THREE RECORDS FROM STRATFORD

AN ADDENDUM

WOODHAM, LONDON AND STRATFORD, ONTARIO · 1900 · 1920 · 1921

What the registrar, the licence clerk and the Stratford Daily Beacon *wrote down, and where it disagrees with the family*

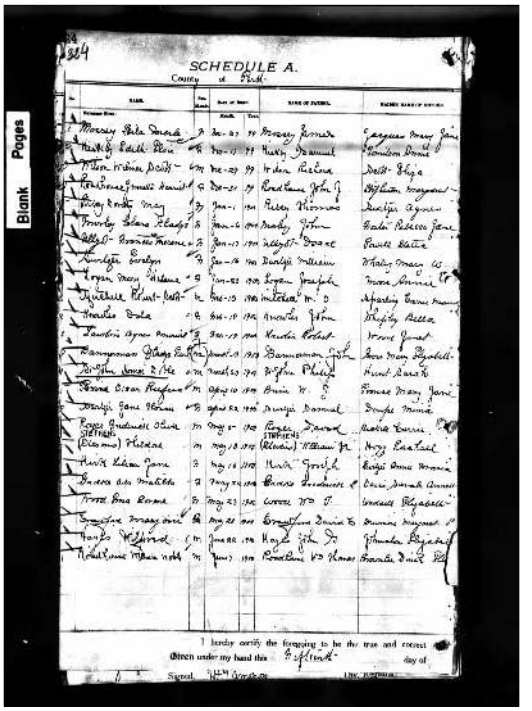
Four pieces of paper came back from Ontario in October 2026. The St. Marys Museum & Archives sent a page of the county's register of births with Homer St. John on it. Then Megan Lockhart of the Stratford-Perth Archives, spending the single free hour the archives gives each distant researcher, sent the licence that let Homer marry Alice Pigeon in 1920, the form that recorded the marriage, and a newspaper notice of a birth in July 1921. Each is set down here as it was written, then in plain English, then as data. Two of them disagree with what the family has always said. Those disagreements are recorded, not settled.

Homer is born, 1900

The province kept its births in a ledger, one county to a page, copied from the returns of the local division registrar. Page 324 of the Perth County schedule holds twenty-four births between November 1899 and June 1900, the Mosseys and Roadhouses and Switzers of the district, entered surname first. Homer is the fourteenth line, and someone has underlined him:

> *St John Homer Doble · m · March 20 · 1900 · St John Philip · Hunt Sarah*

In plain English: a boy, Homer Doble St. John, was born on Tuesday, 20 March 1900, to Philip St. John and Sarah St. John, whose maiden name was Hunt. The registrar certified the page "to be the true and correct" record, signing as division registrar; his signature is not legible with confidence. Two days later the *St. Marys Journal* printed the same news: "ST. JOHN.—In Woodham, on March 20th, to Mr. and Mrs. Philip St. John, a son."



PERTH COUNTY REGISTER OF BIRTHS, 1899–1900, PAGE 324

FIELD	AS WRITTEN	IN PLAIN ENGLISH
Name	St John Homer Doble	Homer Doble St. John
Sex	m	male
Born	March 20 · 1900	Tuesday, 20 March 1900
Father	St John Philip	Philip St. John
Mother	Hunt Sarah	Sarah St. John, born Hunt
Where	County of Perth (register); "In Woodham" (*Journal*)	Woodham, Blanshard Township, Perth County



MARRIAGE LICENCE NO. C 96576, ISSUED AT LONDON, 1 OCTOBER 1920

FIELD	AS WRITTEN	IN PLAIN ENGLISH
Register	Schedule A, p. 324, line 14	Ontario births, Perth County, 1899–1900

The licence, 1 October 1920

Twenty years later Homer was in London, working as a labourer, and he meant to marry a Stratford girl without the banns being called first. The province sold that permission; the Marriage Act, quoted on the back of the next form, set the fee at five dollars. The licence is a printed form in the name of the Lieutenant-Governor, signed in advance by his deputy in Toronto and dated, in type, the tenth of April 1920; a local issuer filled in the names and the real date when someone came to his counter. Its operative sentence reads:

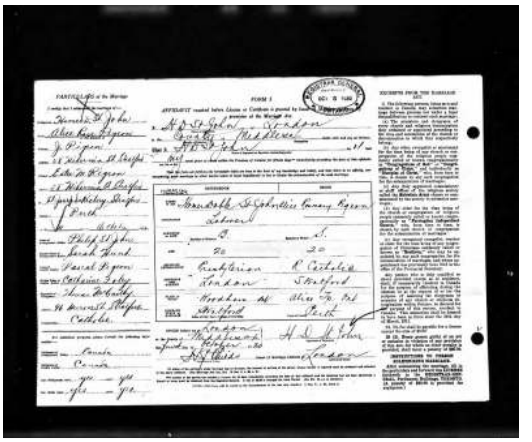
> *Whereas Homer Doble St John, Bachelor, and Alice Rosmary Pigeon, Spinster, are determined to enter into the holy estate of Matrimony and are desirous of having their marriage publicly solemnized without publication of banns, I do hereby, for good causes, Give and Grant this License or Faculty for the solemnization of marriage between the said parties …*

The issuer, H. J. Childs of London, wrote in "first" and "October" and signed. In plain English: on Friday, 1 October 1920, the province gave Homer and Alice leave to be married by any authorised minister in Ontario without first having banns published, provided no law stood in the way, and the paper was good for three months. The left-hand margin of the form prints the table of relatives a man or woman may not marry, from a grandmother to a husband's brother, in case anyone at the counter was in doubt.

FIELD	AS WRITTEN	IN PLAIN ENGLISH
Licence	No. C 96576, Form 5	Ontario marriage licence
Groom	Homer Doble St John, Bachelor	Homer Doble St. John, never married
Bride	Alice Rosmary Pigeon, Spinster	Alice Pigeon, never married; her middle name written "Rosmary"
Purpose	without publication of banns	to marry without banns
Printed date	tenth day of April 1920	when the blank form was signed in Toronto
Issued	first day of October 1920, London	Friday, 1 October 1920, at London, Ont.
Issuer	H J Childs	H. J. Childs, issuer of marriage licences
Valid	within THREE MONTHS from the date of issue	until about 1 January 1921

The marriage, 4 October 1920

The same day, before the same issuer, Homer swore the affidavit that the licence required, and the form travelled with the couple to Stratford. Three days later the priest filled in the left-



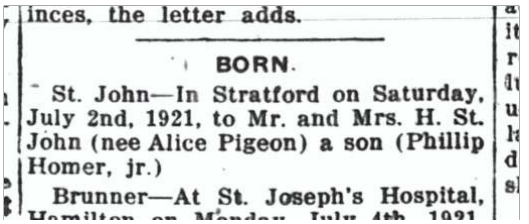
FORM 3: AFFIDAVIT AND PARTICULARS OF THE MARRIAGE, RECEIVED BY THE REGISTRAR GENERAL 5 OCTOBER 1920

hand panel, and the Registrar General's clerk in Toronto stamped it received on 5 October 1920. It is the fullest portrait of the two of them that survives from that year.

FIELD	AS WRITTEN	IN PLAIN ENGLISH
Number	022528	Ontario marriage registration
Groom	Homer Doble St John · Labourer · B. · 20	Homer, a labourer, bachelor, aged 20
Lived	London	London, Ont.
Born	Woodham Ont	Woodham, Ont.
Religion	Presbyterian	Presbyterian
Bride	Alice Rose Pigeon (panel); Alice Rosmary Pigeon (affidavit) · S. · 20	Alice Pigeon, spinster, aged 20
Lived	Stratford	Stratford, Ont.
Born	"Alice Tp. Ont"	probably Ellice Township, Perth County (the reading is uncertain)
Religion	R Catholic	Roman Catholic
Where married	St. Joseph's Rectory, Stratford, County of Perth	the priest's house of St. Joseph's, Stratford
When	4 day of October 1920	Monday, 4 October 1920
Priest	Thomas McCarthy, 96 Huron St. Stratford, Catholic	Rev. Thomas McCarthy
Witnesses	J. Pigeon; Ester M. Pigeon, 58 Hibernia St. Stratford	two of the Pigeon family, of 58 Hibernia Street
His parents	Philip St. John; Sarah Hunt	Philip St. John and Sarah, born Hunt
Her parents	Pascal Pigeon; Catharine Foley	Pascal Pigeon and Catharine, born Foley
Sworn	London, County of Middlesex, first day of October 1920; H D St John; H J Childs	Homer signed the affidavit in London on 1 October
Read and write	yes · yes (both)	both could read and write
Received	Registrar General, OCT 5 1920	filed in Toronto on Tuesday, 5 October 1920

In plain English: on Monday, 4 October 1920, Homer Doble St. John, twenty, a Presbyterian labourer from London, born at Woodham, married Alice Pigeon, twenty, a Roman Catholic of Stratford, at the rectory of St. Joseph's Church, Stratford. The Reverend Thomas McCarthy married them, and two of Alice's family, J. and Ester M. Pigeon of 58 Hibernia Street, stood as witnesses. The *St. Marys Journal* carried it on 7 October: "ST. JOHN—PIGEON—In Stratford on Monday, Oct. 4, 1920, Alice Rosaline Pigeon of Stratford to Homer Doble St. John of London, Ont." Between the licence, the form and the paper, Alice's middle name is spelled three ways, Rose, Rosmary and Rosaline, which is two more than she needed.

One detail sits awkwardly with the family file. The registration calls Homer a Presbyterian; another record in his dossier has called him a Methodist. Both are kept until a third record decides.


inces, the letter adds.

BORN.

St. John—In Stratford on Saturday, July 2nd, 1921, to Mr. and Mrs. H. St. John (nee Alice Pigeon) a son (Phillip Homer, jr.)

Brunner—At St. Joseph's Hospital,

STRATFORD DAILY BEACON, 5 JULY 1921

A son, July 1921

Nine months after the wedding the *Stratford Daily Beacon* ran a notice among its births on Tuesday, 5 July 1921:

> *BORN. St. John—In Stratford on Saturday, July 2nd, 1921, to Mr. and Mrs. H. St. John (nee Alice Pigeon) a son (Phillip Homer, jr.)*

In plain English: a son was born in Stratford on Saturday, 2 July 1921, to Homer and Alice St. John, and the paper gave his name as Phillip Homer St. John, junior.

FIELD	AS WRITTEN	IN PLAIN ENGLISH
Paper	Stratford Daily Beacon	Stratford's daily newspaper
Printed	5 July 1921	Tuesday, 5 July 1921
Born	Saturday, July 2nd, 1921	Saturday, 2 July 1921
Where	In Stratford	Stratford, Ont.

FIELD	AS WRITTEN	IN PLAIN ENGLISH
Parents	Mr. and Mrs. H. St. John (nee Alice Pigeon)	Homer and Alice St. John, born Pigeon
Child	a son (Phillip Homer, jr.)	a boy, named Phillip Homer St. John, Jr.

This is where the paper and the family part company. The family has always known Daniel's father as John St. John, born on 2 June 1921, and the chapter on John is written that way. The *Beacon* gives a different month and a different name. It is not easily dismissed as a slip of the typesetter: 2 July 1921 really was a Saturday, as the notice says, while 2 June fell on a Thursday, so a misprint would have had to get the month and the weekday wrong together. The two dates also sit differently against the wedding, the one nine months after it and the other eight.

There are three plain readings, and the records do not yet choose between them. The notice may simply be wrong. The boy may have been registered or baptised Phillip Homer and known ever after as John. Or the notice may be about a child the family never spoke of; Homer and Alice did later have a son named Phillip, born in Michigan about 1942. Two records would settle it. St. Joseph's in Stratford, where his parents were married, was asked on 26 October 2026 for its 1921 baptism entry under both names and both dates. The province's 1921 birth registration is still held by ServiceOntario and can be ordered by his next of kin. A third record has since spoken on the date. The Department of Veterans Affairs keeps a register of veterans' graves, and it lists one St. John, John H, of the United States Army, born 07/02/1921 and died 10/28/2006, buried at Glen Abbey Memorial Park in Bonita, California. The government's July and the newspaper's July agree, against the family's June, and the chapter on John now gives the second of July. The name is another matter: "John H." and "Phillip Homer, jr." can both be the same boy, but only the baptism register or the birth registration can say so, and until one of them answers this page keeps the newspaper's name.

THE RECORDS

Homer's birth. Province of Ontario, register of births, County of Perth, Schedule A, 1899–1900, p. 324 (also numbered 24), line 14; copy supplied by St. Marys Museum & Archives, research request answered 9 October 2026 (Abigail Parsons, Assistant Curator), work/first-pass/archive-replies/st-marys/St.John, Homer - Birth.jpg; *St. Marys Journal*, 22 March 1900 and 7 October 1920, transcribed in facts/records/homer-st-john/st_marys_2026-10-09.md.

The licence. Province of Ontario, marriage licence No. C 96576, Homer Doble St. John and Alice Rosmary Pigeon, issued at London, 1 October 1920, by H. J. Childs; "Ontario, Canada records," image 397 of 1364, image group 005635608, Archives of Ontario, via FamilySearch (ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9ST-B22T), accessed 24 October 2026 by the Stratford-Perth Archives.

The marriage. Province of Ontario, Form 3, affidavit and particulars of the marriage, No. 022528, Homer Doble St. John and Alice Rose Pigeon, St. Joseph's Rectory, Stratford, 4 October 1920, received by the Registrar General 5 October 1920 (image via Ancestry).

The birth notice. *Stratford Daily Beacon*, 5 July 1921, "Born: St. John."

The grave. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Nationwide Gravesite Locator: St John, John H, US Army, born 07/02/1921, died 10/28/2006, Glen Abbey Mortuary, Bonita, Calif. 91902 (search of 26 October 2026, saved in work/first-pass/archive-replies/va-gravesite-locator/).

The licence, the registration and the notice were found and sent by Megan Lockhart, Assistant Archivist, Stratford-Perth Archives, Stratford, Ontario, 26 October 2026. Copies in work/first-pass/archive-replies/stratford-perth/ and on Google Drive (Book-o-Matic/Records/stratford-perth); correspondence indexed in work/first-pass/archive-replies/_correspondence/INDEX.csv. Dossier rows: homer S494–S495, john-st-john S415.