
RESEARCHING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Researching your family history can be a rewarding experience that can help you to learn more about your identity and heritage. Whether you are interested in discovering more about one individual's story, or attempting to uncover a full family tree, family history research demands time, patience and perseverance. It is worth noting that not all records are accessible in the same location. While the City of Thunder Bay Archives has a variety of helpful resources, other institutions can provide additional information. Furthermore, it is important to be aware that access restrictions may apply to some records due to privacy legislation.

The primary records available at the City of Thunder Bay Archives relating to family history research include:

- Henderson's City Directories
- Assessment Rolls
- Cemetery Records
- Marriage Indexes

In order to help get you started, this Research Guide provides an overview of each of the records listed above and provides information on other institutions you can visit to find answers to other common research inquiries.



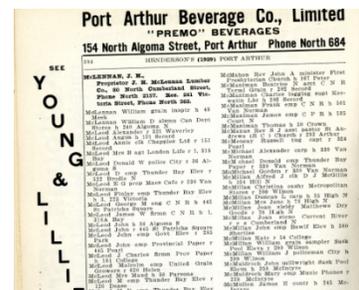
"At Cascade Falls" circa 1920. 1992-06 (Item 11). Series 250. Fulton Private Donation.

Getting started: General tips for researching your family history

- Try and get as much information as you can from present day relatives before delving deeper into the past.
- Start from the present day and work backwards.
- Define a scope for your project: you may find it useful to define some parameters for your research so that you have a clear idea of what information you are looking for and where you need to go to get it.

HENDERSON'S CITY DIRECTORIES

Henderson's city directories were published by a private company and are not official records of the City Government. However, these directories remain one of the most commonly consulted items in the Archives. City directories are a useful first step for learning more about your ancestors. From the directories, you can uncover information such as: an individual's residence, their occupation and whether or not they boarded, rented or owned the property listed as their residence. City Directories also provide information on the communities of the former Cities of Fort William and Port Arthur and The City of Thunder Bay. This may be helpful depending on the scope of your research and what you hope to learn. Broader information that can be gathered from directories includes statistical information on the population, and information about institutions such as schools, churches, hospitals and libraries. Directories can also provide information about businesses that were active in the City at a given time and information about civic administration.



Excerpt from the Henderson's Directory for 1929.

Henderson's directories are a useful first step for researchers studying their family history

City directories are organized into two distinct sections and include alphabetical listings by name and by street address. Directories created prior to the amalgamation of The City of Thunder Bay are divided into sections representing Port Arthur and Fort William. The Archives has directories for the following years: 1909 – 1911; 1920 – 1923; 1925; 1927; 1929 – 1931; 1935 – 2000. The Archives also keeps phone directories and currently has

the years: 2002 – 2003; 2006 – 2007; 2009 – 2011/2012.

Although city directories are easy to navigate, they only cover areas within the city limits and do not include the greater regional areas such as Neebing, McIntyre and Shuniah. Additionally, directories generally only list the head of the household. Despite these limitations, city directories can be a useful stepping stone for further research. Directories are available in the Archives reading room and are fully accessible to the public.

ASSESSMENT ROLLS

As an authoritative source of information on property ownership, assessment rolls are often consulted by researchers studying the history of their house or property. Assessment rolls can complement information obtained from city directories and, on occasion, assessment rolls may contain additional personal information about residents. The information contained in assessment rolls varies depending on the year the assessment roll was created.

Typical information that can be obtained from assessment rolls includes: parcel number for a property, name and mailing address of the owner, location and description of the assessed property, school zone, school support, tax class, total valuation, exempt distribution and taxable distribution. Additional

personal information that may be recorded includes: religion, marital status, occupation, citizenship and number of children residing in the household.

The Archives has assessment rolls for the former City of Fort William, between 1902 and 1969 (Series 13) and the former City of Port Arthur, between 1886 and 1969 (Series 23). There are some gaps in the earlier years for the City of Port Arthur.

The Archives also has assessment rolls for The City of Thunder Bay, beginning 1970 until the most current assessment (Series 40). Street and Name Indexes are available for assessment rolls between the years 1976 and 1995 (Series 41 & 42). Assessment rolls also exist for the former Township of Neebing between 1907 and 1970.

Fort William Assessment Roll from 1934-1935 (Series 13). City of Fort William fonds.

Assessment rolls are organized by ward and subdivision. In order to navigate Assessment Rolls for family history research, you will need to have an address for your ancestors. This information can generally be obtained through examining Henderson’s city directories. Maps showing ward boundaries are available in the Archives reading room.

CEMETERY RECORDS

The City of Thunder Bay Archives holds cemetery records from Mountainview Cemetery only. Cemetery records can be a useful resource in establishing information on your ancestors’ death. However, access restrictions may apply to cemetery records from recent years.

The most prominent series available at the Archives include: Indexes to Lot Owners and Interments (Series 138) and Record of Interments (Series 139). These records range between the years 1902 and 1966 and consist of an alphabetical listing of people interred at Mountainview Cemetery. Records of Interments contain additional information on individuals interred at the cemetery including: an individual’s place of birth, date of death, cause of death, next of kin, social state (for example, the individual’s marital status), lot fee and the late residence of the individual.

Cemetery records relating to Mountainview Cemetery date back to 1902

Other records relating to Mountainview Cemetery include: Burial Records between 1951 and 1969 (Series 140), Miscellaneous Cemetery Records between 1942 and 1969 (Series 212) and Cemetery Burial Permits, ranging predominantly between 1967 and 1992 (Series 240).

MARRIAGE RECORDS

Marriage records held at The City of Thunder Bay Archives that are currently accessible to the public include:

- Indexes of Marriages – Names of Women for the former City of Fort William (1908-1919)

These Indexes are organized by year and alphabetically (by the maiden name of the woman) and include the bride and groom's full names and the year they were married. The Ledger for 1917-1919 contains specific dates for marriages.

- Records of Marriage Licenses for the former City of Fort William (1921-1928)

Records of Marriage Licenses include: the marriage license number, date that the license was issued, name and address of the bride and the groom and the name of the Clergyman associated with the marriage.

- Index of Marriages for the former City of Fort William (beginning in 1928)

Arranged alphabetically by surname and by year, these Indexes list the name and marriage license number of either the bride or the groom.

NAME OF BRIDE	ADDRESS (Give street and number where possible)	CLERGYMAN (Name and Address)
Rosa Stefanatto	236 N. Forest St.	Rev. Father Longpre
Joseph Litchell	43 Bellevue Ave. North	Rev. Fr. Chappin, P. A. D.
Ethel Bonython	Vancouver, B.C.	Rev. Fr. Adams
Lela Brarros	272 S. Algoma St.	Rev. Fr. Bruckshanks
May McBain	Jackson	Rev. Fr. Chappin, P. A. D.
Grace Macbeth	132 S. Harold St.	Rev. Fr. Schindler
Joseph W. Kishman	17 Riverside, Toronto	Rev. Fr. Bruckshanks
Anne Lowrey	Fort William	Rev. Fr. C. Poppy, P. A. D.

Record of Marriage Licenses 1921-1928. (Series 213) City of Fort William fonds.

These marriage records form part of the series Fort William Vital Statistics (Series 213). Marriage records created in the past 80 years are not available to the public under the Vital Statistics Act (1990).

EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR COMMON INQUIRIES

Many of the records available at other institutions are also helpful in family history research. Major archives such as the Archives of Ontario and Library and Archives Canada offer a range of useful resources. Additionally, local history institutions within Thunder Bay may help you to fill in some of the gaps in your research. Below is a list of records commonly required by family history researchers and the relevant institutions for obtaining this information:

VITAL STATISTICS: BIRTHS, DEATHS & MARRIAGES

Birth, death and marriage registrations are administered by the Government of Ontario. Under the Vital Statistics Act (1990), access to these records is restricted under the following time frames:

- Births (95 years)
- Deaths (70 years)
- Marriages (80 years)

For records older than the dates listed above, you will need to visit the Archives of Ontario. <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/>

For any records of births, deaths or marriages within the above time frame, you will need to contact the Office of the Registrar General:

Office of the Registrar General
P.O. Box 4600
189 Red River Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6L8

Phone: 1800-461-2156
Email: infoMGS@ontario.ca

OBITUARIES

Thunder Bay Public Library has microfilmed obituaries from the following publications: Fort William Daily Times Journal, Port Arthur Daily News and News Chronicle, The Chronicle Journal and the Time News. Obituaries date between 1900 to the late 1950's, and between 1988 and 2010.

CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION RECORDS

The Archives of Ontario has Immigration Records dating between 1833 and 1901. These records relate to immigration within the Province of Ontario and its predecessor governments. Additionally, the Archives of Ontario has microfilmed copies of records from Library and Archives Canada including; Central Registry Files of the Department of Immigration (1873 – 1979), Juvenile Immigration Records (1892 – 1932), Border Entry Lists (1908-1919) and Ships' Manifests (1868 – 1920). Visit Library and Archives Canada (www.collectionscanada.gc.ca) for Border Entry Lists (1920-1935) and Ships' Manifests (1921-1935).

CENSUS RECORDS

Census Records are available on microfilm or online at Library and Archives Canada and on microfilm at the Archives of Ontario. The most recent census available to the public is the 1911 census.

CONTACT THE ARCHIVES

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