

## Canadian National Censuses: 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901

The Canadian Census varies by province. A basic overview of the steps you should take to search the Canadian Census is given here, but all the variations are not explained.

Additional resources that may help you find your Canadian ancestors are listed at the end of this document. *Bullinger's Postal and Shipping Guide for Canada* (Religion/Family Ref HE 9 .U5 B83) lists most Canadian towns and gives their province and county.

You need to know the following to find a person on the census:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Approximate birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

Start with the most recent census that might help you and work back to earlier censuses for additional information.

Check U.S. sources first if your ancestor immigrated to this country. There are more published records in the U.S., and U.S. records are often better indexed.

Because the Canadian Census was conducted by districts, you will need to find the name of your ancestor's district to find his or her name on the census. Although the names of Canadian districts are sometimes the same as names of Canadian counties, the boundaries of districts and counties may not be the same. Like U.S. Congressional District boundaries, Canadian Census district boundaries change frequently.

Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island district boundaries match county boundaries quite consistently, but Ontario, Western Canada, and Quebec are much less consistent.

To find your ancestor on the census: (1) Use any available index, (2) Use other resources if no index is available, (3) Find the correct film number, (4) Search the census.

### Step 1. Use any available index.

An index can quickly help you find your ancestor's district.

- " The following indexes are available: Ontario 1871, Manitoba 1881, Northwest Territories 1881 (such as Saskatchewan and Alberta), and British Columbia 1881. Check the BYU Library Catalog by typing in "[Province] AND Census".
- " Additional indexes for counties and townships are listed in the locality section of the Family History Library Catalog. To look for an index in the catalog, look under--  
[PROVINCE], [COUNTY] - CENSUS or  
[PROVINCE], [COUNTY], [TOWNSHIP] - CENSUS

If an index for your ancestor's county and township is listed in the catalog write its call number here: \_\_\_\_\_  
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If an index is available for your ancestor, find it and look up your ancestor's name. The index will give you your ancestor's district and sub-district and the page number in the census where your ancestor's name is listed. You can now use a census register to find the film number for that census page. Go to Step 3.

### Step 2. Use other resources if no index is available.

If no index is available, other resources may help you to find your ancestor's district:

- " If your ancestor was from an eastern province, look up your ancestor's province and city or town in *Lovell's Canadian Dominion Directory for 1871* located on FHL microfiche set 6,046,766; or FHL films 856,124 and 856,125. This book will tell you the county and township your ancestor's town is in. In many cases the name of the township will also be the name of the census sub-district.

Look up your ancestor's sub-district in the finding aid located in the Census Register book (unless you are searching the 1871 census). This will tell you what district your ancestor's sub-district was in. This register is only at the FHL in SLC.

- " If your ancestor was not from an eastern province, see the *Canada Research Outline* for information.

### Step 3. Find the correct film number.

Now that you know your ancestor's district and sub-district, you can use the Canada Census Register (Table 4A) to find the film number where your ancestor's name is likely to be recorded.

Find the Canada Census and look under your ancestor's province, district, and sub-district.

Census film number: \_\_\_\_\_

Check the FHL film cabinets to see if the film is at the BYU Family History Center. If it is not at BYU, you can order it to be sent to BYU. Check with the student at the reference desk for details. You can also go to the Family History Library in Salt Lake to look at the film.

### Step 4. Search the census.

Use the film number to find the film, then put it on a reader and find your ancestor's district. In the 1871 and 1881 censuses, districts are arranged on the film geographically from east to west. In the 1891 and 1901 censuses, district names are listed alphabetically on the film, not by geographical location. Once you have found your ancestor's name, you can make a photocopy of the page or print a blank census form, on which to hand copy the information.

If you can't find your ancestor on the census film for a particular district, try searching the records of nearby districts. To find nearby districts in eastern Canada around 1880, you can use the maps in *Historical Atlas of Canada* (Religion/Family Ref G 116.S1 H56x). In sparsely populated areas, it may be worthwhile to go through the census name by name.

### Other resources:

If you cannot locate your ancestor in census indexes, you may try looking in other kinds of province-wide indexes. The records to which these indexes refer may serve as census substitutes. Or you may check the *Canada Research Outline* (Table 4A) for other sources.

Such sources include:

Look in the Family History Library Catalog under:

*Master Name Index* (for Prince Edward Island)

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND - GENEALOGY - SOURCES - INDEXES

*Home stead Application Index for Saskatchewan*

SASKATCHEWAN - LAND AND PROPERTY

*The Ontario Archives Land Index* (to locate people from Ontario)

ONTARIO - LAND AND PROPERTY  
(FHL fiche 6,330,425-6,330,477)

*Loiselle Index* (to locate people from Quebec and neighboring areas)

QUEBEC - CHURCH RECORDS

*Index to new England Naturalization* (lists many Canadians who came to New England before 1906)

CONNECTICUT - NATURALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*Manifest Records of Aliens Arriving From Foreign Contiguous Territory* (border crossing records of people entering the U.S. from Canada between 1895 and 1954) (check under locality sections in FHLC)

CANADA - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

\*\*Included in the *Manifest Records*, Soundex indexes to the St. Alban's District records, 1895-1924, are especially helpful because that district covered the entire US/Canada border until about 1915. (FHL films 1,472,802-1,473,201).

Note: The Canadian census bureau (Statistics Canada) will not release national censuses after 1901 because when these later censuses were taken it was with the promise that information in them would always remain confidential.