

## Archives of Ontario Pathfinder to: ESTATE FILES

*Estate files* contain wills probated with the Courts and records related to the probate, or records documenting administrations for estates without a will. More information research tips and addresses for local courthouses can be found in Research Guide no. 206, *How to Find a Will in Court Records*. [Click here to view Research Guide 206](#).

**Note: Estate files after 1976:** For Parry Sound District (up to 1986), Rainy River District (up to 1977), or if you do not know the county (up to 1982), go to the end of this pathfinder. For other counties and years, contact the local courthouse.

**Note:** If you do not find an estate file, the will may have been filed with the local Land Registry Office; see *Inventory 61* (Private Property Registrations) or [click here to view Research Guide 231, Finding Land registration Records](#).

**TIP:** The will may have been probated a few years after the death.

### How to Find an Estate File

#### Before 1793

We hold records for the following districts/counties:

- Hesse District (Lake Erie and Windsor area (southwestern Ontario))
  - [Click here to see the Archives Descriptive Database description for series RG 22-6](#). If you find the name in the description of the records, contact us to request retrieval or a copy of the file.
- Lunenburg District (Uppt Canada-Lower Canada border area (southeastern Ontario))
  - [Click here to see the Archives Descriptive Database description for series RG 22-7](#). If you find the name in the description of the records, contact us to request retrieval or a copy of the records.
- Essex County and Leeds and Grenville County, Follow these steps:
  1. [Click here to go to the Archives Descriptive Database](#) and enter the person's name in the keyword field (Note: there may be unrelated hits).
  2. Write down the name, location, file number (if there no number, the estate files will be arranged alphabetically), microfilm reel number, and whether the file is from the Probate or Surrogate Court (the series title contains that information).
  3. Retrieve the microfilm from the self-serve cabinet, or borrow it through your local library.
- Other counties and district: We do not hold estate records for those years.

#### Between 1793 and 1858

Follow the steps below to find an estate file

1. [Click here to go to the Archives Descriptive Database](#) and enter the person's name in the keyword field (Note: there may be unrelated hits).
2. Results:
  - a. *If the name is there:*
    - i. Write down the name, location, file number (if there no number, the estate files will be arranged alphabetically), microfilm reel number, and whether the file is from the Probate or Surrogate Court (the series title contains that information)
    - ii. Retrieve the microfilm from the self-serve cabinet, or borrow it through your local library.
  - b. *If the name is not there:* The will may have been probated after 1858. Follow the instruction below for files between 1859 and 1930.

## Between 1859 and 1930

Follow the steps below to find an estate file

1. **For York County (to 1862) and Norfolk County (to 1869):** Follow the steps for the files between 1793 and 1859, above.
2. **For other counties and years:**
  - a. You can either:
    - i. Check Guide 206, *How to find a will in court records* for a list of counties we have printed indexes for (up to 1900). Then retrieve the printed index for that county from the Genealogy area, and write down the year and estate file number...OR
    - ii. Go to the *User's Guide to Surrogate Courts and Surrogate Clerk Microfilm Reels* , or [click here to see the Microfilm Interloan Catalogue](#) to find what microfilm reel contains the index for the county and year you are looking for. Note the instruction on how to find the file number for each county.
  - b. Retrieve the reel from the self-service cabinet, or borrow it through your local library, find the name and write down the estate file number and year.
  - c. Go back to the *User's Guide to Surrogate Courts and Surrogate Clerk Microfilm Reels* or to the Microfilm Interloan Catalogue, find the number of the microfilm reel corresponding to the county, year and file number.
  - d. Retrieve the microfilm from the self-serve cabinet, or borrow it through your local library.
3. **If you don't know the county:**
  - a. Go to the *User's Guide to Surrogate Courts and Surrogate Clerk Microfilm Reels*, or [click here to see the Microfilm Interloan Catalogue](#), and follow the instructions on how to find and use the *Surrogate Clerk for Ontario applications for probate books and indexes*.
  - b. If you find the name you are looking for, write down the county, year and name, and follow the instruction above (for 1859-1930) or below (after 1930).

## Between 1931 and 1976

Follow the steps below to find an estate file

1. **If you don't know the County:** Follow the instructions for the 1859-1930 files in this pathfinder, then proceed to Step 2 once you have the county and year.
2. **If you know the County:**
  - a. Go to the *User's Guide to Surrogate Courts and Surrogate Clerk Microfilm Reels*, or [click here to see the Microfilm Interloan Catalogue](#) to find what microfilm reel contains the index for the county and year you are looking for. Note the instruction on how to find the file number for each county.
  - b. **If we have the index or register you are looking for:**
    - i. Write down the microfilm number for the index or register you need, and retrieve the reel from the self-service cabinet, search the reel to find the name and write down the given estate file number and year.
    - ii. Once you have the file number and year:
      1. For York County to 1967 only, go to the *User's Guide to Surrogate Courts and Surrogate Clerk Microfilm Reels* to find the number of the microfilm reel corresponding to the county, year and file number. Retrieve the reel from the self-service cabinet.
      2. For Prince Edward County: Contact the Prince Edward County Historical Society, in Picton (until 1970) or the local courthouse (after 1970)
      3. For Manitoulin and Rainy River Districts (after 1974) and Wentworth County (after 1975), contact the local courthouse.
      4. For other counties: Contact the Reference staff with the name, county, year and file number. These estate files are located off site; usual retrieval time is 1-2 working days (copying will take longer).
  - c. **If we don't have the index or register you are looking for:**
    - i. Contact the local courthouse to obtain the file number and year, then:
    - ii. The local courthouse holds the file Prince Edward County (after 1970), Manitoulin and Rainy River Districts (after 1974) and Wentworth County (after 1975),.
    - iii. For other counties and years: Reference staff with the name, county, year and file number. These estate files are located off site; usual retrieval time is 1-2 working days (copying will take longer)

## Between 1977 and 1982 (1986 for Parry Sound District, 1977 for Rainy River District)

Follow the steps below to find an estate file

1. **Parry Sound District (to 1986) and Rainy River District (to 1977):**
  - a. Go to the *User's Guide to Surrogate Courts and Surrogate Clerk Microfilm Reels*, or [click here to see the Microfilm Interloan Catalogue](#) to find what microfilm reel contains the index for the county and year you are looking for.
  - b. Once you have the file number and year, contact the local courthouse.
2. **For other counties and years:** Contact the local courthouse.
3. **If you don't know the county:**
  - a. Go to the *User's Guide to Surrogate Courts and Surrogate Clerk Microfilm Reels*, or [click here to see the Microfilm Interloan Catalogue](#), and follow the instructions on how to find and use the *Surrogate Clerk for Ontario applications for probate books and indexes*.
  - b. If you find the name you are looking for, contact the local courthouse (or follow step 1 for Parry Sound District or Rainy River District).