

Finding Your Canadian Ancestors

AT ANCESTRY.COM



Like the U.S., Canada has seen high rates of immigration from Europe over the past few hundred years. French settlements in present-day Nova Scotia and Quebec were successfully formed during the 17th century, while British influence and occupation of Canada came a bit later, in the 17th century.



Canada has always been an appealing destination for immigrants. Even U.S. residents weren't immune: more than 2 million Americans have immigrated to Canada since 1867, with the greatest influx occurring between 1895 and 1915. All of this adds up to a key fact for family historians: the United States and Canada are connected by more than just a border – for many people, it's a family tie.

Waves of Immigration

Early immigrants to the country were predominantly French, arriving in the 17th century. Scottish settlers also arrived early on. Canada's Great Migration occurred between 1815 and 1850, when more 800,000 immigrants arrived, most from Britain. An influx of Irish immigrants arrived around the years of that country's potato famine (mid-1840s thru mid-1850s).

Tip: American and Chinese settlers to western portions of Canada during the latter part of the 19th century may have been searching for gold. Search western Canada passenger lists and border crossings for clues that your own family participated.



Crossing into the U.S.

For much of the 19th century, European travel to Canada was more affordable than traveling to U.S. ports, a fact promoted by steamship companies serving Canadian routes. In addition to the cheaper fares, many immigrants avoided U.S. immigration policies by taking the Canadian route before crossing into the U.S.

In 1895, the U.S. government began requiring Canadian steamships and railroads to complete manifest forms and only provide transportation to U.S. destinations to immigrants who would have been allowed to enter the country via U.S. ports. Prior to this date, border crossings from Canada were not required to be recorded.

Tip: Look for comings and goings. Americans and Canadians crossed the border for leisure travel and work, too.

Canada's Great Migration occurred in the early 19th century; British immigrants also arrived earlier, including loyalists who departed the American colonies during the Revolutionary War.

Steps to Discovering Canadian Family Connections

STEP 1: BEGIN WITH RECORDS CREATED BY THE FAMILY IN THE U.S.

Start with the most recent records, including the 1930 and 1920 censuses, military draft registration cards, yearbooks, obituaries and other records at Ancestry.com.

HOW: Click on the Search tab at Ancestry.com to get started. Input the name of an ancestor who would have been living during the 20th century. Include other details – birth year, residence or birthplace and the names of other relatives – if available.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Click on the results returned and inspect the details. Family names, ages and relationships, birthplaces, occupations and addresses (scan horizontally across the page to see all of the information) can help you determine if you've found the correct family in U.S. records. Pay close attention to birthplaces, which were recorded in censuses beginning in 1850.

Save the records you find to your Ancestry.com family tree – Ancestry.com can use the details to help you discover even more.

WHERE NEXT: Use the information you discover to create more searches for the same family moving backwards in time. And focus on the full family unit: note names of siblings and research them as well. Remember that family members who never lived in Canada may have crossed the border to visit other branches of the family there, and immigrants who traveled through Canada may have lived in Canada for a few years or more before migrating into the U.S. While neither of these will include a Canadian place of birth, both scenarios could give you a trail to follow in Canadian records.

Tip: Even if you already know your Canadian immigrant ancestor, you'll still want to start with the most recent records available and march back in time. That way you'll know you're researching the right family and the right immigrant – and gather all of the great details available.

Kitchen Samuel E. Head	R 45	Yes	M	W	46	M	31	No	Yes	New York	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania
— Lonnie wife			F	W	44	M	19	No	Yes	New York	Spain	Germany
— Frank R. son			M	W	18	S		No	Yes	Massachusetts	New York	New York
Sherman Linnier Roomer			M	W	32	M	34	No	Yes	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts
— Grace Roomer			F	W	28	M	30	No	Yes	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts
— Jane Roomer			F	W	5	S		No	Yes	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts
Kitchen George S. brother			M	W	44	S		No	Yes	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania

STEP 2: LOOK FOR YOUR FAMILY'S CANADIAN CONNECTION IN THE IMMIGRATION AND TRAVEL COLLECTION AT ANCESTRY.COM.

If you've discovered a birthplace in Canada during your search, you'll know quickly who your family's immigrant was. But even if you haven't, you may still find a family member in passenger lists and border crossings between the U.S. and Canada.

HOW: Click on the Search tab at Ancestry.com. From the Special Collections list on the right side of the page, select Immigration and Travel to limit your search to records from this collection. Fill in the search form with details you've discovered about your family's immigrant – name, birth year, year of arrival. No known immigrant from Canada? Try a broader approach and look for individual family members or even just the family surname, birthplace and "lived in" location.

The screenshot shows the 'Special Collections' menu on Ancestry.com. The 'Immigration & Travel' option is highlighted in green. Below it, a sub-menu is visible with the following options: Passenger Lists, Citizenship & Naturalization Records, Border Crossings & Passports, and More... Other options in the main menu include Birth, Marriage, Death, Census, Military, and more.

Steps to Discovering Canadian Family Connections

STEP 2 CONTINUED

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: In crossings from Canada to the U.S., look for details about final destination of the traveler as well whom he or she is joining, closest relative in home country and whether the traveler has ever been in the U.S. before. Crossings from the U.S. into Canada may include occupation information, birthplace and intended destination. All of these details point to new records to search for and can help you determine if you're looking at the right family.



Border crossing from the United States to Canada.

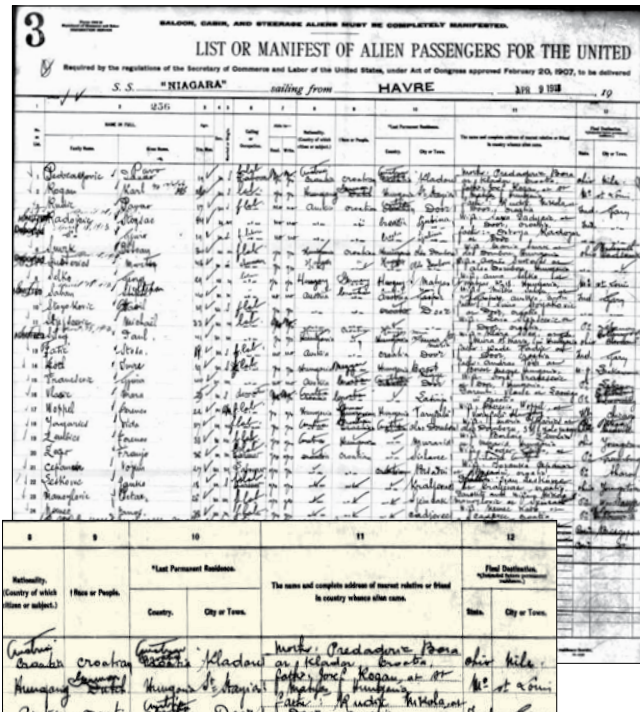
WHERE NEXT: Use the details you find in the Immigration and Travel collection to help you get started searching through Canadian records. And carefully analyze all finds you make in the Immigration and Travel collection so you can assess the details against the facts you've found previously.

STEP 3: USE NAME, BIRTH DETAILS AND PLACE INFORMATION TO LOCATE YOUR ANCESTOR IN RECORDS CREATED IN CANADA

Use the same steps you use for U.S. research on your family in Canada. Start with the most recent records you're likely to find them in – census records are key resources in Canada, too. Look for more immigration clues, this time for the immigrant ancestor who first came to Canada. As always, make note of the entire family unit as you search. You can use these details to help you compare earlier documents you find to ensure you're on the right track.

HOW: CLICK ON THE SEARCH TAB AT ANCESTRY.COM AND CHOOSE SHOW ADVANCED. THEN FILL IN THE SEARCH FORM WITH DETAILS YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOUR ANCESTOR. At the bottom of the form is

Tip: Discrepancies exist. Details in immigration and naturalization records may not mirror what you've found elsewhere. Analyze records carefully and have an open mind before discarding a non-exact result.



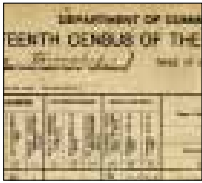
Border crossing from Canada to the United States.



a "Collection Priority" option. Select "Canadian" as the priority and then choose "Show only records from this location" to focus your search on records created in Canada. Be sure, however, to undo these settings before conducting your next search of all records.

WHERE NEXT: Much like U.S. family trees, Canadian family trees usually began with an immigrant ancestor. Use the details you collect in more modern records to continue your search back in time until you reach the immigrant to Canada. Then look for records that will help you find him or her in the former homeland.

Key Resources at Ancestry.com for Researching Canadian Connections



U.S. FEDERAL CENSUS COLLECTION AND CANADIAN CENSUS COLLECTION — to help you discover more about your family's life and give you the clues you'll need to follow them back through generations - both in the U.S. and Canada.



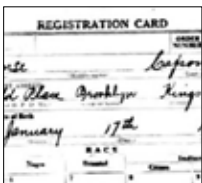
CANADIAN AND U.S. CITY DIRECTORIES AND CANADIAN SCHOOL DIRECTORIES — to follow family members through residence or school attendance; directories often contain unique family details and help fill in during non-census years.



IMMIGRATION AND TRAVEL COLLECTION — to see travel paths, moments and other details about ancestors who crossed between the U.S. and Canada; immigrant ancestors may have also filled out paperwork to obtain citizenship.



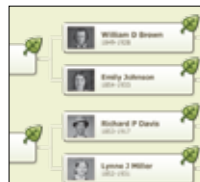
THE DROUIN COLLECTION (CA) — to search through a vast collection of birth, marriage, death, notarial and other miscellaneous records from parishes in Quebec as well as French Catholic parish records from Ontario, Acadia and the U.S.



MILITARY COLLECTION — to learn more about military service in both the U.S. and Canada; some records include details about land grants, pensions, burials or provide personal stories and information about other relatives.



MESSAGE BOARDS — to connect with other researchers who have experience discovering families in Canadian records and towns.



FAMILY TREES — to link to other family members, possibly even distant cousins who are also researching the same family lines that you are; one of them may have the details you're searching for.

New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 about Luigi Ventura

Name:	Luigi Ventura
Arrival Date:	8 Nov 1922
Birth Year:	abt 1909
Birth Location:	Italy
Birth Location Other:	corato
Age:	13
Gender:	Male
Ethnicity/Race-/Nationality:	Italian (South) (Italian)

[View Original Record](#)
[View Passenger List](#)

Tip: Discrepancies exist. Details in immigration and naturalization records may not mirror what you've found elsewhere. Analyze records carefully and have an open mind before discarding a non-exact result.

Note the search result for Luigi provides his birthplace, arrival date and other details but page 2 (right) of the original passenger list record also states Luigi's destination in the U.S., health condition, physical description and more.

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Place of Birth	Country of Birth	Year of Birth	Year of Arrival	Port of Origin	Destination	Remarks
1	Luigi Ventura	13	M		Corato	Italy	abt 1909	Nov 8 1922	Genoa	New York	Single

TAKING FRENCH-CANADIAN ANCESTORS BACK TO EUROPE

French-Canadian family lines? Lucky you: detailed marriage records may make it easier for you to follow that family all the way back to their European immigrants.

1. Start by identifying the husband and wife in your family tree who were married in French Canada.
2. Search Birth, Marriage and Death records from Canada at Ancestry.com to find their marriage in a marriage index.
3. Next, record the names of the parents of the bride and groom.
4. Repeat #2 and #3 for each set of parents, continuing the process until you reach immigrant ancestors.

Tip: French-Canadian names went through especially radical changes when people crossed the border. For instance, Benoit was often changed to Benway, Courtemanche changed to Shortsleeve, Perrin to Bettis, Vaillancourt to Vancor and Gareau turned to Saint-Onge.

STILL CAN'T FIND THE FAMILY? TRY THESE TRICKS

Some ancestors are pros at hiding. Beat them at a game of hide and seek with the following tricks:

TRICK 1

Think the name might be to blame? Try a wildcard search in which you use asterisks to replace some of the letters in a name. For example, if the surname was Lefevre, Le*e*re would produce it as well as Lefebre and other variants.

TRICK 2

Search by criteria. Forego your ancestor's surname and search using birthplace, age, gender, occupation and other details to find people who match the ancestor you're seeking. Pay special attention to the names in your search results. Do any of them seem to reflect your family?

TRICK 3

Follow your ancestor backwards by address in a city directory. You may get lucky and discover that the family remained in the same residence for years, even if their name changed slightly.

TRICK 4

On border crossings and passenger lists, be sure to note relatives' names and other travelers from the same location as your ancestor - it's a great way to find new family connections.

TRICK 5

Listen to family stories. While there's plenty of fiction to be heard out there, even the wildest tales usually hold an inkling of truth. One of the leads may point you right to your ancestor.



Arrival of immigrants at Union Station, Toronto, Canada