



Canadian Census Records

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28 May 2015

Census records are one of the primary sources for finding family information in Canada. Most of these census records are now digitized and can be searched online.

Canadian Records are Different from U.S. Records

- Record types are the same as in the United States: Vital, probate, census, land, and church records
- Who kept the records is not the same as in the U.S.: Every province is different; record types in each province are different; a major source in one province may be less useful, useless, or non-existent in another province
- For Quebec, they used French “dit” names, meaning “also known as,” or alias. It was used to distinguish one branch of a family from another
- If an ancestor moved to the United States, search U.S. records first, including U.S. census, Canadian Border Crossings, Naturalization Records
- Place names changed over time: names were lost, small towns combined or incorporated with larger cities; duplicate place names
- Names of places and people may be Anglicized or spelled phonetically
- Families often name a baby after a sibling who died
- Accuracy of report ages varied widely, especially in early records

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1763—New France was turned over to Great Britain after the Seven Year's War
- 1774–1784—Province of Quebec was established
- 1791–1841—Old Province of Quebec was divided into Lower Canada (Quebec) and Upper Canada (Ontario)
- 1841—Upper Canada became Canada West (Ontario) and Lower Canada became Canada East (Quebec)
- 1867—Canada organized with four provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick)
- 1870—Manitoba
- 1871—British Columbia
- 1873—Prince Edward Island
- 1898—Yukon
- 1905—Saskatchewan and Alberta
- 1949—Newfoundland
- 1999—Nunavut

CENSUS TIPS

- Early census records began in 1666 in French areas
- Early censuses in Quebec often listed women by their maiden name
- Portions of all censuses have been lost. If books and finding aids list “missing” census is not available anywhere
- Earlier censuses for some provinces
- Format not standard until 1871
- Geographic counties equal township, towns, and villages
- Census was taken by province, then by census district and sub-district
- Census districts and sub-districts are voting or election districts, not counties
- In some provinces, census districts and sub-districts have the same name as counties and townships. Townships may be equal to census sub-districts
- A census district may have the same name as a county, but may not include the same townships
- Census boundaries change frequently
- Townships or census sub-districts may be in different census districts for each census year
- Provinces where census district boundaries often match geographic counties: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island. Provinces where census district boundaries are less likely to match geographic counties: Quebec, Ontario. Western Canada provinces had no counties but only federal election districts

National Census, 1871–1921

- Taken every year since 1871
- First coast to coast census taken in 1881

Dates of Enumeration

1871—April 2

1881—April 4

1891—April 6

1901—March 31

1906 and 1916—June for Prairie Provinces only (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta)

1911—1 June

1921—1 June

No national census available yet after 1921

INFORMATION ON CENSUS RECORDS

Early Census Records

- May be statistical—Most censuses before 1851 were head of family only
- Provincial census records more standard by 1851
- After 1867, all forms standardized listing every person by name

Census Records after 1867

- Name of each person (some smaller provinces still Head of Family only)
- Age and whether born within the last 12 months
- Province or country of birth
- Origin (ethnic background)
- Occupation or profession
- Religion

- Marital status and whether born within the last 12 months

Later censuses may also include:

- Month, day, and year of birth
- Education
- Year of immigration and naturalization
- Nationality
- Country or place of birth of parents
- Race or tribal origin
- Mother tongue
- Employment information
- Relationship to head of household

Census Clues Leading to Other Records

- Religion—church and cemetery records
- Country of birth—immigration records
- Whether born or married in last 12 months—birth, marriage, and church records
- Origin, race, and mother tongue—church records; ethnic record
- Education—school records
- Year of immigration and naturalization—immigration and naturalization and citizenship records

ONLINE CENSUS RECORDS

- Most Canadian census records are now indexed
- If no index is available, you need to know the name of the census district and sub-district, and province, and search the records page by page
- Consult the Canada Census Wiki page for links to indexes and images online:
https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Canada_Census
- AutomatedGenealogy.com has indexes and images for 1851-2. 1901, 1911, and 1906 provincial census for prairie provinces
- Library and Archives Canada has indexes and digital images of national census
<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx>
- Ancestry.com has early census records, 1851–1921, and provincial census for prairie provinces in 1906 and 1916
- FamilySearch.org has census indexes and some images

OTHER CENSUS RECORDS

- There are indexes to various census records that can be found in the Family History Library Catalog using the Place Search under the name of the province, county, and town and the topic: Census—[year]

Alberta (1905)

- 1881, 1891, 1901, 1906, 1911, 1916, 1921
- Earlier census for Northwest Territories

British Columbia (1871)

- 1881–1921

Manitoba (1870)

- 1870, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1906, 1911, 1916, 1921

Newfoundland (1949)

- Partial 1911, 1921, 1935, 1945
- Few 19th century censuses list names. Mostly statistical summaries

New Brunswick (1867)

- Part of Nova Scotia until 1783
- 1851–1921

Nova Scotia (1867)

- Included in French Acadia until about 1755
- 1686, 1708, 1714, 1752, 1770, 1811, 1818, 1827, 1851–1921

Ontario (1867)

- Separated from Quebec in 1791
- 1842, 1878, 1850, 1851–1921

Prince Edward Island (1873)

- Separated from Nova Scotia in 1769
- 1728, 1798, 1848, 1861–1921

Quebec (1867)

- Part of New France until 1775; included Ontario until 1791
- 1666, 1667, 1681, 1762, 1825, 1831, 1842, 1851–1921

Saskatchewan (1905)

- Originally Rupert's Land; part of Northwest Territories in 1870
- 1881, 1891, 1901, 1906, 1911, 1916, 1921

Yukon (1898)

- Originally Rupert's Land, part of Northwest Territories in 1870
- 1881–1921

Summary

- Research in the Canadian census can contain family relationships and other valuable information
- Examine the information found in each census to find clues to other records to search
- You may discover hidden treasures