|  | Archives of Ontario |
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| The Records We Do and Don’t Have |  |
| 201 Research Guide | Most Recent Update: November 2021 |
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This research guide provides:

* an overview of our collections and how to get more information about them
* a list of records in the Archives of Ontario collection and related records that are accessible at other Ontario government offices.

The Archives of Ontario has four groups of records. They are:

* Ontario government records
* Private sector records (records of individuals, business and organisations)
* Photographs, documentary art, maps and plans, and architectural drawings
* Sound and moving images.

### GETTING STARTED

For up-to-date information about our collections and services, [click here to access the Archives of Ontario's website.](http://www.ontario.ca/archives) Our website has the following databases and resources:

In the “Access our Collection” section:

The Archives Descriptive Database(ADD) includes descriptions of Ontario Government Records and Private Sector Records. [Click here to access the Archives Descriptive Database.](http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=%5bARCHON%5dsearch.htm)

BiBLION, the Library Catalogue, includes library materials. [Click here to access the BiBLION Library catalogue.](http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/ARCH_BIBLIO?DIRECTSEARCH)

The Visual Databaseincludes images of selected items from our collections (photographs, documentary art, maps and architectural records). [Click here to access the Visual Database](http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/IMAGES?DIRECTSEARCH).

The Government of Ontario Arts Collection Database includes images of works of art owned by the Government of Ontario, most of them on display in various government buildings. [Click here to access the Government of Ontario Art Collection Database](http://ao.minisisinc.com/goac/intro.htm).

The Research Guides and Tools page includes various resources to help you access the Archives’ services and search our records. [click here to access the Research Guides and Tools page](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/research_guides.aspx).

Table 1, at the end of this guide, has information on where to look for the following commonly requested records:

* Corporations Files
* Crown Land Records
* Divorce Files
* Estate Files, including Wills
* Land Registry Records
* Partnership / Sole Proprietorship Registrations
* Vital Statistics.

### THE RECORDS

#### Ontario Government Records

The Archives’ Ontario government records date from the 18th to the 21st century. Current and past Ontario governments and their predecessors created most of these records. These records provide:

* a description of the evolution of provincial administration
* a record of the interaction between the government and its citizens
* documentation on political and legal decisions
* key evidence of the rights and responsibilities of Ontarians.

You can view and use them in the Archives' Reading Room. Many records are on microfilm and you can ask your local library to arrange an interlibrary loan.

#### Private Sector Records

The Archives has the records of over 2600 private individuals, businesses, clubs and associations, and labour and political organizations.

You can view and use them in the Archives' Reading Room. Many records are on microfilm and you can ask your local library to arrange an interlibrary loan.

#### Special Collections

The Archives’ special collections include photographs, documentary art, architectural drawings and maps. Both private individuals and the government of Ontario created and collected these documents. They date from the 16th to the 21st century.

You can view and use them in the Archives' Reading Room. [Click here to access some special collections that are accessible online using our Visual Database](http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/IMAGES?DIRECTSEARCH) . Please see the “Getting Started” section, above.

#### Sound and Moving Images

The sound and moving images collection includes audio and video recordings and motion picture film material. Both private individuals and the government of Ontario created this material. The collection dates from the 1920s to the 21st century.

#### Archives of Ontario Library

The Archives of Ontario Library is a non-circulating research and reference collection of approximately 70,000 items, relating primarily to the history of Ontario.

You can view and use the library collection in the Archives' Reading Room.

#### Government of Ontario Arts Collection

The Archives of Ontario is responsible for the Government of Ontario Arts Collection. The Collection was established in 1855 as an educational resource. It now includes more than 2500 works of arts of all types, most of which are on display at the Legislative Building (Queen’s Park, Toronto) and at government buildings across the province.

### Making Contact

##### Ready and Willing

Although unable to do your research for you, our reference archivists 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**

**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. [Click here to visit our website.](http://www.ontario.ca/archives).

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This document may contain references to electronic links that can be activated only by using the PDF version found on the Archives of Ontario website.

This information is provided as a public service. Although we endeavour to ensure that the information is as current and accurate as possible, errors do occasionally occur. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information. Readers should where possible verify the information before acting on it.

### Table 1 Locations of Commonly-Requested Records

| **Type of Record** | **Available at the Archives of Ontario** | **Available Only at Other Government Offices** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Vital****Statistics** | The Archives holds indexes and registrations of:Births, ca. 1830-1917 (predominantly 1869-1917, also, a small number of delayed registrations for pre-1869 births)Marriages, ca. 1801-1942 (predominantly 1869-1939)Deaths, 1869-1952 | The Office of the Registrar General holds indexes and registrations of:Births, 1918-presentMarriages, 1943-presentDeaths, 1953-presentFor more information, including how to contact the Office of the Registrar General, [click here to access our Vital Statistics Webpage](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/tracing/vsmain.aspx) (on our Website, this page is located under “Tracing Your Family History”). |
| **Divorce****Files** | The Archives holds:Divorce Files for all of Ontario, 1930-1981, and most counties and districts, 1982-1986.In addition: microfilm copies of Decrees Absolute and Nisi from York County (including Toronto), 1959-1979. | The local Courthouses of the Superior Court of Justice hold:Divorce Files, 1987-present (1982-present for some counties and districts).The Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel holds:Resolutions or Acts of Parliament re: divorces granted by the federal parliament, 1867-1968For more information, including how to contact local Courthouses and the Office of the Law Clerk, [click here to access Research Guide 210: Finding Divorce Files in Ontario](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_210_divorce_files_in_ontario.pdf) and [click here to access Research Guide 211: Finding York County Divorce Files](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_211_york_county_divorce_files.pdf).  |
| **Estate Files (including Wills)** | The Archives holds:Estate Files for most of Ontario, ca.1793-1976 (except Prince Edward County for which we only have up to 1930, and some other counties). | The local Courthouses hold:Estate Files, 1977-present Note: The Prince Edward County Archives in Picton holds original estate files for Prince Edward County up to 1969.[Click here to access Research Guide 206: How To Find A Will in Court Records](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_206_wills.pdf) for more information, including how to contact local Courthouses |
| **Partnership/****Sole-Proprietorship Registrations** | The Archives holds:Registrations for all of Ontario, 1855-1991 (predominantly 1870-1991), except for Thunder Bay District, pre1973For details, [click here to search the Archives Descriptive Database](http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=%5bARCHON%5dsearch.htm) for series RG 55-17 (for pre-1973 records) or RG 55-16 (for 1973-1991 records), or [click here to access Research Guide 218: Partnership and Benevolent Society Register Records](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_218_partnership_and_benevolent_societies.pdf).  | The Companies and Personal Property Security Branch, Ministry of Government Services (Service Ontario) holds: Registrations, 1992-presentContact: Companies and Personal Property Security Branch, Ministry of Government Services (Service Ontario)393 University Ave., 2nd Floor, Suite 200Toronto, ON, M5G 2M2Phone: 416-314-8880 The Thunder Bay Land Registry Office holds Registrations, pre-1973Contact:Thunder Bay Land Registry Office189 Red River Road, Suite 201 Thunder Bay ON P7B 1A2 **Tel: (807) 343-7436****Fax: (807) 343-7439** |
| **Corporations Files** | The Archives holds:Corporations Files and Charter Books for companies which were defunct as of 1907.Corporation files of companies that went defunct between 1907 and 1978, with Corporations File Numbers TC1 to TC3155. TC3221, and TC21293 to TC 23885Part of some corporation files for corporations that were created between 1907 and the early 1970’s and were still active as of 1978.Charter Books, 1907-1971. (Note: Use the more complete corporation files from the Companies and Personal Property Security Branch, Ministry of Government Services, rather than the Charter Books).For details, [click here to access Research Guide 217: Corporation Records of the Government of Ontario.](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_217_government_corporation_records.pdf) | The Companies and Personal Property Security Branch, Ministry of Government Services (Service Ontario) holds:Corporations Files of companies existing in or created after 1978 (exception for parts of some files for companies created between 1907 and the early 1970’s)Corporations Files of companies that went defunct between 1907 and 1978 with file number TC3156 to TC3220, TC3222 to TC21292, and above TC23885.Contact: Companies and Personal Property Security Branch, Ministry of Government Services (Service Ontario)393 University Ave., 2nd Floor, Suite 200Toronto, ON, M5G 2M2Phone: 416-314-8880 |
| **Bankruptcy files** | The Archives holds bankruptcy files for bankruptcies up to 1989, and some bankruptcies, 1989-1995. For more information, [click here to access Research Guide 229, Finding Bankruptcy Records](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_230_bankruptcy_records.pdf). | The courts hold records for some bankruptcies for 1990-1995, and all bankruptcies from 1996 to present. For information on how to access these records, [click here to access the Website of the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcies](http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/bsf-osb.nsf/eng/home). |
| **Crown Land Records** | The Archives holds extensive Crown land records, including those relating to the granting of Crown land to private citizens. Commonly requested records include:Ontario Land Records Index, ca.1780-ca.1920Land petitionsLand patent indexes Patent plans, [178-]-1977Township papers, ca.1783-ca.1870For more information on using these and other Crown land records for genealogical research, [click here to access Research Guide 215: From Grant to Patent: A Guide to Early Land Settlement Records, ca.1790 to ca.1850](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_215_grant_to_patent.pdf). | The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources:issues copies of patentshas a large quantity of Crown land survey diaries, field notes and reports, in addition to the ones at the Archives.For copies of patents, contact: Ministry of Natural Resources and ForestryRegional Operations DivisionIntegration BranchProgram Services SectionLands Business Unit5th Floor, South Tower300 Water StreetPeterborough, ON  K9J 3C7Phone:  1-888-551-5552Fax:  705-755-2181[Click here to access the Website of the Land Business Unit](http://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/crown-patents)Click here to e-mail the Land Business UnitFor information on survey diaries, field notes and reports, contact:Ministry of Natural Resources and ForestryCorporate Management and Information DivisionMapping and Information Resources BranchOffice of the Surveyor GeneralCrown Land Surveys2nd Floor, North Tower300 Water StreetPeterborough, ON  K9J 3C7Phone:  705-755-2100Fax:  705-755-2149Click here to e-mail Crown Land Surveys |
| **Land Registry Offices Records** | The records of Land Registry Offices (LROs) document transactions relating to privately owned land. The Archives holds the following LRO records:Original Records-instruments and deeds up to 1867-copybooks up to 1955 (many have been placed on long- term loan with local repositories)-some post-1867 instruments and deeds, where the copybooks are missingMicrofilm Copies-copybooks, abstract indexes, and alphabetical indexes,  ca.1795-ca.1960, predominantly to ca.1880Original records are closed for conservation reasons. Microfilm only can be used. For more information, [click here to access Research Guide 231: Finding land registration records](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/documents/research_guide_231_finding_land_registration_records.pdf). | ONLand:Instruments and deeds or copybooks, and indexes, for all land registration transactions, are available at [www.onland.ca](http://www.onland.ca).Note: The Archives and LROs have placed some original copybooks, abstract indexes, and other documents in local archives, museums, and other repositories. |