

Lida Larkin's family history tips

May 7, 2009

Volume II, Issue 9

This exciting article was in the Meridian Magazine. I thought you all might be interested in the info.
Lida

Known But To God

By James W. Petty, AG®, CG

Peter Barton followed his guide into the basement archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Commissioned by the Australian government, this British historian was on assignment to uncover information about 400 World War I Allied soldiers recently re-discovered in 2008, in a mass grave in the village of Fromelles, France. He had no idea of what records existed for these fallen heroes. He was not prepared for what he was about to find.

The room he was led to was filled with card and document files, virtually untouched since they were put there over 80 years ago. They didn't pertain to just one battle, but to many; and not just to one army, but to all of the armies involved in that great conflict. Peter didn't find records about just 400 soldiers, he found records for **20,000,000** individuals.

These records in the basement of the Geneva Red Cross Archives contained information prepared by the German Army during World War I, primarily of Allied soldiers who had been wounded, captured, imprisoned, or killed during the war, as well as some German and Axis soldiers who had died, but whose families had never been determined to inform them about their lost soldier sons. The Allied soldiers, found in this collection, had originally been identified by their papers and dogtags, or by their own admission. When the information was recorded, it was sent to the Allied Red Cross by the German officials, so the proper leaders and the soldiers' families could be

notified. For many soldiers that is where the information stopped.

Peter Barton was amazed by the extent of the records. He recognized the historical significance of the information, and that it could change the way we look at the history of World War I and the men who fought. He also realized that for tens of thousands of families who never knew what happened to their soldier son, or father, or husband, answers might be forth coming. For those soldiers who had died and were buried in Europe, **specific co-ordinates of their burial sites were given in the newly discovered records. Based on this detailed data, he learned, you could pace out the instructions and find their graves.** Men were buried individually or in mass graves, and the information was there. In nearly every European World War I cemetery, there is a site for the Unknown Soldier. Peter Barton asked the archivists again and again whether other researchers had studied these collections, and again and again they replied that no one had even asked about the files. In so many cases, these soldiers have long been forgotten, and their whereabouts known but to God.

The data in these Red Cross records tells of men from Australia, Great Britain, America, Canada, France, Greece, Germany, Russia, and dozens more countries. Efforts have already begun, to digitize this collection, which they hope to complete in 2014 by the 100 th year anniversary of the beginning of The Great Conflict. But, The work of compiling and understanding the stories of these soldiers will take several lifetimes, Mr. Barton said. I'm going to need to apply for another myself.

How does this information pertain to us? Besides providing details about family members lost in the service, as a genealogist, I recognized several important aspects. Nearly all of the twenty million

people named in these files are now over 110 years old. What were civil and public records like 110 years ago? Government records of births, marriages, and deaths had not yet been started in eighty percent of the states in the U.S. The same was true for other countries. Ireland had begun birth and death registration in 1864, but in 1922 during the Irish Rebellion from England, the Irish national archives in Dublin was burned to the ground. The historical heritage of that great country disappeared in smoke. Thousands of Church Parish registers were gone, along with court minutes, wills, and many other important resources. These newly revealed Red Cross records may help fill a big hole in the history of the Irish people.

As we consider the enormity of this discovery, we also realize there are many more such collections lying in basements of museums, archives, societies, or simply in closets, attics, or basements of government, commercial and home buildings, waiting to be brought to light. As a Latter-day Saint, I have often contemplated the enormous responsibility we have been given by our Lord and Savior, to turn our hearts and identify our families and our ancestors, and work to provide saving ordinances for them. How would we find the needed information? Where will records come from?

We have but to look to our Savior in the faith that he will provide the means and the resources for this great work. These souls who have been ~~known~~ but to God are now to be known to all men. As temples are built, and Saints around the world come to the House of the Lord to commit their time and labors in service for their own families and loved ones, names will be made known, and records will be revealed and placed in our hands that this great work may go forward. What is ~~known~~ but to God, is God's to make known

* * * * *

As a follow-up to my Pandemic Preparation class, I'm teaching a Solar Cooking class tonight along with some other cooking methods if your power was out. It's been fun but keeping me busy. So I'll let this article suffice this time because it contains such important information. ☺

That's all Folks! For this time.

To Contact lida larkin

momuv712@gmail.com

