



Archibald William Cheesman
A Canadian British Home Child

Archie William Cheesman was born, along with five of his six siblings, in Saskatchewan on his British Home Child Father William Cheesman's homestead. His father was brought to Canada by the Barnardo organization in 1894, his mother, Annie, arrived in 1912 as an English 'mail order' bride.

After a fire destroyed their farm, the Cheesmans returned to England. William only stayed for four months before returning to Canada, where he remained for a year and a half, leaving his family behind.

Upon William's return to England in 1921 to collect his family and bring them back to Canada, Annie became pregnant with their sixth child. Due to reasons unknown, William returned to Canada on his own, never to be seen again.

Annie was alone when she gave birth to her daughter, Olive. With six children under the age of nine, and no means to support them, Annie turned to the Kingston Union Workhouse in Herefordshire, England. Archie, the eldest of the six, celebrated his 10th and 11th birthday there.

We can only just begin to imagine the horrors they experienced there and just how magnified that would have been to a child who was not even allowed to see his mother and not allowed any measure of comfort or support. Archie being the oldest of the children and for some time the "man" of the house we can only wonder what responsibility for what had happened to them he heaped upon himself, as impressionable young children can. With nobody there to console him or to tell him that none of what happened was his responsibility, one can only imagine the scars it placed upon his soul.

In 1925, Archie and his six siblings were sent to Canada by the Salvation Army. Annie was allowed to accompany her children but only if she agreed to allow the children to be boarded out, as she couldn't support them on her own.

In Canada the children were separated and sent to different homes. Archie did end up living with his mother for a time after she married the man she'd been working for, but he treated him roughly and Archie moved to a neighbouring farm.

Archie ended up marrying and having three children of his own. Tragically, they all died at a young age. Divorced, Archie had one more child in a common-law relationship but the daughter was eventually placed with another family.

After a failed attempt at a reunion, Archie spent the rest of his life as a recluse, moving from place to place.

British Home Child Advocacy & Research Association

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BHCARA News

The BHCARA is proud to have their display featured at the Wellington County Museum in Fergus from March 5th till April 5th.

A recent addition to the display is the very unique First World War flag quilt, the story of which is featured in our March newsletter.

Other objects to be included in the display at Black Creek Pioneer Village (BCPV) are from a BHC descendant collection in Tillsonburg, Ontario. Richard Lucas has loaned us his father Charles' collection of artifacts. Charles meticulously cared for and kept most items, including poems he wrote while working on the farms.

On September 28th, at around five o'clock, a special celebratory three course dinner will be held at Black Creek Pioneer Village to allow British Home Child descendants to meet others who have the same unique heritage and share their

stories. Registration procedure and details will become available at the beginning of May. Seating is limited.

The HOMECHILD the Musical, members of whom will be performing at our BCPV event, will be in Erin, Ontario for a limited performance on October 23, 24 and two performances on the 25th.

Artist Michele Woodey has joined her colleague, Nerea Martinez in Wales to collaborate on their project, The Ballad of Ivor Jones, a BHC who died in the First World War. Their work will be shown on September 28th at BCPV.

Another batch of signatures has been sent to Judy Sgro, MP, York West, for a third presentation of the Apology Petition in the House of Commons.

**The BHCARA wishes
BHC Walter Goulding
a very happy
106th birthday
this month**

Upcoming Events:

- April 5 Wellington County Museum and Archives, a very special BHC workshop - Lori Oschefski, Sandra Joyce, Karen Mahoney
 - April 9 presentation by Sandra Joyce - Probus Club Brampton
 - April 24 - Millbrook Historical Society - Lori Oschefski & Sandra Joyce
- For details and times please visit:

www.BritishHomeChildrenAdvocacy.weebly.com