



# HOME CHILDREN CANADA

February 2023 Newsletter

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Compensation is now being offered to surviving Fairbridgians  
See Page 5 for details

## Celebrating Black History Month



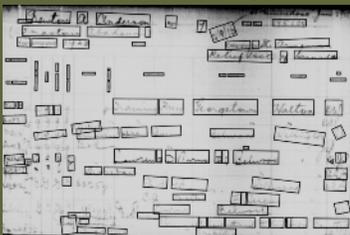
Home Children Canada is pleased to announce our partnership with Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in the development of intelligence software to transcribe handwritten records. This software can also be programed to transcribe documents such as the Ups and Downs Magazine.

The project was spearheaded by HCC Member Stephen Adams in 2020 but was stalled because of covid.

The Library and Archives Canada released tens of thousands of unindexed and documents, which have not been transcribed. To date, Home Children Canada can only provide a rough index of where this information can be found. This partnership will allow us to publish transcriptions of this information and increase access to valuable Home Child information

A license has been obtained with the Library and Archives Canada who have released 27,000 images to this project.

The development of this software started moving ahead in January of 2023 and raw testing of the new software has started - here is an example of how the software works picking up details on an inspection report.



As this project progresses, we will be crowd sourcing help for the public to work with Mohawk in providing manual transcriptions as a means of testing. A special website has been developed for this purpose. More information will become available soon.

### A WORLD APART - THE STORY OF JOHN LYDIET GEORGE WRITTEN BY NORAH ELLEN DENNIS FOR EBONY GEORGE-VAN BENTHEM



**JOHN LYDIET GEORGE**

In the British Home Child and Child Migrant schemes, it was understood that "good, white stock" were to be found from the masses of unwanted, orphaned and disposed children of England. They were to be placed in British colonies for the purpose of building up the populations and providing workers.

But in the height of child emigration, in 1895, there appeared one doe-eyed little boy of color sent to Canada by Barnardo Homes.

John Lydiet George, though not the only black child to be emigrated during the hundred or so years of the British Home Child schemes, was unique in that he overcame the prejudice of status as a home child, but further he endured the prejudice of race.

His life had not always been such a struggle. John's father, John George, Sr., was born in 1855 in the Caribbean. He became a sailor and while in Australia, met Grace Lydiet, who was born in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, in 1860.

A year after their marriage in 1880, the young couple moved to London, England. John George, Jr., was born on August 30, 1883, with the family resident at 64 East Mount Street, Poplar, London, England.

John, Sr., worked as a ships steward while his wife stayed home with their three children: John, Charles Henry and Nellie. Messrs, Pinkneys & Sons employed John and would send his wife four pounds out of the seven he earned for the support of his family. Their lives were irreversibly altered upon the disappearance of John George, Sr., in 1890, and the mystery of what happened to him continues to this day. What is known is that he last contacted his wife in 1889 from Bilboa, Spain. He said the head steward quit and John found the work difficult to continue alone. He was planning on leaving the ship and joining one headed for Philadelphia. In October of that same year John arrived at Philadelphia. His employers sent his wife the last four pounds that same month. Nothing was heard again from John after that time.

Grace refused to believe that John would leave his family. She was sure that something bad had to have happened to him to keep him from them.

But days stretched into weeks, and as life grew harsher, Grace had no choice but to give her two sons over to care. In the end, only little John was accepted by the Barnardo Homes.

John George Jr., before being sent to Canada, was said by Barnardo's to be a happy child and showing great improvement. This was disparate of the great prejudices he would face in Canada.

John arrived in Quebec on April 1, 1895. John was sent to several homes, each whom rejected him. He, at last, was sent to a Dr. Walter McKeown at 92 McCaul Street, Toronto, Ontario, who kept him. But John left the home following a break-in while the family was away at church in March of 1898. He was not heard from by the placement agency for a number of years. The last report on John George by Barnardos in 1900-1901 showed that he was in Albany Penitentiary Hospital in New York, and was calling himself George Walker. He was requesting the address of his family.

John worked in Madison, New York as a servant before returning to Canada. While there, he married Jessie Mildred Harris, a Canadian, on March 11, 1910. Together they had 10 children (Ernest L. George; Leslie L. George; Leona A. George; Cecil J. George; Lorraine E. George; Beatrice L. George; Erma E. George; Wesley D. George; Jessie M. George; and Reta N. George). In 1914 they moved to Port Huron, Michigan then later to Flint, Michigan. In 1940 Jessie Harris- George died of volvulus (abnormal twisting of the intestine).

John George continued to live in Flint, working as a janitor. He died on November 19, 1955 of chronic arteriosclerosis, while residing at 1410 Harrison Street.

A descendent of John George's brother, Charles, said that the family in England always thought John would return one day. We can only wonder whether John was ever provided that address he sought while incarcerated.

There are still many mysteries surrounding John Lydjet George, and his great-granddaughter, Ebony, continues her research. But John's determined nature left a rich legacy as someone who endured and survived even higher odds than most British home children or child migrants. Perhaps his name will not be spoken of in history books, but in his quiet life, John Lydjet George became a hero of sorts--surviving childhood trauma, separation, prejudice, rejection and adversity.

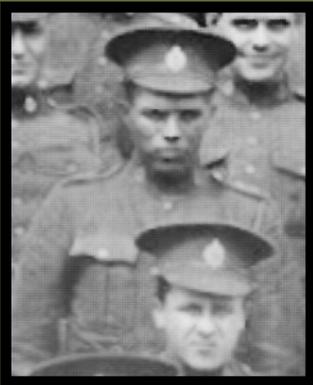
“Barnardo’s started its work in 1866, 60 years after the end of the slave trade. According to Barnardo’s Chief executive Javed Khan, it was the first national children’s charity in England to take in vulnerable black and mixed-heritage children. Other organizations followed suit. We are just discovering this part of the emigration of children to Canada and are pleased to share two more stories with you.

[READ MORE HERE FROM BARNARDO’S](#)

... here heard interesting accounts of the remarkable tidal movements incidental to the Bay of Fundy and other parts of this coast. A very rapid run brought our “Special” into St. John, N.B., about 10 o’clock, p.m., and here we parted with an interesting little negro boy whom Dr. Barnardo is restoring to his distressed parents in Wilmington, North Carolina.

At St. John we enter upon the first section of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the beds here

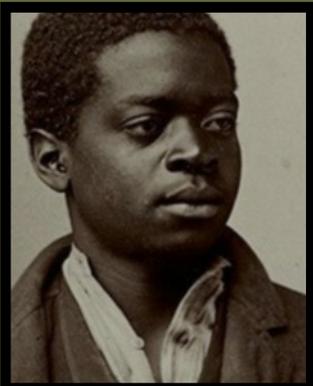
*From the 1896 Barnardo Magazine  
Ups and Downs*



**William Ernest Miller**

William Ernest Miller the son of Samuel John and Mary Jane Miller, of Falmouth, England. Before arriving in Canada as a Home Child, he was an inmate in the South Stoneham Workhouse. He arrived in Canada via Annie Macpherson in 1901 and was received in Stratford, Ontario. The records indicated William could not read or write. The records also indicated that no government inspections or visits were done during his servitude on the farm. William enlisted in the First World War in Ottawa, Ontario in August of 1915. His next of kin was his sister Adelaide Andrews, living in Cornwall, England. William was died on 26 October 1916 as a result of gun shot wounds he sustained in battle during the War.

More information on William can be found in our [War Service Index](#)  
Information submitted by Steve Rose.



**Benjamin Washington**

Cheryl Nneka Hazell opens her recently released article with:  
“In 1891, a Black teenager named Benjamin Washington disembarked from the cattle boat Basil in Cardiff, Wales. He held tightly onto the five shillings he had earned for his work onboard during the long and dangerous voyage from America.”  
Cherly tells the compelling story of strength and resilience. Benjamin makes his way into London, England where he is taken in by the Dr. Barnardo Homes. In 1892 he is emigrated to Russell, Manitoba, Canada for indentured farm work. Benjamin enlisted in the First World War 16 September 1916. He passed away 28 February 1966 in Manitoba at the age of 89.

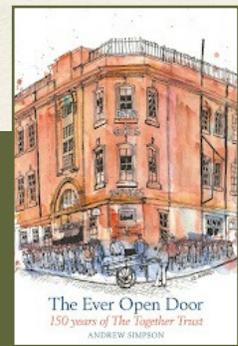
You can read Cheryl’s article here: [How This American Orphan Became A Canadian Landowner: The Story of Benjamin Washington](#)

[Benjamin Washington in our Service Index.](#)

# "Where poverty busied itself" ..... Looking for the parents of British Home Children

By Our Anderw Simpson, Author of "The Ever Open Door"

British Home Children ..... the story from Britain  
Visit Andrew's Blog: <https://chorltonhistory.blogspot.com/>



We will all be familiar with the grinding poverty and uncertainty of maintaining a livelihood which was the background to the story of British Home Children.

Any one of a range of disasters could pitch a family in to disaster, from a long period of unemployment, a chronic and perhaps fatal illness of one parent to a run of bad luck which saw them slide down the economic ladder.

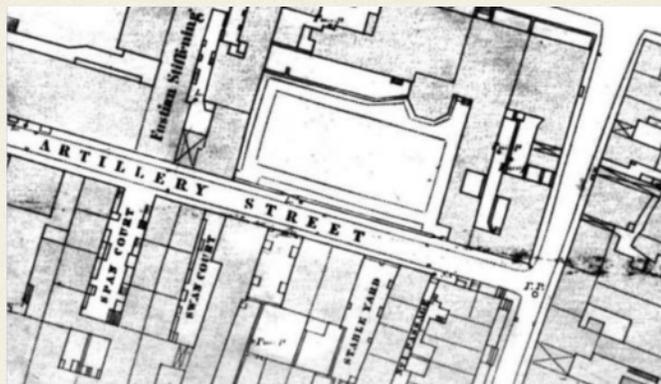
But often we deal in generalities, so today I thought I would wander into a few streets in the heart of Manchester in 1851.

Now the practice of migrating young people was still two decades a way but those we shall encounter may well have been or knew the parents of children who did leave Britain and their experiences are a valid area of research.

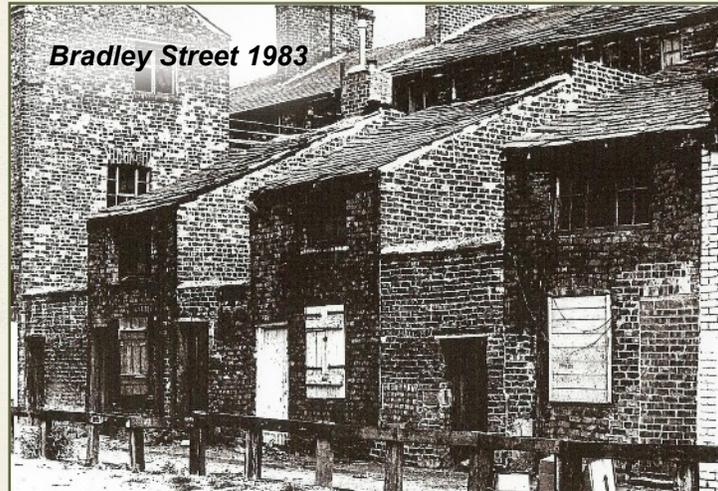
So, I am in Span Court, which was a collection of six back-to-back houses in a partially enclosed court off Artillery Street which runs from Byrom Street to Longworth Street behind Deansgate.

This was not one of the notorious areas of the city, like Little Ireland or Angel Meadow, where disease, infected water supplies, and primitive housing conditions combined to make it a place few but the needy would choose to live.

Nor was it like some of the closed courts where as late as the 1870s all manner of criminality went on and where only the foolish who were not residents would venture.



**Span Court**



Span Court was a cut above these "dens of desperation". It was close to a heap of warehouses, textile mills, dye works and foundries which were at the heart of a transport hub, dominated by a series of canals, and Britain's first real railway which had opened in 1831.

The houses were one up one down with a cellar and did not rate an entry

in the street directories which is not unsurprising given that those who lived here were on very modest means and some on the very margins of poverty.

In 1851 in those six houses lived a total of thirty-three people who made their living from the bottom end of the economic pile including six power loom weavers, a cooper, dress maker as well as an errand boy, a hawker and a pauper.

It is very easy to become blasé at the conditions in Span Court, after all historical empathy only goes so far, but this was living at the precarious end. I rather think that Ann Cass aged 73 who described herself as a pauper had never had an easy life, and now she and her two daughters in their 30s were reliant on their combined wages as power loom weavers and what they got from Annie Harrison, their 38 year old lodger who was a band box maker.

Nor were they alone in taking in lodgers' because other families in the court were also doing the same and in most cases having to find space in what was at best two rooms and may even have been less, as the majority of our houses were sublet. Of the six, five had two families living in them as clearly defined and separate households. Now these properties did have cellars and there were plenty of people living in the cellars of houses across the city according to the 1851 census. But usually, the enumerator recorded those who lived in the cellars. But in this case no such records were made, which rather suggests that families and their lodgers were living in just one of the two rooms in each of the houses.

And in the case of John and Catherine Pussy it meant finding space for their five children ranging in ages from 20 down to three as well as their 19-year-old lodger in what I

guess was one room given that the house was shared with another family of four.

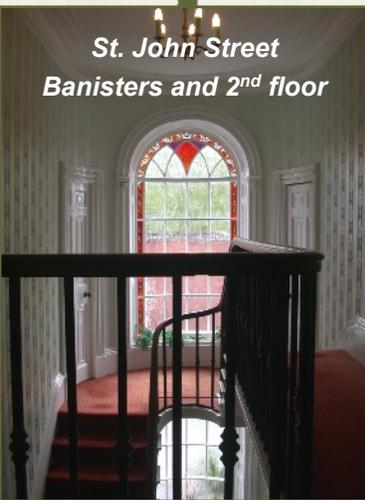
Span Court is now just a space, but Artillery Street is still there and you have to walk it to get some idea of how narrow the street was and then try to picture the 83 people who lived mainly in the three courts off it or the 96 who lived on Longworth Street which ran from Artillery Street to St John Street. The whole census patch amounts to ten streets and their small courts, most not much wider than Artillery Street and bounded by Deansgate and Byrom Street in which crowded a total of 497 people.

But it would be wrong to run away with the idea that this was just a collection of humble streets housing the least well off. True the majority made their living from unskilled or factory work but there were also artisans, shop keepers small businessmen. And almost acting as an island of wealth was St John Street, then as now a place of fine late 18th and early 19th century houses whose residents' included accountants, a silk manufacturer and a retired calico engraver and printer.

And it is this last "calico engraver" who I want to finish with as a contrast to Span Court. James Holt had set up the family business sometime at the beginning of the 19th century had bought and maybe built his double fronted property on St John Street and in the fullness of time retired to Chorlton, leaving his son to run the business and retain in the family home in the heart of Manchester off Deansgate. This was the Holt family who in the 1850s moved to the countryside.

But the family never gave up their interest in the area surrounding their town home and so by 1912 they owned seven of the fine houses on St John Street as well as shops cottages and a beer shop on the surrounding streets as well as land and the fine estate of Beech House in the small rural township of Chorlton-cum-Hardy. \*\*

We have rather come to be conditioned by the rich living in gated communities set apart from the less well-off and our wealthy families were no different. Samuel Brooks had established his own estate which would be developed for the well off on the edge of Chorlton-cum-Hardy, and in the late 1830s Victoria Park Company was set up to "erect a number of dwelling houses of respectable appearance and condition, with gardens and pleasure grounds attached,



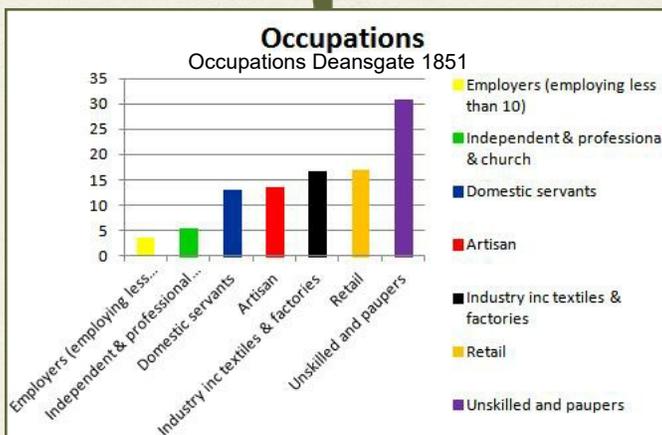
with proper rules and regulations against damage an nuisances."\*\*\*

But the residents of the houses on the north side of St John's Street backed on to Span Court while the Holt's own fine house was not only beside a timber yard, but its rear windows overlooked a coal yard and the densely packed court of Holt's Place which consisted of ten small back-to-back properties.

So Span Court and the poor were never that far from the rich of St John's Street which I suppose is an interesting take on that much quoted phrase, "the poor are always with us."

Not that their homes have survived. Span Court and its poor neighbours vanished a long time ago, leaving only the fine properties of St John Street including the Holt's home to bear witness that the poor might always be with us but the details and ephemera of their lives are easily lost.

Leaving me to observe that only three one up one down early 19th century houses still exist.



They are on Bradley Street and while our picture of them has that period flavour, they too have succumbed to a makeover. When I visited them back in the 1990s they were still recognisable as dwellings with generations of peeling wallpaper falling from the walls. Today they are home to smart new businesses, including a massage spa parlour which I suspect

would bemuse the inhabitants of Span Court.

*Pictures; one up one down cottages in Bradley Street, 1983 from the Early Manchester Dwellings Group, detail from 1842-44 OS map of Manchester & Salford, Digital Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.co.uk/>, pictures of St John Street and Artillery Street, 2011 from the collection of Andrew Simpson*

*\*Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum, Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century, 1971, Pelican edition 1973*

*\*\*Camp Street, Holt Place, James Place, Longworth Street, Severn Street, Byrom Street, Great John Street, Gillow Street, Lower Byrom Street, Charles Street, Peel Street and City Road*

*\*\*\* A Short Account of the Victoria Park Manchester, Manchester Corporation, 1937*

## ATTENTION SURVIVING Fairbridgians

You are now able to file against Fairbridge for damages in respect of physical, sexual, emotional and any mistreatment arising from the FAIRBRIDGE child migration programs. For details on how to claim visit: [Fairbridge \(Restored\) Limited](#)

***We need to reach as many survivors as we can so please share this.  
Survivors could be anywhere.***

Please note the deadline is **MARCH 31, 2023**. AND - the former Fairbridgian had to be alive on March 5, 2020 - Fairbridgians who passed way before that date are NOT eligible

### Presentations



Susan Hillman Brazeau

We have many members out sharing the story of the Home Children through various presentations and displays. We commend each and every one of you and wish to help where we can. We are making available, to the public, material which will make it easier to put together presentations. Our package includes a basic powerpoint presentation, our hand out sheets and a silent film of the faces of Home Children. This material can be accessed through the QR code to the right of through this

link:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fyD46pEyIZytNRVwEzSnV\\_cEa88Et05q?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fyD46pEyIZytNRVwEzSnV_cEa88Et05q?usp=sharing)



We also like to acknowledge Susan Hillman Brazeau, of Lloydminster, Alberta, Canada, who have been very active with her presentations and also, doing media interviews. The story of the Home Children in western Canada needs strong representation to bring the story forward. With Susan and Home Children Canada's directors in Alberta, Sue Pearson, Kim Farrell and our representative Roberta Horrox we are well on our way of accomplishing our goals.

Fairbridge Canada President Pat Skidmore is very active in Vancouver.

In Ontario, we are getting back to our in-person presentations. Available speakers are Lori Oschefski, John Jefkins and Dan Oatman. Each one delivers excellent presentations. We also have many members who are out sharing the story. By making presentation material available to the general public, we hope to encourage more speakers.

To book a speaker contact us at: [HomeChildrenCanada@gmail.com](mailto:HomeChildrenCanada@gmail.com). We can't always promise a speaker in your area, but we will do our best.

### Beacons of Light 2023

Our 2023 Beacon of Light celebration plans are well underway. We are planning an event to be held in Creemore, Ontario as well as our annual lighting tributes. Grave commemorations are reaching more areas, with 8,120 memorials now in our index. We encourage our members to reach out to venues in their area which can be included in our Beacon's lighting tributes. To make this easier, we have released a package of information that you can now use. You can access this file at [Beacons of Light Public Information](#) or through the QR code to the right.

Bookings for our Beacons have already started! We thank each and every one of you who participated in the tribute to our Home Children.



# British Consul General Reception - January 25<sup>th</sup> 2023



Kelly Morrison with Sir George Beardshaw

The British Consul General in Toronto, Greg Quinn held a special reception at his residence last month to highlight the story of the Home Children and their service in our Wars. Kelly Morrison, working on her doctoral studies at Waterloo University, has a keen interest in the service of the Home Children. Recently she was speaking at a private luncheon for the Royal Canadian Navy and presented the story of a Home Child who served in the Navy. She also gave some information on the background of the Home Children. Unbeknownst to her, the BCG, Greg Quinn, was there. The story intrigued him as he knew very little about the Home Children. Mr. Quinn contacted Kelly soon after about a reception he wished to hold. Kelly contacted Lori Oschefski at Home Children Canada and together with Mr. Quinn they organized the evening.

Despite the terrible snowstorm that evening, the reception was very well attended. Our special guest of honor was our last known surviving Barnardo Boy, 99-year-old Sir George Beardshaw. George is also our last known surviving BHC who served in our Wars - out of some 25,000. He is also the last known surviving soldier of the Queen's Own Rifles that served in the Second World War. As mentioned by Lori Oschefski in her address, he is indeed a national treasure.

This event marked the first time that all of our directors were gathered together. Kim Farrell and Sue Pearson flew in from Western Canada, at their own expense, to attend this event. The day started with a special luncheon in Toronto for the directors.

This evening was an enormous success, with very valuable contacts made. Our guests were very touched by the story of the Home Children, with many asking how they can help move this story forward in Canada. Caroline Dromaguet, President and CEO of the Canadian War Museum attended along with their Head of Collections James Whitham. When he received our invitation, James knew very little about the Home Children and visited our websites to learn more. What he ultimately learned, to his surprise, was that he too is a descendant of a Home Child who came to Canada through the Annie Macpherson homes! Our goal in inviting Caroline and James was to obtain an exhibit in the War Museum. Interest was shown in helping with the Beacon's of Light, Home Children brought to Montreal, Black children emigrated through these programs and their service. Susannah Goshko CMG, the British High Commissioner to Canada acknowledged that Canada is not doing enough to recognize the children and is considering what she can do to change that.

Genevieve Graham, best-selling author of "The Forgotten Home Child" had a special announcement. She attended this event with writer and director Patrick Sisam. Patrick is currently working on the creation of a six-part miniseries based on The Forgotten Home Child. This is very exciting news!

This evening is an example of how we can never stop speaking about the Home Children when we can because you never know who is listening and who might take action as the BCG Greg Quinn did. Well done Kelly!!!



From left to right: Our directors: Kim Farrell, Dan Oatman, Sue Pearson, Paul Jackson, Lori Oschefski, British Consul General in Toronto Greg Quinn, Dianna Fulton, John Jefkins and Marie May



Our luncheon in Toronto attended by the directors, with our special guest Genevieve Graham, author of the best selling book "The Forgotten Home Child".



Jonathan Turner - BCG in Calgary, Hon. Charmaine A. Williams (Brampton Centre), Greg Quinn and the BCG, Montreal, Chloë Jayne Adams.



Ralph Cipolla, Orillia City Counselor, British High Commissioner to Canada Susannah Goshko CMG and Gregg Quinn



Judi Helle, Sir George Beardshaw and Ann Ward



Genevieve Graham with Writer and Director Patrick Sisam. Patrick is currently working on the creation of a six-part miniseries based on The Forgotten Home Child.