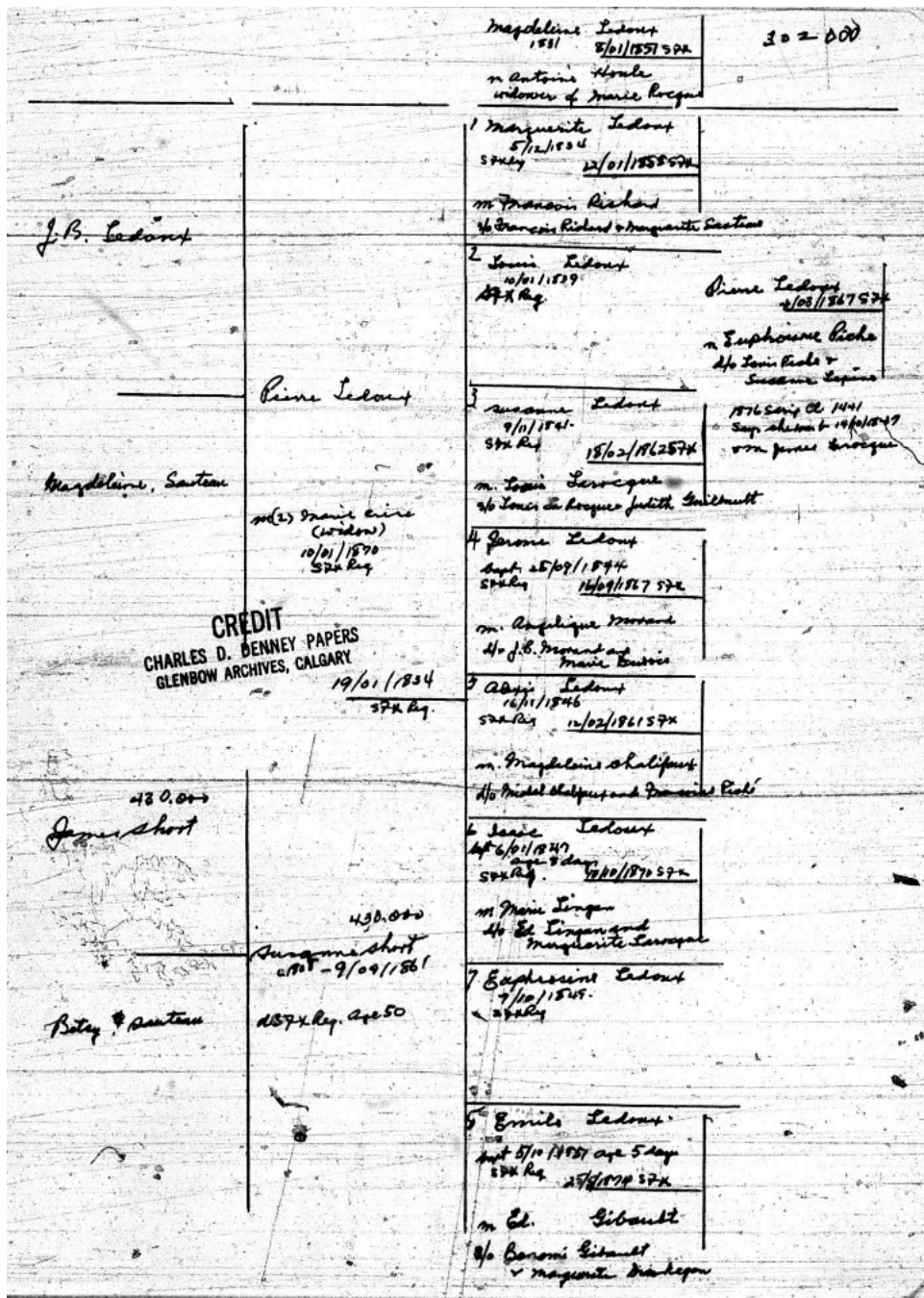


Figure 5-4 Family Chart J.B. Ledoux, Ledoux Family File pp. 2

America (Winnipeg, MB: University of Winnipeg Press, 1985), 195–206; Macdougall, *One of the Family*; Timothy P. Foran, *Defining Métis: Catholic Missionaries and the Idea of Civilization in Northwestern Saskatchewan 1885–1898* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017).

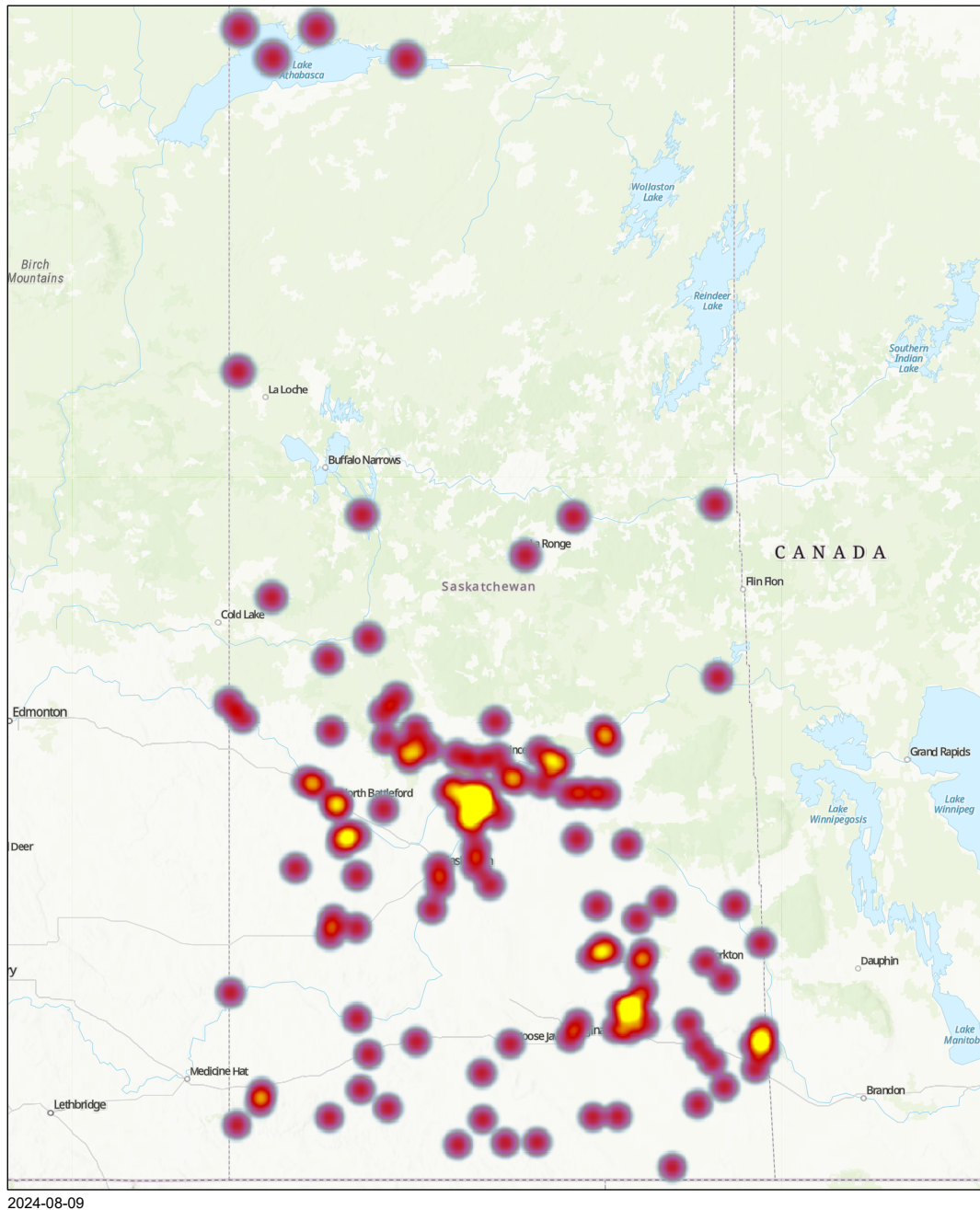
(see figure 5-4) has several generations all referencing Saint François Xavier Church (SFX) for marriages and births, but no indication that they lived in the town.²⁵ They Family Files often show the second, third, and fourth generations all listing SFX as their location, which obscures migration patterns and actual homes. Several parishes are both a locality and a church. Denney referenced these accurately, though most churches are in the same named districts, such as Ste. Agathe and St. Eustache. The same names led to a degree of confusion in the files.

The focus on the Red River reflects Denney's intellectual starting point, the Selkirk families from whom Mildred descended. Still, it also reflects the Red River Valley's importance as an administrative centre in the web of an incredibly mobile population. This is not necessarily proof of a 'Red River Myopia,' as Carolyn Podruchny and Nicole St-Onge note "that traffic along the web of Metis kin networks moved in all directions. Connections formed among many of the small communities and extended families along the fur trade routes, and new regional centers such as Fort St. Joseph, Île à la Crosse, Lac la Biche, Batoche, Wood Mountain, and St-Laurent, were constantly emerging."²⁶ You can see this happen along the family trees. An early concentration appears in one area, and subsequent generations move farther from the metropole. This is an acknowledgement that the Red River was consistently the first starting point on Denney's charts, and this was the community Denney wanted to concentrate on, as it was the starting point for Mildred's people.

²⁵ Charles Denney, "Ledoux Family File," n.d., 2, M7144/302000 Ledoux Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

²⁶ Nicole St-Onge and Carolyn Podruchny, "Scuttling Along a Spiders Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 63.

Saskatchewan



2024-08-09

1:6,239,899
0 40 80 160 mi
0 65 130 260 km
Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NRCAN,
Parks Canada, Esri, USGS

Figure 5-5 Map of Saskatchewan Showing Heat Map of Document Locations

Table 5-7 Locations in Saskatchewan that appear 10 or more times in Family Files

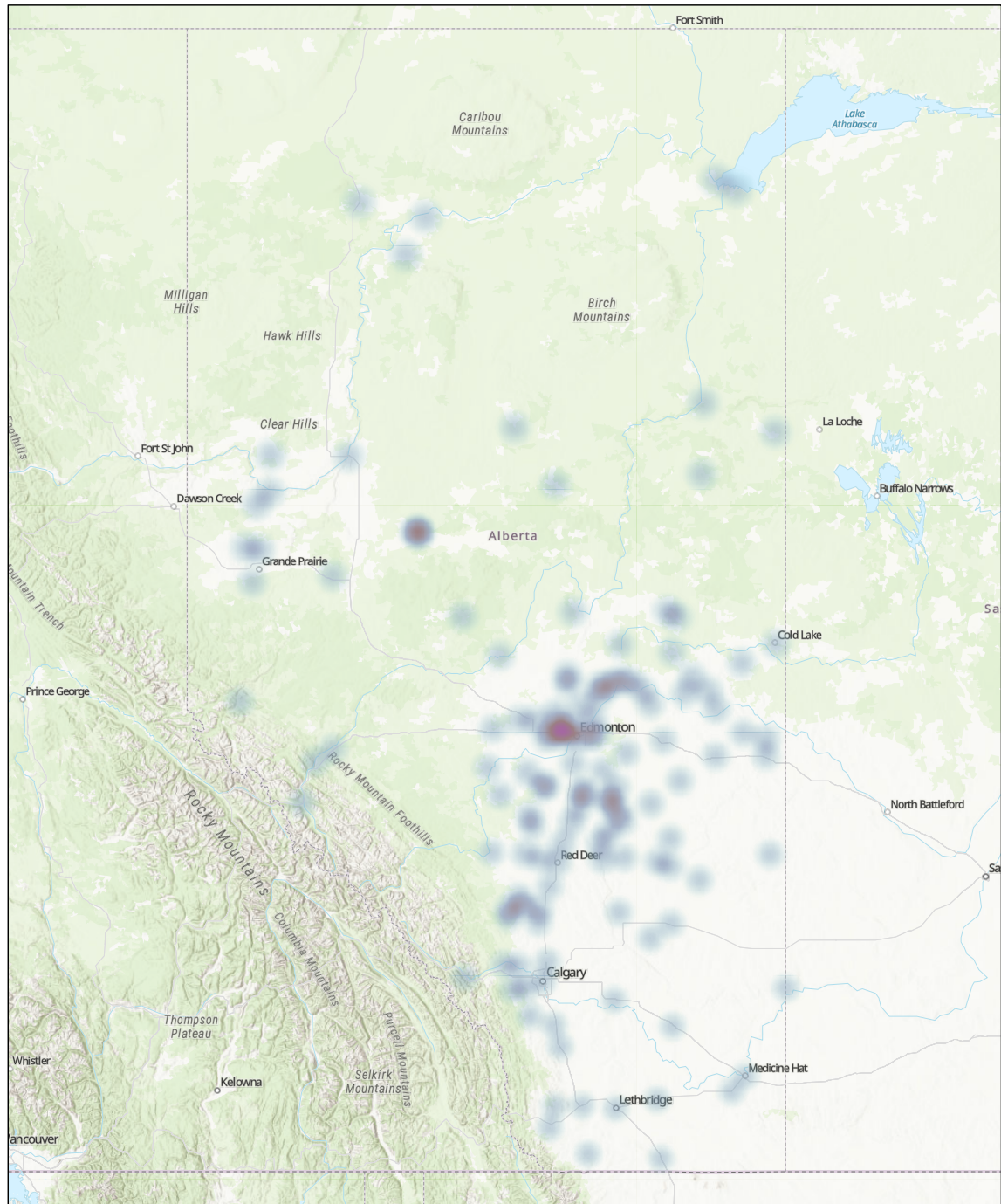
Location	File Appearances	% of all Charts	% of all Files
Prince Albert	46	15%	13%
Batoche	30	10%	8%
Duck Lake	28	9%	8%
Qu'Appelle	26	8%	7%
St-Laurent-Grandin	24	8%	7%
Cumberland House	23	7%	6%
Cypress Hills	21	7%	6%
Fort Carlton	19	6%	5%
Fort Qu'Appelle	16	5%	4%
Wood Mountain	16	5%	4%
Île-à-la-Crosse	15	5%	4%
Regina	15	5%	4%
Saskatoon	13	4%	4%
Battleford	12	4%	3%
Fort Pelly	11	4%	3%
Maple Creek	11	4%	3%
Moose Jaw	11	4%	3%
Fort Pitt	10	3%	3%
Willow Bunch	10	3%	3%

Saskatchewan has 19 locations indicated more than 10 times in the files. Areas of Metis settlement dominate (Prince Albert, Batoche, Duck Lake). Prince Albert functions much like Winnipeg in the previous chart: an administrative centre home to churches, schools, and cemeteries referenced by Denney.

Alberta

Table 5-8 Locations in Alberta that appear 10 or more times in Family Files

Location	File Appearances	% of all Charts	% of all Files
Edmonton	84	27%	23%
Calgary	42	14%	12%
St. Albert	34	11%	9%
Lac Ste. Anne	24	8%	7%
Lesser Slave Lake	18	6%	5%
Fort Chipewyan	16	5%	4%
Lac La Biche	16	5%	4%
Red Deer	16	5%	4%
Fort Vermilion	13	4%	4%
Jasper (House)	12	4%	3%
St. Paul	12	4%	3%
Rocky Mountain House	10	3%	3%



2024-08-10

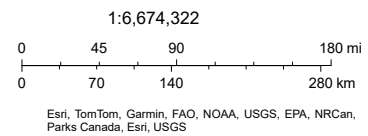


Figure 5-6 Map of Alberta Showing Heat Map of Document Locations

Alberta has 12 locations with 10 or more entries. Edmonton has almost twice the number as Calgary, while important areas, like St Alberta and Lac Ste. Anne, appear multiple times.

Outside the Prairies

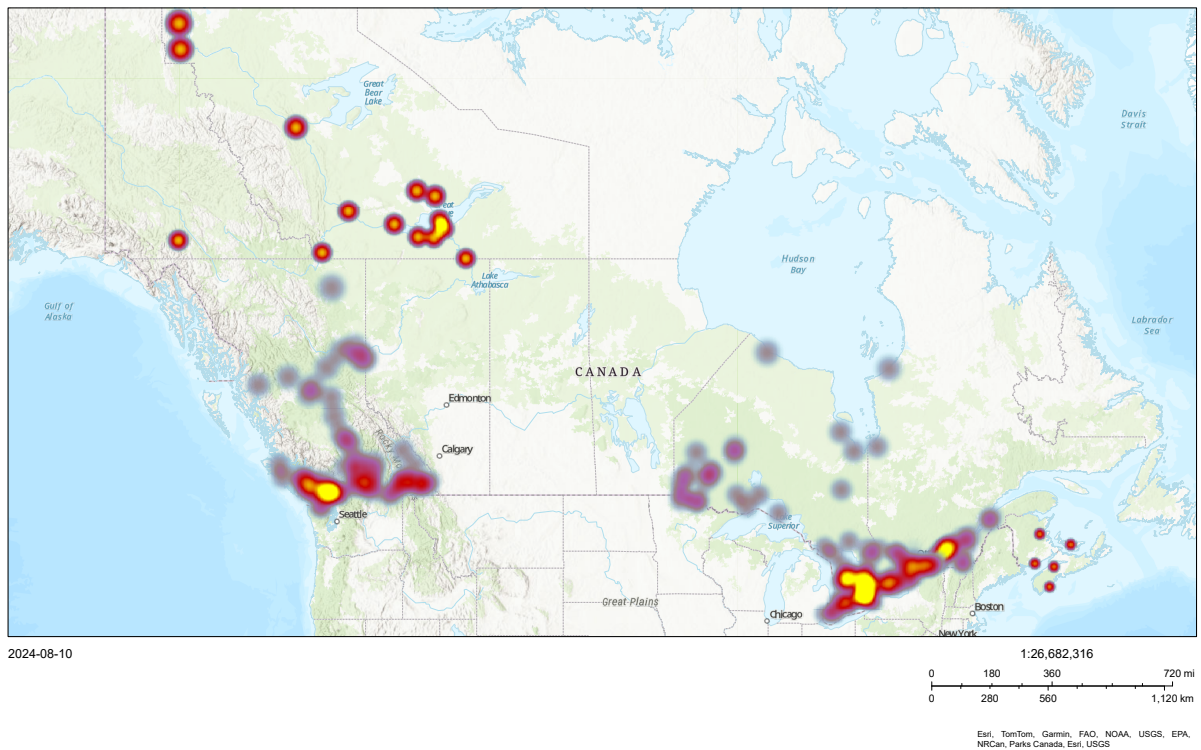


Figure 5-7 Map of BC, NWT, ON, QC and Maritimes Showing Heat Map of Document Locations

British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec

Table 5-9 Locations in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec that appear 10 or more times in Family File

Location	File Appearances	% of all Charts	% of all Files
BC			
Vancouver	28	9%	8%
Victoria	23	7%	6%
ON			
Toronto	13	4%	4%
Fort Albany	12	4%	3%
QC			
Montreal	14	5%	4%

In the cases of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, only the metropole appears more than 10 times, with the exception of Fort Albany, ON, which is a former HBC post and the home to the Fort Albany First Nation.

Maritimes and the North

No areas in the North or in the Maritimes are represented 10 or more times. The closest was Fort Simpson which had 8 documents referenced.

Historic Districts

Table 5-10 Historic Districts that appear in Family Files

HBC & Historic Districts	File Appearances
Assiniboia	2
Athabasca	7
Columbia	1
Columbia River	1
Lower Canada	1
Mackenzie River	2
New Caledonia	1
North West (Territory)	31
Rocky Mountains	1
Ruperts Land	25
Saskatchewan District	18
Swan River District	1
Upper Canada	1

As Denney was working with HBC records, the recording of places is quite nebulous, and sometimes district names are used. These district borders were not static, however, and often moved over time with changing politics and fur trade company priorities.²⁷

²⁷ Norman Nicolson, "Historical Boundaries of Canada," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, March 4, 2015), <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/territorial-evolution>.

International Locations

The USA

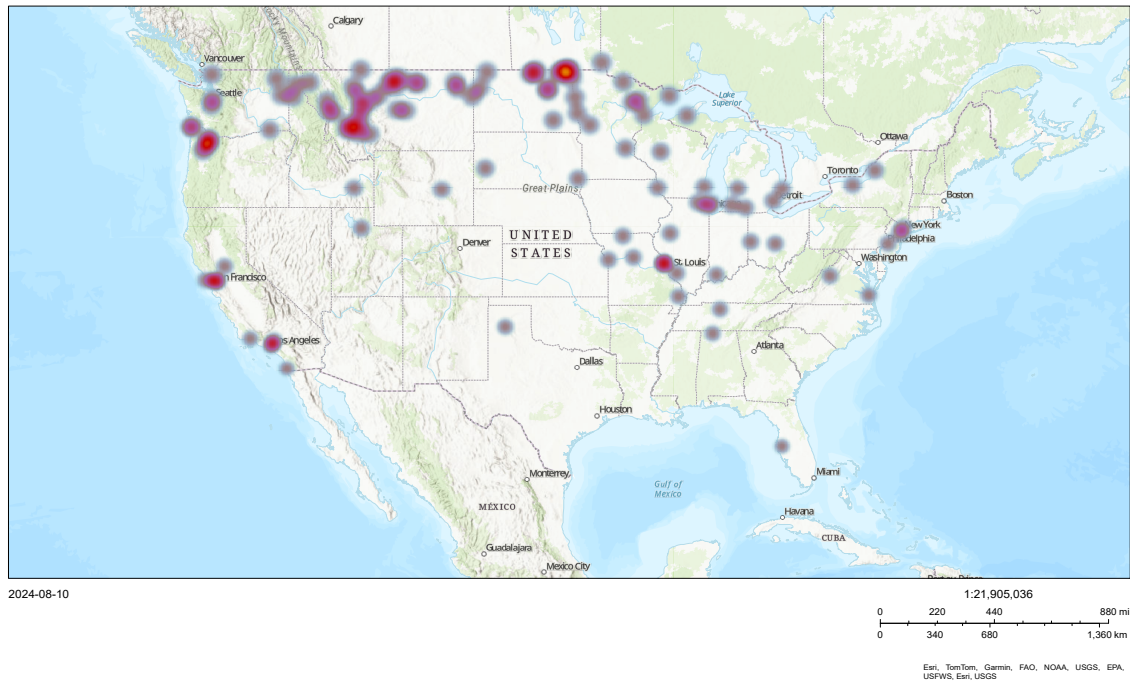


Figure 5-8 Map of Continental USA Showing Heat Map of Document Locations

Table 5-11 States in the USA that appear in Family Files

State	File Appearances	% of all Charts	% of all Files
USA Total	92	30%	25%
Alabama	1	0%	0%
Alaska	3	1%	1%
California	12	4%	3%
Florida	1	0%	0%
Hawaii	1	0%	0%
Idaho	4	1%	1%
Illinois	10	3%	3%
Indiana	1	0%	0%
Michigan	7	2%	2%
Minnesota	14	5%	4%
Missouri	16	5%	4%
Montana	24	8%	7%
Nebraska	1	0%	0%
New York State	5	2%	1%
North Dakota	38	12%	10%
Ohio	2	1%	1%
Oregon	8	3%	2%
Pennsylvania	1	0%	0%
South Dakota	5	2%	1%
Tennessee	1	0%	0%
Texas	1	0%	0%
Utah	1	0%	0%
Virginia	2	1%	1%
Washington State	10	3%	3%
Wisconsin	3	1%	1%
Wyoming	2	1%	1%

The only American location that appears more than 10 times is Pembina, a Metis settlement near the international border in North Dakota, which appears 19 times in the files. The border was porous for Plains and Great Lakes border states, most prominently in Missouri, Montana, and North Dakota, as do areas that encompassed the North West Company (NWC) and Pacific Fur Company (PFC) trades, such as Minnesota, Oregon and Washington state. Denney does focus on a few families that participated in the Sinclair Expedition of 1841 in his files (the 1,700-mile trip took them from White Horse Plains in Manitoba to Fort Vancouver and finally Fort Nisqually).²⁸ For many borderland peoples, the border was a tool rather than an imposition. The border was used and manipulated by the Indigenous peoples who lived around it. For the borderland Metis, the border was, at worst, an inconvenience.²⁹ Calling the border a “Medicine Line,” the newly placed border was a tool to undermine the HBC’s trade monopoly and avoid unwanted colonial interference.³⁰ These opportunities created by the border aided in establishing commercial opportunities in the new transnational market and, conversely, a method to avoid legal entanglements. The border later lost its usefulness when it became used as a tool for othering the Metis and for marking the mixed-race families as foreign both by the American officials when attempting to establish and maintain their communities south of the border and by the Canadian Script Commissions when Metis people attempted to apply for scrip.³¹

²⁸ For work on the Willamette Sinclair Families see: John C. Jackson, *Children of the Fur Trade Forgotten Metis of the Pacific Northwest* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2007).

²⁹ Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People*.

³⁰ Hogue, 57.

³¹ Hogue, 182.

Outside North America



Figure 5-9 Map of International locations. Showing Map of Document Locations

Table 5-12 International Locations Outside of North America that appear in Family Files

Area	Country	File Appearances	% of all Charts	% of all Files
Asia		1	0%	0%
	Japan	1	0%	0%
Oceania		2	1%	1%
	New Zealand	2	1%	1%
Caribbean		1	0%	0%
	Trinidad	1	0%	0%
Europe (Excepting UK)		42	14%	12%
	Belgium	1	0%	0%
	Crimea	1	0%	0%
	Denmark	3	1%	1%
	France	5	2%	1%
	Germany	3	1%	1%
	Ireland	16	5%	4%
	Netherlands	1	0%	0%
	Norway	6	2%	2%
	Poland	1	0%	0%
	Russia	3	1%	1%
	Sweden	1	0%	0%
	Switzerland	1	0%	0%
UK		149	48%	41%
	England	67	22%	18%
	Northern Ireland	2	1%	1%
	Scotland	120	39%	33%
	Wales	3	1%	1%

Denney's interest in families of Scottish origin comes through in his research, which was likely a reflection of the HBC's preference for hiring from the Orkney Islands and the settlement of the Scottish highlanders in the Selkirk Colony. France has a small imprint, as most French ancestry traders came from Quebec.

Race and Ethnicity

Indigenous Peoples

Table 5-13 Race and Ethnicity: Indigenous Appearances in Family Files

Race and Ethnicity	Nation	Sources	% of all trees
Race and Ethnicity		209	67%
All			
Indigenous		200	65%
	Indian (Native)	123	40%
	Anishinaabe	8	3%
	Cree	29	9%
	Crow	1	0%
	Dene	3	1%
	Haudenosaunee	3	1%
	Innu	1	0%
	Syilx	2	1%
	Saulteaux	10	3%
	Shoshone	3	1%
	Spokane	1	0%
	Tsuut'ina	4	2%
	Inuit	0	0%
	Metis	152	49%

Denney was keenly aware of the Indigenous presence in his files. He notes in a letter to the Glenbow Archives in 1974, while discussing the possibility of the archive buying the collection:

Not only did the Selkirk Settler families marry amongst themselves but also they married into the Fur Trade Families. Indeed, within five days of the arrival of the 1815 group at York Factory, five of the girls were married there to fur trade men they previously didn't know existed.

In the course of the next fifty-five years there was a great intermingling by marriage among the descendants of the Settlers and the descendants of the fur traders, as well as the newer fur traders.

Since many of the fur traders had Indian wives, many of their descendants, and the descendants of the settlers, possesses more or less Indian blood. While some of them have been considerably less than successful in our eyes, many of them have been most outstanding.³²

One Family File gives an example of how Denney curated this archive. The file titled “109,000 McDonald, Kenneth” includes 69 pages of documents. Half of these (30) are Charts, spanning the 1770s to the 1950s. The surnames listed include Bruce, McNab, Bird, Calder and McDonald, all names common in the fur trade and in the contemporary Metis Nation. The trees give basic information such as birth, baptism, marriage and death dates. They mention some of the family members were born overseas, specifically noting one Elizabeth Calder, who was born in England, and her husband Kenneth MacDonald, who was born in Northern Ireland. Their son, Donald McDonald, does not have a birthplace listed; however, Denney does note a few details, including his year of birth and death and that he lost his left arm.³³

Another branch in the same file is the Bruce family. Denney lists William Bruce and Francis Allory as the parents of James Bruce, who was born in Poplar Point, St Anne’s, in 1815. Denney gives no dates or locations for the parents; however, he clearly notes that Frances Allory is an “Indian.”³⁴ Denney also includes a short piece of writing about the families included, likely taken from their living ancestor Rhoda Bell Stirling. It is unclear how much is Denney’s own words, as it appears to be Denney’s summary and analysis of an interview. Denney notes:

³² Denney to Chritchley, May 30, 1974.

³³ Charles Denney, “McDonald, Kenneth Family File,” n.d., 7, M7144/109000 McDonald, Kenneth Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

³⁴ Denney, 6.

Mrs. Rhoda Bell (Stirling) Davis is very proud of her ancestry, both Indian and Scotch. She likes to boast of the Indian Princesses who were her grandmothers. One of her Great Grandmothers, she isn't sure which one, at about 16 years of age, was being sent to Scotland for an education. But at the port of embarkation she met a handsome man who thought she would do very well for a wife even without an education. That has to be James Bruce, and she pretty well had to be Mary McNab. For services rendered by some one [sic.] in Jane's family during the "Manitoba Troubles," Lady Schultz gave Jane (Bruce) MacDonald a silver service of knives and forks – which Mrs. Davis still has.³⁵

Denney makes a couple of interesting points in the note. First, he highlights the woman's pride in her ancestors, including the Indigenous women, though why he chooses to include the trope of the Indian princess is questionable as by doing so, he is falling into the ahistorical desire to assign 'royal' tropes to Indigenous women. It also falls into the trap of genealogy being for the noble or great families. He associates the family directly with the Red River Resistance in 1869-70 by invoking the "Manitoba troubles" and mentioning services to Lady Shultz, likely Agnes Campbell Farquharson, the wife of Dr. John Shultz. Dr. Shultz strongly opposed Louis Riel during the Resistance and acted several times to undermine the Metis Provisional Government.³⁶ Echoing his interest in John Pritchard, Denney includes details and connections to white "great men" of the West. The last item in the file is an obituary for J.R. MacDonald. Denney has underlined several parts of the article, including the phrase "son of a Lord Selkirk Settler."

Denney references race throughout his trees, though he's inconsistent from tree to tree. In one tree, he would indicate a racial category, and in the next two or three, the same individual will not have a category assigned. For example, in the Delorme Family Files #1024000³⁷,

³⁵ Denney, Charles, "McDonald Kenneth Family File," n.d., 11, M - 7144-109,000, Glenbow Museum and Archives.

³⁶ "Schultz, Sir John Christian," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/ Université Laval, 2015), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/schultz_john_christian_12E.html.

³⁷ Denney, "Delorme Family File."

referenced in Chapter 1, the couple Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun appear with different information in several different trees.

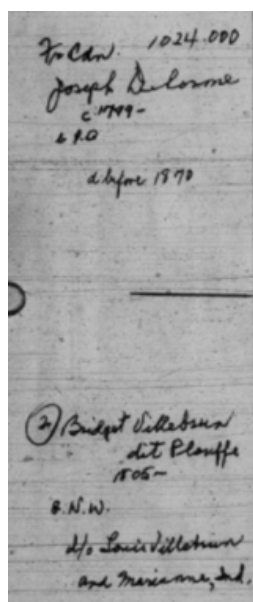


Figure 5-10 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 1

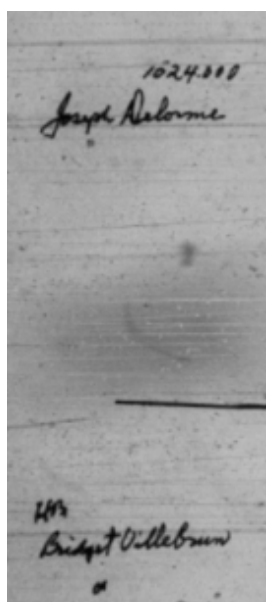


Figure 5-11 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 2

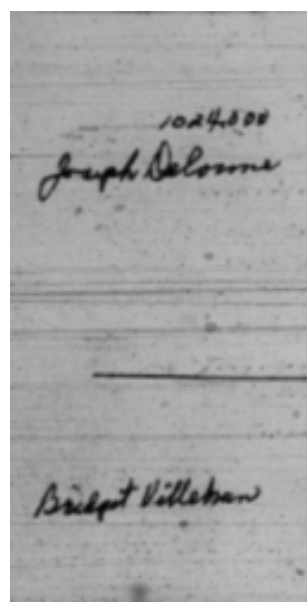


Figure 5-12 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 3

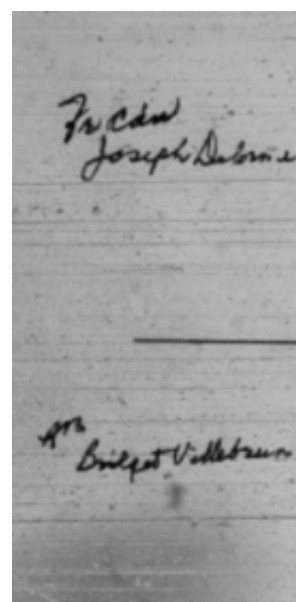


Figure 5-13 Detail, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. Delorme Family File pp. 10

All four of these are taken from the same Family File and reference the earliest ancestors, Joseph Delorme and Bridget Villebrun. There is varying detail on each of the charts. Figure 1 shows references to Denney's racial categories, dates of birth and death, locations and family information. In figure 5-10 Delorme is referenced as "Fr Can" (French Canadian), born in PQ (Quebec) circa 1789 and died before 1870 (likely he stopped appearing on the census). Bridget is listed as Bridget Villebrun dit. Plouffe, born in 1805 in the NW (North West), daughter of Louis Villebrun and Marianne, Ind. (Indian). In figure 5-11, only Bridget's race is referenced. He noted "HB" (Half-Breed) beside her name. Denney rarely used the term Metis on his files, preferring

Half-Breed. Metis or ‘half-breed’ specifically appears in half of the files (49%), with most of these files (143/151) specifically using the term “half-breed” or the abbreviation “HB.”³⁸

In figure 5-12, no information is given aside from their names, and in Figure 5-13, Delorme is referenced as “Fr Can” and Villebrun as “HB.” When referring to First Nations, Denney shifts. Sometimes he uses the term “native,” sometimes as “Ind,” and occasionally by their specific First Nation.

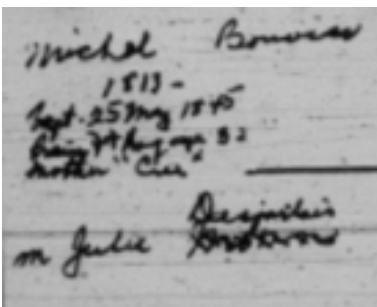


Figure 5-14 Detail, Michel Bouvier. Bouvier Family File pp. 1

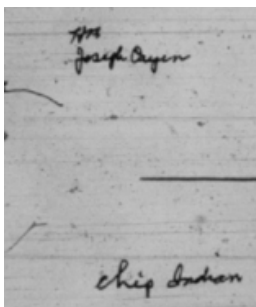


Figure 5-15 Detail, Joseph Cayon, Bolieu Family File pp. 3

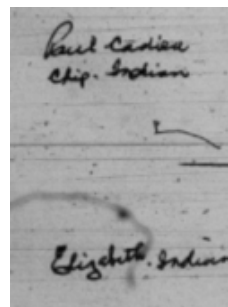


Figure 5-16 Detail, Paul Cadeau and Elizabeth. Bolieu Family File pp. 5

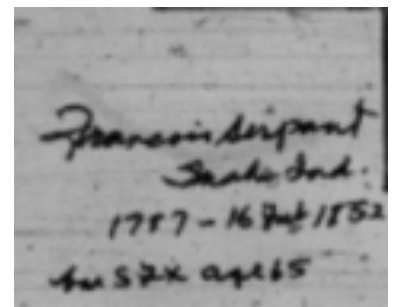


Figure 5-17 Detail, Francois Serpant. Serpant Family File pp. 5

In these four examples Denney assigns some detail to the individuals’ ethnicity. In figure 5-14, Michel Bouvier’s mother is listed as “Cree.” In Figure 5-15, Joseph Cayon is shown married to an unknown woman designated as a “Chip Indian.” Generally, Denney uses “Chip” to mean Chipewyan (Dene). In contrast, he will rarely use it for Anishinaabe or “Chippewa” (Chippewa was a variation of Ojibwe, as was Saulteaux, referring to people of the rapids). Locations have been cross-referenced using “Chip” to ensure the correct nation is being coded. In Figure 5-16, Denney includes two First Nations individuals. Paul Cadeau is listed as “Chip. Indian” and his wife Elizabeth is designated as “Indian,” with no associated nation. Figure 5-17

³⁸ See list of abbreviations for the full list used by Denney.

contains an entry for Francois Serpent, who is labelled as “Snake Indian,” Snake likely referring to the Shoshone nation.

Racial designations appear 209 times in the files. Indigenous people are mentioned in 65% of all the charts. However, these references are all First Nations or Metis, as there are no Inuit people specifically referenced in any of Denney’s trees. In the case of First Nations people, 124 files (40%) mention someone as “native” or “ind.” or “indian.” Of these, 68 refer specifically to a specific nation. Cree (39) is the most common, followed by Saulteaux (10), and Anishinaabe (7).

White Coded

Table 5-14 Race and Ethnicity: White Appearances in Family Files

Race and Ethnicity	File Appearances	% of Trees
Race and Ethnicity: All	209	67%
White	48	15%
OWS (Original White Settler)	5	2%
Creole	1	0%
French Canadian	70	23%

Denney does include ‘white’ designations in his files. You will see OWS (original white settler), which was a type of money or land scrip that was offered to non-Metis settlers in 1870 as part of the Manitoba Act.³⁹ Likely, anyone with that designation was identified in the scrip records that Kipling and Denney indexed in the 1970s. Denney includes ‘white’ beside names in some cases. He also references “Red River Settler” and “Pioneer” in files, which implies

³⁹ Jeffery S. Murray, “A Guide to the Records of the Metis Scrip Commissions in the National Archives of Canada,” 1994; Library and Archives Canada, “Manitoba Commissions - Métis Scrip Records - Library and Archives Canada,” Library and Archives Canada, March 1, 2012, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/metis-scrip/005005-3110-e.html>. For an in depth look at the Half-Breed, OWS and North West Scrip see: Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, 1996.

whiteness. He also specifically notes ‘French Canadian’ and ‘Scot.’ in trees. I have not indexed ‘Scot’ under race, not because it is unimportant, but because Denney doesn’t differentiate between ethnicity and location with his use of that term. “Scot” may have a double meaning here, but it’s impossible to see where and how Denney made these choices. French Canadian is listed solely by Denney as an ethnicity as it appears next to a location in most cases. Denney does not conflate place and ethnicity in that term.

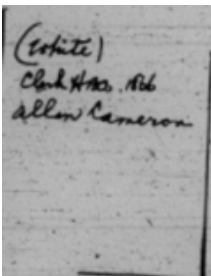


Figure 5-18 Detail, Allen Cameron. Cameron Family File, pp. 1

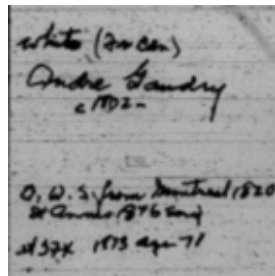


Figure 5-19 Detail, Andre Gaudry David Family File, pp. 1

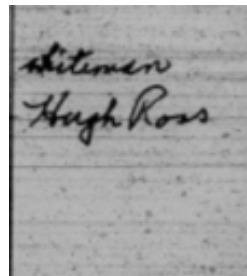


Figure 5-20 Detail, Hugh Ross. Ross Family File, pp. 1

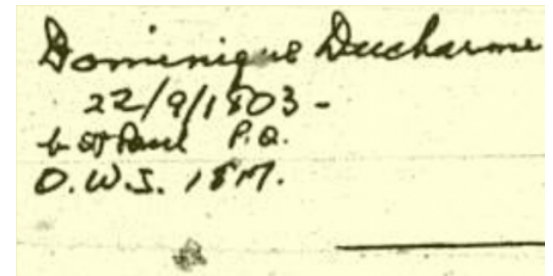


Figure 5-21 Detail Dominique Ducharme, Ducharme Family File pp. 2

In figure 5-18, Allen Cameron, an HBC clerk, is simply listed as ‘white.’ Andre Gaudry in figure 5-19 is listed as white, French Canadian and as an OWS. High Ross is listed in figure 5-20 as “whiteman” while Dominique Ducharme, born in Quebec, is listed in figure 5-21 as an OWS. Whiteness is not included for comparison; it appears randomly and not only in mixed-race couples. Denney likely received some information in the research that indicated clearly the individual was white, like in the OWS scrip or in a census record. Denney is inconsistent in his indication of whiteness. He likely implied it as a default in later generations but is often included in earlier individuals. Denney is cognizant of race in his trees, but he is unreliable in how and if he chooses to record it.

Metis Markers

Several Metis cultural markers, outside of race, were also included in the coding. In files that explicitly referenced the Resistances, the Dumont, Riel, or Grant families were tagged. The fur trade and references to any of the Scrip Commissions were also included as categories.

Table 5-15 Metis Markers that appear in Family Files

Metis Markers		File Appearances	% of Total Files
		145	
Fur Trade	All	90	25%
	HBC	79	22%
	NWC	14	4%
Resistance	All	29	8%
	1816	4	1%
	1869	10	3%
	1885	11	3%
	Dumont Family	7	2%
	Grant Family	6	2%
	Riel Family	2	1%
Scrip	All	69	19%

The fur trade appears in 90 files mostly as a notation beside a name or indicated by profession (i.e. Chief Factor ‘CF’ or Chief Trader ‘CT’) in the charts, or in the notes Denney included alongside the genealogical charts. Denney and Kipling spent much time working in HBC records, compiling and adding to their index cards. In a letter to K.K. Naismith at Indian Affairs in 1972, Denney references the scrip files that he is being lent, writing, “having gone this far in building up my resources of information about the half breeds, I would like to make the further step,” and asked if he could borrow more.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Charles Denney to J.K. Naismith, July 21, 1972, M7144/9 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Philip Tate was the H.B.C. Factor at Victoria (B.C.)
 He was known as the "Black Head" to distinguish
 him from Richard Hardisty of Edmonton who was
 known as the Red Head. This was in the early 1870's.
 Robert Logan, later of Tofield, was a clerk at Victoria.
 In May of 1865 the half-breed hunter of the mouth of the
 area, with factors Hardisty and Tate went out and
 Res. Geo. Mc Dougall met about two miles north of
 Tofield to plan a buffalo hunt out on the plains.
 — on the Mc Allister farm.

Figure 5-22 Detail of Note in Tate Family File, pp. 51

100.000
 James Tate [1757] - [1773]
 b. Thompson, Orphan, Orkney
 Master Trader at Cross Lake
 1775-6, with 1773

Figure 5-23 Detail of James Tate.
 Tate Family File, pp. 8.

90.002
 #7
 Madeline Delorme
 15 Nov 1841 - 20 Jan 1859
 at Linden Creek
 1886
 married 1854
 Batoche
 their home at Batoche
 was destroyed in 1885
 1021.010
 Ludger Gareault
 29 Nov 1855 - 8 Jan 1886
 at Linden Cr. Apr 98
 1st Jacques de la Chapelle
 P.Q.
 Carpenter

Figure 5-24 Detail
 Madeline Delorme
 and Ludger
 Gareault. Gareault
 Family File, pp.3

Figure 5-22 includes notes on HBC employees referenced in the Tate Family File. He lists Phillip Tate and Robert Logan as “Factor” and “employee.” There is no source in the notes, but it’s likely from HBC archives, possibly from the HBC Biographical Sheets. Figure 5-23 shows an HBC employee in a chart. Denney indicates that he was a Master Trader at Cross Lake, MB and was employed by the HBC from 1795-6 to 1773.⁴¹

The Resistances appear throughout the files in the included secondary source documents and in death dates. One interesting reference is in the Gareault Family File, which references Madeline Delorme and Ludger Enrocer. The entry notes regular biographical details such as marriage and residences, but it also includes the notation: “their home at Batoche was destroyed in 1885.” (See fig. 5-24) This note likely references the destruction

⁴¹ Charles Denney, “Tate Family File,” n.d., M7144/101000 Tate Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

that occurred during the Northwest Resistance on 9–15 May 1885 in the town of Batoche, SK.⁴²

Several files also reference the Metis leaders Gabriel Dumont, Louis Riel and Cuthbert Grant. There are Family Files for Grant, Riel and Dumont. Only Riel and Dumont were included in the sampled files. The Riel file is almost entirely notes created by Kipling. Only Kipling's handwriting appears in the documents. It appears that very little, if anything, was contributed by Denney.⁴³ The Dumont file is entirely Denney's work. At 44 pages, it includes mostly genealogical material, including charts, descendant charts, family group charts and one baptismal registry, but no secondary source material referencing Dumont's political activities.⁴⁴

File Organization

In a 1993 article about Charles Denney in the *Edmonton Journal*, the writer describes Denney as having "That pack-rat instinct and a bookkeeper's attention to detail."⁴⁵ Nowhere is that more evident than in the elaborate organizational systems Denney developed to keep track of his families. In a letter to Jean Anderson, Denney gives detailed advice on how to get started organizing her family history. Denney writes:

Though I am not a professional genealogist. I am glad to start your study of the Anderson family. First of all it is wise to make a Family Background or Pedigree Chart. I am enclosing a couple of copies for your convenience. Your grandson should put his own name down at the extreme left side. Then he should see what he can do about filling in the parents, the grandparents, etc. Once he has done as much on this chart as he can it

⁴² Charles Denney, "Gareault Family File," n.d., M7144/1021000 Gareault Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴³ Charles Denney, "Riel Family File," n.d., M7144/209000 Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴⁴ Charles Denney, "Dumont Family File," n.d., M7144/216001 Dumont Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴⁵ Thomas, "Tracing the Roots of Western Canada's Metis; His Wife's Curiosity and His Passion for History Launched Charles Denney on an Exhaustive Quest."

will be time enough to start writing Letters. Don't ask anybody a thing until you have been through all your scrap books, birthday books, boxes of clippings. snapshots, etc. When you are sure you have nothing more of your own to research, then you can see what aunts and uncles have.

I am also enclosing a couple of Family Unit Charts. These are very useful for gathering details of complete families--yours, for instance. Put your husband's name at the top. When you have finished you will find you have listed all your children.

Now that you have established you can do that with yourselves, you will find you can do the same thing for anybody-e.g. all the different people on the pedigree chart.

If you work at it, you will find that after a while you have charts filled in for many of your relatives.

The term "Family Tree" is misleading. Some people actually try to draw a tree and place all the names on the branches. Some do a very good job, too. But it is never as satisfactory as a properly prepared set of charts.

May I suggest that to each name you are researching you give a number. Anderson you can call 1000. Apply it to the Anderson that is as far back as you can go--perhaps your husbands grandfather. Then divide the the[sic.] following 999 digits among successive Andersons. After that you can always find them by referring to them by the number you have given.⁴⁶

The creation of Denney's numbering system, of which he gives a brief outline above and which appears in the naming and throughout his files and letters, is complex. It also appears to be partly of his own invention. This seems to be common. Pat McCloy, a retired librarian, also devised his own genealogical system, which Denney mentioned repeatedly he could not manage to decipher.⁴⁷ Denney explained an early version of the system to Kipling in 1973:

I have recently fallen in love with a numbering system that I didn't really understand before. Let's say you start with Letendre, Jean Baptiste, born 31 August, 1762 as the first one of the line. With me he would have the number 251. Then his children would be:

251.1 Jean Baptiste Letendre b.c.[born circa] 1881
251.4 Louis Letendre b.c. 1897
251.5 Josephite Letendre b.c. 1898
251.7 Angelique Letendre b.c. 1907
251.2 Marie Letendre b.c. 1888

⁴⁶ Charles Denney to Jean Anderson, November 12, 1973, M7144/15 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁴⁷ Denney to June Kelley, March 12, 1997.

251.3 Agathe Letendre b.c.1894
251.6 Joseph Letendre b.c. 1904⁴⁸

Jean Baptiste Letendre (251.1)'s children would be in another generation numbered as follows:

251.1.1 Jean Baptiste Letendre
251.1.2 Marguerite Letendre
251.1.3 Marie Letendre
251.1.4 Stanislas Letendre
251.1.5 Mariane Letendre
251.1.6 Antoine Letendre
251.1.7 Sarah Letendre
251.1.8 Caroline Letendre

The children of Louis (251.4) would be:

251.4.1 Joseph Letendre
251.4.2 Louis Letendre
251.4.3 Marie Verginie Letendre
251.4.4 Rosalie Letendre
251.4.5 Henmetta Letendre
251.4.6 Jean Baptiste Letendre
251.4.7 Verginie Letendre
251.4.8 Mary Jane Letendre
251.4.9. Marie Letendre
251.4.10 Eliza Letendre
251.4.11 Victor Letendre

Victor is the eleventh child of the fourth child of 251-- who was the original Jean Baptist Letendre...

A number like 251.5.6.2.7.8 would indicate the 8th child of the 7th child of the 2nd child of the 6th child of the 5th child of 251. With a glance you would be able to see that the 8th is also in the 6th generation. With this system one never runs out of numbers. And every number tells you the generation. The drawback is that when one gets to the 9th generation the numbers are pretty long. But it is a small price to pay for the instant recognition of a child's place in the family.

To use this system well one would have to know the order in which the children were born. But that is true of any system. I frequently have to re-number my individuals.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Note this is an edited version – in the typed version Denney had the Birth order wrong – he hand-wrote a corrected order– this is why this generation is listed out of order.

⁴⁹ Denney to Kipling, October 3, 1973.

Denney adapts this system, moving away from the periods, and adding a comma after the core numbers, following with a string of numbers. Denney uses this numbering system everywhere in his papers. They appear on charts, on the names of the files, and annotated on letters and notes. They are also not differentiated by gender; women keep their numbers throughout the files, though most numerical families start from a male ancestor. In the McKay Favell file (see fig. 5-26), Denney has a chart listing all the family names, generations and associated numbers in columns. This is rare, but the Favells may have been one of the families with which Denney worked out his system. The LDS has a letter and number system differentiating batches of sources.⁵⁰ There are also codes associated with user-uploaded content; Mildred Denney's code is "MTQZ-LLJ."⁵¹ Most genealogists today would be working with a computer or online database so these kinds of reference systems would be unnecessary.

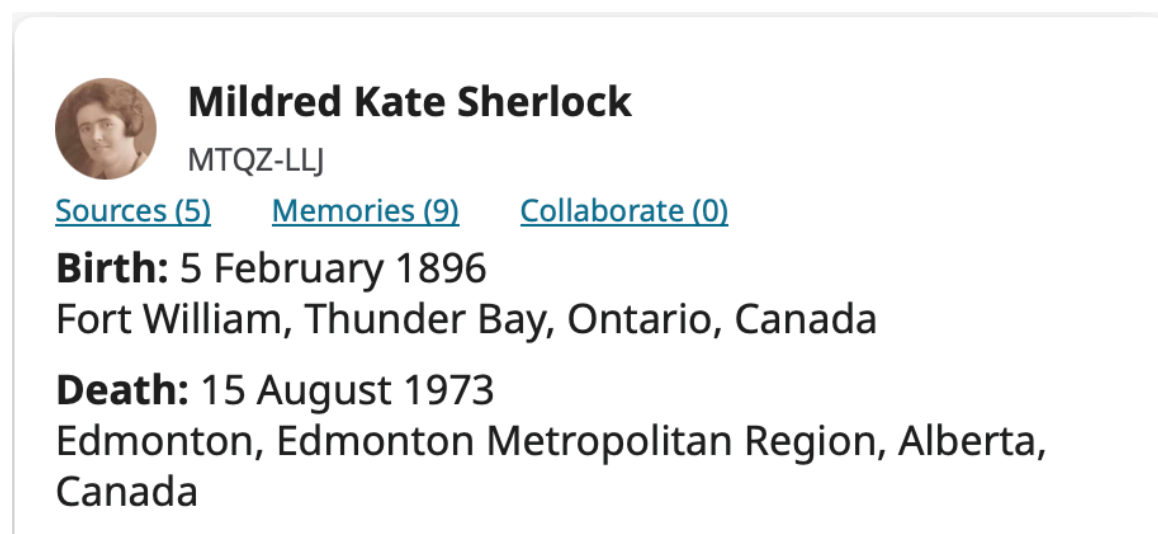
A screenshot of a FamilySearch.org profile card for Mildred Kate Sherlock. The card features a circular portrait of a woman with dark hair. To the right of the portrait, the name "Mildred Kate Sherlock" is displayed in bold, followed by the LDS code "MTQZ-LLJ". Below the name, there are three links: "Sources (5)", "Memories (9)", and "Collaborate (0)". The card also lists her birth information: "Birth: 5 February 1896" and "Fort William, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada". Her death information is listed as: "Death: 15 August 1973" and "Edmonton, Edmonton Metropolitan Region, Alberta, Canada".

Figure 5-25 Mildred Kate Sherlock Card Showing LDS code from FamilySearch.org

⁵⁰ "International Genealogical Index," FamilySearch Wiki, February 13, 2024, https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/International_Genealogical_Index; "IGI Batch Numbers for the British Isles and North America," FamilySearch Wiki, October 17, 2023, https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/IGI_Batch_Numbers_for_the_British_Isles_and_North_America.

⁵¹ "Family Tree Search Results - Mildred Kate Sherlock • FamilySearch," accessed July 21, 2024, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/tree/results?count=20&q.givenName=Mildred%20Kate&q.surname=Sherlock%20>.

Family of John McKay and Mary Favel					3
33 000					
33 001	33 002	33 165	33 305	33 322	Family of Agnes Elzabeth McKay and Malcolm Douglas Thelie
				33 323	do Florence Lillian Louise McKay and John Lillian Campbell
				33 327	do Reginald Stuart McKay and (1) David Smith
				33 327	do Reginald Stuart McKay and (2) David Lillian Campbell
		33 165	33 320 A		do Angus McKay and Marie Madeleine Mary Fortescue
			33 320 B		do Angus McKay and (2) Margaret Anne Dugan
				33 327	do Gertrude Elzabeth McKay and Edwin S. Williams
				33 328	do Charles Angus Campbell McKay and Marie Thelie
		33 165	33 345		do Lillian McKay and Mary Brydon
		33 165	33 384		do Judge James McKay and Florence Anne Reid
33 001	33 320				The family of Edward McKay and Caroline Cook
	33 320	33 341 A+B			do Alexander McKay and Virginia Laroque
			33 362		do Alfred McKay and (2) Rosalie Whitford
			33 363		do Joseph P. McKay and Mary
			33 367		do Anne Elizabeth McKay and Francis St Denis
			33 378		do Emma McKay and (2) William Patterson
			33 378		do Marie McKay and Joseph James Litch
			33 377		do Sarah McKay and Charles Adams
			33 385		do Eliza McKay and Louis Riel Adams
				33 386	do Julia Adams and Henry Richardson
			33 394		do Edmund Bray McKay and Marion Louise Marshall
33 001	33 320	33 400			do Edwin McKay and Mary Brewster
		33 401 A			do Samuel McKay and (1) Madeline Berstone
		33 401 B			do Samuel McKay and (2) Catherine La Poudre
			33 402		do William Henry McKay and Elizabeth Margaret
			33 415		do Samuel Robert McKay
			33 420		do Florence McKay and Henry Simpson
			33 430		do Reginald McKay and (1) James Wallace
			33 441 A+B		do Jonima McKay - John Henry Graham Bray

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GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY

Figure 5-26 Chart showing Denney numbering system. Favel Family File pp. 2

The following File 33,441, McKay Jemima and John Henry Greshorn Bray (fig. 5-27), follows John McKay's line (33,000). The tree for a branch of the family follows and shows Denney's numbering system in a tree:

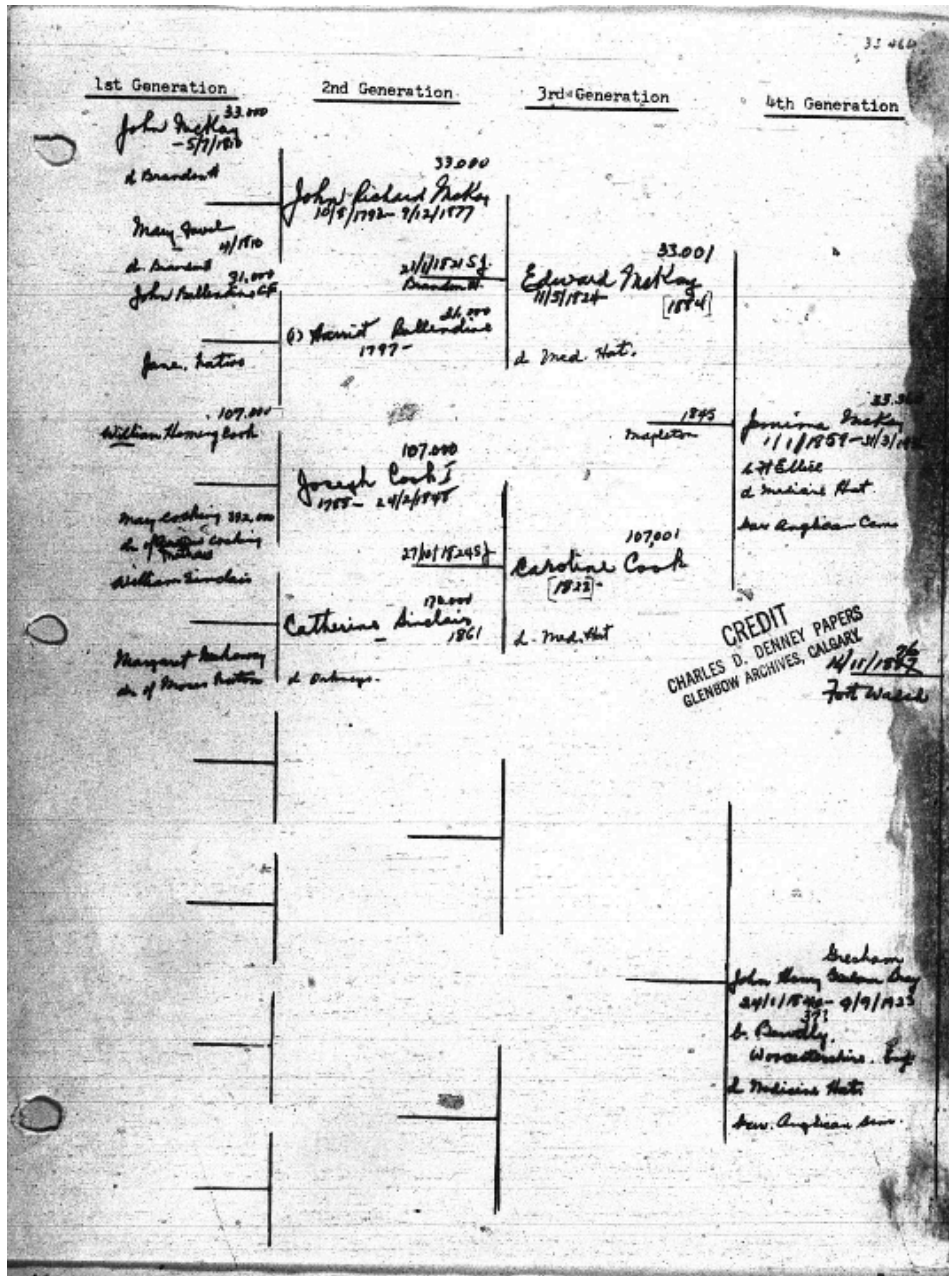


Figure 5-27 Chart, Favell and McKay Family File pp.2

Denney uses these numbers to annotate additional documents, including correspondence.

This letter from Elise Bray references Les Johnson, a descendant of the same John McKay.

Denney underlines the extractible information, a 35th anniversary, and the number of children. He also annotates the letter with family number #33.442B. The letters appear later as another identifier between siblings. Denney felt strongly about his system; however, it would require deep insider knowledge to use, and with computerized trees, it would not be useful today.

Hospital
Dear Charles & Elsie, Sept. 28th 1979
Rec. your letter & cheque & the neg. Thanks for all - I'm here in the hosp. & perhaps will be for another wk. Then I shall send you whatever information I can find about Aunt Flo & her 2 husbands - OK. I'm feeling much better - have been here nearly a month. Came in with one thing & they find lots more wrong - but I shall be fit as can be when I go out. - I'm sure of that.
Everyone is so good to me - that's the nice thing in having such a big family - isn't it? Sounds like you folks had quite a good trip to Grande Prairie. You probably were there when Les Johnson's wife Daisy were there celebrating their 35th wedding Ann. They have 2 children married & living there now. You shall hear from me again. Thanks once again - Sincerely, Elsie B.

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Figure 5-28 Annotated Letter. McKay Family File pp. 20.

Correspondence

Denney's correspondence also populates the files, as above, and he often annotates letters with family information. The bulk of his correspondence is covered in other parts of this dissertation. One interesting thing found in many charts, and not in his personal files, is Denney's 'cold call' letters, where he approaches people for the first time to ask them to share their family history with him. These letters generally follow a similar pattern. They start with an introduction; Denney provides the recipients with an association or connection between him (or, more likely, Mildred) and the recipient as an acknowledgement of *wahkootowin*. He then introduces his project. He often follows up with a series of questions or an attached family sheet. An example of this kind of letter is below:

10756-24 Ave.,
Edmonton 60, Alberta,
January 18, 1969.

Dear cousin Ernest,

A letter from me will not likely stir any recent memories. So I am enclosing a copy of a letter dated April 16, 1968, which will serve to introduce me and to tell you what I am about.

Though I have known about you for a long time, I have not known where to write to you. I asked Margaret Morgan for your address a couple of times; but I guess she is too busy to send it to me. However, a couple of days ago I was digging in some of Mildred's things, and came across a letter from you dated June 27th 1962. That is a long time ago, I am aware, and it is possible you no longer live at the address given. But here I am.

In your letter you tell of your daughter Ruth working for Edward Matheson in Eaton's. I expect you all know him as "Ted". He is now manager of the Co-op Store at Lloydminster. And he is a son of John "Gracie" Matheson. I have not met him, but I hope to improve on that some day in the spring. Indeed, I was just telling Margaret Morgan that I hope to visit Winnipeg some time in the spring and visit around for a couple of weeks. There are so many people I want to see. And I would like to visit the archives there. So I hope to see you, also.

In your letter you mentioned that your brother Albert's daughter and a Dr. Livingstone were working on family tree. And you wanted Mildred to write to her. But you didn't give her name and address. Now if you will tell me what her name is, and where she is, I will write. John "Old Bushy" Matheson had a brother known as "Little Angus" Matheson, who went to Iowa away back about 1898. He married a girl named Bell Livingstone. I presume that Bell meant Emmell. And I expect the Dr. Livingstone who is working on the family tree is a connection through "Bell". It would surely be interesting to know them. And to compare notes.

I was quite surprised to read that you had three brothers. All I had heard of was Rev. Albert.

Will you tell me more about Lawrence? For instance,

What was his post office?
When was he born? 1877
When did he die? 1961
What was his wife's name? Mary Dwyer
When was she born?
Where was she born? Ontario
When were they married?
Is she still alive?
If so, where is she?
If not, when did she die?
Did they have any children?
Who are they?
Where are they?

Now about George, how would you like to tell me the same things about him and his family.

It is so very little that I know about Rev. Albert, also. So what would you like to tell me about him? I would surely like to know a lot.

In your letter you mention that back in 1923 when Mildred visited Winnipeg you took your Nettie and her to the Winnipeg Festival; then the next day some male friend wanted to know where you got all the good looking women. Well, I also thought Mildred was good looking. Unfortunately I never saw your Nettie, so I couldn't pass judgment on her. But I will take that man's word for her. It would have been a pleasure to meet her.

I notice that you told Mildred Albert's daughter Alberta, is Mrs. Henry Hutman, and you gave her address. If this is the one that was working on the family tree, I have her address. Anyway I am glad to have this one. Maybe I will find time to write to her.

You also sent the name and address of your daughter Ruth, out in Vancouver. I am glad to have it also, for I would like to write to her. And I look forward to seeing her some time. There are so many "cousins" out at White Rock, Vancouver, and Victoria, that I have not met, that I am looking forward to another trip just to see them.

Coming back to Mildred: Though she is at times a very good looking woman, she is an old woman—age 73 next month—and all bent and broken. It is hard to believe that the beautiful red head you took to the theatre can be so helpless. She cannot read or write any more. About the only thing she can do is a poor job of feeding herself. Indeed, I believe it is so poor a job that I am sure she fails to be properly fed most of the time. Today, though it is 21 below, I got the car out and went and had lunch with her. If I had not been there, she certainly would not have had her soup, which she wanted very much. She just could not get it into her mouth. Because she is so physically helpless, and even finds it so hard to think and to talk, or to listen, I come away each time all played out. What a sad situation.

Do you know that I just turned to see that I had your daughter's full name in my chart, and her married name, when I realised how little she knew about you. I don't even know when you were born, nor where. I don't know what your Nettie's full maiden name was, nor when she was born, nor when she died. Don't know when Ruth was born, nor her husband's full name. Dear me, you can tell me all about that, too, if you have the energy.

I had better quit now, before you get the impression that I want you to write a book for me. But I surely would like to know a lot of things. And anything you write me will be appreciated.

When I left Mildred today, she said: give my love to everybody. I am certain she meant you. So here is love from Mildred, and the sincerest of good wishes from me.

Charles
Charles Douglas Denney,
Son of George,
Grand-son of Leonard.

Figure 5-29 Letter to Murray from Denney, Murray
Family File pp. 140-141

The letter is inquiring about the Matheson family. The recipient is not Denney's 'cousin' but rather Mildred's cousin. However, Denney ingratiates himself with the term. He then asks about family members, Murray's daughter and his brother Lawrence, and includes a list of questions for Murray to answer, along with family gossip and pleasantries.⁵²

Denney trims these letters down; his cold call letter four years later is slightly more succinct, but it still heavily relies on his relationship with Mildred to establish trust. Here is a later example:

⁵² Charles Denney to Ernest Murray, January 18, 1969, M7144/38000 Murray Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

501 Heritage House
8315 - 105th Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 4H4
April 13th, 1972

Mrs. Gordon Moar
411 Dufferin Street
Selkirk, Manitoba

Dear Mrs. Moar,

Many years ago I had the good fortune to marry Mildred Sherlock. Then I found it very romantic and exciting that she is descended from the Mathesons, Pritchards, Frasers, Bannermans, etc., of the original Selkirk Settler families. So about four years ago when I got the time and the opportunity I began recording her ancestors and relatives on paper. This became even more romantic and exciting, for I quickly found that I was trying to develop all the other Selkirk Settler families as well as many of the Fur Trade families.

One of my wife's forebearers was Janet Matheson. She married Hector Jordan. And from that union there were, so far as I can tell, three children: Alexander, who was known as Sandy, Mary, who married John Moar, and Catherine, who married Angus Campbell.

In the Angus-Campbell family there may have been thirteen children. And just recently, through a daughter of Flora Campbell and Frederic Peters, I have been finding out a little bit about them.

But from some other source I have learned that Margaret Janet Campbell married Donald Moar. Then, from some other source, it has been indicated to me that Margaret and Donald Moar lived and died at Selkirk.

While I should no doubt be addressing this letter to your husband, I find that the ladies in the families are much more helpful than the men in supplying family data. So now I wonder if you wouldn't like to help me figure out if and where your husband fits into the family picture. To make it easy for you to do that, I am enclosing one of my family tree charts on which I have placed your husband's name at the beginning. If you and he will follow it back as far as you can go, supplying as much information as you can, I will be very much helped.

Because I am assuming that your husband is a son of Margaret and Donald Moar, I am also enclosing one of my family unit charts made out in their name. If you would complete and return one of these, also, I would be very happy.

So many people have been so very helpful to me in my efforts to build a written monument to the memory of their family that I am very hopeful you will also want to help me. So I now look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,
C.D. Denney

hm/C.D.D.

Figure 5-30 Letter to Moar from Denney, Moar Family File pp. 9.

Denney adopts the sexist position of men of his generation, saying to female recipients, "I should no doubt be addressing this to your husband." Denney establishes a connection explaining his relationship to and interest in the family, demonstrates his familiarity with the family tree, and then includes a family group chart and an ancestry chart for the family to fill out.⁵³ Not all these cold call letters are successful; many went unanswered. The files include numerous follow-up letters asking the family to reconsider and fill out the charts he has included.

⁵³ Charles Denney to Gordon Mrs Moar, Ap 1972, M7144/316000 Moar Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Problems and Rejections

Denney did not always receive a warm welcome from families. In fact, he is often clearly rebuffed for being intrusive. In a letter to Denney, Mrs. Mouser returned the forms incomplete and admonished Denney: “I can’t say as I particularly like the tone of your letter of Jan 9/72 as there are tones of sarcasm in it. While you feel very strong about your project & it is no doubt very interesting to you. I feel you are imposing on a lot of people for you information.... I don’t make a habit of giving out personal information to people I never met.”⁵⁴ Denney responded with indignation, the success of his project and listing the number of people who love his work. He wrote:

You say I am imposing on a lot of people for my information. And that is true. But you would be surprised how many people love to supply it just the same. Hundreds have complemented me in my project and wished me every possible success. ... And I have had many offers of financial Assistance from Victoria to Winnipeg. Several people have insisted I be their house guest while I pursue my research... in an attempt to acquire that knowledge I have already travelled about 15,000 miles, written over 2000 letters and seen hundreds of people From Church, cemetery, script,[sic.] census, and newspaper records I have built up about 20,000 index cards on births, marriages ins deaths... From what I have already said you will know that not many people share your reticence about giving personal information. As one man said, it will all be information for an obituary or a tombstone before too long. So why not record it now when it can be done correctly?⁵⁵

Denney often responds like this when a person rejects his overtures. Instead of addressing their issues, he often tries to overwhelm them with the size of his archive and the people who appreciate his work rather than accepting that he’s being intrusive, and that people have the right to refuse to participate in and contribute to his “project.” This is a direct repudiation of Metis family’s agency in who has a right to their family and certainly questions *wahkootowin*. In one

⁵⁴ M.J. Mouser to Charles Denney, January 31, 1972, M7144/38000 Murray Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵⁵ Charles Denney to M.J. Mouser, March 3, 1972, M7144/38000 Murray Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

letter, Denney wrote that he was asked to leave a person's property when he stopped in to gather information. He elaborated: "While she was courteous and well spoken, she let me know again that she knew nothing of her relatives, wanted to know nothing of her relatives, wanted to be left out of any book that might be written, wanted me to forget I ever knew of her or that she existed."⁵⁶ One person went so far as to ask her lawyer to contact Denney to ensure "that I would not use their name in a book or an article. But the lawyer knew it was a stupid thing to do. More than that, he really indicated he was interested in my project, for he said, 'if you are interested in the history of the Fiddler family, you will find material in a recent book entitled the 'The Assiniboine Basin' written by Martin Kavanaugh.'"⁵⁷ In the letter, Denney casually disregarded the threat of a lawsuit and appeared to dismiss the family's strong opposition to him having their information. Instead, Denney congratulated himself that the lawyer was interested in the project. There are a series of two rejection-focussed correspondences that involve the deeper issue of Denney's work asking the families to confront their complicated relationships with Indigenous ancestry. One is the case of an upset family member, and the other of a rival genealogist.

In a series of letters from a Pritchard descendent, Sadie Sage, it's clear that revealing the family's Metis background caused much familial consternation. The letters are regarding charts Denney sent to the family after Sage sent Denney their father's information. They likely included the 'HB' designation in the charts, which are not included in the letter. Sage wrote Denney an indignant response:

⁵⁶ Charles Denney to George Barker and Florence Barker, October 8, 1969, M7144/38000 Murray Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁵⁷ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, April 4, 1971, M7144/158 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Dear Charles Denney,

Thanks for your letter and booklet on Sask History.

A question, why do you write down their nationalities? Who wants to be called a breed. I noticed many of the Pritchards has[sic.] Indian blood, which I regretted very much.

William Pritchard who lived in Fort Ellice, St Lazare- Spy Hill area. I have never heard of him before. I believed you are receiving the wrong information about the Pritchards history. I know there are many breeds around in the Pritchards, which (we)[encircled] are greatly ashamed [underline hers] of them. We are very pleased we don't carry the name anymore.

My dad was not a breed [underline hers] and we are all proud of him.

Why are you so anxious about the history of the Pritchards. We can't understand it. We know many of the Pritchards were very famous, but they are all gone.

Now the William Pritchard formerly of Fort Ellice etc. came from the Indian woman's son according to you. Therefore we have decided now, not to mentioned[sic.] anything concerning dad and his family in your "writeups." You will be getting a letter from Grace also with the same warning. We are not proud of people with Indian blood, perhaps because many Pritchards here are a disgrace to the community. (We)[circled] even disliked the name (Pritchard) this shouldn't hurt your feelings because you are not involve[sic.] in the Pritchard blood.

So kindly please omit the 'family' from your writeups There is nothing interesting of the rest of the Pritchards

I hope you are all well. If you around Rocanville, perhaps we could have another talk on the matter, I believed I have explained to you when you visited me why we ~~don't~~ object for further history on our family on the Pritchards.

Excuse the writing this is written in a hurry in a couple hours. I'm leaving for Regina Hospital.
Sincerely Sadie Sage⁵⁸

There is a lot to unpack, but the message is clear: she did not want to be associated with Indigenous people in her community of Rocanville, SK. She worried that anyone may find out about her father's Metis heritage, stating, "My father was not a breed." The implication that her father's family is a 'breed' was upsetting to her, and admittedly it is a controversial term. The

⁵⁸ Sadie Sage to Charles Denney, February 1, 1972, M7144/221 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

discussion of blood is reminiscent of Kim Tallbear's analysis of blood as a "more-than-biological substance" that contains a genetic memory which the family felt was unwanted and undesirable.⁵⁹ The booklet she mentions is Denney's article in *Saskatchewan History* about Mary Rose Pritchard and her involvement in the Resistance at Duck Lake. Sage claims pride in having a different surname from the rest of the Pritchard family, as Sage was her married name.⁶⁰ This may be how she and her sister, named in the letter, distanced themselves from Indigenous/ Metis families in the area. She is clearly anxious about this information becoming public. She writes in an earlier letter, "None of us want our history written in a book, I told you all what I know about my dad and ancestors. We had respectable parents, and we were proud of them and missed them very much."⁶¹ The denial in the letter is difficult to read. She claims that her father could not be a 'breed' because he was respectable, as if the two were incompatible. From Denney's perspective, this was Mildred's family as well, as she was a Pritchard descendant, so perhaps his feelings were hurt. This wasn't the first time that a family member expressed discomfort with publicizing their Indigenous ancestry. Denney referenced another familial exchange in a letter to his "Friends and Relatives":

I have had a couple of letters of which I would like to tell you. One was from a woman cousin who appears to resent having any Indian blood in her veins. Poor dear, she doesn't seem to be able to absorb the fact that some of our most illustrious citizens have Indian background, Leonard Sayers, Assistant Auditor General for Canada in Ottawa, for instance, is descended from John Pritchard through his Indian wife. He has no reason to be ashamed of himself. Nor we of him. Indeed I can become quite emotional about the attainments of some of Mildred's relatives who have Indian background.⁶²

⁵⁹ Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, 1st edition (Minneapolis, MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2013), 8.

⁶⁰ Town of Rocanville, "Webster's Cemetary: Sadie Sage 1910-1993," Town of Rocanville, Saskatchewan, accessed July 21, 2024, <https://www.rocanville.ca>.

⁶¹ Sadie Sage to Charles Denney, March 9, 1971, M7144/221 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶² Denney to Friends and Relatives, June 21, 1968.

Noting that creating a tree and who is contained in a tree is a choice, Zerubavel observes that “Pedigrees and family trees are therefore partly products of the choices we make about which ancestors to remember.”⁶³ Sage chooses to do what Zerubavel calls ‘pruning:’ omitting relatives that are inconvenient or unwanted.⁶⁴ For Sage, if they are not in her tree, and if she can stop Denney from creating and disseminating the charts, she and her family remain white. This internal racism was not universal – rather this is a specific example. However, This is not the only situation where revealing Indigenous ancestry had repercussions for Denney, but this one comes from another amateur genealogist who also participated in ‘pruning’ her family tree.

In a series of letters between Clarence Kipling and Denney, a “Mrs. Anne Carter” is referenced first in passing and then with significantly more regularity. She first appears as a correspondent of Kipling’s. Denney notes after Kipling shares her letter, “It is too bad you and I couldn’t be down close to that Mrs. Carter. She seems to have a real interest as well as some knowledge of how to go about finding information. Between the three of us, I bet we would set the world on fire.”⁶⁵ Things turn when Kipling and Denney go over her charts and correct some potentially intentional errors. Kipling writes to Denney about her charts, “I see in it some errors, I think they tried [sic.] to make Issac Batt’s Wife as a French woman, to hide their Indian ancestry, I don’t think Mrs. Carter knew of her Indian ancestry until I wrote to her, as she stated her mother never told her. So maybe I upset the applecart, but she doesn’t seem to mind,

⁶³ Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, 77.

⁶⁴ Zerubavel, 80–81.

⁶⁵ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, November 6, 1969, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

although her family don't know it.”⁶⁶ By 1972, Anne Carter turned on the pair, spreading rumours about Denney in the Saskatchewan community. Denney writes to Kipling:

When I was in Regina I met with the officers of the Genealogical society in the home of the President Mrs. Boomer. Had my loose leaf binders with me. When she discovered the George Setter family she remembered that over a year ago She had ^a request from Mrs. Anne Carter for help with that family. So she [Mrs. Boomer] was all for copying everything & sending it to her. Naturally she was surprised when I told her I had already sent her the info. And the whole lot was amazed when I told them I had made up and sent to her a whole loose leaf binder of everything on the Andrew Settler family at a cost of over \$15.⁰⁰ plus many hours of work. And I am sure I made ^and sent a folder of the George Settler family. Then D'arcy Hands the new President told us he had referred her to once before and got a letter back telling how she had helped me and I had never done anything for her. The poor woman did help me. But I have since sent her info – which she doesn't acknowledge. And she wrote to others telling them to have nothing to do with me – I was just stealing everything I could get, etc. etc. & I proposed to make money out of it etc. etc?

Which leads me to tell you I visited Mrs J.P. Jones at Maidenstone last week (formerly Peyton). She lent me a bunch of letters & notes to copy. Among them are some from Anne Carter. They are about as clear as mud. On one of them Mrs. Jones had written 'all wrong'.

It has always been perfectly obvious to me that Mrs. Carter knows considerable, But it is equally obvious that she is badly wrong in places -- and that she is incapable of writing down clearly what she knows.⁶⁷

In such a small community of genealogists, it's obvious that Mrs. Carter's actions would get back to Denney, not to mention that D'Arcy Hands was a good friend of Denney's, having worked as Denney's assistant in Edmonton before moving on to an archivist position at the Saskatchewan Archives.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Clarence Kipling to Charles Denney, November 17, 1969, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶⁷ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, October 29, 1972, M7144/157 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁶⁸ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, January 29, 1974, M7144/155 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

However, this was not the end of Denney's issues with Mrs. Carter. In a following letter, he writes to Kipling, "I have discovered that Anne Carter has become so jealous of me that she has written to some to say that they should not give me any information a t [sic] all. That is too bad, for the only way any of us are going to get ahead is to help one another."⁶⁹ Denney mentions Mrs. Carter again a year later:

To [sic] bad Mrs Carter isn't more cooperative I've an idea quite a few people in Winnipeg have decided not to cooperate with me. Do you suppose they have something to hide? I have an idea some of them would not like to be found to have some indian blood. Maybe it would do them good. But some may have skeletons hidden which they are afraid I might discover. Anyway, I feel rejected.⁷⁰

In musing about Mrs. Carter, her repeated omissions or 'pruning' her charts, and her obvious animosity toward Denney, Denney circles back to the hiding of Indigenous ancestry. Denney was not an easy person, and Mrs. Carter could likely have just disliked him, but it's also imperative to read between the lines as to why Denney threatened her so much. Was it his working on what she felt was her family, her discomfort with her Indigenous ancestry or a combination of the two? She doesn't appear in later letters, so it's unclear if the issue is ever resolved.

Family Files

Denney's Family files vary considerably in size, contents and depth of research. But there are commonalities. The files prominently feature the historic Metis Nation, with a particular emphasis on the Red River families and their expansion northward and westward over time.

⁶⁹ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, November 1972, M7144/157 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

⁷⁰ Charles Denney to Clarence Kipling, April 1, 1973, M7144/156 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

Race is constructed in the files. Denney makes a point to indicate both whiteness and Indigeneity, though his construct of whiteness shifts between geography and ethnicity, particularly in the case of the Orkneymen. Denney includes significant material from secondary sources but rarely from primary sources, which likely reflects the transcriptions he and Kipling did in the early 1970s. Though he was clearly successful in eliciting information from families, he did encounter resistance, both from fellow researchers and from families.

James Flett & Mary Peebles Family File

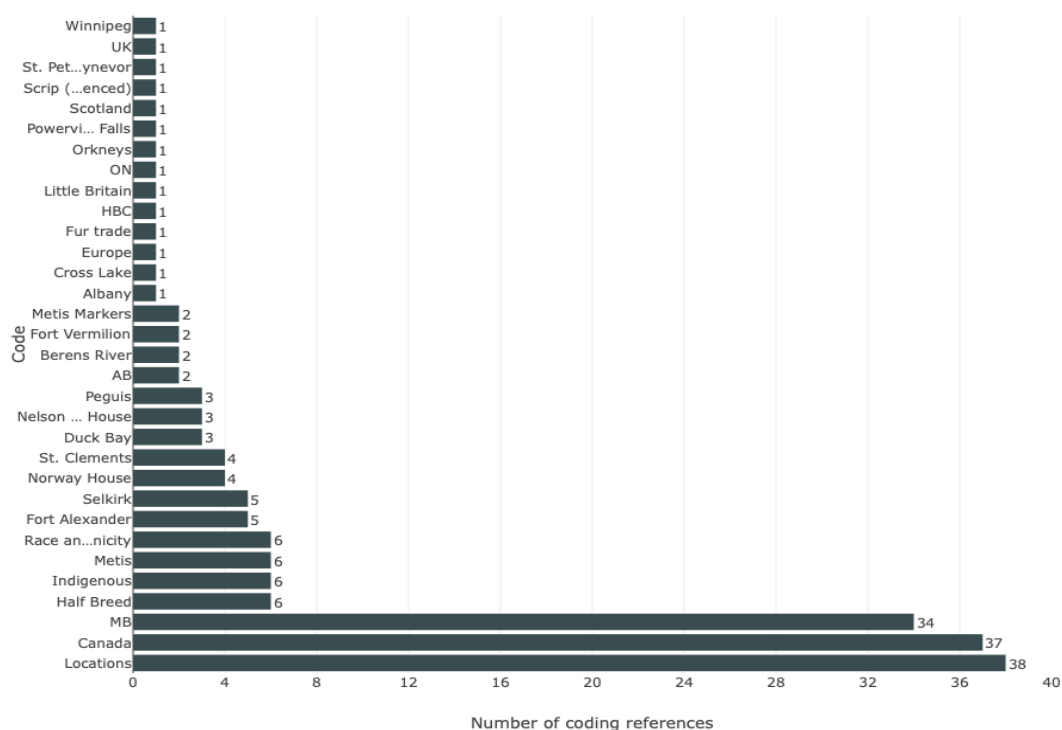
A close look at a single-family file reflects the wider patterns in the data drawn from my sample of 365 files. The Flett file follows the two sons of James Flett and Mary Peebles.

Table 5-16 Breakdown of Flett Family File

Total pgs	Earliest Date	Charts	Newspaper Clipping	Coded References (Total)	File references
8	1830	5 -3 Full ,2 partial	3	194	38

The Flett family appears across several files, but this example focuses on the children of James Flett and Mary Peebles in the file numbered #M7144/950000. The file is 8 pages in total, so just on the slightly shorter side of Denney's files. The earliest recorded date on the file is James Flett's birthdate, 6/6/1830. It includes a cover page, newspaper articles, charts, and a page of genealogical notes. The file has 194 individual coded items, and the file contains 34 total items. A breakdown of the most coded references follows.

Table 5-17 Coding references including Parent Categories in Flett Family File# 950000



This chart includes all categories, including parent categories. This is why ‘Location,’ ‘Canada’ and ‘Manitoba (MB)’ are the largest lines on table 5-17, as they include all child locations in the file. Individual locations also appear on the graph, with locations Fort Alexander, MB and Selkirk, MB appearing most often in the chart. Other markers, such as referencing “Halfbreed,” appear multiple times in the chart.

Table 5-18 Locations coded in Flett Family File

Locations		Number to times coded in File
AB		
	Fort Vermilion	2
MB		
	Berens River	2
	Cross Lake	1
	Duck Bay	3
	Fort Alexander	5
	Little Britain	1
	Nelson River House	3
	Norway House	4
	Peguis	3
	Powerview-Pine Falls	1
	Selkirk	5
	St. Clements Cemetery	4
	St. Peters Settlement	1
	Winnipeg	1
ON		
	Albany	1

UK	1
Scotland	1

The first chart on page 2 (figure 5-38) follows the descendants of James Peebles and Elizabeth Morrison. Neither have birth or death dates, but they are indicated as ‘HB.’ The next generation is their daughter, Mary Peebles, also noted as an HB. It includes her birth date, 14/4/1842, marriage year and location, Norway House 1857, and her death date, 06/05/1928. It also notes she is buried at St. Clements Church in Selkirk, MB. Her husband is recorded as James Flett. Flett is marked with the abbreviation “CF,” meaning he was Chief Factor at the fort of Norway House. His birth location is indicated as the Orkneys and his birth and death dates are listed (6/6/1830 - 31/12/1906.) Peebles was quite young, 15 years old when she married Flett, who was 27. Peebles lived until she was 86, and Flett lived to 76.

The third generation lists Flett and Peebles’ eight children. Their first child, John Flett, was born on 21/12/1859 at Norway House and died on 15/10/1885 at Berens River. Their second child, William Flett, was born in 1861 at Norway House, and was living at Cross Lake in 1900. He married Philomene Chartrand in 1883 in Duck Bay and had a daughter Catherine, who married James Walter. Their third child, Mary Flett, was born on 7/9/1863 at Nelson River and was reported at Fort Alexander in 1900. Their fourth child, Jane Flett, was married to A. A. MacDonald and was in Winnipeg in 1949. A “J” appears beside his name with a question mark and the date 1955, possibly a death date. Their fifth child, Maggie (Margaret) Flett, was born on 9/7/1867 at Nelson River and died on 5/11/1959 at 92 years old. She was also at Fort Alexander in 1900 and is buried at St Clements Church in Selkirk, MB, where her mother was also buried. Their sixth child, Fanny (Francis) Flett, was born on 31/12/1869 in Nelson River, was at Fort Alexander in 1900, and was married to Duncan McIvor in Selkirk on 29/10/1890. She was 21

when they married. McIvor was born on 24/01/1867 and was two years older than Fanny Flett. No death is listed for either, but they were on the Peguis reserve in 1949. Their seventh child, Alexander Flett, was born on 21/08/1870 at Norway House and was still residing at Norway House in 1900. Their eighth child, Lizzie (Elizabeth) Flett, was born on 15/02/1872 in Berens River, MB, was at the St. Peter's Indian (Saulteaux) Settlement in 1900, and died on the Peguis reserve on 21/04/1955 at 83 and was buried at St Clements Church along with her mother and other siblings. She married someone named "Young," but Denney notes it's unclear if this is a surname or a given name. Denney's numbering system appears in a few places on the page. The top left reads 950,000A, Catherine Flett has a 950,001, and Alexander has 950,250 beside his entry.

		950.000A	
		2nd	3rd
There was a 9m cabin the first of Pagine in 1st class 40 James Flett One of 9m cabin the first of Pagine in 1st class 40 James Flett James Pebbles Elizabeth Morrison burst elements age 6-0-18			1 John Flett 21/12/1859-15/10/1883 6 Norway St. d. Cairns R. ϕ 2 William Flett 1861 6 Norway St. at Cairns 1900 1873 m. Philomena Chastard 3 Mary 7/09/1863- 6 Nelson St. at Halsbury 1900 4 Jane on a. a. Mac Donald J. 1955 5 Margaret Flett 9/07/1867-5/11/1919 6 Nelson St. at Halsbury 1900 burst elements 6 Frances 2/12/1868 6 Nelson St. at Halsbury 1900 m. Duncan Mac Don 2/10/1887- 7 Alexander 2/08/1870- 6 Norway St. 1900 8 Elizabeth (Linn) Flett 15/02/1872-31/09/1955 6 Cairns R. at St Rita 1900 d. Pagine 1923 m. St Clement young "young may have been a given name"
			6 Cairns R. 1873 m. Philomena Chastard
			6 Nelson St. at Halsbury 1900
			on a. a. Mac Donald J. 1955
			6 Nelson St. at Halsbury 1900 burst elements
			6 Nelson St. at Halsbury 1900 m. Duncan Mac Don 2/10/1887-
			6 Norway St. 1900
			6 Cairns R. at St Rita 1900 d. Pagine 1923 m. St Clement young "young may have been a given name"

Figure 5-31 Chart of James Pebbles and Elizabeth Morrison, Flett family File pp. 2.

Fig. 5-32, page 3 of the file includes an obituary from the *Selkirk Record* from 10 May 1928 for “Mrs. Janes [sic.] Flett of Peguis” and a tree drawn by Denney from information in the obituary. The obituary identifies her by her maiden name, Mary Peebles. It includes information about her husband’s career, her children, their residences, and the names of her grandsons, who were also her pallbearers. The obituary also has a chart drawn by Denney that notes the children and names of grandsons. The obituary includes additional information that the family lived on the Peguis reserve in Manitoba, where both Mary and James died, and the names of their grandsons.

Mrs. Janes Flett Dies

Mrs. James Flett, of Peguis, Man., died Sunday evening, May 6, at the age of 66 years from a stroke, following prolonged illness of nearly eight years, during which time she was confined to her bed.

Mrs. Flett was one of the most highly esteemed and respected residents of Manitoba. She had spent the greater part of her life in the north, having been born at Albany, on James Bay, Ont. Her maiden name was Mary Peebles. After her arrival in Manitoba she married James Flett, who was then the Hudson's Bay company's manager at Nelson House. Later he was the manager at the company's fur trading post at God's Lake, Split Lake, Norway House, Beron's River and Fort Alexander. He retired on pension twenty years ago and decided to reside at Peguis, Man., where he died shortly afterwards, and where the surviving members of the family reside. Mrs. Flett's kindly personality endeared her a wide circle of friends.

Four sons and six daughters survive. These are: Mrs. Duncan McIvor, of Peguis; Mrs. A. Q. McDonald, of Norwood; Mrs. James Monkman, of Vermillion; Alta; Misses Maggie, Lizzie and Kate, at home; William, of Winnipeg; Alva, H.B. company manager at Front Lake, Ont.; Donald, at Norway House; and George, living at Peguis.

A private service was held at the house at 1 o'clock on Wednesday, from there to Knox church, Selkirk. Rev. A. T. Macintosh conducting the service. Burial took place to St. Clements cemetery.

The pall bearers were six grandsons: Ernest Flett, Bert Flett, Archie McArthur, Norman McArthur, Glen McArthur, Bruce McArthur.

Selkirk Record
10 May 1928

James Flett
ca 1905

Mrs. Duncan McIvor
#6

Mrs. A. Q. McDonald
#8

Mrs. James Monkman
#14

Maggie #5

Lizzie #8

Kate #14

William Flett #1

Alva #1

Donald #9

George #10

Grandsons:
Ernest Flett
Bert Flett
Archie McArthur
Norman McArthur
Glen McArthur
Bruce McArthur

Mary Flett
1843-6/6/1928

Althony

A. Selkirk
Apr 25

from statement

Figure 5-32 Obituary of Jane Flett and Notes, Flett Family File. pp. 3

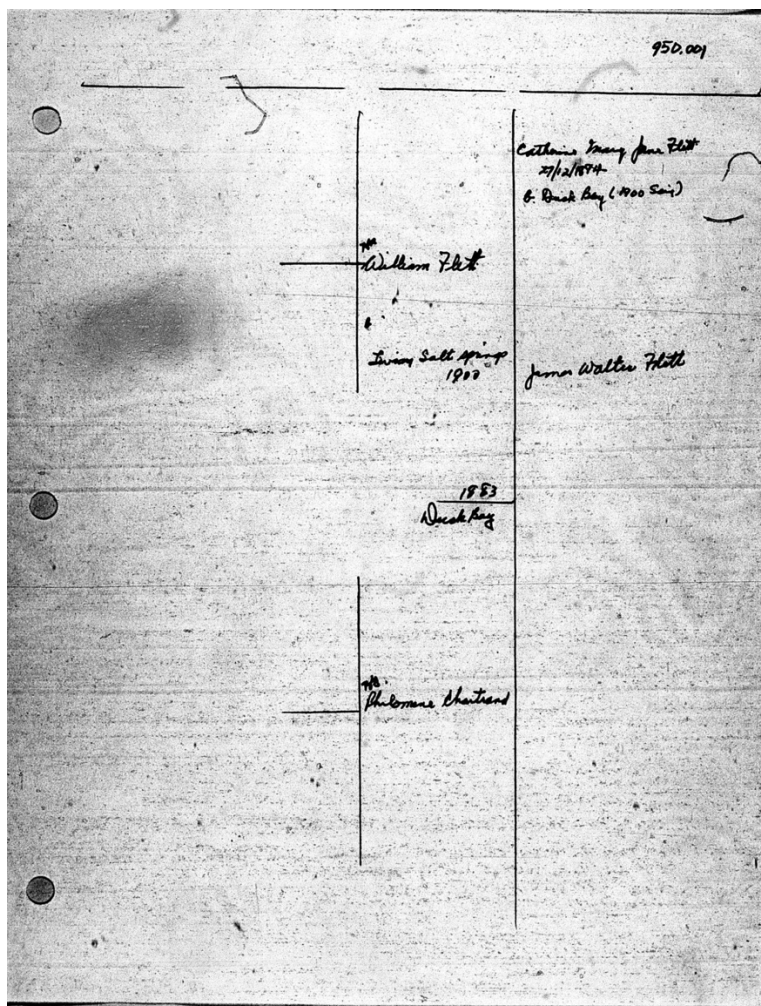


Figure 5-33 Chart William Flett and Philomene Chartrand, Flett Family File pp. 4

Page 4 (fig. 5-33) is a small chart listed as 950,001 for the family of William Flett and Philomene Chartrand (listed as 3rd generation #2 in the first chart discussed). Denney lists William Flett as an HB, living in Salt Springs, and in 1900 married to Philomene Chartrand. Philomene is also listed as an HB, and the chart indicates they were married in 1883 in Duck Bay, MB. The next line indicates their daughter, Catherine Mary Jane Flett, was born on 27/12/1874 in Duck Bay, MB. It

also notes by Catherine's name "1900 Scrip," which means she received scrip in 1900. This adds some context to the previous chart, where Denney lists several locations beside the year 1900. Denney was likely referencing the family's location from the scrip applications collected between 1886 and 1902. Because of how this is referenced, all as 1900, Denney probably sourced the information from Gail Morin's *1900 Scrip*.⁷¹ There is another child listed, James Walter Flett, but no other information is provided, and James was not one of his grandmother's pallbearers.

⁷¹ Gail Morin, *1900 Scrip* (Pawtucket, RI: Quintin Pub, 1998).

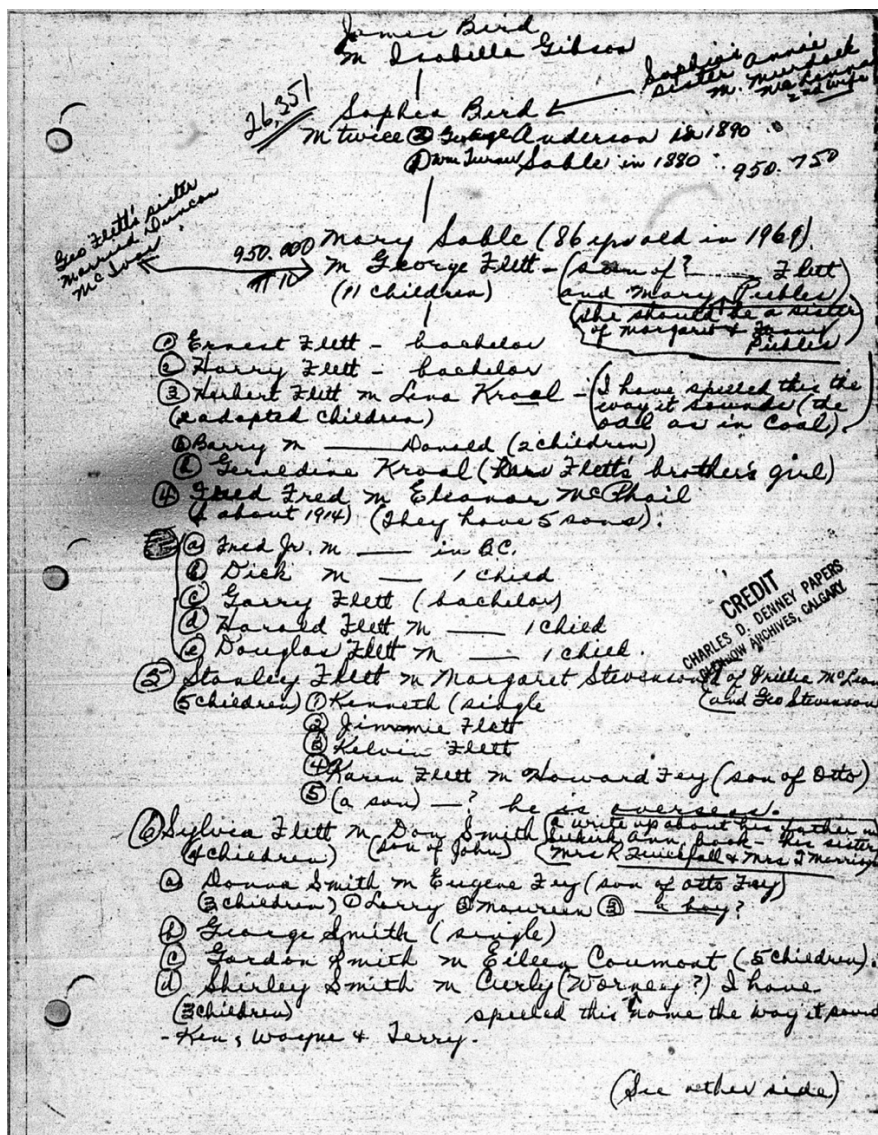


Figure 5-34 Notes on Bird Family, Flett Family File pp.5

can't compare handwriting. Many Fletts ended up in the Willamette Valley in Oregon after the Sinclair expedition.⁷² The Fletts marry into the Bird family. The notes indicate that George Flett is the son of Mary Peebles, making him James Flett's brother.

The following document is an obituary for George Flett, from the *Selkirk Record*, 4 April 1940, and an accompanying tree (fig. 5-35). This is the same family as in the previous notes. The

The following page (fig. 5.34) is a series of notes on the family of James Bird and Isabella Gibson. The page is not in Denney's handwriting, so it's likely sourced from another genealogist, possibly Joanne Hughes, who corresponded with Denney about her work in BC and Oregon and taught genealogy at Camosun College. Unfortunately, she types her letters so we

⁷² Joanne Hughes to Charles Denney, 1980, M7144/160 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

[illegible]

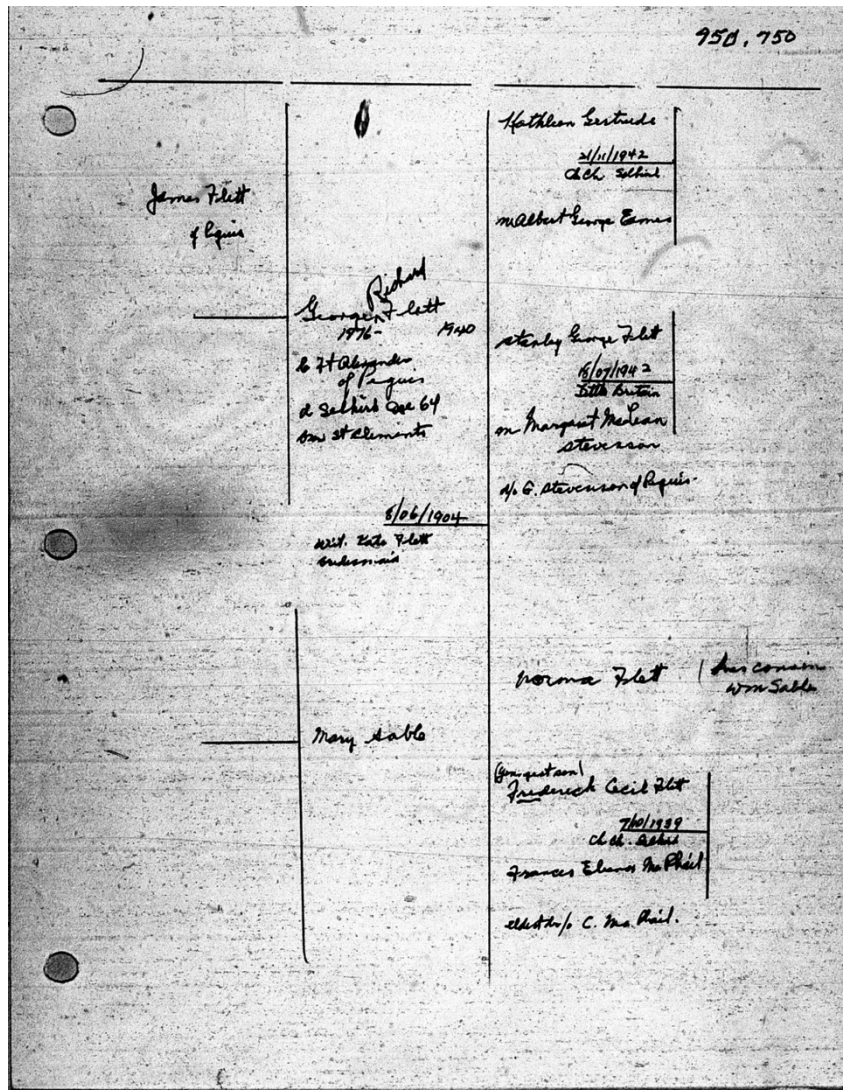
274

The next document (5-36) is a page from a newspaper that includes a wedding announcement from the *Selkirk Record*, listed as the 4th of March 1943 for Margaret Flett and Peter Chibore. Denney has underlined all the names and information about the family, likely to add them to a tree.



Figure 5-36 Wedding Announcement Margaret Flett. Flett Family File pp.7.

The final page in the file is another tree (fig 5-37), this one numbered 950,750, which follows the family of George Flett. It starts with James Flett of Peguis and lists his child, George Richard Flett, born in 1876 at Fort Alexander, MB and dying in Selkirk, MB, in 1940 at 64 years old. It also notes he was buried at St Clements Cemetery in Selkirk, MB. He married Mary Sable on 5/6/1904, with Kate Flett noted as a witness and bridesmaid. The next generation shows their children. The first is Kathleen Gertrude, who was married to Albert George Eames on



21/11/1942 in Selkirk. The second is Stanley George Flett, married to Margaret Mclean Stevenson on 18/7/1942 in Little Britain, MB (close to Selkirk). There's also a notation that Margaret is the daughter of A. G. Stevenson of Peguis. The third is Norma Flett, who has no information other than another name, "Wm Sable." The youngest child (noted by Denney) is Frederick Cecil Flett, married on 7/10/1939 in Selkirk to Frances Elenor

Figure 5-37 Chart of George Flett and Mary Sable. Flett Family File pp. 8.

McPhail, who is noted as the eldest daughter of C. McPhail. One point of interest is that James

Flett's information changes from the first chart to the last. He is noted as being from the Orkney Islands in Scotland on the first chart but is listed as being from Peguis, MB on the last chart. We do know this is the same individual by comparing family file numbers and other documents in the file. There is no indication which chart could have been constructed first, but it does allow the reader to move from chart to chart to get a more nuanced picture of James Flett's life.

The file reflects the overall content of the archive. It follows a Metis family through several generations, specifically that of the two brothers, John and George Flett. It takes place primarily in the Manitoba region of Red River, in and around the town of Selkirk. It shows how Denney acquired information from sources like newspapers and from soliciting from genealogists in other locations. It also has caveats. Information is incomplete, details shift, and there is no indication of where much information is sourced, like the 1900 Residence entries. It also shows where Denney's interest ends. The family's stories taper out when they leave the prairies. This could be because of access to resources, or it may have been a choice of Denney's. The Flett file tells a story and reflects Denney's interest in the Metis homeland and historic Metis nation.

Conclusion

Charles Denney understood, better than anyone, the vast messiness of his archival collection. He understood how difficult it would be to create a cohesive story from his files. At first glance, the Charles Denney archive seems too large and too unwieldy to characterize in a single manner. But Denney also knew that the collection, though chaotic, was not arbitrary. Denney knew which families and what information he wanted. He was very clear in his correspondence, and his cold call letters about what details he felt were important. He pursued

familial information, even when the families rejected his queries outright, either through a desire for privacy or due to internal familial racism. His collections, though lacking a written narrative, do tell a story. They tell us about place, births, deaths, moves, work and families. They tell the history of men and women who chose to create families in the Red River Valley, worked in the fur trade and moved their lives when that trade ended. They tell us about the women who lived, married and created families. They tell a story of *wahkootowin*. They tell the story of Mildred Sherlock's people, which was the story Denney wanted to tell.

Chapter 6 *Wahkootowin* and Citizenship: The Metis Nation's Connection to Genealogy

Introduction

The relationship between the Metis Nation, Denney's archive, and genealogy as a practice is complicated. Some of this is obvious: the Denney Collection is an archive built by a white man around a Metis woman's family in the heart of the Metis Nation. As historian Gerhard Ens observes in Denney's obituary, the collection is "basically a history of the Metis nation, family by family almost."¹ He worked closely with Metis researchers, in particular, Clarence Kipling and Pat McCloy. The Metis nation helped focus and guide Denney's research and, once it went public, were the primary users. Despite Denney's identity and personal politics, he created an anti-colonial archive of Metis history. Denney noted to the Glenbow, "The people of the West are beginning to find they have family roots as well as family histories. Increasingly, they want to know those histories. This is particularly true of people with native blood."² He understood that his archives served people with Indigenous family backgrounds but died before he could see them used to achieve Indigenous citizenship. The Metis Nation's use of the Denney Archive is cultural and political. It explores the Cree/Metis concept of *wahkootowin*, which emphasizes the cultural responsibility to learn one's ancestral heritage. It is also connected to the Powley decision in requiring genealogy as part of the citizenship process.

¹ "Died: Charles Denney."

² Denney to Chritchley, June 13, 1974.

The appeal of research, or ‘archive fever,’ is discussed by genealogist Darrell Loyer and his daughter, University of Alberta librarian Jessie Loyer, in “Talking with My Daughter About Archives: Métis Researchers and Genealogy.” The two reflect on how captivating archival research can be for Darrell:

Darrell. ... I just want to go, go, go, go! I have a problem when I go to archives.

Jessie. What’s the problem?

Darrell. My problem is, I go there, and I just go, go, and keep doing, and keep working, and keep working. I don’t eat.

Jessie. You don’t eat?

Darrell. Maybe go the bathroom. I run to the bathroom. I come back. And I go, go, go, go.

Jessie. Why?

Darrell. ‘Cause I just can’t leave. It’s an addiction, cha. No, it’s not! It’s just so interesting, and it just grabs me. And I can’t leave. I don’t eat.

Jessie. Oh, God.³

There is also the distinction that Metis families are researchable, unlike many other working-class people. Historian Heather Devine notes the abundance of documentation in the fur trade is significant: “It is ironic that the genealogies of the labouring classes of the fur trade may actually be more accurate than those of the officer class, because of the abundance of primary data available to researchers.”⁴ Government records, in particular, the Half breed and Northwest Scrip commissions, though problematic,⁵ contain volumes of material on Metis families. Scrip was a type of single payment or land allocation established by the Canadian government to extinguish Metis Indigenous title. It was a long process that involved significant paperwork, travel, and several steps, making receiving it unsustainable for many Metis families. The two scrip commissions, the Half-Breed Scrip Commission and the Northwest Scrip Commission, were

³ Loyer and Loyer, “Talking with My Daughter About Archives: Métis Researchers and Genealogy,” 3.

⁴ Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*, 2004, 232.

⁵ For an in depth explanation of the scrip commissions see: Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, 1996.

offered alongside the Numbered Treaty commissions in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta (1870-1924) and were not offered in British Columbia and Ontario. There was also original White Settler Scrip given in Manitoba to white families to establish title.⁶ Scrip applications included information on families including spouses, children and ethnic backgrounds.

Below, (fig 6-1) you can see the four-page Northwest Half Breed Scrip application for Mathilde Nault, wife of Alexandre Nault. It contains information on Mathilde Nault's parents and grandparents, as well as her birth and marriage details. It notes the ethnicity of her parents as 'halfbreed.' It also includes a letter (in French) from the Prince Albert Catholic parish, giving the details of Mathilde's baptism at the St Laurent mission. After his death, the family returned to Manitoba where many members of the family remain today. The application also includes an affidavit that mentions Mathilde's father Damase Carrière was killed at Batoche, during the 1885 Resistance⁷. Scrip was a particular interest to Clarence Kipling who spent much of his time cataloguing scrip files on to cards, which he later donated to the LAC.⁸

⁶ Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996).

⁷ North West Scrip Commission, "Nault, Mathilde; Scrip Cert.: Form E, No. 3386; Claim No. 1441," November 25, 2016, RG15-D-II-8-c, Volume number: 1361, Microfilm reel number: C-14993, Library and Archives Canada, <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=1513324&lang=eng>; Tim Everett to Erin Dolmage, "My Grandpa Is the One with the Beer and the Big Mouth," July 26, 2012.

⁸ Library and Archives Canada, "Kipling Collection."

1441
Examined
J. J. McNeill
revised scrip as
H.B. Children
29/10/11

Land
Form A (1).
NORTH-WEST HALFBREED CLAIMS COMMISSION.
1901.
RECEIVED

Before JAMES ANDREW JOSEPH McKENNA, of the City of Ottawa, in the Province of Ontario, Esquire, duly appointed and sitting as sole Commissioner at Winnipeg in the Prov. of Manitoba, to investigate claims of Halfbreeds in the territory included in the Province of Manitoba, as now constituted, which was not included in the said Province as constituted by the Manitoba Act, 33 Victoria, Cap. 3, born up to 31st December 1885, and claims remaining to be dealt with in the North-West Territories, of Halfbreeds born up to 31st December 1885, personally came and appeared, Mathilde Carriere wife of Alexandre Carriere Claimant, who being duly sworn, deposes as follows:—

Question 1. What is your name?
Answer Mathilde Carriere Nault

Question 2. Where do you reside?
Answer St Vital Manitoba

Question 3. How long have you lived there and where have you lived previously?
Answer Since summer of 1886

Question 4. Where were you born?
Answer Natchez

Question 5. When were you born?
Answer 22 Nov 1875 Exhibit A

Question 6. What is your father's name?
Answer Dominic Carriere alias Carriere alias Carriere

Question 7. What was the name of your mother before her marriage?
Answer Margaret Pelagie Parenteau alias Parenteau

Question 8. Is your father a Whiteman, a Halfbreed or an Indian?
Answer Halfbreed

Question 9. Is your mother a Whiteman, a Halfbreed or an Indian?
Answer Halfbreed

Mathieu Payette of St Vital Province of Manitoba - being duly sworn saith:
I identify the claimant Mathilde Nault daughter of Dominick Carriere and his wife, and wife of Alexandre Nault. Her father was killed at the rebellion of 1870-71. The family came back to Manitoba after the rebellion.

Sworn before me
at Winnipeg, Prov.
of Manitoba, this
28th day of Nov. A.D.
1901.

Mathieu Payette
J. J. McNeill
Halfbreed Commissioner

Question 10. Have you ever received land or scrip in Manitoba or the North-West Territories in extinguishment of your Halfbreed rights?

Answer *No*

Question 11. Did you ever apply for land or scrip before to-day? If so, when and where?

Answer *Never applied myself, but Agents both received scrip - cannot tell where - think as Man A.B. Chelch.*

Question 12. Are you now or have you ever been a member of any Indian Band, or in receipt of Indian Treaty money, or did you ever receive commutation of same?

Answer *No*

Question 13. Did your father or mother receive scrip? If so, when and where?

Answer *Both as Man A.B. Schindl*

Question 14. Are you married? If so, when and where and to whom?

Answer *Yes - to Alexandre Nault at St. Pierre Manitoba, in 1893.*

My father was killed during the rebellion of 1885 at Batoche. Our family was all there at that time. We came to Manitoba after the rebellion.

And further deponent sayeth not.

Subscribed before me at *Manitoba* this *28th* day of *November* A.D. 190 *7*.

Mathilde Carrière
Mathilde Carrière
Commissioner.

Exhibit A
Diocèse de Prince-Albert
SASKATCHEWAN, N. W. T.

Prince-Albert, *1*

Extrait du Registre de la Mission de St. Laurent.

Le vingt quatre novembre mil huit cent soixante quinze nous soussigné prêtre avons baptisé Mathilde née avant l'union du légitime mariage de Thomas Carrière et de Béatrice Paronken. Le parrain a été Jean Baptiste Paronken et la marraine Mathilde Carrière représentée par Béatrice Dumont qui ne signe.

J. V. Bourmont ptre, C. M. G.

Pour copie conforme
M. Passignol ptre, C. M. G.

Figure 6-1 Nault, Mathilde; Scrip cert.: form E, no. 3386; claim no 1441

Denney notes in a letter: “In the fur trade there were many laborer / voyageur types who didn't make a great name for themselves. However, they did leave families; and the children were sufficiently important that most of the couples were married and the h[sic] children baptised. So there are church records even if we don't know their stories.”⁹ The LDS’ FamilySearch.org wiki page has a section dedicated to the Metis that directs researchers to scrip records, the Voyageur Contracts Database, the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, and the Glenbow Museum.¹⁰ The Voyager Contract database, discussed in depth later in the chapter, is a

⁹ Charles Denney to Cheryl Cabaj, March 29, 1984, M8189/259 Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

¹⁰ “Métis,” FamilySearch Wiki, December 6, 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/M%C3%A9tis>.

searchable database that focusses on fur trade engagements signed in Montreal between the years 1714 and 1830. The database includes names, locations and details about the contracts.¹¹ The Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) are a massive repository of documents from the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in North America. Now housed in Winnipeg, it includes archival records of HBC and other records related to HBC history, such as private records of individuals and subsidiary companies. It also includes post journals, biographical Information sheets, maps, ships' histories and as well as extensive publications by the Hudson's Bay Record Society (HBRS).¹²

For the contemporary Metis Nation there are practical reasons to research their family history. This is associated with two Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) decisions that recognize the rights of Metis people. The first is *R. v. Powley* decision in 2003, which was the first major Aboriginal rights case concerning Metis peoples. The *Powley* decision resulted in "the *Powley* Test," which laid out a set of criteria to define what might constitute a Metis right and who is entitled to those rights. Although the *Powley* decision defined Metis rights as they relate to hunting, many legal experts and Metis leaders view the *Powley* case as potentially instrumental in the future of recognizing Metis rights. The second is *Daniels v. Canada* in 2016, in which the SCC asserted that the term "Indian" for purposes of Canada's law-making powers under section 91(24) includes all Aboriginal peoples including Metis and non-Status Indians (and there is no need to delineate between the two). Hence, all Metis are eligible for Aboriginal rights available

¹¹ "Voyageurs Contracts," Société historique de Saint-Boniface, accessed June 22, 2024, <https://shsb.mb.ca/traveler-contracts/?lang=en>.

¹² Archives of Manitoba, "Hudson's Bay Company Archives," Archives of Manitoba, 2024, https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/common_research_topics.html#books.

to all First Nations.¹³ To apply for citizenship and to hold rights under s. 35 of the Canadian constitution, you must have citizenship with one of the Metis governing members of the Métis National Council (MNC) or the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). These are organized by province and are made up of the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), Métis Nation Alberta (MNA), Métis Nation Saskatchewan (MN-S), and Métis Nation Ontario (MNO). The MMF and MNBC are currently independent of the MNC.¹⁴ To receive Metis citizenship, you must meet certain criteria set out in the MNC's 'National Definition' (2002): "'Métis' means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation" and as laid out in the 2003 Powley case.¹⁵

The arguably most important factor connecting Metis with genealogy is the worldview of *wahkootowin*, or relatedness. Brenda Macdougall introduced *wahkootowin* as a framing narrative and an academic concept in her book *One of the Family*. She describes that it is not just a kinship but a responsibility. She notes it is "a worldview that privileged relatedness to land, people (living, ancestral, and those to come), the spirit world, and creatures inhabiting the space."¹⁶ Implicit in *wahkootowin* is knowing your family, including ancestors. This chapter argues that the production of Metis genealogy, the Powley decision and the citizenship process, and the cultural imperative of *wahkootowin* help us understand why the Denney archive deserves academic study.

¹³ R. v. Powley, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207 (Supreme Court of Canada 2003); Daniels v. Canada, [2016] 1 SCR 99 (Supreme Court of Canada 2016).

¹⁴ Manitoba Métis Federation, "MMF Withdraws from MNC - Focus on Being the National Voice for the Red River Métis," *Manitoba Métis Federation* (blog), September 29, 2021, <https://www.mmf.mb.ca/news/mmf-withdraws-from-mnc-focus-on-being-the-national-voice-for-the-red-river-metis>; Métis Nation British Columbia, "Métis Nation British Columbia Withdraws from the Métis National Council," *MNBC* (blog), November 30, 2024, <https://www.mnbc.ca/mnbc-withdraws-mnc>.

¹⁵ Métis National Council, "Citizenship," 2024, <https://www.metisnation.ca/about/citizenship>.

¹⁶ Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, 3.

Wahkootowin

Wahkootowin, since it was discussed as a framing narrative by Brenda Macdougall, has emerged as a foundational methodology in Metis research. Macdougall describes that social obligation and familial responsibility “were part of a Metis worldview that privileged family above all else and directed actions and behaviours in a manner that reflected the values, taboos, virtues, and ideals of this society, which, in turn, were the laws by which people lived. Kin or *wahkootowin* was, to borrow an anthropological phrase, the ‘style of life’ that reflected a shared cultural identity....”¹⁷ To look for and look out for one’s family, including ancestors, is part of this cultural obligation, and particularly for a diaspora like the Metis Nation, requires knowing who your people are and where they come from. As Zerubavel notes “Rather than simply documenting who our ancestors were, they are the narratives we construct to actually make them our ancestors. By the same token, rather than simply helping us find out who our relatives are, they are the narratives we construct to actually make them our relatives.”¹⁸ Writer and Elder Maria Campbell, in her introduction to *Contours of a People*, notes that encroaching Canadian governance and the Resistances of 1869-70 and 1885 led to the dispossession of the Metis peoples, first westward to areas like Fort Qu’Appelle and Batoche. After the losses in 1885, they were effectively dispossessed, many families living without title on road allowances and crown lands, leading to the term “the Road Allowance People.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Macdougall, 6.

¹⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community*, Kindle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 77.

¹⁹ Maria Campbell, “Forward,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, 77.

In a ‘kitchen table’ discussion about archives, Darrell Loyer (Metis) talks about his hobby with his daughter, Jessie Loyer (Cree-Metis). Their resulting article explores the relationship between genealogy and family in a multigenerational context. Darrell and Jessie discuss navigating archives, why they conduct research, and the importance of family history. In one part of the conversation Darrell Loyer explains his grandmother’s influence on his developing an interest in genealogy. His grandmother, Clara Loyer (Nanny), was a midwife and *maskihkîyiskwêw* (medicine woman) and taught her grandson the importance of kinship and family. They explain:

Jessie. Nanny would just tell you stories about people that were there or were coming to visit or just whatever?

Darrell. Just, who people were related to, and how so-and-so was related. And everybody didn’t have this business about you were either—you knew your aunts and uncles and close family ties and then people who were related were your cousins. And so it was never really . . . sometimes they told how you were related, but it was also a very small group of folks, actually, because they all married each other. It was very close. And so, you knew if somebody was marrying somebody, you knew their family already. You knew. And so, in our family, we’ve got brothers marrying sisters. And so, the families were very close.

Jessie. Yeah, ’cause Nanny’s sister married her . . .

Darrell. Nanny’s sister married her husband’s brother. And then her niece married another brother. Jessie. Right.

Darrell. [laughs]

Jessie. Good family.

Darrell. Yeah.

Jessie. It makes sense, though. You would see people.

Darrell. You’d see people, and so that . . . but even going back, people you would see, and you would always wonder then how they were related. And so, you would figure out. And she would tell you. It would be oral. You’d sit around. Because it wasn’t technology.

People would visit, and talk, and you’d say, “OK, how about that person?” And sometimes you’d ask after. And sometimes you wouldn’t know. I didn’t find out ’til years later about some people, how they are related, like their great-great-grandparents was a Loyer, and so then they’re still connected. And like, I’d see Irene in St. Albert and she’d tell her kids, “This is your cousin,” and everybody: “OK.”²⁰

²⁰ Loyer and Loyer, “Talking with My Daughter About Archives: Métis Researchers and Genealogy,” 4.

Although this conversation feels casual, there are embedded ideas about Metis in the exchange. Firstly, it is a casual back-and-forth conversation around a kitchen table (virtual, as it was recorded during the pandemic) between family members. In methods gifted from Elder and writer Maria Campbell, Metis scholar Janice Cindy Gaudet refers to *keeoukaywin* or “the visiting way.”²¹ Gaudet sees visiting as part of Metis educator Sherry Farrell Racette’s ‘kitchen table theory,’ where everyone is involved in the conversation. Farrell Racette advocates the multi-modality of the kitchen table and its centrality to the home as a space for Metis research and teaching.²²

Métis kitchen table talks cover a lot; they do not stay on one topic, but meander around and loop back around. People laugh a lot! This methodology does not set up an unequal power dynamic between an interviewer and their subject, but, rather, allows everyone’s voice to be heard. Métis kitchen table talks show the way that conversation while eating, drinking, and creating is a distinct form of knowledge transmission.²³

This discussion is explicitly positioned as a kitchen table conversation by Darrell Loyer. He references the value of meeting and sitting with family. He describes the importance of family visits and the teachings his grandmother would give him to understand his relations. It also typifies the power of an oral history and the feeling of “the visiting way.” The conversation continues:

Darrell. So, you want to know why I do genealogy? No?

Jessie. Yeah. I mean, that’s part of it.

Darrell. Because I’ve always been doing genealogy. Nanny did it. In her head. It was all in your head. Because you had to know who you’re related to, and who your relatives were related to.

Jessie. How come? Why would you need to know?

Darrell. Because you have a responsibility to those people. They have a responsibility to you.

²¹ Lindquist, Jobin, and Letendre, “Metis Research and Relationality: Auntie Governance, the Visiting Way, and Kitchen Table Reflections,” 157.

²² Lindquist, Jobin, and Letendre, 157. For more information on Kitchen Table Relationality see Sherry Farrell Racette, “Kitchen Tables and Beads: Space and Gesture in Contemplative and Creative Research,” in *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Art Histories in the United States and Canada*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2023), 85–91.

²³ Loyer and Loyer, “Talking with My Daughter About Archives: Métis Researchers and Genealogy,” 1.

Jessie. They're your people.
Darrell. Yep. And back then it was all in your head.²⁴

Although Darrell Loyer isn't using the term, he is talking about *wahkootowin*. The statement "Because you have a responsibility to those people. They have a responsibility to you" encapsulates precisely the responsibly and relationality embodied by *wahkootowin*. Darrell points out that this is something his family has always done. His grandmother may have done it in her head, but it's the same: it teaches an important lesson, and for Darrell Loyer, genealogy isn't a hobby; it's a cultural imperative. He tells his daughter: "They're your people."

Loyer and Loyer also discuss Charles Denney and his archives. I've quoted part of this exchange elsewhere, but there is an additional part of the conversation that illuminates the importance of the Denney archive:

Darrell. Charles Denney, I met him. I knew him. Back in the day.
Jessie. What did he have?
Darrell. He has—oh my God, Jessie—he had one of his bedrooms in his little apartment, because I went to his apartment. I don't know if his wife was alive. I can't remember if there was a woman there or not. Anyway, I went to visit him, because I was doing... I wanted to do genealogy more. Maybe I was going to university, because I was in town. And so, he has—oh, he had one bedroom that was just packed. Packed! With bookshelves, boxes, paper. All the genealogy on paper. But he had done phenomenal stuff.

Jessie. Who was he?

Darrell. Charles Denney. Just a genealogist person. And his wife was Métis.

Jessie. Oh, so that's how he knew.

Darrell. That's how he started, I think. Doing some of her family's. And then it just went from family to the next family, to the next family and then all of a sudden it went to all of us out here. Because I think she is originally from maybe Manitoba.

Jessie. Oh, so she's not even Métis from here?

Darrell. I don't think so. But of course people are connected. Because lots of them got their wives from over there, way back. But he did phenomenal genealogy, lots, lots.

Jessie. So, his stuff is now at the Glenbow.

Darrell. Was! I think so. I think all that paper went to Glenbow.

Jessie. That whole room! [laughs]²⁵

²⁴ Loyer and Loyer, 5.

²⁵ Loyer and Loyer, 5,6.

There are two important takeaways from their conversation. The first is Jessie's response to learning about Mildred Denney: "Oh, so that's how he knew." She noted that intrinsic responsibility was familial. Denney 'knew' about the Metis Nation because they met at his kitchen table. It also shows how much Jessie understands about her father's love of genealogy. At their heart, they are family histories and family responsibilities. The other interesting detail was Darrell's observation about Mildred Denney's family being connected to his community in Edmonton despite being from Manitoba, a reference to Podruchny and St-Onge's 'spiderweb'.²⁶

Metis Genealogies

Genealogy is also attached to the availability of records, but records are not benign. We've discussed the challenges of records earlier when looking at the range of documents available for genealogical research. Darrel Loyer explains reading a familial death registration and the bias in the entry:

Darrell. I haven't showed this to Auntie Flossie and Auntie Marlene yet. It's bad. It's kind of prejudiced. Because, OK, it says the father is "Lloyd James Poitras," "Mary Valerie Dion,"²⁷ etc. The cause of death. It says, "Medical certificate of death," and we got this Lavina. So she's sixty-nine days old. The first one is "Bronchial pneumonia, 10 days," "Candida albicans infection, 1 month." Mom and I checked that out, whatever. She had, like, thrush, and she couldn't suck. Another condition, contributing to death: "Malnutrition."

Jessie. Oh.

Darrell. "Due to insufficient lactation of mother." They wrote it in there.

Jessie. Ah, so they put the blame on Auntie Minnie.

Darrell. They put the blame on Auntie Minnie. For sixty-nine days.

²⁶ Loyer and Loyer, "Talking with My Daughter About Archives"; also see Nicole St-Onge and Carolyn Podruchny, "Scuttling Along A Spiders Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 74–119. It appears Darrell Loyer is in Edmonton, Alberta and Jessie Loyer is the Indigenous Engagement Librarian at the University of Alberta.

²⁷ This is a different Mary Valerie Dion than discussed previously, I have no records of my great grandmother marrying into the Potrais family.

Jessie. Geez.

Darrell. It's in her certificate of death! So, this is back in the sixties, and this is Elk Point hospital. A little bit sketch.²⁸

Here they read between the lines regarding racism in the records. They identify bias in the notation that it was the mother's inability to produce milk led to the baby's death. Loyer and Loyer additionally note the other previously discussed issues, specifically inconsistency in documents, including name changes, *dit* names, and translation of Indigenous names into English and back into Cree. For example, they discuss the names Piche becoming Wildcat; Petit Couteau becoming Jackknife; Crier becoming Mato; Mahikan becoming Arcan, then Arcand; and a Dion marrying a Buffalo Chip and their descendants being known as Dion-Buffalo, then only as Buffalo.²⁹ The documents they question were created by settlers for the colonial state, even though they serve Loyer's pursuit of *wahkootowin*.

It's important to focus on *wahkootowin* and a Metis worldview in this discussion because Metis people have more than just outside reasons, such as citizenship or s.35 recognition, to pursue family histories. As Metis artist Lisa Shepherd writes in her article "We know ourselves:"

"... my 3x great-grandpa was Cuthbert Grant," and, "My great-great-grandma Grant was a teamster who operated the ferry across the North Saskatchewan River, taking over the business after her husband passed away."

Go to any Métis gathering, and you will hear stories like these. You will hear that we know ourselves. We are enough, and not fractions or percentages. That was a construct meant to disappear us, and I won't even take a sip from that juice. We are whole people with significant and complex histories, living in the here and now, and we continue to contribute to the growth of this country.

I remember when I was teaching jigging to Mrs. Giroux's grand-daughter. I asked Mrs. Giroux if she had her citizenship card. She sternly told me, 'I don't need a card to tell me who I am. I know who I am.' It was her act of defiance against a government that actively worked to assimilate us, and now wants us to carry cards to qualify us as "enough" to be

²⁸ Loyer and Loyer, "Talking with My Daughter About Archives ," 6.

²⁹ Loyer and Loyer, 6.

Métis. I remember overhearing her talking to someone about me, and she said, "Lisa knows who she is. She knows our people and where we come from." Coming from Mrs. Giroux, it was the biggest compliment.³⁰

Mrs. Giroux's point, "I don't need a card," is salient. Metis citizenship, although considered as participation in self-government, is still a government in association with the Canadian state.

Powley, Daniels, and the MNC

Identity is a foundational issue in Metis studies as community, political groups and the Metis Nation themselves are continuing to refine a process of self-identification based on tradition, genealogy, and the new legal definitions that have come about through the Canadian constitution, the 2003 *R. v. Powley* SCC decision, and the subsequent 2016 *Daniels v. Canada* decision. Historically, 'Métis' was the term for the largely Catholic, francophone population that descended from the North West Company fur traders out of Quebec, while the term English Metis or 'Half Breed' or 'Bungee' was used by the mostly Protestant, Orkney-born men who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company.³¹ The adoption of the single term Metis came through the efforts of governing bodies such as the Métis National Council. It is also the term included in Section 35 of the Canadian constitution.³²

Although several important pieces of legislation formally use the term 'Métis,' it is still being negotiated what the term legally and constitutionally means. S. 35 of the Canadian

³⁰ Lisa Shepherd, "We Know Ourselves," in *Around the Kitchen Table*, ed. Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 13.

³¹ Paul Chartrand, "'Terms of Division': Problems of 'Outside Naming' for Aboriginal People in Canada," *Journal of Indigenous Studies* 2, no. 2 (1991): 12.

³² "Constitution Act," 1982, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-12.html#h-39>. Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 477.

constitution reads: “(1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed. (2) In this Act, ‘aboriginal peoples of Canada’ includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.”³³ However, this does not define what Métis could mean in the same way that the Inuit and First Nations were more easily defined, as their status was predetermined by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and their inclusion in the Indian Act.³⁴ Métis leadership, in the form of the Métis National Council, put forward their own definition in 2002 that reads: “Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation.”³⁵ Again, self-identification is key, meaning the individual chooses to identify as Métis and not as an Indian or Inuit.

The Powley and Daniels Decisions

The 2003 *R. v. Powley* decision was a case based on Métis hunting and fishing rights brought forward by a father and son, Steve and Roddy Powley. The Powleys, from Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, had been hunting and had caught a bull moose. They tagged the moose with a note that included their Métis card and a note which read “harvesting meat for winter.”³⁶ They were subsequently arrested for hunting without a licence. The trial went through several stages, with the Powleys’ claiming they had Aboriginal hunting rights as per their inclusion in s. 35. The government argued that they did not. The Powleys won their initial case in 1998, the Crown

³³ “Constitution Act, 1982,” Pub. L. No. Being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK) (1982), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-12.html#h-39>.

³⁴ “Indian Act, RSC 1985,” Pub. L. No. c I-5 (1985), <https://canlii.ca/t/7vhk>.

³⁵ Métis National Council, “Citizenship.”

³⁶ Jean Teillet, “*R. v. Powley* A Summary of the Supreme Court of Canada Reasons for Judgment” (Pape & Salter Barristers & Solicitors, 2003), <http://www.pstlaw.ca/resources/Powley%20summary-final.pdf>.

appealed, and the Ontario Court of Appeal heard the case in 2001. Again, the Court found in favour of the Powleys and the Crown appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC). The Crown lost once again, and the Powleys (and by extension all Métis) gained federal recognition of their Aboriginal right to hunt.³⁷ As Jennifer Adese notes, “what was at stake in *R. v. Powley*, inasmuch as the case was about Métis rights, was the question of whether the Métis community that the defendants in the case claimed to be from *existed* as an Aboriginal community”³⁸ The SCC decision offered an outline of who could claim rights as Métis. The decision reads:

The term “Métis” in s.35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage; rather, it refers to distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears. A Métis community is a group of Métis with a distinctive collective identity, living together in the same geographical area and sharing a common way of life.³⁹

The decision is clear that Metis peoples are distinct from non-status peoples, and must share identity, territory and way of life.⁴⁰ The next section is what has been colloquially called the ‘Powley test.’ It lays out the requirements for ‘formal identification,’ how an individual qualifies as Métis under the constitution:

The verification of a claimant’s membership in the relevant contemporary community is crucial, since individuals are only entitled to exercise Métis aboriginal rights by virtue of their ancestral connection to and current membership in a Métis community. Self-identification, ancestral connection, and community acceptance are factors which define Métis identity for the purpose of claiming Métis rights under s.35.⁴¹

These specific factors—verification of membership in a contemporary community, self-identification, ancestral connection, and community acceptance—are benchmarks for Métis

³⁷ Teillet.

³⁸ Adese, *Aboriginal TM*, 54.

³⁹ *R. v. Powley*, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207.

⁴⁰ For a in-depth analysis of the implications of the Powley decision and the Metis Nation see: Andersen, *Métis*.

⁴¹ *R. v. Powley*, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207.

citizenship. The MNC and the governing members have adopted these as membership requirements to access s. 35 rights, explicitly substance hunting and harvesting.

This was not an easy transition; the release of the MNC's national definition of "Métis" means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Metis Nation in 2002.⁴² The Powley decision in 2003 caused a lot of consternation amongst communities, and the imposition of further restrictions alienated many long-term community members. This has recently been an issue with the Métis Nation Ontario and their acceptance of seven northern communities that the other Metis organizations questioned as being outside of the "homeland."⁴³ It led to an explosion of Metis self-identification in the 2016 Census, and an emergence post-Powley of so-called 'eastern metis.'⁴⁴ Social scientist Daniel Leroux writes: "French-language media popularized the idea that there existed a 'Quebec métis' or 'Eastern métis,' people who not only were Indigenous, but had existed since the dawn of the colony as "métis," regularly conflating its dual meaning: mixed-race and a distinct Indigenous people."⁴⁵ These groups claim they also have newly-discovered Indigenous rights, an example of 'race shifting,'⁴⁶ which have been summarily

⁴² Métis National Council, "Citizenship."

⁴³ Shari Narine, "MNO Will Present Its Case to Determine Future in Métis National Council," *Windspeaker.Com*, October 6, 2021. See also Jason Madden, "After the Hysteria: Understanding Daniels v. Canada from a Métis Nation Perspective," in *Daniels v. Canada: In and beyond the Courts*, ed. Nathalie Kermoal and Chris Andersen (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 44–77.

⁴⁴ Andersen, *Métis*; Chris Andersen, "From Nation to Population: The Racialisation of 'Métis' in the Canadian Census," *Nations and Nationalism* 14, no. 2 (April 2008): 347–68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2008.00331.x>; David S. Koffman and Paul L. Gareau, "Jews and Métis in Canada: Ethnic Mobility and the Politics of Counting," in *The Ever-Dying People?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023), 214–29.

⁴⁵ Darryl Leroux, *Distorted Descent: White Claims to Indigenous Identity* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019), 7.

⁴⁶ For information on the phenomenon of race shifting see Sturm, *Becoming Indian*; Leroux, *Distorted Descent*.

rejected by Metis scholars like Adam Gaudry, Chris Andersen, Chelsea Vowel, Jennifer Adese, and Darryl Leroux.⁴⁷

There have been two other important Metis decisions since *Powley*. *Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada* (2013) determined that the federal government had failed the Manitoba Metis peoples in their allocation of territory with Manitoba's entrance into confederation with the Manitoba Act of 1870.⁴⁸ The second is *Daniels v. Canada* (2016,) a 17-year case was brought by Metis leader Harry Daniels, representing the Metis, and Leah Gardner, representing Non-Status Indians. After Daniels' death, his son Gabriel and Terry Joudrey were added as plaintiffs. The decision affirmed that, "Métis and non-status Indians are "Indians" under s. 91(24)," ⁴⁹, which is a change from the trial court's decision that excluded Non-Status Indians and anyone outside the jurisdiction of the *Powley* decision. Section s. 91(24) of the British North American (BNA) Act notes that the federal government has legislative authority over "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians"⁵⁰ Historian Nathalie Kermoal and sociologist Chris Andersen note:

At least formally, the Daniels decision puts an end to the federal government's politics of avoidance that have left the Métis in jurisdictional limbo. The signing of recent framework agreements by Métis organizations in Western Canada show how s. 91(24) has opened the door for the Métis Nation to forge a new relationship with Canada based on a "nation-to-nation," "government-to-government" dialogue, a foundation and

⁴⁷ Adam Gaudry and Chris Andersen, "Daniels v. Canada: Racialized Legacies, Settler Self-Indigenization and the Denial of Indigenous Peoplehood," *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 36 (2016): 19–30; Chelsea Vowel and Darryl Leroux, "White Settler Antipathy and the Daniels Decision," *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 36 (2016): 30–42.

⁴⁸ Nathalie Kermoal and Chris Andersen, eds., *Daniels v. Canada: In and beyond the Courts* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 3.

⁴⁹ *Daniels v. Canada*, [2016] 1 SCR 99.

⁵⁰ "British North America Act, 1867," 30 & 31 Victoria, c. 3 (UK) § (1867), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-12.html#h-39>.

accommodation that heralds the end of the political and administrative isolation of the Métis Nation.”⁵¹

Up until 2012, the Metis Nations and Non-Status Indians worked with the Office of the Federal Interlocuter, an agency created to service those excluded from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) (which is now Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada or CIRNAC), whose mandate was derived from the Indian Act.⁵² Outside of a jurisdiction change, which predated, and possibly anticipated, the Daniels Decision, what Daniels means is unclear.

R. v. Daniels and R. v. Powley litigator Jason Madden notes, “Jokingly, I have compared Daniels to a Rorschach inkblot test because everyone who reads it can see what they want within it.”⁵³ What Madden makes clear is that Daniels does not mean that the Metis Nation is included under the Indian Act. Rather, the decision affirms that Metis and non-Status Indians were included in the BNA Act’s s.91(24), which states that the federal government can pass legislation regarding Metis and non-Status Indians.⁵⁴ Why was this so important? Madden explains: “Métis and non-Status Indian leaders had heard from Canada—for generations—that uncertainty on this issue was a reason to not deal with the people and communities they represented; and the Plaintiffs had evidence to show that this excuse (as absurd as it was) had directly caused these people and communities significant harm.” They also understood that recognition and

⁵¹ Nathalie Kermoal and Chris Andersen, “Introduction,” in *Daniels v. Canada: In and beyond the Courts*, ed. Nathalie Kermoal and Chris Andersen (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 4.

⁵² Government of Canada, “Mandate, Roles and Responsibilities,” Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, November 25, 2009, <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/arp/mrr-eng.asp>.

⁵³ Madden, “After the Hysteria: Understanding Daniels v. Canada from a Métis Nation Perspective,” 44. Madden was a litigator in *R. v. Powley*, *MMF v. Canada* and *Daniels v. Canada*. Adian McNabb, “From Ignored to a Nation-to-Nation Relationship: Jason Madden’s 20 Years Advocating for Metis Rights,” *Law Times*, March 27, 2024, <https://www.lawtimesnews.com/news/features/from-ignored-to-a-nation-to-nation-relationship-jason-maddens-20-years-advocating-for-metis-rights/384958>.

⁵⁴ Madden, “After the Hysteria: Understanding Daniels v. Canada from a Métis Nation Perspective,” 47.

jurisdiction had led to funding and interest in negotiation on the part of the federal government.⁵⁵ The SCC Daniels decision did not, however, determine who was a Metis, or a “rights bearing community,” as this remains with the Powley case.⁵⁶

Citizenship and the Provincial Metis Nations

How does genealogy come into these SCC decisions and into the day-to-day practices of the provincial Metis Nations? It concerns how the provincial Metis governments and their corresponding registries interpreted *R. v. Powley* and their adoption of the MNC national definition. The MNC notes: “An essential element of self-determination and self-government is the right to determine our own citizenship based on our own citizenship criteria,” which justified establishing the national definition in 2002.⁵⁷ They explain: “In its judgement in *R. v. Powley* 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that Métis are a rights-bearing Aboriginal people and set out the components of a Métis definition for the purpose of claiming Aboriginal rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 based on *ancestral connection* to and acceptance by historic Métis communities.”[italics mine]⁵⁸ *Powley* and the ‘national definition’ gave the MNC a set of parameters to enshrine its provincial governing members’ citizenship requirements. Genealogy was the method needed to establish a prospective citizen’s connection to a ‘historic community’ and demonstrate Metis ancestry.

⁵⁵ Madden, 47.

⁵⁶ Madden, 60.

⁵⁷ Métis National Council, “Citizenship,” 2024, <https://www.metisnation.ca/about/citizenship>.

⁵⁸ Métis National Council, “Citizenship.” There are organizations that are not part of the MNC umbrella that represent Metis people; however, as this is focused on organizations and registries developed from *Powley*, this will focus on only federally recognized Metis governments.

There are minor differences among the provincial Métis Nations, but they all base their citizenship on four factors outlined in *Powley* and the national definition. *R. v. Powley* notes Métis “are only entitled to exercise Métis aboriginal rights by virtue of their ancestral connection to and current membership in a Métis community. Self-identification, ancestral connection, and community acceptance are factors which define Métis identity for the purpose of claiming Métis rights under s. 35.”⁵⁹ The MNA breaks this down on their website:

A Métis must fulfill the National Definition of Métis:

- **Historical Proof** means evidence of an ancestor who received a land grant or scrip granted under the Manitoba Act or the Dominion Lands Act, or who was recognized as a Métis in other government, church or community records.
- **Historic Métis Nation** means the Aboriginal people, then known as Métis or Half-Breeds, who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland.
- **Historic Métis Nation** Homeland means the area of land in west-central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known.
- **Métis Nation** means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the “Aboriginal peoples of Canada” within s.35 of the Constitution Act of 1982. Distinct from other Aboriginal peoples means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.⁶⁰ [bold in the original]

To establish that an individual has met the benchmarks, the governing nations require specific documentation. I will use the Métis Nation of British Columbia (MNBC) as an example because they have had the most stable registry process of the provincial Métis Nations. The MNBC’s registry asks for the following: a long-form birth certificate showing parental information, birth certificates of the applicant’s Métis parent and grandparents back to 1901, an ancestral chart (MNBC call it a “My Métis Family Chart”) and proof of residency. Applicants must allow the MNBC to establish that they are not a Status Indian with Crown-Indigenous Relations and

⁵⁹ *R. v. Powley*, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207.

⁶⁰ Métis Nation of Alberta, “Guidelines & Requirements,” Métis Nation of Alberta, 2024, <https://albertametis.com/registry/guidelines-and-requirement/>.

Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and to indicate which ‘Chartered Community’ they belong to.⁶¹

Chartered communities or ‘Locals’ are the neighborhood organizations that do grassroots work in their communities. The MNBC has 39 Chartered Communities organized into seven geographic regions: Region 1: Vancouver Island and Powell River, Region 2: Lower Mainland, Region 3: Thompson Okanagan, Region 4: Kootenays, Region 5: North Central, Region 6: Northwest, and Region 7: Northeast. If someone from Kamloops were applying for Metis citizenship, they would be a member of the Two Rivers Métis Society in Region 3.⁶² Clarence Kipling co-founded the Calgary Local #87 in 1962.⁶³

All these elements meet different aspects of Metis citizenship outlined by Powley and the National Definition. The Chartered Community/Locals fulfill the “community acceptance” requirement. The CIRNAC verification certifies that they are “distinct from other Aboriginal peoples,” as you cannot actively hold both Indian Status and Metis Citizenship.⁶⁴ The “Ancestral connection to a Historic Community” is established by the vital statistics documentation and the genealogical ancestral chart demonstrates that the applicant has a verifiable Metis ancestor who also lived in a historic Metis community. Genealogy is a requirement for citizenship.

⁶¹ Métis Nation British Columbia, “MNBC Citizenship Application,” May 28, 2024, <https://www.mnbc.ca/media/2040>.

⁶² “Chartered Communities,” MNBC, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www.mnbc.ca/citizens-culture/chartered-communities>.

⁶³ Paquette, “Senator Loves the Trenches.”

⁶⁴ This, of course does not reflect reality, many Metis people are also First Nations, however under Powley decision re membership they are considered separate. Powley does not exclude family who have held status in the past.

The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S), and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) all have requirements similar to those of the MNBC. The only difference is that MN-S does not offer a separate Harvesting Card (which allow members to legally hunt, fish, and trap in specified areas). These four registries require a genealogical component, current ID, and proof of residence.⁶⁵ Where the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has diverged is that they are now encouraging citizenship applications from anyone who has ancestral Metis connections to Manitoba, no matter what province they are currently living in.⁶⁶ As such, they have included proof of residence for individuals wanting citizenship and a harvesting card. They cannot offer s. 35 harvesting rights to Metis peoples who reside outside the province as they need ‘community acceptance’ to meet Powley. This is controversial, as it may mean an individual can apply to be a citizen of more than one provincial organization. However, as the internal politics of the provincial bodies are outside this study, I will only note that the MMF asks for documentation similar to that of the other central registries for harvesting, and the citizenship application does not need proof of residence.⁶⁷ MNBC has, as of November 2024, chosen to leave the MNC alongside the MMF and are operating independently.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Métis Nation of Alberta, “Guidelines & Requirements”; Métis Nation Saskatchewan, “Citizenship,” Métis Nation Saskatchewan, 2024, <https://metisnation.sk.com/citizenship/>; Métis Nation Ontario, “Citizenship,” Métis Nation of Ontario, 2024, <https://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/>.

⁶⁶Renée Lilley, “Manitoba Métis Federation Invites Non-Manitoba Residents to Apply for Citizenship,” *CBC News*, July 10, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/metis-manitoba-beyond-borders-1.6507031>.

⁶⁷ Manitoba Métis Federation, “Central Registry Office - CRO,” Manitoba Métis Federation, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www.mmf.mb.ca/central-registry-office-cro>.

⁶⁸ Métis Nation British Columbia, “Métis Nation British Columbia Withdraws from the Métis National Council.”

Table 6-1 Provincial Governments Citizenship Application Requirements⁶⁹

Provincial Organisation	Proof of in-Province Residency	Birth Certificate (Self)	Birth Certificate (Family)	Ascendant/ Pedigree Chart (Genealogy)	CIRNAC Release	Local/ Chartered Community Information	Photo
MNBC	Yes – Drivers Licence, BC ID or BC Services Card	Yes – Long form or Birth Registration	Yes - to 1901	Yes - Five Generation starting from applicant	Yes	Yes	Yes
MNA	Yes – Photo Identification and declaration	Yes – Copy of Birth Document	No - Additional information may be required on request	Yes – Five generation Chart (to mid 1800s.) Separate Paternal and Maternal Charts	Yes	Yes	Yes
MN-S	Yes	Yes – for out of province births In province information is accessed directly from e-health	No In province information is accessed directly from e-health	Yes - Five Generation Starting from parent	Yes	Yes	Yes (16+)
MMF	No	Yes –birth Certificate or Baptismal Certificate	No	No Tree included – Instructions are to Contact St. Boniface	Yes	Yes	Yes
MNO	Yes	Yes –Long Form Birth Certificate or Baptismal Certificate	Yes - Church or civic documents confirming Métis ancestry after 1750	Yes – List form starting from applicant and going to Metis ancestor	No – Application includes declaration	No	Yes

⁶⁹ Métis Nation British Columbia, “MNBC Citizenship Application”; Métis Nation of Alberta, “MNA Citizen Application,” 2020, <https://albertametis.com/app/uploads/2023/05/MNA-Citizen-Application-Pkg-2020.pdf>; Métis Nation Saskatchewan, “MN-S Individual Citizenship Application,” June 14, 2021, <https://metisnationsk.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/MN-S-Applicaton-PDF-Fillable-and-printable-June-14-2021.pdf>; Métis Nation Ontario, “Citizenship Application Form,” 2021, https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/REG-Citizenship-App-2021_fillable.pdf; Manitoba Métis Federation, “Citizenship/ Harvester Identification Card Application,” January 2021.

Table 6-2 Provincial Government's Harvesting Card Application Requirements ⁷⁰

Provincial Organisation	Proof of in Province Residency	Separate Application	Photo
MNBC – Separate Form in addition to Citizenship	Yes – Drivers Licence BC ID or BC Services Card	Separate Application in addition to Citizenship	Yes
MNA – Separate Form in addition to Citizenship	Yes – Photo Identification and declaration	Separate Application in addition to Citizenship	Yes
MN-S –no separate card	N/A	N/A	N/A
MMF –	Yes – includes declaration	One application with an additional form re residency	Yes
MNO - Additional Form – Must be a Citizen	Yes – Photo Identification and declaration	Separate Application in addition to Citizenship	Yes

The full MNBC application package follows:



Citizenship Application Checklist

Requirements for a Complete Application:

- ☐ 1. Applicant's birth certificate with parental information or registration of live birth
- ☐ 2. Copy of birth certificates with parental information for the following relatives:
 - ☐ a. Métis Parent
 - ☐ b. Métis Grandparent
 - ☐ c. Métis Great Grandparent
 - ☐ d. Métis Great Great Grandparent
- ☐ 3. A "passport quality" photo, capturing your head and shoulders:
 - ☐ a. Do not send a photo of your passport
 - ☐ b. Take the photo against a solid colour background
 - ☐ c. All applicants 15+ require a photo. Children under the age of 15 do not
- ☐ 4. A completed MNBC My Métis Family Chart, to the best of your ability (page 3)
- ☐ 5. Applicants under the age of 15 require parent / guardian signatures
- ☐ 6. Copy of your valid BC Driver's License or BC Services Card

BIRTH RECORDS ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL MÉTIS RELATIVES BORN AFTER 1901. YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE INCOMPLETE UNTIL YOU PROVIDE ALL RECORDS

Don't Have a Required Birth Certificate?

Contact the Vital Statistics Provincial branch that the birth was registered in:

BC ecos.vs.gov.bc.ca/
AB registryconnect.ca/apply/how-to-apply.html
SK ehealthsask.ca/residents/births/Pages/Order-a-Birth-Certificate.aspx
MB residents.gov.mb.ca/reference.html?id=details&program_id=151
ON ontario.ca/page/get-or-replace-ontario-birth-certificate

If Vital Statistics is unable to provide a birth record with parental information or a registration of live birth, please contact our office for support.

V1 05.28.2024 DISCLAIMER: Printed hard copies of controlled documents are considered uncontrolled. All personnel using hard copies for ease of reference are required to determine the up-to-date status by matching to the current electronic version from the MNBC.ca website. Page 1 of 7

Figure 6-2 MNBC Application Checklist (May 2024)



Please email completed applications to citizenship@mmbc.ca.
Please send all mail to: Ministry of Citizenship
#380-13401 108th Avenue
Surrey, BC V3T 5T3

MNBC CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION

Tell us about yourself			
Legal First Name		Legal Middle Name	
Legal Last Name		Maiden and/or previous last name	
Gender (Male/Female/X)		Pronouns	
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)	City of Birth	Province of Birth	Country of Birth
Preferred method of contact (Email or mail)		Email Address	
Primary Phone Number		Secondary Phone Number	
Home Address			
Home City	Home Postal Code	Home Province	Home Country
Mailing Address - if different			
City	Postal Code	Province	Country
Are you a Canadian Citizen (Yes/No)?		Are you Adopted (Yes/No)?	
Do you hold a Certificate of Indian Status issued by the Government of Canada (Yes/No)?			
Do you have a connection to your Métis Community (Yes/No)?		Which Métis Community do you belong to (If Yes)?	
Are you a Veteran (Yes/No)?		Are you an active member of the CAF or RCMP (Yes/No)?	

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Figure 6-3 Figure 4 MNBC Personal Information Form (May 2024)

⁷⁰ Métis Nation British Columbia, "Harvester Card Application," 2022, <https://www.mmbc.ca/sites/default/files/2022-07/Harvester%20Card%20Application%202022%20fillable.pdf>; Métis Nation of Alberta, "MNA Harvester Application," September 2022, <https://albertametis.com/app/uploads/2022/09/MNA-Harvester-Application-Fillable-SEP22.pdf>; Manitoba Métis Federation, "Citizenship/ Harvester Identification Card Application"; Métis Nation Ontario, "Harvester's Certificate Application," 2024, <https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/REG-harvester-application2023updated.pdf>.

Tell us about yourself		
Is your spouse currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces or RCMP (Yes/No)?		
If you are 18 or under, is your legal guardian currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces or RCMP (Yes/No)?		
If you would like to share with us, what made you decide to apply for your MNBC Citizenship?		

If Applicant is 18 years of age or under		
Name of person completing the application	Are you the Applicant's Legal Guardian (Yes/No)?	Is the Applicant living with a Legal Guardian (Yes/No)?
List all Legal Guardians		
Name of Legal Guardian	Relationship with Applicant	Is the Applicant living with Legal Guardian (Yes/No)?

Tell us about your Family	
Does a member of your family have a Métis Nation British Columbia Citizenship card (Yes/No)?	
If yes, Please provide their Full Name	What is their Citizenship number?
What is their relationship to the Applicant?	

V1 05.28.2024 **DISCLAIMER:** Printed hard copies of controlled documents are considered uncontrolled. All personnel using hard copies for ease of reference are required to determine the up-to-date status by matching to the current electronic version from the MNBC.ca website. Page 3 of 7

Figure 6-4 MNBC Personal information pp. 2 (May 2024)

My Métis Family

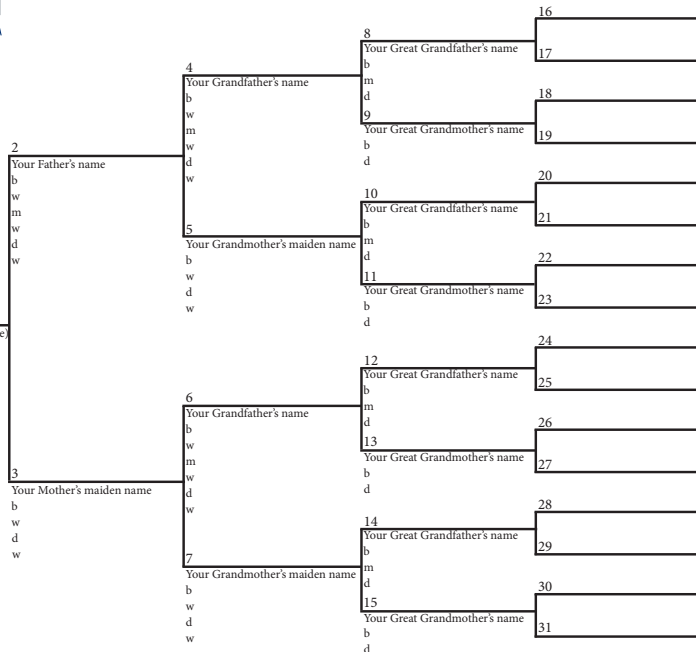
Legend:

b = date of birth
(mm/dd/yyyy)
w = where
m = date of marriage
w = where
d = date of death
w = where

Please use a star to clearly indicate which line is your Métis ancestry.

1
Your name (maiden name if female)
b
w
m
w

Please include as much information as possible to avoid delays in processing your application



V1 05.28.2024

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Page 3 of 7

Figure 6-5 MNBC "My Metis Family" Genealogical Chart (May 2024)

Supporting Documents
Please include copies of the following documents when submitting your application. Do not send originals. Copy of your birth certificate listing parental information, or the Registration of Live Birth for your: • Métis Parent (If born after 1901) • Métis Grandparent (If born after 1901) • Métis Great grandparent (If born after 1901) Copy of a valid BC Government ID; only 1 required. • BC ID • Driver's License • BC Services Card A quality photo head and shoulder shot (not required for applicants under 15); Photo must have been taken in the last six months and be unaltered. • In colour, clear, sharp, in focus, and in high resolution • Face and shoulders to the camera, straight on and centered • Taken with a neutral facial expression with eyes open and mouth closed (no smiling) • Background must be white with uniform lighting with no shadows • No sunglasses, hats, scarves or head coverings unless worn for religious purposes *If you have an immediate family member that has their MNBC Citizenship, please supply the documents to connect you to that family member. If additional documents are required, they will be requested once your application has been reviewed.

Oath of Citizenship		
I agree to Métis Nation British Columbia's Constitution, legislation, bylaws, and policies, as amended from time to time, and voluntarily authorize Métis Nation British Columbia to assert and advance collectively held Métis rights, interests, and claims on behalf of myself, my Métis Chartered Community and the Métis collective in British Columbia, including negotiating and arriving at agreements that advance, determine, recognize and respect Métis rights.		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Last Name of Applicant</td> <td>Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)</td> </tr> </table>	Last Name of Applicant	Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)
Last Name of Applicant	Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)	
Signature of applicant or legal guardian		

Figure 6-6 Oath of Citizenship (May 2024)

Indigenous Services Canada		
I authorize MNBC to share the personal information of the applicant with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to establish that the applicant is not a Registered Indian as described by the Indian Act.		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Last Name of Applicant</td> <td>Date of Birth: (mm/dd/yyyy)</td> </tr> </table>	Last Name of Applicant	Date of Birth: (mm/dd/yyyy)
Last Name of Applicant	Date of Birth: (mm/dd/yyyy)	
Signature of applicant or legal guardian		

Declaration, Privacy Statement and Consent
Privacy Statement This statement explains the purposes and use of personal information provided to Métis Nation British Columbia ("MNBC", "our"), through the Citizenship Application. Your consent to the following is required for your participation in the MNBC Citizenship Application process: You consent that MNBC can collect and use the personal information provided, as stated in the MNBC Constitution, and the MNBC Citizenship Act and the MNBC Privacy Policy. MNBC may use the personal information provided to seek confirmation that you are entitled for registration with the Ministry of Citizenship and to access specific programs, services, and benefits with MNBC. That the personal information provided may be used to assist with MNBC research and publications documenting the history of the Métis. Your data may be shared with other Ministries within MNBC for related business purposes and will be shared with your Métis Chartered Community. You agree to be bound by our Privacy Policy for the consent, use, and disclosure of the personal information provided. The personal information provided is protected under applicable Canadian Federal and Provincial Privacy Laws, as stated within our Privacy Policy. You understand that the contents of the submitted application are confidential and agree with the above-stated uses of the personal information provided. I authorize the Ministry of Citizenship to retain my application and subsequent documentation as long as necessary to fulfill the purposes stated above. For more information regarding our Privacy Policy, please visit mnbcc.ca I have read and understand the Privacy Statement in its entirety, and consent for the collection, storage, use, and disclosure of the personal information provided in this application as described in the document above. I agree: (Initials)

Figure 6-7 ISC and Personal Information Release Form

Declaration		
I solemnly declare that the statements made in this application, as well as the documents and photos submitted to support this application, are unaltered, true, and accurate. I agree: (Initials) Consent I acknowledge MNBC Ministry of Citizenship may use the information and supporting documents within this application during the assessment process to verify other members of my biological family who may or may have applied for Citizenship. I authorize MNBC to use the genealogical documentation provided to assist with research and publications documenting the history of the Métis. I consent to the use of Pedigree Charts and Genealogical Documents. I agree: (Initials) I agree to participate in the Métis Population Health Program to improve access to Métis specific health-related information in B.C. and improve health outcomes for Métis Citizens. Yes, include me I hereby authorize the Ministry of Citizenship to use the information provided in the preparation of voter lists. I consent to add the applicant's email address to the MNBC email distribution list.		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Last Name of Applicant</td> <td>Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)</td> </tr> </table>	Last Name of Applicant	Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)
Last Name of Applicant	Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)	
Signature of applicant or legal guardian		

Applicant Signature
Do not sign if applicant is 14 or under. Signature must not go outside of the box.

Figure 6-8 MNBC Declaration Form (May 2024)

Many of the provincial Metis governments have partnered with universities and have invested in online genealogical databases and genealogical resources rather than the single-access archives like Denney's found in cities, which may require travel and cost to access. These were funded by the federal government to continue "federal departments, provinces and Aboriginal organizations... joint research efforts to further understand rights-bearing Métis communities and strengthening and sustaining membership and identification systems."⁷¹ One of the first was the Métis Aboriginal Title Research Initiative (MatriX). Instituted in 1999, it was part of the research lab at the University of Alberta Faculty of Native Studies, headed by geographer Frank Tough and funded partly by the MN-S. The Matri-X project looked at following the complex paper trail left by the Metis.⁷² It then became known as the Métis Archival Project (MAP). The project "does applied archival research intended for the litigation of Métis rights, taking the crown's historical records and using them to support Métis claims today."⁷³ The lab has also digitized its records with accompanying metadata entered by researchers. After the Powley decision, the MNC was interested in creating a public-facing database for citizens under the direction of historian Nicole St-Onge and the MNC's National Research Initiative.⁷⁴ The data put together by Tough and St-Onge became the basis of the Métis Nation Historical Database. The database tutorial notes that "The Database allows users to access Métis related archival information, previously only available at Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa) or on microfilm.

⁷¹ These initiatives were primarily funded by monies made available Post-Powley by the Government of Canada. Through the Office of the Federal Interlocutor to support the building of registries and to conduct research Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Federal Interlocutor's Contribution Program: Terms and Conditions," guide, December 6, 2013, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1386384755056/1615724714599>; Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Evaluation of the Federal Interlocutor's Contribution Program and Powley Initiative," assessment, April 28, 2014, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1398695363830/1538051775389>.

⁷² Linda Goyette, "The X Files," *Canadian Geographic*, 2003.

⁷³ "Métis Archival Project (MAP) Research Lab | Faculty of Native Studies," accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www.ualberta.ca/native-studies/research/map-lab.html>.

⁷⁴ University of Ottawa, "Nicole St-Onge," 2024, <https://uniweb.uottawa.ca/members/538>.

It is intended for genealogists and Métis to construct Métis family trees using the documents in the database.”⁷⁵ The MMF, after leaving the MNC, now hosts the Métis Nation Historical Online Database.

The MNBC Historic Document Database (HDD) was a project in partnership with MNBC and the Centre for Social, Spatial and Community Justice (now the Institute for Community Engaged Research) at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO), for whom I was a researcher working under anthropologist Mike Evans. The HDD project, like the Voyager and MatriX Projects, was undertaken as a partnership with a provincial Metis Government, the MNBC and Evans, who worked as its research director. It involved the

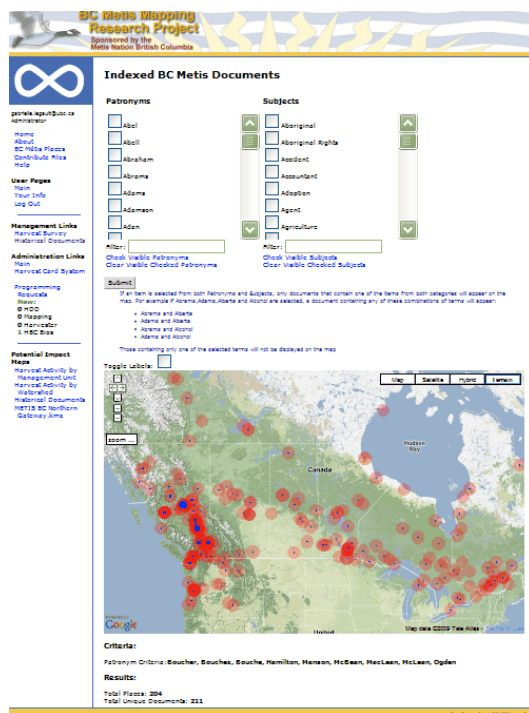


Figure 6-9 Historic Document Database Screenshot Using patronym "MacDougall" bcmetisiteizen.ca 2018

collection and digitization of family history documents, photos, secondary sources, vital statistics, and others. It differs from scrip or government record databases as this project was designed with a participatory action methodology.⁷⁶ The project specifically solicited community documents which could be uploaded directly to the database or shared with researchers or registry staff. The UBCO research team trained the staff, visited communities and helped community members scan high quality copies and to upload their documents.

⁷⁵ “Tutorial,” Métis Nation Historical Online Database, 2007, <https://www.metisnationdatabase.ca/tutorial/>.

⁷⁶ Mike Evans et al., “New Media, DVD and Web-Based Representations, and Map-Based Mashups: Digital Research with Métis in BC,” in *CURA: Explorations in Qualitative and Arts-Based Research Conference*, 2008.

Once the documents were uploaded, I catalogued them by type, authorship, and provenance and indexed them according to three criteria: the subject areas, the patronymics and the geo-location. As of 2010, the HDD had over 16,000 indexed documents.⁷⁷ The data was represented in a search bar and on a map.⁷⁸ Evans notes, “A flexible mapping tool is attached to the database, but the indexing system is particularly helpful in mapping Métis communities by the density of the documents pertaining to that community on the landscape.”⁷⁹ The HDD moved to the MNBC after 2010 and is no longer available to the general public.

A database with a different focus was created at the University of Ottawa, now housed at the St. Boniface Historical Society (Société historique de Saint-Boniface), is the database of Voyageurs Contracts. The contracts, drawn from the *Protonotaire Montréal Greffes de notaires fonds of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec*, total over 36,000 entries and cover the period between 1714 and 1830.⁸⁰ The project was started at St. Boniface and then funded under the National Research Initiative of the Métis National Council. It was supervised by St-Onge at the University of Ottawa and historian Robert Engelbert at the University of Saskatchewan.⁸¹ All of these university projects were devised to serve the research needs of Metis citizens.⁸² Powley funding allowed the Metis provincial governments to partner with universities and professors like Tough, St-Onge, and Evans to build on resources like Morin’s and Denney’s work to create new and innovative genealogical gateways. As establishing a genealogical connection through primary documents (birth certificates) and family trees is required for

⁷⁷ Barman et al., “Metis Networks in British Columbia: Examples from the Central Interior,” 362.

⁷⁸ Barman et al., “Metis Networks in British Columbia: Examples from the Central Interior.”

⁷⁹ Barman et al., 362.

⁸⁰ “Voyageurs Contracts.”

⁸¹ “Voyageurs Contracts.”

⁸² Canada, “Evaluation of the Federal Interlocutor’s Contribution Program and Powley Initiative.”

citizenship in all the recognized Metis organization's registries, making research available and focused on the needs of the Metis Nation was paramount.

Conclusion

Genealogy is a cornerstone of both *wahkootowin* and citizenship in the Metis Nation. Charles Denney, Clarence Kipling, and the researchers who followed them, like Darrel Loyer, all understood the responsibility to know your ancestors. Denney wrote letters and exchanged information at his wife's family's kitchen table, and this exploration of *wahkootowin* continued to be refined in his research relationships with Kipling and others. The genealogies left by Denney gained even more importance after his death with the Metis Nation's introduction of the National Definition and the Powley Case. Both require genealogical proof of ancestral connection to the historic Metis Nation. Although genealogy is a requirement of the citizenship process, it would be erroneous to assign it a more important role in why family history is so important to the Metis. I refer to Mrs. Geroux's response to being asked if she had her citizenship card: "She sternly told me, "I don't need a card to tell me who I am. I know who I am."⁸³ *Wahkootowin* cannot be dismissed.

⁸³ Shepherd, "We Know Ourselves," 13.

Chapter 7 Conclusion: “that neither the rain, frost, lichens, nor vandals will ever destroy...”

In 1963, Charles Denney wrote a long letter to his wife Mildred. Denney was turning 64 and, assuming he would pass before his wife, wanted Mildred to know what to do in the event of his death. The letter is a list of thirteen numbered instructions for her to follow. Many are practical: she should not spend too much on a funeral, he'd prefer cremation (he also suggested if it were easier, she could donate his body to science), and he'd like to be buried in Tofield, AB, with his parents. The letter also instructed Mildred to put the simplest marker possible on his grave, noting, “I shall not die reasoned for anything, and in ten years I will be a vague remembrance for a few. In 40 years, a huge monument could not make me mean anything to anybody.”¹ In ten years, things would change drastically for Denney. His beloved Mildred died, he retired, and he developed a new passion, genealogy. For the next 30+ years, Denney spent his free time working feverishly on Mildred's extended family tree. Against his own advice, Denney installed an elaborate historical marker on Mildred's grave detailing her family history, feeling that unlike him, her history should be remembered.² Denney was wrong about the next 40 years. He could not have anticipated that he would live for another 38 years, that he would remarry, become a well-known figure in Edmonton, and would develop longstanding relationships in the Alberta community of genealogists that he, himself, helped found.

¹ Charles Denney to Mildred Denney, December 28, 1963, M7144/401900 Edmonds Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Charles Denney Collection, Glenbow Archive, Calgary AB.

² Linda, Find a Grave Contributor ID #47353767., *Grave of Mildred Sherlock Denney*.

This dissertation examines the work that Denney produced from the late 1960s up until his death in 2001, held at the Glenbow Museum. Denney, described as having a “pack-rat instinct and a bookkeeper's attention to detail,” collected information on approximately 50,000 individuals arranged in over 1200 families, writing tens of thousands of letters and driving more than 80,000 miles in the process.³ The 2600 Family Files kept in the Glenbow Archives is one of the most significant genealogical collections of early fur trade families. Doug Cass, former chief archivist at the Glenbow, noted in a memorial piece in the *Edmonton Journal* that the collection “is the most useful source for Metis genealogy and the early fur trading families in the Canadian west anywhere in existence.”⁴ The Glenbow collection also contains Denney’s personal papers, including documents, photos and, most significantly to this research, years and years of personal correspondence.

Taking inspiration from Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever* and Ann Laura Stoler’s work on archives, this dissertation asserts that the Denney collection is more than a colonial archive. It is an anti-colonial archive. Denney participated unwittingly in the Cree/Métis process of *wahkootowin*, or relatedness, through his relationships with his wife, her family, a community of collaborators, and lastly, the Glenbow museum. The collection exists in a space and place that intersects with ideas of race, privilege and power, but that power can be used to serve Indigenous needs. The archive is not a neutral space, but neither are the collections nor do they have to

³ Thomas, “Tracing the Roots of Western Canada’s Metis; His Wife’s Curiosity and His Passion for History Launched Charles Denney on an Exhaustive Quest.”

⁴ Jac MacDonald, “Chronicler of Metis Culture Honoured: Traced History of 1,300 Families in Red River Valley: Life and Times -- Charles Douglas Denney,” *Edmonton Journal*, March 16, 2002.

ascribe to the archive's colonial leanings. Rather, they can serve a more anti-colonial purpose, serving their own communities like the Metis Nation's use of Denney's documents.

Derrida writes about the need to deconstruct “not only on the history of the concept of the archive, but perhaps also on the history of the formation of a *concept in general*.”⁵ The archivization of a place and its items, in the case of Derrida's lecture, the transformation of Sigmund Freud's home to a museum and archive, creates change and imposes a form of intellectual and physical authority to its contents. He writes, “With such a status, the documents... are only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*. They inhabit this uncommon, this place of election where law and singularity intersect in privilege.”⁶ This privilege, embedded in the root word *Archē*, is the building where things begin and where commands are given and cannot be mistaken as inherently neutral.⁷

Stoler builds on this concept by urging colonial scholars to recognize this colonial and institutional power and to engage in looking at the creation and life of the archive, moving research from simply accessing archives as a source to approaching archives as a subject.⁸ Archival collections should be approached “as something in between a set of documents, their institutions, and a repository of memory - both a place and a cultural space that encompass official documents but are not confined to them.”⁹ This dissertation argues that Denney created an anti-colonial archive of Metis history. The archive was created by Metis families using

⁵ Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, 5.

⁶ Derrida, 3.

⁷ Derrida, 1.

⁸ Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” 2002, 83–84; Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*.

⁹ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, 2009, 49.

kitchen table and *wahkootowin* methods; Denney relied on many Metis collaborators who shaped the archive. When it moved to a public space it was used by Metis people to secure rights and meet cultural obligations.

This dissertation looks at the Denney archive, created by a white settler-Canadian of very conservative politics, constructed of Metis families, used by the Metis Nation, and located in the Glenbow Museum, as an ideal collection to complicate Stoler's ideas. To best see the archive as a cohesive unit, both the Personal Papers and the Family Files are analyzed. Denney's legacy, a monument to his late wife, grew through and was guided by genealogy as a practice, the family stories he collected, the personal relationships he formed, the colleagues with whom he curated and collaborated, and the archive he left to hold and share his papers. Genealogy is a method of research and a source of information, as well as an actor and producer of *wahkootowin*. We are "no longer studying things, but the making of them."¹⁰ Denney's archive and its meaning shifted over time. Key moments were the inception when Denney received those first documents, the process of building and collaborating with other Metis researchers, the collection's purchase and establishment at the Glenbow, and finally, its use by the Metis nation to establish social and political kinship.

The first part of the dissertation looks at Denney's long life, and his close relationships, which are visible in the personal papers Denney included as part of his collection. His work as a teacher in small-town Alberta shaped his views on the need for a distinctly Anglo-Canadian history that, to him, also intersects with Western Canadian Indigenous spaces. Seemingly in

contrast to many of his populist beliefs, his time as a public servant created a sense of service and community-mindedness that led Denney to focus on the accessibility and sharing of his ‘project.’ Denney’s first wife, Mildred Sherlock a Metis woman, inspired his research and, at times, overshadowed his second marriage with Elsie Wilson. Denney’s personal perspectives, his politics and his prejudices are examined as they guided his worldview. This civic mindedness also led Denney to speak up, supporting archives when needed. However, he was also sexist, homophobic, and paternalistic, with a very specific populist political perspective.

The letters found in Denney’s Personal Papers provide insight into the personal relationships Denney cultivated in creating and guiding his collections. The papers include decades-long correspondence with Metis genealogists Clarence Kipling and Pat McCloy. Though women researchers often dominated genealogical communities, Denney’s most significant collaborations are with other men. Denney was not a descendant of the fur trade families of the Red River, the community he was researching. Instead, Denney found his relationship with Clarence Kipling an entry point into First Nations/Metis families that may not have been open to him as an outsider. In his sometimes-fraught relationship with the Glenbow, Denney relied on the insider knowledge of retired librarian Pat McCloy to help navigate the sometimes bureaucratic and political world of the Glenbow Archives. Denney also turned his administrative skills to form and advocate for the Genealogical Society of Alberta and the Historical Society of Alberta.

The Glenbow, the home of the archive, is a complex space. Created from the collections of Eric L. Harvie and shaped by individuals like Hugh Dempsey and Pat McCloy, the Glenbow

grew into a unique institution, emerging as a Museum, Archive, and Library, but not mandated as a provincial institution like the Provincial Archives or the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM). The Glenbow had the mandate to focus on the history of Western Canada. Still, it also retained the eclectic-ness of its founder, with a disparate collection of artifacts from Department of Indian Affairs Passbooks to Buddhist statuary. The neoliberal politics of Alberta and the institution's unique structure led to a crisis of funding and mandate, as well as how and who the museum and archives were prepared to serve, with ever smaller resources. The Glenbow's participation in the 1988 Olympics and its *The Spirit Sings* exhibition brought to the forefront issues with the Museum's paternalistic relationship with southern Alberta's Indigenous peoples, leading to Canada-wide changes in museum policies and pivoting to Indigenous curatorship of exhibitions. The acquisition of Denney's papers changed the Archives. It became the flagship collection and led the Glenbow to acquire more genealogical collections, making genealogy a focus of the Glenbow Archives. The Denney Collection reflects the Glenbow's desire to serve its local patrons as an open, accessible, and communal space.

Genealogy occupies a unique space in historical practice, often considered the realm of a hobby rather than serious historical inquiry. The influence of organizations like The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is significant, introducing many of the forms and language we use in genealogy today. The LDS and their FamilySearch Centres have shaped how genealogy is accessed and discussed today. The doctrinal requirement to trace family lines has led to technological advances funded by the LDS's massive investment in researching family history. There are issues with the LDS's practices, as they have been rightly identified as unethical and ahistorical, prioritizing proto-baptism and ritual sealings of non-Mormons over

ethical research. Websites like Ancestry.com and Familysearch.org have transformed how genealogy is done, making it easier for the layperson to create and share family trees. Genealogy has often not been taken seriously by historians. Though there have been efforts at professionalization, there are few academic avenues to study it.¹¹ Looking at genealogies provides a broader context for understanding how genealogies, including Denney's, are created and come to shape historical processes. Denney's archive participated in the colonial process of categorizing and containing Metis history, yet it also became a way for individual Metis families to gain power and celebrate their past. This dissertation explores the boundaries of these possibilities by carefully examining the structure of the archive itself. By focussing on family lines, Denney unwittingly emphasized *wahkootowin*. At the same time, his paternalistic and patriarchal cultural blockers limited our views of Metis women leaders.

The Family Files are the centrepiece of the Glenbow's archival collection. However, due to the size and seeming randomness of the materials, it's challenging to draw a narrative from a first glance at the materials. Using data analysis software, we have an overview of the over 2400 files and 1200 families. Most files begin in the Red River Valley and chart the dispersion of people from the valley west across the prairies and south along the American border. They also indicate racial markers, fur trade participation, letters from family members, and sometimes

¹¹ Few universities offer professional degrees in Genealogy outside of Bingham Young University in Utah. Boston University offers a certificate program in genealogy. There are some degree-level courses that explore Genealogy as a practice including "AP/Hist 4850 History Of Me: the Genealogy Seminar" at York University. See: B. Y. U. Catalog, "BYU Catalog," BYU Catalog, accessed August 16, 2024, <https://catalog.byu.edu/programs/byu-catalog.coursedog.com>; "Online Genealogy Studies Program | Boston University (BU)," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://genealogyonline.bu.edu>; York University, "AP/HIST 4850 6.00: History of Me: The Genealogy Seminar," Department of History, accessed August 16, 2024, <https://www.yorku.ca/laps/hist/course-description/ap-hist-4850-6-00-history-of-me-the-genealogy-seminar/>.

small tragic notes indicating accidents or deaths.¹² We also discuss issues that Denney encountered with individuals who were uninterested or uncomfortable with his inquiries. The Family Files, a collection of genealogies, documents, notes, obituaries and ephemera, are organized along family lines. By looking closely at the Flett file, we see that the archives illuminate stories that emerge through the charts, obituaries and notes. The detailed analysis of the Flett file illustrates a typical Family File's contents and Denney's genealogical methods. At the same time, it also provides an intimate portrait of one family's decisions and life choices over time in a changing political and social context that came to shun Metis identity. And yet, in the last few decades, the genealogy of this family has become essential to help descendants claim their Metis identity and reconnect with their family's past. By looking at collections like the Denney Family Files, it's clear that genealogy is an actor and producer of colonial knowledge. However, the Denney Family Files show how genealogy can become a producer of cultural pride and Indigenous resurgence.

One of the most significant users of the Denney genealogies is the Metis Nation. There are political reasons for establishing one's genealogy, particularly the requirements established in the Powley decision and the Metis provincial registry policies. However, the cultural concept of *wahkootowin*, the Cree/Metis worldview that prioritizes kinship, relatedness, and interconnectedness, also explains the attraction of genealogy for Metis people like Darrel Loyer and Heather Devine. As the Denney papers are a nexus of Metis family genealogies, they quickly became and continue to be essential tools for Metis people to seek citizenship and to learn about

¹² An example of this would be on pg 6 of the Bellgarde family tree Denney has a Note next to John Dufort's entry which note that he was murdered at pembina Charles Denney, "Bellegarde Family File," n.d., M7144/411000 Bellegarde Family File, Charles Denney Fonds and Metis Genealogy files, Glenbow Library and Archives, University of Calgary, Calgary AB.

their people. Denney's Family Files aided the Metis Nation's connection to genealogy, both culturally and politically.

In the 'Canada Tree E-Zine,' an online genealogy forum, there is an eulogy on the "Passing of Charles Denney." The article lists a death notice and an accompanying eulogy from Paulette Boudreault-Gilbert on behalf of the 'Metisgen' online community. The eulogy reads:

Metisgen, a group of Metis researchers and known cousins, wish to take this opportunity to Thank Charles Denney 'Publicly' for the donation of his papers and works with much foresight, leaving copies of his papers: in Calgary as well as Edmonton!

Many of our people and families who have been able to get to these centres to view these papers, have not only found themselves, their families, grand parents, great grand parents but also a History vibrant in the making of this land and its continued support of everyone of its children within its Genealogy!

The Metis do not span only this province but the whole of this Continent born from the love/hate/in some cases very bias control of historical renderings of past generations of both Native & Immigrating cultures who came to these shores and from them all, we the children of every generation born since, are what is not commonly known but are in fact: North America's Genealogy!

Charles understood this once he realized what it is he had stumble[sic.] upon, made friends with some very good land based Metis Genealogists and Researchers, who like him, also have since passed on, but every last one of them, continued to connect as many as they were able to do, within the short time it is they all had to do this within? Many have been able to find us from what it is he and many other's have left behind for not only this generation but far more generations who also are growing behind us all.

A Friend of the Metis is never forgotten, but always will be cherished much as every member of our most interesting and vibrant Genealogy and History is building and becoming known!¹³

This was Charles Denney's goal, to leave something behind of substance, "a written monument to them, one that neither the rain, frost, lichens, nor vandals will ever destroy, and one that may be viewed conveniently, possibly in several places."¹⁴ He wanted to establish "North America's

¹³ Paulette Boudreault-Gilbert, "The Passing of Charles Denney," *Canada Tree E-Zine* (blog), 2022, <https://canadatree.tripod.com/canadatreezine/id11.html>.

¹⁴ Denney, "Application for Assistance under the Explorations Program."

Genealogy,” to the research of other genealogists, and to build a monument to Mildred’s extended family.

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