

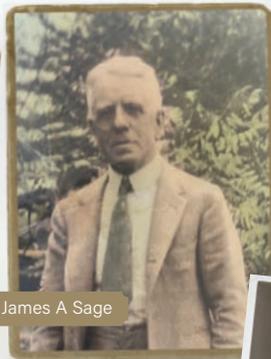
Love *in* Montreal, Genealogy *and the* Way Home



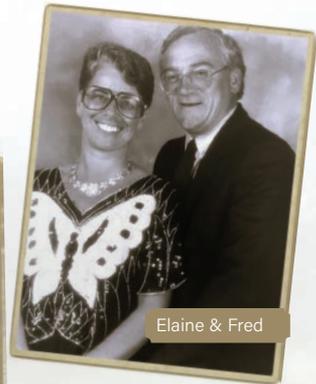
Susan Boyce



Liette Dufour & Harry M Sage



James A Sage



Elaine & Fred



Candice Marie Sage



By Candice Marie Sage, Ph.D.

My maternal grandparents fell in love in Montreal. Harry Sage, my grandfather, was a first-generation Irish Canadian with a charming smile who did not speak French. My grandmother, Liette Dufour, was a beautiful, leggy Québécoise who didn't speak English. They met at a roller-rink and Harry was smitten. They went to Catholic Church together. Liette learned English. They married and settled in Lachine, a suburb of Montreal Island. He sold advertising for Reader's Digest International, and she was a homemaker for three daughters. Their middle child, my mother Elaine, would meet my German immigrant father, Fred, at Expo '67 in Montreal, and your author took earthly form soon after.

Harry had been to Ireland and discovered that the Sages hailed from Rathcool Townland in County Cork. His father, James Aloysius Sage, was born there in 1870 to Constable John Sage and Eliza (nee Walsh). His family, including brother Alfred and sister Theresa, immigrated to Montreal in 1884 and lived in St. Laurent Ward. However, there was rumour that our family tree branched out to County Donegal on my great-grandmother's side. She was a Boyce. And while I was unable to conduct the County Donegal search during my homecoming to Ireland in the summer of 2024 I have since, quite serendipitously, had the opportunity to work with professional genealogists to unravel the mystery of my Donegal connection.

Enter Kate and Mike Lancor of Old Friends Genealogy, both with Celtic heritage and links to the French in Quebec. Both have Irish American great-grandparents. Kate's ancestral lines include Fitzpatrick and Waters (Templemore, Co. Tipperary), McGuirk, Byrne and McDermott (Co. Wicklow), and Regan, Walsh and Harney (Co. Waterford). Mike's ancestral lines are Doyle, Redmond, Whelan and Kennedy (Co. Wexford), and Laide and Sullivan (Co. Kerry). Interestingly, Mike's maternal grandfather's Lesperance line, his maternal grandmother's Labarge line, and his paternal grandfather's Lancor (Lincourt) line all emigrated from France to Quebec and then to northern New York State. In 1851, his Lincourt and Lesperance ancestors lived in St. Ours and Valleyfield, Quebec just outside of Montreal. His Labarge ancestors were originally in Saquenay, Quebec and his Lincourt line was in Quebec City in the 1650s. The couple have travelled to Quebec City and toured Grosse-Île, which served as a quarantine station for ships from Ireland arriving during the Irish Famine (circa 1845-1849).

Old Friends Genealogy is a two-person operation. The couple went into business ten years ago after spending 70+ combined years tracing their ancestors and those of their friends. They recently returned from their 13th trip to Ireland, during which they searched for my Irish lineage. Deeming this their "ancestral trip," they visited their confirmed DNA cousins in Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, Dunganstown, Co. Wexford, Ballydurn, Co. Waterford, and Glenanore, Co. Waterford.

DNA is now a valuable tool for determining one's roots, especially for periods prior to emigration. The interest is certainly there; over 25 million individuals have submitted DNA samples to Ancestry.com alone in recent years.



“By exploring the family trees of one's DNA matches, “long-lost cousins” can now be identified and contacted.

A genealogist, well-versed in understanding how to sort through those numerous DNA matches, can be extremely helpful to “break through brick walls” and dead-end streets.

Mike and Kate have developed family trees for 180 clients, often following multiple lines to ancestral roots in Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia and most European countries. Lately, they have been focusing on Irish and, frequently, French-Canadian ancestry. Genealogists have subscriptions to multiple ancestry websites, and - most importantly - the expertise to know what records to look for, where to find those records, and how to use one record to determine where to look next. Family trees are complex, and the biggest danger is descending “down the rabbit hole” and following the wrong person back in time. Genealogists ensure they discover at least one confirming record for a given ancestor before going back to the previous generation.

They can spend thousands of dollars on different subscription websites used to conduct their research. Knowing when to leapfrog from one website to another comes from knowing which records are housed on each website. As Mike and Kate note, “There really isn't any substitute for that other than years of doing it. It's fun because it's like a jigsaw puzzle in a lot of ways - if you find the right piece in the puzzle, then things start falling together pretty quickly.” Historic newspaper clippings and obituaries are also important documents that can reveal personal insights about the deceased.

In terms of hiring a reputable genealogist, most have their own websites. Check out their reviews, determine their areas of expertise, and touch base with them to see if they can meet your research needs. Kate and Mike typically spend an hour working with a new client to determine whether what they are looking for can be achieved.

My search involved three family lines: the Sages, the Kellys and the Boyces.

Though they had considered retiring, the duo is going to continue to ply their passion. As Kate says, “It's always exciting to help

someone walk in the footsteps of their ancestors in Ireland, Scotland, Canada or elsewhere.

“It isn’t all about records, it’s about learning about a person - which is a whole other dimension to connecting with one’s ancestors...”

So, back to my great-grandfather James Aloysius Sage, who was born in County Cork and emigrated to Canada during the 1880s with his parents John and Elizabeth Walsh Sage. In the 1891 Census, James (aged 21) was living with his parents in Montreal. There, he was a fur trader, eventually Vice-President of the Waldren-Druin Company, and one of the oldest active members of the Dominion Commercial Travellers Association that shaped Canadian business and trade practices in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

As for his wife to be, Susan Boyce was born in Quebec City. In the 1871 Census, she was six months old living with her parents Edward Boyce and Mary Kelly in Montcalm, Quebec. Ten years later, she was living with her widowed mother Mary Kelly Boyce (aged 34) and her six-year-old brother Edward. Susan met travelling salesman James Sage - likely on one of his many business trips - in Quebec City where they married August 14th, 1894. They would later move to Montreal to raise their family.

The Sages purchased a brand new rowhouse on Hutchison Avenue at Fairmount, where they would raise ten children (six boys and four girls), my grandfather being the youngest. The eldest child, Muriel, stayed in that house until her death at age 99! James was warden for St. Michael’s Parish - the “forgotten ward” - where he used his business acumen to develop the community. He was also a trustee of the Federation of Catholic Charities and served on the executive of St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Still employed in the fur trade at 80, James Sage was struck by a motorbus while crossing the street in Chicoutimi, Quebec, and died of his wounds. He and his family, including my mother, are interred at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery, less than a kilometre from where I live in Montreal.

Both the Boyces of Quebec City and the Sages were “White Lace Irish” - families of modest affluence. The Boyces immigrated before the Famine years and the Sages after. Their stories are very different from the refugee “Griff Irish” who came to Montreal under extreme duress during the Great Famine via the Grosse-Île quarantine.

An endearing quality of Mike and Kate is their particular delight in being able to allow clients to “walk in the footsteps” of their Irish immigrant ancestors. They produce historic maps that allow their clients to visit the specific townland(s) where their ancestors lived before departing the beautiful Emerald Isle. We reflected on what might have been the conditions to tear our ancestors away from the incredible place of the faeries that is Ireland: religious prejudice, economic necessity, or plain starvation that would move human beings into a ship to cross the Atlantic Ocean with little knowledge of what awaited on the other side. I look forward to my next visit to Ireland, knowing with certainty where I came from. From Montreal to County Cork to Donegal, I have found my way home. My ancestors are waiting. As Kate and Mike told me, “They wanted to be found.”

