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## Finding Immigration Records

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This research guide will help you to find and use immigration, naturalization and citizenship records.

All descriptions for records mentioned in this guide are available in our online Archives Descriptive Database. You will find all databases mentioned in this guide in the “Accessing Our Collection” section of our website.

### THE RECORDS

#### Upper Canada and Ontario Government Immigration Records

The Government of Upper Canada opened an Emigrant (sic) Office in Toronto in 1833, mostly to assist immigrants to the colony. Offices and agents were later added elsewhere in Ontario and in some European cities. After Confederation (1867), the Ontario and federal governments were jointly responsible for immigration.

Immigration records for the Province of Ontario (RG 11) document the involvement of the Government of Ontario and its predecessors in immigration, from 1833 to 1901.

#### Series RG 11-1 to RG 11-7 (1835-1892) (the Hawke Papers)

These series of records are also known as the *Hawke Papers*. These records mostly document the activities of the Toronto Emigrant Office under A.B. Hawke (agent from 1831 to 1864) and his successors to 1892. They are available on self-service microfilm in the Archives' Reading Room and through the Archives' Microfilm Interloan Service. [Click here to access the Archives' Microfilm Interloan Catalogue.](#)

There is an online database that provides an index to the four volumes of assisted immigration registers created by the Toronto Emigrant Office between 1865 and 1883. [Click here to access this online database.](#) [Click here to access the whole series: RG 11-3.](#) The registers are a chronological listing of those new immigrants who were assisted by the government to travel to many different destinations across southern Ontario. Over 29,000 entries have been transcribed from the registers.

## Series RG 11-8 to RG 11-25 (1862-1901)

This series includes correspondence, letter books, arrival and destination registers and various records on bonus schemes. Federal and Ontario immigration agents, mostly in Toronto but also in Kingston, Quebec City, Montreal and Paris (France), produced these records. Many of these records have been microfilmed and are available on self-service reels in the Archives' Reading Room. [Click here to also access them through the Archives' Microfilm Interloan Service](#). For more information about these records, [click here to consult the Archives Descriptive Database \(ADD\)](#).

## Federal Immigration Branch Records

The records in this section of the guide are available on microfilm at the Archives of Ontario (unless noted otherwise). [Click here to also access these records through Library and Archives Canada](#). There may also be microfilmed copies at public libraries with genealogy collections. Check with your local library to find out if it has a genealogy collection.

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

The records document various subjects related to immigration and contain lists of immigrants. [Click here to check the description for the Federal Immigration Branch diffusion material \(D 8\) for more information about these records.](#)

### Juvenile immigration records, 1892-1932:

(This includes the *Registry of British children immigrating to Canada, 1878-1920*)  
The records document the immigration of children (most of them British) brought to Canada to work on family farms. Some of these records refer to records that are part of the *Central registry files* (see above). [Click here to check the description for the Juvenile immigration records diffusion material \(D 10\) for more information about these records.](#)

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 about their families. Most of these agencies are located in Great Britain and you will need to contact them directly.

### Border entry lists *and* ships' manifests (also known as passenger lists):

These records document people entering Canada on land, and ship passengers: The information in them varies. Often, it is limited to information about the head of the household and the number of family members. The records may also include the traveller's name, age, country of origin (which in some cases is the port of departure), occupation, and intended destination.

Border entry lists for 1908-1919 and ships' manifests for 1865-1920 are available on microfilm at the Archives of Ontario. These records are arranged by point of entry, then by year and date, and then (for ships' manifests) by ship. [Click here to check the description for the Ship passenger lists diffusion material \(D 20\) for more information about these records.](#)

These microfilm reels and microfilm of border entry lists for 1920-1935 and ships' manifests for 1921-1935 are also available by [clicking here to access the Library and Archives Canada Website](#). Library and Archives Canada's website hosts databases for pre-1865 ships' manifests and 1865-1935 ships' manifests.

*Post-1935 records* of immigrants arriving at Canadian land and seaports are still in the custody of the federal government. Contact:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
Public Rights Administration  
300 Slater Street, 3rd Floor, Section D  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1L1

## Naturalization and Citizenship Records

A formal naturalization process was instituted in 1828. Until 1947, immigrants from the United Kingdom, British colonies and Commonwealth countries did not need to be naturalized.

### Before 1828

All individuals wishing to obtain land from the Crown were required to swear an oath of allegiance before a Magistrate or Justice of the Peace. These oaths can usually be found with the Crown land petitions or among the Township papers. See Research Guide 215, *A Guide to Early Land Settlement Records, ca.1790 to ca.1850* for information about these records.

### 1828-1850

The Act to Secure and Confer Upon Certain Inhabitants of this Province [Upper Canada] the Civil and Political Rights of Natural Born British Subjects (1828) mandated that a naturalization register be kept for each county in Upper Canada; this practice continued until 1850.

The surviving *naturalization registers* are available on self-service microfilm reels C-15692 and C-15693 in the Reading Room of the Archives of Ontario. [Click here to access a searchable database of these registers on Library and Archives Canada's Canadian Genealogy Centre website.](#)

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). A copy can be consulted in the Archives of Ontario's Reading Room

### Post-1850

#### Court records, ca. 1850-ca. 1975

Naturalization could occur by swearing an oath of allegiance before a judge, usually at the Court of General Sessions of the Peace in each county or district. Records include registers, oaths, case files, correspondence and copies of certificates for some counties and districts.

To identify series of court records documenting naturalization, [click here to search the Archives Descriptive Database](#) – in the “Search groups of archival records” advanced search option enter the keyword *naturalization*, the name of the district or county (as a title keyword), and archival reference code *RG 22\**).

A record of appearance before the court can sometimes be found in the *minute books* of the court. To identify series of minute books from the Court of General Sessions of the Peace, [click here to search the Archives Descriptive Database](#) – in the “Search groups of archival records” advanced search option, enter title keyword titles *minute*, *sessions* and *peace*, and the name of the county or district.

### **Case files - 1854 and after**

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. Address enquiries to:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada,  
Public Rights Administration,  
300 Slater Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Section D,  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1L1.

A database of naturalizations that took place between 1915 and 1932 is available on Library and Archives Canada’s website. [Click here to access the Library and Archives Canada website.](#)

## **MAKING CONTACT**

### **Ready and Willing**

Although unable to do your immigration, naturalization and citizenship 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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