



Genealogical Research

Getting Started

Local libraries are great places for family history research. Libraries offer books, microfilm collections, subscription databases, access to materials on the Internet, and they can hold unique archival collections. The Guelph Public Library is no exception. This document brings awareness to the resources not only in the library's care, but those made available by the local branch of Ontario Ancestors and the Internet to which the library provides access.

Genealogy Resources

Newspapers

Newspapers are useful for birth, marriage and death information. You may also find articles about relatives involved in court cases, accidents, or public events.

The library holds local area newspapers including the Tri-Weekly Advertiser, Guelph Advertiser, Guelph Weekly Herald, Guelph Evening Mercury, Guelph Weekly Mercury, and the Guelph Mercury. Collectively these papers are often referred to as the Guelph Mercury. We also hold the Guelph Tribune and today's Guelph Mercury Tribune.

The Mercury is available on self-serve microfilm from 1840 to 2016 when it ceased publication. The Guelph Tribune is available on microfiche from 1987 to 2003 and hard copy from 2003 to the present. Please note gaps in our holdings do exist.

With a valid Guelph Public Library card, the Guelph Mercury, Guelph Tribune, the Guelph Mercury Tribune, Waterloo Region Record, Globe and Mail Canada's Heritage from 1844 can be searched remotely using ProQuest:

- Tribune 1999 to present, some exceptions
- The Guelph Mercury Tribune July 2017 to present
- Guelph Mercury 1999 to 2016
- Waterloo Region Record 1990 to present
- Globe and Mail 1844 to 2016
- Guelph Life (1975 to 1977)
- Guelph Guardian (1959 to 1965)

In 2021, a project to digitize both the Guelph Life and Guelph Guardian commenced. Access to this digitized content is available externally from the library's website using

the following link [Web Portal \(laserfiche.ca\)](http://laserfiche.ca) Alternatively you may browse through our digital library collections and under the headings select Genealogy and Local History or Newspapers and Magazines.

A few indexes and transcriptions do exist for some of the local papers:

- Guelph Herald Some Extracts of Births, Deaths, Marriages 1850 to 1851 (929.371343 NOR)
- Guelph Advertiser Births, Deaths, Marriages (1847 to 1849) (929.371343 NOR)
- "A Celebration of Lives: Obituaries of Puslinch Township, Wellington County, Ontario 1935-2003" (OGS 929.371342 JAC)

Early Guelph Newspapers available remotely

Some early 19th Guelph Newspapers are available remotely through [Canadiana](#) such as the Guelph Evening Mercury, the Guelph Herald, and the Guelph Weekly Herald.

The Guelph Public Library does not maintain content on this website.

Local Vertical Files

From the 1960s to 2008, Guelph Public Library staff collected and organized newspaper clippings and other small print items pertaining to Guelph's history. Arranged by subject, these newspaper clippings and print items were kept in vertical file folders in filing cabinets at the Main Library.

In 2015 a project commenced to digitize the contents of these folders. Although many clippings were scanned, some of the more complex items remain in their respective folders. Access to these digital files is only available at the main library using a library computer. Included are folders titled:

- Biographies which includes an index of names
- Genealogy – Families
- Veterans

Photographs

The Guelph Public Library Archives houses an ever-expanding collection of photographic prints and negatives. Of interest is a large collection of Guelph Mercury and Guelph Tribune photographs. Such photographs document community events and activities, which may involve your ancestors. Some of these photographs are available online through the Library's digital archives called [Archeion](#).

High-resolution copies of photographs are available and can requested for use. Library photographs are subject to copyright permissions and fees depending on their use.

City Directories

The Library owns a collection of city directories for Guelph on microfilm to 1980. Directories dating after 1980 to 2013, when the last directory was published, are available at the library in book format only. Subsequent directories are no longer available. Please note the library does have some gaps in its holdings of city directories.

City Directories available remotely

Ancestry Library Edition has digitized Guelph City Directories for the following years: 1873, 1877, 1883, 1886, 1889, 1891, 1894, 1895, 1896. Remote access to this database is not available through our [website](#). Ancestry Library Edition is available in-house only.

You can also access digital copies of Guelph city directories from the 20th and 21st centuries by creating a free account through [FamilySearch](#). Once you create your account click on the tab "search" and then select "books" and type "Guelph and Directory" in the search bar for available titles.

The Guelph Public Library does not maintain content on Ancestry Library Edition or content available through FamilySearch.

[Library and Archives Canada](#) also has directories available for counties in Southwestern Ontario dating from the 19th century that can be accessed remotely.

The Guelph Public Library does not maintain content available online through Library and Archives Canada.

Since 1875, city directories have been composed of two parts. One is an alphabetic listing of people's names and home address. The second part is an alphabetic street directory.

Directories can complement census records as they help place individuals at a particular place and time. They can also provide some biographical information such as a person's occupation. They may even contain advertisements of area businesses an ancestor operated.

Municipal Records

Assessment rolls document basic information about an individual's property, including land and building value, residence or business, religion, age, number of people living on the property, and occupation.

Assessment rolls are arranged by ward and year. It is important to know what ward your ancestor lived to help narrow your search.

Assessment rolls for 1852 to 1853 and 1855 to 1898 are available on self-service microfilm. Additional years are available to 2006, but are located offsite and require several days' notice for retrieval.

Yearbooks

Yearbooks are interesting as they can provide information about a person's interests or involvement in school activities and even clues as to future aspirations such as occupations.

The library holds a collection of yearbooks from Guelph area schools. Although this collection is not complete, you can find yearbooks for:

- Guelph Collegiate 1928 to 2009
- John F. Ross 1961 to 2011
- Centennial Collegiate 1972 to 1976, 1992
- College Heights Vocational Institute 1972 to 1979, 1981 to 2012
- Central Senior 1966 to 1967
- John McCrae Public School 1978 to 1985

Please make an appointment to view these materials.

Bell Telephone Directories

The library holds a collection consisting of 36 microfilm reels of Bell Telephone Books dating from 1883 to 1979. Subsequent years are available in print. Like city directories, telephone directories help place individuals at a particular place and time. They may even provide biographical details. Ask a librarian for directories dating after 1979, which are available in stacks.

Private Records

Approximately half of Guelph Public Library Archives holdings are primary documents from private sources such as:

- Canadian Federation of University Women - Guelph Chapter
- Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE)
- Guelph Horticultural Society
- Guelph Curling Club
- YMCA / YWCA Guelph

If your relatives were involved in any of these organizations, there may be photographs and or textual records of their participation. These records are arranged and described using the Rules for Archival Description. You may wish to view these descriptions hosted on [Archeion](#) and or speak to the Guelph Public Library Archivist.

Local Histories

Guelph Public Library holds various publications pertaining to the history of Guelph. These secondary resources include published histories. For example, publications of the Guelph Historical Society such as *Historic Guelph*. The library actively catalogues such items so they are searchable in the [library's catalogue](#).

Historic Guelph available remotely

You may also access some digital copies of *Historic Guelph* at [Home — Guelph Historical Society](#)

The Guelph Public Library does not maintain the content on this website.

Wellington County Branch of the Ontario Ancestors

The Wellington Branch of the Ontario Ancestors (formally Wellington County Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society) also makes a significant amount of its research and many of its books available in the Library for reference purposes. This collection includes family histories, cemetery transcriptions, and biographies of early pioneers. The library actively catalogues items from this collection so they are searchable in the [library's catalogue](#).

Vital Statistics

Civil vital statistics are official government records for births, deaths and marriages. The Library has a current index for the following years:

- Births 1869 to 1914
- Marriages 1869 to 1929
- Deaths 1869 to 1937

Ancestry Library Edition can be used to search for civil registrations (including Ontario) as opposed to using microfilm.

Subscription Databases

The Library subscribes to a number of subscription databases. Of particular use to the genealogist is The Globe and Mail-Canada's Heritage from 1844 and the Toronto Star Pages of the Past 1894 to 2014. With a valid Guelph Public Library card, these databases can be used from home over the internet.

The Library also subscribes to Ancestry Library Edition for use at Guelph Public Library locations. Remote access to this database is not available.

As an Affiliate library member, library users can access millions of normally restricted content through FamilySearch at a library location.

Census Records

Census records are seen as a staple food source for the family historian (Merriman 105). Few census records have survived prior to 1842 with the original enumeration sheets destroyed after they were microfilm (Merriman 105). Remember that some early census information was sometimes combined with tax assessment records (Merriman 107).

The library holds the following census returns on microfilm:

- Gore District: 1818 to 1845
- Wellington County 1851, 1861, and 1881 (Town and Township of Guelph are missing for 1851)
- All of Ontario 1871, 1891, 1901

Census returns of 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 list each person individually, generally with age, sex, country or province of birth, religion, racial or ethnic origin, occupation, marital status and education details.

In addition to library microfilm Library and Archives Canada has extensive information and available databases to search various census years. [Censuses - Library and Archives Canada \(bac-lac.gc.ca\)](http://bac-lac.gc.ca)

The Guelph Public Library does not maintain the content on this website.

Ontario Land Records Index 1780 to 1920 (OLRI)

Like some other public libraries, the Guelph Public Library holds the Ontario Land Records Index (OLRI). This index is considered an important resource or finding aid for crown land grants in Ontario (Merriman 134). Province wide the index dates to the early settlement years and were derived or created by the Archives of Ontario from the surveyor general crown land papers (Merriman 134). The Ontario Land Records Index is composed into two parts an alphabetical index by surname and another alphabetical listing by township. The Archives of Ontario provides a guide to [Using the Ontario Land Records Index ca. 1780-1920.](#)

Religious Records

Denominations will sometimes keep records such baptismal, marriage and newspaper materials. In fact, using religious records is often necessary prior to civil registrations of births, marriages and deaths. Keep in mind religious records are often private in nature and are not public records (Merriman 75). Further religious institutions have their own reasons for keeping records and these reasons may “not coincide with genealogical expectations” (Merriman 83).

The Guelph Public Library does not hold an extensive collection of religious records. However, we do have secondary resources that may be helpful to point out such as:

More notices from Ontario Methodist Papers 1858-1872 (OGS 929.3713 MCK)

More obituaries from Ontario's Methodist papers, 1873-1884 (OGS 929.3713 MCK)

Obituaries from the Christian Guardian 1884-1890 (929.3713 MCK)

Obituaries from Ontario's Christian Guardian 1873-1880 (OGS 929.3713 MCK)

Obituaries from the Canada Christian Advocate 1873-1884 (OGS 929.3717 MCK)

For more information about the Guelph Public Library's Archives

Please contact Guelph Public Library Archivist Darcy Hiltz at dhiltz@guelphpl.ca or phone 519-824-6220 extension 245. Visit www.guelphpl.ca/localhistory for more information.

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