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# Finding Change of Name Records in Ontario

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This research guide describes records held by the Archives of Ontario that document the legal change of a person's name. In order to find Change of Name files, you need to know (a) when the application took place and (b) the original or altered name used by the applicant.

Prior to 1939, there was no legal process documenting a change of name through the courts or Ontario Government. Under common law, people were able to adopt any name, provided the change was not made with the intention to defraud.

In 1939, Ontario passed the *Change of Name Act* allowing single adults and married men, of British citizenship living in Ontario, to change their name. In 1948, this privilege was expanded to every Ontario resident. Under the Act, County or District Court judges held formal hearings into any proposed name change and required the following information:

- Applicant's (and, if married, family's) current address, birth date, and birth place
- Names of parents, including maiden name (plus spouse's parents, if married)
- Proof of British (later, Canadian) citizenship or naturalization
- Occupation
- Whether the applicant had ever been convicted (and if so, the particulars of the offence)
- Name to be used forthwith
- Statement for the reasons behind the change

If approved, the court files will also contain an order authorizing the change, and a notice from the County/District Court Clerk notifying the Office of the Registrar General of the new name.

**NOTE:** In many cases, new immigrants changed their surnames to better fit into the local business community and to obtain credit from local banks. Often, ethnic businessmen would use more than one surname depending on who their customers were. Researchers should use the City Directories to help track possible name changes, especially the listings by address. For example, if Abe Gold and Avraham Goldstein both live at the residential property, you are likely dealing with the same person.

## GETTING STARTED

There are three main periods for Change of Name records at the Archives of Ontario: pre-1939, 1939-1979, and post-1973.

### Pre-1939: Change of Name Deed Polls

Before the Act's introduction, individuals could file a deed poll at the County or District level, as a public declaration so that new names might be recognized in the community. While a deed poll had to be openly sworn before a judge, the courts were not required to keep an official record of the declaration. The only copy of the deed poll was retained by the person who was changing their name. However, there are pre-1939 Change of Name deed polls from across Ontario in **York Supreme Court matter files (RG 22-5801)**. This series will cover some of the deed polls declared within the Province of Ontario, prior to 1939.

Use the index in series **Supreme Court Central Office matter index (RG 22-5808)** to access these files. The first four volumes, covering the 1850's-1946, are available on self-serve microfilm MS 4006. Once you have found the original name, record the year and the docket number, then place an order for the corresponding York Supreme Court matters file.

### 1939-1979: County/District Court matters records

With the passing of the Change of Name Act, County and District Court judges were to hold formal hearings into any proposed name change. These records were documented in matters files.

Under the **Start Your Research** section on our website ([www.ontario.ca/archives](http://www.ontario.ca/archives)), search the Archives Descriptive Database using (a) the name of the county (southern Ontario) or district (northern Ontario) where the individual resided and (b) the phrase "Change of Name" as your search terms (i.e., Middlesex County Change of Name). This search will take you to the matters files or the action and matters files for the area you are searching.

To order in these records you will need to access an index for a file number. The index process varies between courthouses so please follow the instructions under the *How to order these records* section within the record description.

### 1939-1973: When a County/District Court matters record cannot be found

If you cannot find a court record, you can apply to have **Change of Name court orders (RG 80-1)** searched to see if there is a secondary record. This series consists of the copies of Change of Name court orders that were sent to the Office of the Registrar General. Classified as a personal information bank under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, requests for these records must be submitted in writing to the Information and Privacy Unit of the Archives of Ontario, along with a five dollar fee. Requests by mail should use cheque or money order made payable to the Minister of Finance. Submit requests to:

**Coordinator, Information and Privacy Unit  
Archives of Ontario  
134 Ian Macdonald Blvd.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 2C5**

**NOTE:** While the Archives of Ontario holds the Change of Name orders, the Registrar General still retains the index to the document numbers by name of applicant. Prior to submitting your access request, please contact the Registrar General for the file number at the address given below.

#### **Post-1979: Change of Name records:**

The Archives of Ontario does not have Change of Name records after 1979. If you are looking for a Change of Name that took place in Ontario in the 1980's or afterwards, please contact the Office of the Registrar General:

**Office of the Registrar General  
PO Box 4600, 189 Red River Road  
Thunder Bay, Ontario  
P7B 6L8  
Telephone: 1-800-461-2156 or 416-325-8305**

## **MAKING CONTACT**

### ***Ready and Willing***

Although unable to do your change of name research for you, our reference archivists are waiting to assist you with guidance in what to do. Feel free to telephone, write, or visit the Archives of Ontario.

### ***Contact us***

**Telephone:** 416-327-1600 Toll free (Ontario): 1-800-668-9933  
**Fax:** 416-327-1999  
**Email:** [reference@ontario.ca](mailto:reference@ontario.ca)  
**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 visit our website <http://www.ontario.ca/archives>.

### ***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 "Start Your Research" on the home page of the Archives website.

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