

# Alberta

## Research Outline

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This outline describes major sources of information about families from Alberta. As you read this outline, study the *Canada Research Outline* (34545), which will help you understand terminology and the contents and uses of genealogical records.

## RECORDS OF THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

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The Family History Library has many of the records described in this outline. Some of the sources described in this outline list the Family History Library's book, microfilm, microfiche, and computer numbers. These are preceded by *FHL*, the abbreviation for *Family History Library*. You can use these numbers to locate materials in the library and to order microfilm and microfiche at Family History Centers.

You can use the computer number if you have access to the Family History Library Catalog on computer. The "Computer Number Search" is the fastest way to find a source in the catalog.

## RESEARCH STRATEGY

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When researching in this province, begin by checking the following records in the order suggested:

1. Vital records
2. Church records
3. Census returns
4. Land records
5. Court records

## ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

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The following archives and libraries have collections of genealogical value:

- National Archives of Canada  
395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N3  
CANADA  
Telephone: 613-996-7458

- Personnel Records Unit  
Researcher Services Division  
National Archives of Canada  
395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N3  
CANADA

- Provincial Archives of Alberta  
12845-102 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5N 0M6  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-427-1750  
Fax: 403-427-4646

- City of Edmonton Archives  
10440-102 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5H 3Z9  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-496-8710  
Fax: 403-496-8732

- United Church Archives  
St. Stephen's College  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB T6G 2E8  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-439-7311  
Fax: 403-433-8875

- Glenbow-Alberta Institute  
130 9th Avenue S.E.  
Calgary, AB T2G 0P3  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-263-9552

- Family History Library  
35 West Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3400  
USA  
Telephone 801-240-2331  
Fax: 801-240-5551

## **Computer Networks and Bulletin Boards**

Computers with modems can be useful tools for obtaining information from selected archives and libraries. In a way, computer networks themselves serve as a library. The Internet, certain computer bulletin boards, and commercial on-line services help family history researchers:

- Locate other researchers.
- Post queries.
- Send and receive E-mail.
- Search large databases.
- Search computer libraries.
- Join in computer chat and lecture sessions.

You can find computerized research tips and information about ancestors from Alberta in a variety of sources at local, state, national, and international levels. The list of sources is growing rapidly. Most of the information is available at no cost.

Addresses on the Internet change frequently. As of September 1997, the following sites are important gateways linking you to many more network and bulletin board sites:

- Canada GenWeb

A cooperative effort by many volunteers to list genealogical databases, libraries, bulletin boards, and other resources available on the Internet for each county and province.

- Canadian Genealogy Resources

<http://genealogy.about.com/hobbies/genealogy/msubcanada.htm>

Lists county, provincial, and national sources; personal pages; and publications.

- **Roots-L**

<http://www.rootsweb.com/roots-l/canada.html>

A useful list of sites and resources. Includes a large, regularly updated research coordination list.

## **CEMETERIES**

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Some of the cemetery records have been compiled by the Genealogical Society of Alberta. Many are in manuscript form at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

## **CENSUS**

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Censuses were taken in 1881, 1885, 1891, and 1901, while Alberta was part of three of the provisional districts of Northwest Territories. Censuses have been taken every five years since 1906. The censuses from 1885 to the present are confidential and are kept at the National Archives of Canada, in Ottawa. Some school attendance records, tax rolls, and voter lists are available at the Provincial Archives. There is also a card file which lists the names of early settlers in each school district.

## **CHURCH RECORDS**

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The earliest denominations, Wesleyan Methodists and Roman Catholics, came into Alberta in the 1840s. They were followed by the Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Latter-day Saints. The Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists combined in 1925 to form the United Church of Canada.

To assist the churches in preserving their records, the government of Alberta has made several agreements with them, designating the Provincial Archives of Alberta as the official repository for these records.

The Provincial Archives holds the records for three Anglican dioceses (160 parishes): the Diocese of Edmonton (1889–1981), the Diocese of Athabasca (1874–1982), and the Diocese of Mackenzie River (1859–1966). These records include registers of baptisms, marriages, and deaths, as well as confirmations, minutes, newsletters, Bishop's correspondence, property records, and other related material. The Diocese of Calgary records are located in the Special Collections Library of the University of Calgary.

The Provincial Archives also holds the Catholic records for the Religious Orders of Les Oblates de Marie Immaculée (129 parishes, 1842–1981), Les Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge (1869–1973), the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (1849–

1980), the Sisters of Providence (1886–1978), the Soeurs Grises/Grey Nuns (1877-1967), and the Immaculée-Conception Parish, Edmonton (1905–1981). These records include registers of baptisms, marriages, burials, and communions, as well as historical information concerning events and individuals in the parishes. Many of these records are in French.

The Provincial Archives also holds the United Church of Canada records for the Alberta Conference (1853–1982). Included are the records of the three denominations which united in 1925 to form this church: Congregational records (1910–1912), Methodist records (1863–1925), and Presbyterian records (1887–1925). Eighty-six pastoral congregations are represented. These records include some baptisms, marriages, burials, clergy rolls, hospital records, accounts, and correspondence.

The Provincial Archives has only recently undertaken to preserve the records of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Alberta Synod), but no information on their content is yet available.

The Provincial Archives also holds records of some congregations of Western Canada Synod, Lutheran Church in America from 1898–1983 (76 congregations), which include registers of baptisms, marriages, burials, and confirmations, as well as church minutes, synod newsletters, correspondence, and accounts.

## **COLLECTIONS**

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The Glenbow-Alberta Institute and the Provincial Archives have clipping files of well-known Albertans.

## **COURT RECORDS**

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Alberta has 12 judicial districts. The offices are located at the courthouses in the following cities and towns (except Edmonton, where it is located at the Law Courts Building):

Calgary  
Drumheller  
Edmonton  
Fort Macleod  
Grande Prairie  
Hanna  
Lethbridge  
Medicine Hat  
Peace River  
Red Deer

Vegreville  
Wetaskiwin

The court records found at the Provincial Archives are coroners' files (1910–1927), inquest files (1884–1905, 1910–1928), justice of the peace files (1898–1927), and criminal files (1915–1928). Most of these records are indexed.

## DIRECTORIES

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Directories for Alberta as well as for Saskatchewan from 1881 to 1908 are located at the Provincial Archives. The archives also has a collection of city directories for Edmonton (1908–1980), Calgary (1911–1981), Lethbridge (1911–1980, with gaps), Medicine Hat (1913–1914, 1950–1981), Red Deer (1965–1981), Grande Prairie (1978–1980), and a small selection of telephone and other directories from 1908 to the 1960s.

Many Alberta directories up to and including 1900 are available on microfiche:

*Pre-1900 Canadian Directories*. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, 1988. (On 4219 FHL fiche beginning with 6360453. These fiche do not circulate to Family History Centers.)

## EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

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The Provincial Archives has some data on the immigration policies and movements of various groups of people rather than on individuals. This can be helpful to know where various nationalities settled.

### Canadian Border Crossing Records

The United States kept records of people crossing the border from Canada to the United States. These records are called border crossing lists, passenger lists, or manifests. There are two kinds of manifests:

- Manifests of people sailing from Canada to the United States.
- Manifests of people traveling by train from Canada to the United States.

In 1895 Canadian shipping companies agreed to make manifests of passengers traveling to the United States. The Canadian government allowed U.S. immigration officials to inspect those passengers while they were still in Canada. The U.S. immigration officials also inspected train passengers traveling from Canada to the United States. The U.S. officials worked at Canadian seaports and major cities like Québec and Winnipeg. The manifests from every seaport and emigration station in Canada were sent to St. Albans, Vermont.

The Family History Library has copies of both kinds of manifests. Because the manifests were sent to St. Albans, Vermont, they are called *St. Albans District Records of Aliens Arriving from Foreign Contiguous Territory*. Despite the name, the manifests are actually from seaports and railroad stations all over Canada and the northern United States, not just Vermont.

**Border Crossing Manifests.** Manifests may include each passenger's name, port or station of entry, date of entry, literacy, last residence, previous visits to the United States, and birthplace. The manifests are reproduced in two series:

- *Manifests of Passengers Arriving in the St. Albans, Vermont, District through Canadian Pacific and Atlantic Ports, 1895–January 1921.* (608 rolls; FHL films 1561087–499; computer number 423848.) Includes records from seaports and railroad stations all over Canada and the northern United States. These manifests provide two types of lists:
  - Traditional passenger lists on U.S. immigration forms.
  - Monthly lists of passengers crossing the border on trains. These lists are divided by month. In each month, the records are grouped by railroad station. (The stations are listed in alphabetical order.) Under the station, the passengers are grouped by railroad company.
- *Manifests of Passengers Arriving in the St. Albans, Vermont, District through Canadian Pacific Ports, 1929–1949.* (25 rolls; FHL films 1549387–411; computer number 423848.) Travel to the United States from Canadian Pacific seaports only.

**Border Crossing Indexes.** In many cases, index cards were the *only* records kept of the crossings. These cards are indexed in four publications:

- *Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries through the St. Albans, Vermont, District, 1895–1924.* (400 rolls; FHL films 1472801–3201; computer number 423848.) The Soundex is a surname index based on the way a name sounds rather than how it is spelled. Names like Smith and Smyth are filed together.
- *Soundex Index to Entries into the St. Albans, Vermont, District through Canadian Pacific and Atlantic Ports, 1924–1952.* (98 rolls; FHL films 1570714–811; computer number 423848.)
- *St. Albans District Manifest Records of Aliens Arriving from Foreign Contiguous Territory: Records of Arrivals through Small Ports in Vermont, 1895–1924.* (6 rolls; FHL films 1430987–92.) The records are arranged first by port and then alphabetically by surname. Only from Vermont ports of entry: Alburg, Beecher Falls, Canaan, Highgate Springs, Island Pond, Norton, Richford, St. Albans, and Swanton.
- *Detroit District Manifest Records of Aliens Arriving from Foreign Contiguous Territory: Arrivals at Detroit, Michigan, 1906–1954.* (117 rolls; FHL films 1490449–565; computer number 432703.) Only from Michigan ports of entry: Bay City, Detroit, Port Huron, and Sault Ste. Marie.

## GENEALOGY

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A recent index to many published biographies, census records (1881–1891), directories to 1913, genealogies, local histories, and vital records in newspapers is:

Elliot, Noel Montgomery, ed. *The Western Canadians, 1600–1900: An Alphabetized Directory of the People, Places, and Vital Dates*. 3 vols. Toronto: Genealogical Research Library, 1994. (FHL book 971 D22w.) Indexes about 300,000 names from various

sources for the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and Yukon (also includes Alaska). Sources are listed at the end of each volume.

## HISTORY

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1670	Today's Alberta was a part of the territory given to the Hudson's Bay Company.
1777–1778	First trading post on Lake Athabasca was established.
1778	Fort Chipewyan was founded.
1794	Fort Augustus was founded near the present site of Edmonton.
1869	Rupert's Land bought from the Hudson's Bay Company and organized into the Northwest Territories.
1874–1875	North West Mounted Police established Fort Macleod and Fort Calgary.
1876–1877	Territorial rights acquired from the Indians by treaty.
1882	The southern region of the Northwest Territories was divided into four districts; one was named Alberta.
1883	Canadian Pacific Railway's main line was completed across Alberta.
1885	Northwest Rebellion outbreak.
1905	The Province of Alberta was formed.
1908	The University of Alberta was founded.

About half of Alberta's population is of British origin. Other nationalities include Czech, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Scandinavian, Ukrainian, and Indian (18,000 American Indians reside on 90 reservations). Most migrations were from eastern Canada, Europe, and the United States in the early 1900s.

## LAND AND PROPERTY RECORDS

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Homestead registers from about 1885 to 1930 are available on microfilm at the Provincial Archives. The records are arranged by land location. There is an index to these records. The township registers list the name of the applicant, the application date, and the date the patent was granted. There are related files which contain actual applications for homestead and give the name, marital status, citizenship, and previous residence of applicants and the number of ages of their family members.

Maps of municipal districts and counties which show the land owners' names can also be found at the Provincial Archives.

There are two districts for land registration in Alberta:

## **Northern Alberta Land Registration District**

LJohn E. Brownlee Building Phone: Fax:

10365-97 Street

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

T5J 3W7

Telephone: 780-427-2742

Fax: 780-422-4290

## **Southern Alberta Land Registration District**

Service Alberta Building

710 - 4 Avenue S.W.

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

T2P 0K3

Telephone: 403-297-6511

Fax: 403-297-8641

## **MAPS and GAZETTEERS**

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The Provincial Archives has an extensive collection of historical, topographical, land use, and local government maps.

## **MILITARY RECORDS**

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### **World War I (1914–1918)**

Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) service records are available through the Personnel Records Unit of the National Archives of Canada (see the “Archives and Libraries” section of this outline for the address). These service records contain detailed information from enlistment to demobilization (discharge). Information may include each person's date and place of birth, address at the time of enlistment, name and address of next of kin, marital status, occupation, personal description (eye and hair color, height, weight, and distinctive marks or scars), and religion. When requesting information from the Personnel Records Unit, please include the person's name, rank, and regiment (where known).

## **NATURALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

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Until 1947 British immigrants from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland automatically became citizens of Canada. They did not need naturalization. Non-British immigrants, however, were required to make oaths of allegiance before receiving land grants. Files

containing these oaths and petitions for citizenship covering the years 1817 to 1846 are found at the Provincial Archives.

Records created after 1917 are more detailed than earlier records and are found at:

Department of Citizenship and Immigration  
Public Rights Administration  
300 Slater Street, 3rd floor, section D  
Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1  
CANADA  
Telephone: 888-242-2100 (in Canada only; outside of Canada, write to the above address)

## NEWSPAPERS

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Collections of newspapers are at the Provincial Archives, the Alberta Legislative Library, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute Library, the University of Alberta Library, and the University of Calgary Library.

## PERIODICALS

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Many local periodicals are indexed in:

*PERiodical Source Index (PERSI)*. Ft. Wayne, Ind.: Allen County Public Library Foundation, 1987-. (FHL book 973 D25per; 1847–1985 on **fiche 6016863** [set of 40]; 1986–1990 on **fiche 6016864** [set of 15]; computer number 658308.) Index of thousands of family history periodicals. Annual indexes have been published since 1986. For further details, see the *PERiodical Source Index Resource Guide* (34119).

## PROBATE RECORDS

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Wills and probate records are kept by the surrogate registrar. The registrar's records, as well as those of the clerk of court, are housed in the courthouses of the various judicial districts (see the "Court Records" section of this outline).

## **SCHOOL RECORDS**

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School attendance returns are located in the Provincial Archives and at:

Department of Education  
Devonian Building  
1160 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, AB TSK QLZ  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-427-7219  
Fax: 403-427-0591

## **SOCIETIES**

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The following societies, archives, and libraries are listed with the larger collections first.

Provincial Archives of Alberta  
12845-102 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5N 0M6  
CANADA

Alberta Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 12015  
Edmonton, AB T5J 3L2  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-424-4429  
Fax: 403-423-8980

There are branches of the Alberta Genealogical Society in Brooks, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Wetaskiwin.

City of Edmonton Archives  
10440-102 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5H 3Z9  
CANADA

Historical Society of Alberta  
Box 4035, Station C  
Calgary, AB T2T 5M9  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-261-3662  
Fax: 403-269-6029

Alberta Family Histories Society  
P.O. Box 30270, Station B  
Calgary, AB T2M 4P1  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-214-1447

Société Historique et Généalogique de Smoky River  
P.O. Box 224  
Donnelly, AB T0H 1G0  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-925-3801  
Fax: 403-925-2203

Société Généalogique du Nord-Ouest  
200 109th Street  
Edmonton, AB T0H 1G0  
CANADA  
Telephone: 403-424-2476  
Fax: 403-424-2476

Alberta Historical Resources Foundation  
102 8th Avenue S.E.  
Calgary, AB T2G 0K6  
CANADA

United Church Archives  
St. Stephen's College  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB T6G 2E8  
CANADA

Smoky River Genealogical Society  
Donnelly, AB T0H 1G0  
CANADA

Glenbow-Alberta Institute  
130 9th Avenue S.E.  
Calgary, AB T2G 0P3  
CANADA

National Archives of Canada  
395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N3  
CANADA

Family History Library  
35 West Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3400  
USA

Most microfilms available at the library can also be distributed to its Family History Centers. A current list of Family History Centers in your area can be obtained from the Family History Library.

## VITAL RECORDS

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Alberta's birth, marriage, and death registration began 1 April 1889. Beginning in 1878 some marriage returns were taken in parts of Alberta. Many of these records are restricted for reasons of privacy. In 1994 the Province of Alberta changed the process of obtaining vital information. People residing in Alberta must go to their local registry offices to obtain copies of vital information. They are not allowed to get information from the office in Edmonton. People residing outside Alberta should contact the Edmonton office at the following address:

Alberta Registries  
Vital Statistics  
10365 97th Street  
Edmonton, AB T5J 3W7  
CANADA  
Telephone: 780-427-7013

*Mailing Address:*  
Alberta Registries  
Vital Statistics  
P.O. Box 2023  
Edmonton, AB T5J 4W7  
CANADA

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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*Canadian Almanac & Directory*. Copp Clark Pitman: Toronto, 1984-0000 (FHL no 971 E4ca).

*Encyclopedia Canadiana*. Canadians Co.: Ottawa, 1957 (FHL no. 030.71 En19).

Jonasson, Eric. *The Canadian Genealogical Handbook*. 2nd ed. Winnipeg: Wheatfield Press, 1978. Indexed (FHL no. 971 D27j 1978).

Provincial Archives of Alberta. *Alberta's Documentary Heritage*. Provincial Archives of Alberta Information Leaflet no. 2., 1981.

Provincial Archives of Alberta. *Church Archives at the Provincial Archives of Alberta*.

Provincial Archives of Alberta Information Leaflet no. 12., 1984.

Provincial Archives of Alberta. *Sources of Ethno- Cultural Information at the Provincial Archives of Alberta*. Provincial Archives of Alberta Information Leaflet no. 6., 1983.

Provincial Government of Alberta. *Annual Report 1899*. pp. 78–79.

The United Church of Canada. *Yearbook 1984*. Toronto, 1984.

## **COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

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The Family History Library welcomes additions and corrections that will improve future editions of this outline. Please send your suggestions to:

Publications Coordination  
Family History Library  
35 N. West Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3400  
USA

We appreciate the archivists, librarians, and others who have reviewed this outline and shared helpful information.

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