



# Canada Research: An Introduction

Joni Kesler, AG®

FamilySearch International

Family history research in Canada can be very fun and rewarding. Learn about Canada's history, background, and records for each province and territory to help you begin your family history research. Many of the records for Canada are digital and are readily available at major genealogical websites such as FamilySearch, Ancestry.com, and Library and Archives Canada.

## History and Background

European colonization in Canada began when Norsemen built temporary fishing camps along the eastern coast about 1000 AD.

### Significant dates in Canadian history

**1763:** End of Seven Year's War (French and Indian War), most of Canada came under British rule

**1783–1784:** After American Revolution, 30,000+ Loyalist refugees fled to Canada

**1783–1784:** Loyalists settled the following areas:

- Coastal regions
- Eastern Townships of Quebec
- Area between Ottawa and St. Lawrence river valleys (known as Upper Canada or Ontario)

**1784:** New Brunswick separated from Nova Scotia

**1800-1815:** Around 35,000 people immigrate to Upper Canada. These include 23,000 Loyalists, "late Loyalists," and their descendants. They were mainly from upstate New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

**1815–1850:** The great immigration was from Scotland and Ireland to the Atlantic colonies. Every year a few thousand immigrants came. During the Famine Migration from Ireland, tens of thousands settled the farms and towns of Upper and Lower Canada. Many went to New Brunswick

**1841-1867:** Ontario was called Canada West and Quebec was Canada East

**1867:** Canada confederation brought about self-rule and united Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec.

**1881:** Settlement in Manitoba increased as immigrants and farmers from Ontario headed west.

## Provinces and Territories

Canada consists of 10 provinces and 3 territories

### Maritime or Atlantic Provinces

- New Brunswick, July 1, 1867

- Nova Scotia, July 1, 1867
- Prince Edward Island, July 1, 1873
- Newfoundland, March 31, 1949

#### **Central Provinces**

- Ontario, July 1, 1867
- Quebec, July 1, 1867

#### **Prairie Provinces**

- Alberta, Sept. 1, 1905
- Manitoba, July 15, 1870
- Saskatchewan, Sept. 1, 1905

#### **Nunavut**

- Separated from Northwest Territories, April 1, 1999

#### **Northwest Territories**, July 15, 1870, (north of the Prairie Provinces)

Includes the following areas:

- Arctic island
- Islands of Hudson Bay

#### **West Coast Province**

- British Columbia, July 20, 1871
- Yukon Territory, June 13, 1898
- Land north of British Columbia

### **Vital Records**

- Each province is responsible for vital records
- Registration for all provinces was not complete until the 1920s
- Dates for vital records vary by province

### **Maritime and Atlantic Provinces**

#### **New Brunswick**

- Birth 1800-1925, Marriage 1847-1970, Death 1815-1969
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/New\\_Brunswick,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/New_Brunswick,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Provincial Archives of New Brunswick  
<https://archives.gnb.ca/Search/VISSE/NameIndex.aspx?culture=en-CA&letter=A&datasets=012>

#### **Nova Scotia**

- Birth 1864-1877 and 1908-1919, Marriage bonds 1763-1864
- Marriage registrations 1864-1944, Deaths 1864-1877 and 1908-1969
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Nova\\_Scotia,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Nova_Scotia,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics: <https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com>

#### **Prince Edward Island**

- Birth and Baptism 1788-1943, Marriage licenses 1827-1919, Marriage registrations 1920-1936, Death Pre-1906 and 1906-1968
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Prince\\_Edward\\_Island,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Prince_Edward_Island,_Canada_Genealogy)

- Prince Edward Island Public Archives and Records Office  
<http://www.gov.pe.ca/parosearch/>

### **Newfoundland and Labrador**

- Birth 1891-1899, Marriage 1891-1922, Death 1891-1949
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Newfoundland\\_and\\_Labrador,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Newfoundland_and_Labrador,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Vital Statistics  
<https://www.vitalstats.eservices.gov.nl.ca/can/AFSCClient/mainMenuSubmit.m?mainmenu=p1>

## **Central Provinces**

### **Ontario**

- Ontario Birth 1869-1917, Marriage 1801-1938, Death 1869-1948
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ontario,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ontario,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Archives of Ontario [http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/tracing/the\\_records.aspx](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/tracing/the_records.aspx)

### **Quebec**

- Birth, Marriage, and Death 1679-1900 (most vital records information comes from church records)
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Quebec,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Quebec,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Quebec Civil Records <http://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/default.html>

## **Prairie Provinces**

### **Alberta**

- Birth 1870 to 1901, Marriage 1870-1942, Death 1870-1971
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Alberta,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Alberta,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Alberta Provincial Archives <https://provincialarchives.alberta.ca/how-to/find-birth-marriage-and-death-records>

### **Manitoba**

- Birth 1882-1917, Marriage 1882-1937, Death 1882-1947
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Manitoba,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Manitoba,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Manitoba Vital Statistics Agency <https://vitalstats.gov.mb.ca/Query.php>

### **Saskatchewan**

- Birth 1875-1908, Marriage 1878- (no index available), Death 1889-1916
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Saskatchewan,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Saskatchewan,_Canada_Genealogy)
- E Health Saskatchewan [http://genealogy.ehealthsask.ca/vsgs\\_srch.aspx](http://genealogy.ehealthsask.ca/vsgs_srch.aspx)

## Other Provinces and Territories

### Nunavut

- Birth, Marriage, Death 1925-
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Nunavut,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Nunavut,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Northwest Territories, Health and Social Services  
[https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/topics?mefibs-form-filters-combine=&mefibs-form-filters-field\\_sector\\_tid=All&mefibs-form-filters-field\\_program\\_type\\_tid=35&mefibs-form-filters-mefibs\\_block\\_id=filters](https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/topics?mefibs-form-filters-combine=&mefibs-form-filters-field_sector_tid=All&mefibs-form-filters-field_program_type_tid=35&mefibs-form-filters-mefibs_block_id=filters)

### Northwest Territories

- Birth, Marriage, Death 1925-
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Northwest\\_Territories,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Northwest_Territories,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Northwest Territories, Health and Social Services  
[https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/topics?mefibs-form-filters-combine=&mefibs-form-filters-field\\_sector\\_tid=All&mefibs-form-filters-field\\_program\\_type\\_tid=35&mefibs-form-filters-mefibs\\_block\\_id=filters](https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/topics?mefibs-form-filters-combine=&mefibs-form-filters-field_sector_tid=All&mefibs-form-filters-field_program_type_tid=35&mefibs-form-filters-mefibs_block_id=filters)

### West Coast Provinces: British Columbia

- Birth 1854-1903, Marriage 1871-1944, Death 1872-1999
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/British\\_Columbia,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/British_Columbia,_Canada_Genealogy)
- British Columbia Archives <http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy>

### Yukon Territory

- Births 1898-, Marriage 1899-, Marriage license applications 1901-1917 (Library and Archives Canada), Death 1899-, Yukon River Basin Death and Burials 1887-2007
- FamilySearch Research Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Yukon,\\_Canada\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Yukon,_Canada_Genealogy)
- Yukon Archives Data database search  
[http://yukongenealogy.com/search?search=vital+records&archives\\_people=1&specialty=1&francophone=1&sourdough=1&barristers=1&pioneer=1&basin=1&grey=1&yukonnews=1&klondikemiss=1&businesses=1&census1891=1&whitehorsebdm=1](http://yukongenealogy.com/search?search=vital+records&archives_people=1&specialty=1&francophone=1&sourdough=1&barristers=1&pioneer=1&basin=1&grey=1&yukonnews=1&klondikemiss=1&businesses=1&census1891=1&whitehorsebdm=1)

### Census Records

- The national government of Canada has taken a census every ten years since 1871

- The last national Canadian census available to the general public is the 1921 census
- For the years 1842-1871 some partial or incomplete censuses exist for some areas but do not cover all modern-day Canada

#### Introduction

- National census records are arranged by province and within provinces by census districts and subdistricts.
- Census districts are voting districts, not counties. Although a voting district may have the same name as a county, it may not include the same townships.

#### Contents

- Name
- Family relationships
- Age
- Year of birth
- Place of birth
- Marital status

#### Census Record Availability

- FamilySearch <https://www.familysearch.org>
- Ancestry <https://www.ancestry.com> or <https://ancestry.ca>
- Library and Archives Canada <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx>

#### 1842 Census

- FamilySearch indexes and images
- Ancestry index and FamilySearch indexes
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1851 Census

- FamilySearch index
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1861 Census

- FamilySearch index and images, index only for Ontario
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1871 Census

- FamilySearch index only
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1881 Census

- FamilySearch index and images
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1891 Census

- FamilySearch index
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1901 Census

- FamilySearch index and images
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1911 Census

- FamilySearch index
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### 1921 Census

- FamilySearch index
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### Prairie Provinces Census Records

##### 1906 Census

- FamilySearch index
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

##### 1916 Census

- FamilySearch index and images
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

##### 1926 Census

- FamilySearch index and images
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

#### Newfoundland and Labrador

##### 1921 Census

- FamilySearch index and images
- Ancestry index and images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

### 1935 Census

- FamilySearch index and images
- Ancestry index with FamilySearch images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

### 1945 Census

- FamilySearch index and images
- Ancestry index with FamilySearch images
- Library and Archives Canada index and images

## Naturalization and Immigration

### Naturalization

- Before Canada became a nation (pre-1867) naturalization was completed in accordance with the laws of the provinces or with British law
- Between 1763 and 1947, non-alien residents of Canada were considered British subjects
- Settlers from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales had no need to naturalize in Canada.

You may find evidence that an ancestor completed citizenship requirements in one of the following documents

- Censuses
- Court minutes
- Homestead records
- Passports
- Voting registers
- Military papers

### History and Background

**1828:** Naturalization Act where Upper Canada (Ontario) gave men British citizenship after 7 years of residency

**1841:** Naturalization Act after the union of Lower and Upper Canada

1868: A local Act known as Law of Naturalization and Allegiance which required naturalization to be a federal process (although provinces retained some jurisdiction)

### Naturalization

#### History and Background

**1914:** Naturalization Act required the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration to issue naturalization (began in 1916)

**1947:** Canadian citizenship was established and became separate from British citizenship

### Naturalization Databases

Library and Archives Canada has databases for some limited collections including:

- Naturalization Records, 1828-1850 for Upper Canada/Canada West (present day Ontario)

- Citizenship Registration Records, 1851-1945 for the Montreal Circuit Court
- Naturalization Records, 1915-1951

Find Naturalization Databases at

- <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/citizenship-naturalization-records/Pages/introduction.aspx>

### Canada Gazette

- From 1915-1951, the Canada Gazette published all naturalizations as part of the annual report of the Secretary of State. There are two parts to the database:
- 1915 to 1946—published in certificate number order. The name index allows you to search by first or last name and country.
- 1947 to 1951—contains digital images of naturalizations published in the *Canada Gazette*. It is searchable by month and year of publication.

Search the Gazette at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/citizenship-naturalization-records/naturalized-records-1915-1951/Pages/introduction.aspx>

Published naturalization records include:

- Name
- Country of origin (or for a wife or child, the relationship to the person being naturalized)
- Date naturalization certificate was issued
- Occupation
- Residence
- Certificate number and series

### Immigration Records

Immigration records are sources that give information about the movement of groups or individuals from one place to another, usually between nations

- Immigration—to enter
- Emigration—to leave

#### Pre-1865

- Library Archives Canada has immigration documents showing emigrants to Canada between 1750 and 1854 (about 28,000 entries)
- Some of these are available digitally, other documents will need to be requested

#### Post 1865

- Passenger lists for various ports 1865-1922
- Passenger lists for the Port of Quebec City and other ports 1865-1922
- Immigrants from China, 1885-1949
- Ukranian Immigrants 1891-1930
- Immigrants from the Russian Empire 1898-1922

Find immigration databases at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/Pages/introduction.aspx>



## Canadian Border Crossings

### US to Canada and Canada to US 1895-1954

- FamilySearch St. Albans <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2185163>
- Ancestry search card catalog for U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895-1960 and Canada, Border Crossings from U.S. to Canada, 1908-1935

## Other Records

### Church Records

- Church records were first recorded in Canada starting in the 1620s with the French settlements in Quebec
- Because many provinces did not keep vital records until after confederation in 1867, church records are crucial to research in earlier time periods

### Church Records

- Three-fourths of Canadians claim a connection to one of four churches:
  - Roman Catholic Church
  - Anglican Church of Canada
  - United Church of Canada
  - Presbyterian Church in Canada
- If you are not sure of the religious affiliation of your ancestor, check the census records, as census records asked about religion

### Find church records at FamilySearch

- Historical Records Collection  
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list/?fcs=region%3ACANADA&ec=region%3ACANADA&cqs=church>
- Or use the catalog place search  
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog> to search by district, county city or town

## The Drouin Collection

- The Drouin collection is a collection of Catholic Records submitted to the government by churches to be registered civilly
- The Drouin collection includes records from many denominations across Quebec including Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of England, Baptist, Methodist, and others
- Find Quebec church records
  - FamilySearch Quebec Catholic  
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1321742>
  - Family Search Quebec Non-Catholic  
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1929561>
  - Ancestry.com search card catalog for Drouin collection

### Other valuable record types

- Land
- Newspapers
- Notarial
- Probate