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## Lambton County Branch OGS Gathers British Home Children Information

The Government of Canada has designated the year 2010 to be "The Year of the British Home Child."

100,000 British Home Children came to Canada between 1869 and 1948. These were children who were sent from British orphanages or other institutions to work as farm labourers and domestic servants. Many fought and died in World War One. Some 4 million or 12% of Canadians can count one as an ancestor.

How fitting that the Lambton County Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society is in the second year of gathering data for its Lambton British Home Children Inventory. To date, the Branch's coordinator, Barbara Luckham, has compiled two volumes containing information about 56 Lambton British Home Children. A third volume has been started. The first two volumes are now part of the Lambton Branch Library which is housed in the Lambton Room at the Lambton County Library Headquarters, Wyoming, Ontario.

Barbara has also created a database which records the following information: Full name, township of residence, placement hosts and contact(s) information.

Not all of the Home Children's experiences in Canada were positive, but most, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, were able to carve out a productive life for themselves in Canada.

Among the British Home Children who came to Lambton County were three brothers born in England by 1897. Their father eked out a living as a firewood vendor on the streets of London. He was soon hospitalized for poor health worsened by "semi starvation", and described by his wife as "a sober man weighted down with poverty." She was faced with feeding and clothing four children with no means of support. When a friend found the boys begging for pennies on the street he persuaded her to place them in the Dr. Barnardo's Homes in 1903.

Within two years they were sent to Canada, ages 8, 10 and 12, as farm labourers. Separated at first, the oldest brother persuaded Barnardo's Home to let his two siblings be placed near him in Lambton County. By 1914, they had all moved to Western Canada and when WW1 began they enlisted, reuniting with their mother during the war. One of the boys later spoke of the Barnardo's Home with affection. He was treated well in Canada, unlike many others, and allowed to go to school, but he would never speak about his childhood in England. After his death his Good Conduct and Length of Service medal were found among his effects. Despite the trauma of family separation, emigration and the ensuing stigma of being a Home Child, he went on to have a successful life, building a strong family and a happy home.

Lambton Branch asks that residents, who have Lambton British Home Children as ancestors, consider adding information to the Inventory. In this way, the stories of these local Home Children will not be lost. Those interested in learning more about the British Home Children Inventory should contact the Lambton County Branch OGS via email at [Lambton@ogs.on.ca](mailto:Lambton@ogs.on.ca) or by mail at Box 2857, Sarnia ON N7T 7W1.

For more information about this project please contact:

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