

Doing Genealogy Research at the Brantford Public Library

Getting Started

1. Write down all of the information that you know about your family, starting with yourself, your parents, and your grandparents. Think about names, dates, locations, and specific events.
2. Look for any information that you may have at home such as photographs, family bibles, letters, and diaries.
3. Contact relatives to see if they have any family information, memorabilia or stories.
4. Choose a branch of your family that you have some information about and start looking for records that will help you learn more about your ancestors.

The Brantford Public Library has lots of genealogy information for Brantford and Brant County. There are also numerous websites that you can use from home to find information about your ancestors.

Here are some suggestions to help you get started with your research:

Births, Marriages, and Deaths

Birth, marriage, and death notices in newspapers can provide relatives' names, dates, and locations for these important events.

In Library: The [Birth-Marriage-Death Index to the Brantford Expositor](#) indexes notices that have appeared in the Brantford Expositor as far back as October 1852. The years that have been indexed so far are listed on the search page. The microfilm of this newspaper is kept in the Geoffrey Moyer Local History room.

Hint: More recent death notices are located on the [Expositor's website](#).

On the Internet: Many other public libraries also have BMD indexes on their websites. Sometimes the complete notice is available online. Check out these links to [Ontario BMD Indexes at Public Libraries in our Genealogy Websites section](#).

Hints:

1. The Brantford Courier was published from 1884-1918. Many editions of this newspaper have been digitized and are available on [Canadiana Online](#).
2. Don't forget to check for more recent death notices in other newspapers across Canada and the United States. Search the name of the city and the word "newspaper" in Google if you don't know the newspaper's name. There is usually an "Obituary" link that you can click on to access these notices.
3. Search for obituaries from many locations on websites such as [Legacy.com](#) and [Remembering.ca](#).
4. If your ancestors lived in Toronto you can search the [Toronto Star for 1894-2019](#) on the library's website. This provides a digitized version of one of the country's largest newspapers and includes the

classified pages with the birth, marriage, and death notices. You need a library card number to access this resource.

Vital Statistics

Vital statistics are the official registration of births, marriages, and deaths by the provincial governments in Canada. Some of the older registrations have been made public and can be searched. In Ontario, vital statistics registration started in 1869 but it varies in the other provinces. More recent registrations are held by the Ontario Registrar General because of privacy restrictions.

In Library: You can search Ancestry Library Edition for Ontario vital statistics. Births have been released for 1869-1915, marriages for 1869-1938, and deaths for 1869-1948. Once you find your ancestor you can usually see a digitized copy of the actual registration.

On the Internet: If you don't have your own Ancestry account then you can register for free and use [FamilySearch](#) to search for Ontario vital statistics. They have births for 1869-1912, marriages for 1869-1927, and deaths for 1869-1937 so far. In most cases you can see a digitized copy of the actual registration.

Hints:

1. Some of the other Canadian provinces also have their vital statistics registrations available for searching on the Internet. Examples include [British Columbia](#), [Manitoba](#), and [New Brunswick](#).
2. A lot of U.S. states also have their vital statistics available for searching online. Check out the [United States Vital Records](#) links on our webpage for some examples.

Cemetery Records

Tombstones may provide a lot of information about your ancestor, including: birth date, death date, spouse's name, and children's names. Family members are often buried in the same cemetery.

In Library: We have print copies of the cemetery indexes/transcriptions in the Geoffrey Moyer Local History room for all of the Brantford and Brant County cemeteries. More recent burials will not be included in these transcripts.

On the Internet: Volunteers have transcribed and photographed many of the tombstones in cemeteries in Ontario and around the world and have made these photographs available on the Internet. Many of these websites include cemeteries in Brant County and the surrounding area. Examples of Canadian cemeteries are: [Canada GenWeb's Cemetery Project](#) and [Canadian Headstone Photo Project](#). There are also many international cemetery websites, including: [Find a Grave](#), [Gravestone Photographic Resource](#), and [Interment.net](#).

Census

Starting in 1851, everyone in the household was listed in each Canadian census which was taken by the government every 10 years. The latest Canadian census to be released is 1921. The census provides names, ages, and occupations for every family member.

In Library: You can search all of the Canadian censuses on Ancestry and view digitized images of the pages. We have microfilm of the 1851-1901 censuses for Brant County and the surrounding area as well as some print indexes in the Geoffrey Moyer Local History Room.

On the Internet: If you don't have your own Ancestry account then you can register for free to use [FamilySearch](#) and search the Canadian censuses up to 1911. All of the Canadian censuses are also available on the [Library and Archives Canada](#) website and include digitized images of the pages.

Hints:

1. If your ancestors moved to the western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta you may be able to find them in the 1916 and 1926 censuses which were taken only in those provinces. These censuses are searchable on Ancestry and [Library and Archives Canada](#).
2. You can find the United States federal censuses for 1790-1940 on Ancestry and [FamilySearch](#). There are also a number of state censuses available for various years.
3. Look at the [How to find Census Information](#) pathfinder for more information about censuses.

City Directories

City directories are useful if you want to find out where your ancestors were living and what they were doing in the years between the censuses. These directories provide names, addresses, and occupations.

In Library: Check the [Brantford/Brant County Directories pathfinder](#) to find out which directories are available in the Geoffrey Moyer Local History Room in print and on microfilm/microfiche. Directories prior to 1900 often include the townships in Brant County as well as the city of Brantford in their listings.

On the Internet: The [FamilySearch](#) website has digitized over 700 Ontario city directories for many cities including Brantford (choose the Books link at the top of the page and then the Ontario Ancestors link near the bottom of the page to view these directories). You have to register to use this site but it is free.

Hints:

1. If your ancestors lived in Toronto you can search the [Toronto City Directories](#) on the Toronto Public Library website.
2. A number of Canadian directories have been digitized on [Canadiana Online](#).
3. Search the [Internet Archive](#) to find other city directories from Canada and the United States.

Family Histories

Check to see if anyone else has already written a family history about your ancestors. Family histories may be only a few pages long or can be bound copies with hundreds of names.

In Library: Search the [library's catalogue](#) to find the family histories in the Geoffrey Moyer Local History Room.

On the Internet: Search the Books section of the [FamilySearch](#) website for family histories. [Google Books](#) is another source to check to see if anyone has written about your ancestors. Check [Canadiana Online](#) and the [Internet Archive](#) as well to see if there are any family histories.

Military History

If any of your ancestors served in the military you may be able to find out more details about this time in their lives.

On the Internet:

Search the [Virtual War Memorial](#) on the library's website to get biographical information about local citizens who died serving Canada during World War II.

Look in the [Great War Centenary Association's database](#) for information about the citizens from Brantford, Brant County, and Six Nations who served in World War I. The information may include photographs, letters, and documents.

Library and Archives Canada's Military Heritage section provides a lot of information about the Canadian men and women who have served their country, including the searchable [Personnel Records of the First World War](#) database.

Maps and Atlases

Early maps and atlases can show where your ancestor lived or owned land.

In Library: There are print copies of many of the illustrated historical atlases for counties in Ontario which show the names of land owners during the 1870s.

On the Internet: The [Canadian County Digital Atlas Project](#) has created a searchable database of the property owners' names which appear on the township maps in the Ontario county atlases mentioned above. You can search by a person's name or look at the map for one of the counties and its townships.

Digital Archives

Use the library's [Digital Archives](#) to see if there is any biographical or background information about your ancestors if they were from Brantford and Brant County. Click on the Advanced Search option and choose one of the subjects. The Digital Archives includes the **History of the County of Brant** (Warner, Beers, 1883) and the **History of the County of Brant** (F. Douglas Reville, 1920). Both of these histories list many names of early settlers.

Other Records

Check out all of the [genealogy websites](#) that the Library has listed.

Check out these genealogy pathfinders for more detailed information:

[Searching for Births, Marriages, and Deaths](#)

[How to Find an Estate File](#)

[Immigration and Citizenship Resources](#)

[Land Records](#)

Other Organizations

1. [Brant County Branch of Ontario Ancestors](#)
2. [Brant County Museum and Archives](#)
3. [County of Brant Public Library Digital Collections](#)
4. [Woodland Cultural Centre](#)
5. [Ontario Ancestors](#) (The Ontario Genealogical Society)
6. [Archives of Ontario](#)
7. [Library and Archives Canada](#)
8. [FamilySearch](#)