

Research Guide 228
Immigration and Citizenship Records

Last Updated: March 2023



Potential emigrants viewing poster for the Ontario Air Immigration Plan, 1947
RG 9-7-4-1-1

Ontario Air Immigration Plan photographs

In this guide	2
Where do I find these records?	2
What do I need to get started?	3
The Records	3
1. Immigration records	3
1.1 Provincial government immigration records	3
1.2 Federal immigration records.....	5
1.3 Home Children records	6
2. Naturalization and citizenship records.....	7
2.1 Naturalization records, 1828 to 1850	7
2.2 Court naturalization records, 1850 to 1977	8
2.3 Federal government naturalization records, 1854 to present	8
How do I get to the online descriptions?	8
Contact us	10

In this guide

This guide has information on how to find records pertaining to immigration and citizenship at the Archives of Ontario. It also includes records available at other institution.

Please note: this guide contains links to information found in our online Archives and Information Management System (AIMS). On our website, this database is found under “Access Our Collections”. If you are using a print copy of this guide, go to page 8 for more information on how to find the online descriptions.

Where do I find these records?

Most of our records mentioned in this guide are available on microfilm in our reading room, and you do not need to request them in advance. Libraries that offer interloan services can borrow most of those reels for you. [Click here to view our Microfilm Interloan Catalogue](#). On our website, you will find this catalogue under “Access Our Collections”. Some of the microfilmed records are available online.

You will need to request some of our records in advance to view them in our reading room. In some cases, you may be able to request copies from a distance.

We have microfilm copies of some of the records from other institutions mentioned in this guide. You can view those microfilm copies in our reading room. Some of those

records are available online. In some cases, you may need to submit a request in writing to the institution that has the records.

What do I need to get started?

To find immigration or citizenship records, you need to know the name of the person, and when they immigrated or became citizens. For some records, you may need to know where they lived in Ontario.

If you are not sure when the person immigrated or became citizen, information found in census records, city directories, land records and birth, marriage and death records may help you narrow your search down. [Click here to view research guides and tools on how to search these records](#). On our website, you will find the Research Guides and Tools page under “Access Our Collection”.

The Records

1. Immigration records

The Government of Upper Canada opened an Emigrant (sic) Office in Toronto in 1833. Its main role was to promote immigration to the colony and provide financial assistance to some immigrants, Offices and agents were later added elsewhere in Ontario, in Quebec City and in some European cities.

After Confederation (1867), the Ontario and federal governments were jointly responsible for immigration. The provincial government continued to provide financial assistance to immigrants to the province, through the Immigration Branch (later Department of Immigration and Colonization Bureau) between 1867 and 1910. Since 1910, various offices in the provincial government have been responsible for assistance and settlement programs for immigrants.

Please note: In many records before 1900, people immigrating to Canada are referred to as emigrants.

1.1 Provincial government immigration records

Records of the Emigrant Office and the provincial Department of Immigration (1831 to 1902) document the arrival of immigrants in the province, financial assistance provided to some immigrants, health services and various administration and financial issues.

Note: immigrants who did not receive government assistance may not appear in these records.

The Toronto Emigrant Office assisted emigration registers (1863 to 1885) contain information about immigrants who received government assistance to travel to or settle in Ontario. Information may include the name of ship, date of arrival, assistance provided and destination in Ontario.

These records are available on microfilm, and local libraries that offer interloan services may borrow the film for you. For a transcription and an index, and more information about these records, [click here to search our Toronto Emigrant Office Assisted Immigration Registers Database](#). On our website, you will find this database under “Access Our Collection”.

Most other provincial records from 1831 to 1902 are available on microfilm in our reading room, and libraries that offer interloan services may borrow them for you. Table 1 below is a list of provincial immigration records from 1831 to 1902.

Some of the microfilm are also digitized and available on the FamilySearch website, [click here to access our Digitized Microfilm Collections webpage for more information](#). To find this information on our website, click on “Access our Collections” then click on the “Digitized Microfilm” page. The FamilySearch website is www.familysearch.org.

Table 1: Provincial government immigration records, 1831 to 1902

Title and Dates	Reference Code	How to access
Applications for refund bonuses from emigrants to Ontario, 1872 to 1876	Click here to view the description for RG 11-23	On microfilm and digitized
Chief Emigrant Agent’s letterbooks, 1835 to 1859	Click here to view the description for RG 11-1	On microfilm
Daily journals of the Secretary of the Toronto Emigration Office, 1873 to 1902	Click here to view the description for RG 11-9	Request the originals
Department of Immigration accounting records, 1870 to 1901	Click here to view the description for RG 11-19	Request the originals
Department of Immigration letter registers, 1867 to 1883	Click here to view the description for RG 11-12	Request the originals
Department of Immigration numbered correspondence files, 1873 to 1897	Click here to view the description for RG 11-8-1	On microfilm and digitized
Department of Immigration Secretary’s correspondence files, 1891 to 1899	Click here to view the description for RG 11-8-3	Request the originals
Department of Immigration unnumbered correspondence files, 1869 to 1892	Click here to view the description for RG 11-8-2	On microfilm and digitized
Emigrant arrival and destination records, 1862 to 1881	Click here to view the description for RG 11-17	On microfilm and digitized
Emigrant assisted passage certificates, 1872 to 1873	Click here to view the description for RG 11-16	On microfilm and digitized
Emigrant railway pass records, 1873 to 1875	Click here to view the description for RG 11-18	Request the originals
Emigrant six dollar bonus certificates, 1875	Click here to view the description for RG 11-24	On microfilm and digitized
Expense account for immigration agent at Toronto, 1869	Click here to view the description for RG 11-21	Request the originals

Title and Dates	Reference Code	How to access
Immigration bonus certificates and advance bonus list, 1872 to 1874	Click here to view the description for RG 11-15	On microfilm and digitized
Immigration Commissioner's letterbook, 1874 to 1875	Click here to view the description for RG 11-13	Request the original
Immigration refund bonus certificates, 1873 to 1874	Click here to view the description for RG 11-22	On microfilm and digitized
Kingston Emigrant Agent's letterbook, 1849 to 1874	Click here to view the description for RG 11-2	On microfilm
Letterbooks of Ontario Immigration Agents, 1869 to 1901	Click here to view the description for RG 11-11	Request the originals
List of emigrants receiving refund bonus, 1872 to 1875	Click here to view the description for RG 11-14	On microfilm and digitized
Miscellaneous records of the Department of Immigration, 1869 to 1899	Click here to view the description for RG 11-20	On microfilm and digitized
Passage bonus receipts for emigrants, 1873 to 1875	Click here to view the description for RG 11-10	On microfilm and digitized
Registers of applications for emigrant passage warrants, 1872 to 1888	Click here to view the description for RG 11-25	On microfilm and digitized
Reports of inspection of Home Children, 1875 and 1886	Click here to view the description for RG 11-7	On microfilm
Toronto Convalescent and Fever Hospital admission and discharge register, 1847 to 1848	Click here to view the description for RG 11-6	On microfilm
Toronto Emigrant Office financial records, 1831 to 1879	Click here to view the description for RG 11-5	On microfilm
Toronto Emigrant Office arrival and destination registers, 1857 to 1892	Click here to view the description for RG 11-4	On microfilm

For information about records on provincial government assistance programs for immigrants after World War II, see our research guide 235, Records Related to Multiculturalism and Ethno-Cultural Communities in Ontario.

1.2 Federal immigration records

Passenger lists (ships' manifests) and border entry lists

Ship captains were required to submit a list of their passengers at the first Canadian port they arrived at. Lists of passengers whose final destination was in Canada were also submitted to consular authorities in American ports.

Information in passenger lists varies. Often, it is limited to information about the head of the household and the number of family members. The lists may also include the traveller's name, age, country of origin (which in some cases is the port of departure), occupation, and intended destination. Few lists before 1865 still exist; in some cases, local newspapers at the port of arrival listed passengers.

Beginning in 1908, immigrants' entering Canada through the land border with the United States at entry ports (official entry points). were recorded on border entry lists. Between 1919 and 1925, these lists were replaced with forms all immigrants were required to fill. Information included may include the name, age, occupation, birthplace and citizenship, race and religion, and destination.

You may view microfilm copies of passenger lists, 1865 to 1920 and border entry lists, 1908 to 1919, in our reading room. The originals are with Library and Archives Canada. For more information about these records. [click here to view the description for the Ship passenger lists diffusion material \(D 20\)](#).

Library and Archives Canada has ship passenger lists from 1750 (mostly 1865) to 1935, border entry lists from 1908 to 1919 and 1925 to 1935, and border entry forms from 1920 to 1924. Visit the Library and Archives Canada website. www.collectionscanada.gc.ca, for digitized copies and indexes for some of these records, as well as other immigration-related records in their collections.

Ship passenger lists from 1865 to 1935 and border entry records from 1908 to 1935 are also digitized on www.ancestry.ca. Passenger lists for some ports, 1881 to 1922, are also digitized on www.familysearch.org

For information on how to access records of immigrants' entrance after 1935, visit <https://atip-aiprp.apps.gc.ca/atip/welcome.do>.

Central registry files of the Department of Immigration, 1873 to-1979:

We hold microfilm copies of the Central registry files of the Department of Immigration. These records may include correspondence between immigrants and the Department, lists of immigrants, reports and other records about Home Children (also see below), and records on various topics related to immigration. For more information about these records [click here to view the description for the Federal Immigration Branch diffusion material \(D 8\)](#) . For information on how to access these records through Library and Archives Canada, visit its website, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca.

1.3 Home Children records

Between 1869 and the 1930's, more than 100000 orphaned, abandoned and poor children were sent from the British Isles to work on Canadian farms. Churches and philanthropic organizations were responsible recruiting, transporting and placing these children, which are referred to as Home Children.

We have records of inspections of Home Children, done in 1875 and 1886. These inspections contain personal information about the children, their placement, and their living and working conditions. You may view these records on microfilm in our reading room, and libraries that offer interloan services may borrow the reels for you. For more information about these records, [click here to view the description for RG 11-7](#)

You may also view microfilm copies of records from Library and Archives about Home Children, 1878 to 1920, in our reading room. For more information about these records, [click here to check the description for the Juvenile immigration records diffusion material \(D 10\) for more information about these records.](#)

Visit the Library and Archives Canada website, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca for information about accessing these and other records about Home Children, searchable a database to Home Children records, and resources on researching Home Children.

Some records from the private agencies that organized juvenile immigration still exist. They may contain information on children's dates and places of birth and their families. Most of these agencies are located in Great Britain and you will need to contact them directly.

2. Naturalization and citizenship records

A formal naturalization process was instituted in 1828. Before that year, all people applying for a grant of land from the Crown had to swear an oath of allegiance to the King. Those who were not born British subjects were deemed to be subjects once they had sworn that oath.

You may find some of these oaths in the land petitions or the township papers. For information about land records, [click here to see our Research Guide 225, Researching Crown land records.](#) On our website, you will find this and other research guides on the "Research Guide and Tools" page, under "Access Our Collections".

Note: Until 1947, Canadian citizens were legally British subjects. Immigrants who were already British subjects (immigrants from the United Kingdom, British colonies and Commonwealth countries) did not need to be naturalized.

2.1 Naturalization records, 1828 to 1850

We have an oath of allegiance book for the years 1837 to 1842, recording the names of people who swore on oath of allegiance as a condition to be naturalized. For information on this book and how to access it, [click here to view the description for RG 22-771.](#)

We also have microfilm copies of naturalization registers. Between 1828 and 1850, naturalization registers were maintained for each county. Registers originally included the person's name, residence, signature, registry date and an entry number. Other information was included in later entries.

You may view these registers in our reading room, on microfilm reels C-15692 and C-15693. The originals are with Library and Archives Canada. Visit the Library and

Archives Canada website, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca, for a database listing these records and to view digitized copies.

These registers are indexed in Donald A. McKenzie's series of articles entitled *Upper Canada naturalization records 1828-1850* (published in *Families*, vol. 18, no. 3 to vol. 20, no. 1; 1979-1981). There is a copy in our reading room.

2.2 Court naturalization records, 1850 to 1977

Between 1850 and 1977, the naturalization process involved swearing an oath before a judge. This has been replaced by citizenship ceremonies presided by citizenship judges appointed by the Governor in Council.

We have records documenting some of these oaths. Records may include registers and lists of people swearing the oath, correspondence, and background files on the applicants. For information about these records and how to access them, [click here to search the Archives and Information Management System \(AIMS\), "Archives Repository", Advanced search by group of records, subject "citizenship" and the name of the county or district.](#)

Minute books of the Courts of General Sessions of the Peace may include the name of the people swearing the oath, and the date. For information about these records and how to access them, [click here to search the Archives and Information Management System \(AIMS\), "Archives Repository" by group of records, then by subject "minutes", "sessions" and "peace" and the name of the county or district.](#)

2.3 Federal government naturalization records, 1854 to present

Library and Archives Canada has a database of people naturalized in Canada between 1915 and 1951. To search this database, visit www.collectionscanada.gc.ca.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada holds a surname card index for naturalizations that took place between 1854 and 1917, as well as case files created after 1917. These case files may include application forms, oaths of allegiance sworn before County or District Court judges, and supporting documentation on applicants, their families and their length of stay in the country. For information on how to access the card index and the case files, visit <https://atip-aiprp.apps.gc.ca/atip/welcome.do>.

How do I get to the online descriptions?

1. On our website's main page, click on "Access Our Collections", and click on "Archives and Information Management System", as shown in the image below:

- ▶ About Us
 - ▶ **Access Our Collections**
 - ▶ Services to the Public
 - ▶ Tracing Your Family History
 - ▶ Private Records Acquisition
 - ▶ Education at the Archives
 - ▶ Art Collection
 - ▶ Explore Our Exhibits
 - ▶ Recordkeeping
- Visit Us On... 



You can access and search the collections at the Archives of Ontario with the help of the databases, research guides and tools, and resources, as described in the links below. Learn more about **what we have**. Read our [Statement on Language and Description](#) for information about how our staff describe the materials in our collections. If you require assistance using these tools or accessing our collections, please [contact us](#).

AIMS
Search archival, library and art collections using the new **Archives and Information Management System (AIMS)**. AIMS replaces the Archives Descriptive Database, the BIBLION Library Catalogue Database, the Government of Ontario Art Collection Database, and the Visual Database. AIMS provides integrated access to all of these collections.

[LEARN MORE about AIMS](#)

2. In the Archives and Information Management System (AIMS), click on “Archives repository (only)” button:

- Home
- Art collection (only)
- Archives Repository (only)
- Library Holdings (only)
- Immigration Records
- Second Heir and Devisee Commission Case Files
- [Ask about our records](#)



Welcome to the Archives of Ontario!

Welcome to AIMS, the Archive's new collections management system. AIMS provides integrated access to our archival, library and art collections. Search AIMS for descriptions of the records in our holdings.

IMPORTANT!

You must have an AIMS account to order records. An AIMS account is not required to search records. AIMS and AOR account number are not the same.

[Click here to go to Public Secure](#)

[How do I get an AIMS account?](#)

Search archival, art, and library collection

Option 1: Keyword Search

Enter a search term or terms:

All of these categories Any of these categories Exact phrase

[How to search](#)

3. On the “Welcome to the Archival Collection” search page, click “Advanced Search”:



AIMS
Archives and Information Management System

Welcome to the Archival Collection!
Search the Archival Collection of the Archives of Ontario

This part of AIMS allows you to search the archival holdings of the Archives of Ontario using keywords. You can also refine your search with specific criteria using the Advanced Search button or use the More Search Options Browse Record Creators button to access descriptions of Government of Ontario agencies and private sector organizations, people and families that have created archival records.


Keyword Search
Enter a search term or terms:

All of the keywords Any of these Keywords Exact Phrase

4. On the “Archives Advanced Search” page enter the reference code (that’s the number starting with C, F or RG) in the Reference Code field and click “Search” (at the bottom of the page).

Archives Advanced Search

Refine your search using one or many of the specific search fields below:



Contact us

Although unable to do your research for you, our reference archivists are waiting to assist you. You may call or write to them by mail or email or — best of all — visit the Archives of Ontario.

Telephone: 416-327-1600 Toll free (Ontario): 1-800-668-9933

Email: [Click here to email the Archives of Ontario](#). The e-mail address is reference@ontario.ca

Address: Archives of Ontario, 134 Ian Macdonald Blvd., Toronto, ON M7A 2C5

Website

Visit our website for information about our collections and our services, our online exhibits and education programs, and links to our social media accounts. [Click here to visit our website](#). The website is www.ontario.ca/archives.

Customer Service and Research Guides

Our guides contain information about our services, freelance researchers available to do research for you, and some of most popular records. [Click here to view our guides](#). To find the “Research Guides and Tools” on our website, click on “Access our Collections”.

© King's Printer for Ontario, 2023

This information is provided as a public service. Last update is shown at the beginning of this guide. Readers should where possible verify the information before acting on it.