
Census Records

220 Research Guide

Most Recent Update:
June 2018

This research guide will help you to find and use census records at the Archives of Ontario. It covers the following topics:

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THE RECORDS

Starting in 1793, districts and municipalities in Upper Canada were mandated to conduct annual censuses. Colony-wide censuses were carried out in Canada West (current-day Ontario, south of the Muskoka and Haliburton areas) in 1842, 1851-1852 and 1861. The federal government has conducted a Canada-wide census every tenth year since 1871 (every fifth year since 1956).

Please note: Census records after 1921 are *not* available to the public.

Pre-1851 Census Records

- Pre-1851 census records often only contain statistical information with no names listed or list only the names of family heads. Except for Talbot District, these censuses are on microfilm and available on self-service reels in the Archives' Reading Room and through the Microfilm Interloan Service. For more detailed descriptions, click on the highlighted links:
 - [Click here to access the database description for the District of Gore fonds \(F 1679\)](#)
 - [Click here to access the database description for the District of Johnstown fonds \(F 1721\)](#)

- [Click here to access the database description for the District of Newcastle fonds \(F 1800\)](#)
- [Click here to access the database description for the District of Niagara fonds \(F 1804\)](#)
- [Click here to access the database description for the District of Ottawa fonds \(F 1849\)](#)
- [Click here to access the database description for the Talbot District fonds \(F 1951\)](#)
- [Click here to access the database description for the Township of Trafalgar fonds \(F 1965\)](#)
- [Click here to access the database description for the Western District fonds \(F 2007\)](#)

[Click here to access the Microfilm Interloan Service for more information](#)

- For other early Ontario census records, check our binder of Ontario Census Returns, 1842-1901 available in the Reading Room. [Click here to also access it on the Library and Archives Canada website.](#)
- The Archives also holds copies of FamilySearch microfilm of censuses for the Township of Binbrook, 1837-1839 (microfilm number: GS 1436) and the Township of Blanshard, 1848 and 1850 (microfilm number: GS 539). [Click here to access the description for census for the Township of Blanshard.](#) For information on accessing these records through FamilySearch, [click here to access the FamilySearch website.](#)
- An index to the 1848 and 1850 Censuses for the Districts of Huron, Johnstown and Newcastle is available on self-service microfiche in the Archives' Reading Room. [Click here to access the description for 1848 and 1850 Censuses Index.](#) The University of Western Ontario's D.B. Weldon Library has the District of Huron 1848 Census on microfilm. [Click here to access the online listing on the University of Western Ontario's website.](#)
- The Archives has microfilmed aggregate census and assessment returns for Upper Canada and Canada West, 1824-1850. They contain population statistics for all townships and municipalities, but no information about individuals. The microfilm reel, MS 180, is available in our reading room only. The returns can also be found in the *Journals of the Legislative Assembly*.
- In addition, militia muster rolls served as county- or province-wide censuses of the adult male population. [For more information, click here to see Research Guide 226: Militia and Military Records.](#)

Post-1851 Census Returns

- The Archives has microfilm copies of the personal census returns for Canada West/Ontario for 1851-1852, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 and the 1861

and 1871 agricultural census returns for Canada West/Ontario. The returns are arranged by county, then by town and township.

The Archives of Ontario has *not* acquired a microfilmed copy of the 1911 and 1921 censuses. Library and Archives Canada's website has databases of digital images from these censuses.

Ontario Census Returns, 1842-1901, which is available in the Reading Room's Genealogy Reference Area, lists this microfilm by town and township. This binder is an annotated abstract of Thomas A. Hillman's *Catalogue of Census Returns on Microfilm, 1666-1891 / Catalogue des Recensements sur Microfilm, 1666-1891* (Ottawa: National Archives of Canada, 1987); it is available in most libraries. [Click here to also access the catalogue on the Library and Archives Canada website.](#) A separate finding aid, Toronto Census Aid (located in the Reading Room), lists the reels for the census returns for each Toronto ward and includes maps showing ward limits at the time of each census.

- The Archives has microfilm copies of the 1871 Census Returns for Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Check the finding aid listing of the Microfilm of the 1871 Census for Quebec (available in the Reading Room) or the Thomas A. Hillman book (mentioned above); the Hillman book lists the microfilm for all three provinces.
- The *personal* returns usually record a person's age, country of birth and origin, religion and occupation. The type and the amount of information vary from one census to another. The *agricultural* returns record the concession and lot, buildings and livestock owned by farmers.

Indexes and Databases for Post-1850 Census Returns

The following indexes are available in the Archives' Reading Room:

- 1851: [Click here to access the description for an index and transcript on microfiche of the census for Middlesex County.](#)
- 1851: The census for **Bruce, Grey, Lennox & Addington, and Wellington Counties** is indexed in Renie A. Rumpel's *Index to the 1851 Census of Canada West (Ontario)* (Waterloo, Ontario: Ontario Indexing Services, 2001), 3 vol. This index is available in the Archives' Reading Room's Genealogy Reference Area.
- 1861: The 1861 census for **Lennox and Addington County** is indexed in Linda Corupe's *Index to the 1861 Census of Lennox and Addington Co.* (self-published). It is available in the Archives' Reading Room (Call number 929.371359C671).
- 1871: A surname index (head of households) for the 1871 census for **all of Ontario** has been published by the Ontario Genealogical Society (30 vols., 1986-1992). It is available in the Archives' Reading Room

(Genealogy Reference Area) and on the Library and Archives Canada's Website; [click here to access the Library and Archives Canada's website](#).

For the 1851 census and all 1871 to 1921 census, there are online databases of names or digitized images. For more information, [click here to access the Library and Archives Canada's website](#).

MAKING CONTACT

Ready and Willing

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

Contact us

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

Fax: 416-327-1999.

Email: [Click here to email the Archives of Ontario](#)

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

Website

For information about the Archives' holdings, as well as access to research guides and other customer service materials available through the Archives of Ontario. [Please click here to visit our website](#).

Customer Service and Research Guides

The Archives of Ontario has published a series of in-depth research guides on a variety of specific topics. For more information, please see "Research Guides and Tools" under "Accessing Our Collection" on the home page of the Archives website.

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