

Finding Your Family in Ontario Historical Records 2017 OGS Conference Workshop

Research Strategies Census Records:

1. **Start searching with the most recent census records** working backwards.
2. **Women and maiden names:**
 - i. Search using each name
 - ii. What name did she use in the license when she remarried?
3. **Try searching without a place** in case they moved or recorded the event across the border.
4. **Match place of residence** with vital records and with other life events . Often facts from census records help you interpret other records like vital records, land records, immigration records, occupation records, cemetery records and religious affiliation records.
5. **Check for name variations.** FamilySearch automatically checks some name variations (Beth for Elizabeth), but it doesn't check them all.
6. **Certain letters are often mistaken when indexed** (Samuel vs. Lemuel, for example). Learn what those are and search accordingly
7. **Switch surname and given names**
8. **First two given names** might be reversed, i.e. R Scott Raymond might change to Robert S Raymond
9. **Search by pronunciation** of the period, rather than how it is spelled: Mesquita meant Mosquito
10. **Search by initials** only
11. **FamilySearch doesn't currently require three letters be used with wildcards**, as other sites might. However, we might change that in the future, i.e. [S* A* Pyefinch] will find "S A Pyefinch", "Shirley A Pyefinch", "S Ann Pyefinch", "Shirley Ann Pyefinch", etc.
12. **Wildcards** can be the first letter of a name, i.e. [?oseph ?aller] finds "Joseph Caller", "Yoseph Kaller", etc.
13. **Search the Census records even if you can't find your ancestors in the indexes** (errors could occur or they could have been missed during indexing or transcribing records).
14. **Remember:**
 - Not everything is available online – could have been destroyed, damaged or not digitized yet
 - Don't expect to find your ancestor on the first try

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- Don't assume it's your ancestor because the name is the same as your Ancestor's, you need to prove it's the right ancestor, through also relationships of householders, and their names, always check birth dates, birth places, place of residence, etc.
- Filter your searches with more information
- 4 ways of searching were demonstrated; through the FamilySearch Catalog; the FamilySearch Wiki; through Historical Records Collections – Browse All Published Collections; and through the Historical Records Collection Map

Research Strategies for Land Records:

1. **Establish where your ancestor lived through various types of records:**
 - Census Records
 - Church Records
 - Civil Records (birth, marriage, death, tax and military records)
2. Once you can establish where your ancestor lived you will need to know the **county, township, concession and lot where they lived or municipal address.**
3. With this information **locate the county record office or archive** that has the land records for the period of time you are searching.
4. **Search by township** through the registries.
5. **Search in the registry indexes for instruments** and **view the instruments** registered on title.
6. **Remember Land Records can help you solve these problems:**
 - Establish dates of residence
 - Establish age estimates
 - Learn about your ancestor's occupation
 - Establish earlier or later residences
 - Identify the wife or wives of your ancestor
 - Establish death dates
 - Find statements of relationships
 - May lead you to other types of records, e.g. Military records
 - Anchor your ancestor in a very specific place and time
 - Learn about your ancestor's real property and possibly visit the ancestral home
 - Land records can solve problems, most effective when used with other records

Research Strategies for Civil Records:

1. **Record entries can be missed during indexing** (either online or microfilm processing) – look at the entries record by record on microfilm
2. Could be a **late registration**
3. **Name changes** – known name not the same as the birth registration name
4. **Informants, and witnesses can be close relatives** (you may get a signature of an ancestor)

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5. **Research other people with the same surname** living in the same areas as your ancestors
6. **Seek to corroborate evidence for B-M-Ds** if possible with other records (church records, family records – i.e. family bible, census records, land records, etc.)
7. If you can't find them in the index **try different ways of spelling the name, broaden search parameters for dates & places**
8. **Registration could be in a different place** other than where the family lived
9. **Search only with parent's names**, and include the **mother's maiden name**
10. **Search both births and deaths for newborns**
11. **Try name reversal**
12. **Use wildcards in searching**
13. **If you still have not found a marriage records look at:**
 - Censuses
 - Church records
 - Cemetery records
 - Obituaries
 - Birth, marriage, and death notices in newspapers
 - Local histories
 - Genealogies
 - Probate records often give married names of daughters (clue to marriage)
 - Land and property records
 - Immigration records, especially border crossings
 - Family letters and Bibles
 - Military records
 - Lineage society records, such as United Empire Loyalists
 - Is it a Gretna Green marriage? Check known Gretna Green sites.
 - Consider if the couple **divorced?**
 - Up to 1930 an **Act of the Parliament of Canada**
 - Write to **Clerk of the Senate** provide the **names of the spouses and the estimated year of divorce**

The Clerk of the Senate
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
CANADA
 - 1930+ a matter for the **Supreme Court of Ontario**(see *Ontario Court Records* - FamilySearch Wiki article)
 - Some Ontarians **received divorces in United States** jurisdictions, even though such divorces had no legal standing in Canada
 - **Consult historic newspapers** - Ontario divorce proceedings and decrees were routinely published in newspapers (i.e. The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star (formerly the Toronto Telegram)

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14. Remember:

- **Not every registration online is correct**
- **Errors with online indexing**
- **Errors in recordkeeping** – transferring recorded information from municipal registries to county registries
- **Verify index** with the **original record** if possible
- Both indexes from Ancestry and FamilySearch contain over **2M registrations**
- **Content of forms changed overtime** – variances in information collected during registration (see handouts) and some offices used up old forms instead of disposing old forms before starting to use new forms at times this caused inconsistency in form usage throughout the province
- **Informants** could have be uninformed at registration, have poor memories, or willfully fabricated information (e.g. Births occurring before 9 months after a marriage, etc.)
- **Information created during a life event is probably more accurate than later recordings** (e.g. Birth certificate info vs. birth info on a death certificate)

Research Strategies for Church Records:

1. **Compare church records to other various type of records to verify accuracy**, search civil records (BMDs, Military, Land records) first
2. **Switch first and middle names, and try variations in spelling names including surnames**
3. **Expect name changes**, i.e. Irish often did not go by their christened names
4. **Search surrounding areas**, i.e. Gretna Green marriage?
5. **Search different denominations** in the same area
6. **Life events not always in the usual order**
7. **Follow up on sponsors, witnesses** as probably extended family members
8. **Do index searches with various known family relationships**
9. **Search other sources** – Newspapers, published family histories, society records, central church archives, etc.
10. **Other sources for cemetery records include:**
 - Find A Grave Index (on FamilySearch)
 - Billion Graves Index (on FamilySearch)

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- Canadian Headstones Index (on FamilySearch)
- OGS – Ontario Cemetery Finding Aid
- Publications
- Newspapers: Obituaries, memorials, etc.
- Funeral home records

Research Strategies for Military Records:

1. **Start with what your family already knows** and have in their possession
2. Refer to LAC for **Attestation Papers**
3. See the **Canadian Military History Gateway** <http://www.cmhg.gc.ca>
4. View the **Canadian Military Heritage Project** <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~canmil/>
5. Go to the **Military History Research Centre at the Canadian War Museum** www.warmuseum.ca
View the **Democracy at War** web page, contains over 140,000 news clippings collecting during wartime

Research Strategies for Newspapers:

1. Search for birth, marriage and death notices
2. Military activities
3. Ancestral businesses – advertisements, auctions
4. Court cases
5. Society news – family coming to visit from out of town, or going out of town
6. Go to:
 - Family History Centres access the online portal for free – Newspaper subscription sites, and other family history subscription sites (Ancestry, Find My Past, etc)
 - Public Libraries – ProQuest
 - Google – Historical Newspapers in Canada
 - Google News <https://sites.google.com/site/onlinedirectorysite/Home/can/on> (Free)
 - Canadian Newspaper Archives <https://newspaperarchive.com/ca/> (\$)

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FamilySearch Historical Books:

- Over 300,000 family history digitized books, and publications that can be accessed online through the FamilySearch.org website, some copyright restrictions require access through the portal at Family History Centres
- Search by surnames, and by geographic place names

FamilySearch Family Tree:

- Online collaborative space where you can preserve your family tree along with uploading documents, photographs, stories, and audio files
- Uploaded items can be tagged to the people in your family tree, described, and titled
- Digital photo albums can be created
- People can be put on watch in order to track changes
- Discussion capabilities are built into the Person Page where you can view the profile of each person, review record hints, and other research help capabilities like data errors