Canada: Jewish Family History Research Guide

Brief History
The earliest Jewish community in Canada was established in 1759, when Jews were first officially permitted to reside in the country. The first congregation was founded in 1768 in Montreal. Jewish settlement was mainly confined to Montreal until the 1840’s, when Jewish settlers slowly began to spread throughout the country. Jewish immigration increased around the turn of the 20th century, as it did in the United States. Today, Jews make up approximately 1.2% of Canada’s population.

Primary Records

Library and Archives Canada
Library and Archives Canada is the main source of primary records from the 18th to the 20th centuries. This repository contains a vast range of materials relevant to Canadian Jewish genealogical research, including but not limited to vital, cemetery, census, immigration, naturalization, mutual/immigrant aid society, synagogue, military, orphanage/adoption, land, and employment records, national and local Jewish newspapers, and city directories. Many record groups have been indexed and are searchable online at http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/search/anc?. However, please note that only some of the indexed record groups are digitized and viewable as images online. Major digitized collections include National Census (1851, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, & 1911), Canadian Naturalization (1915-1951), Quebec City Passenger Lists (1865-1900), Immigrants from the Russian Empire – passports and identity papers (1898-1922), and Canadian Directories (pre-1901).*

*Primary records are also available via Ancestry and World Vital Records (See Web Resources below)

Library and Archives Canada: Genealogy Services
Address: 395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON   K1A 0N4, Canada
Tel.:  Local: 613-996-5115; Toll-free: 1-866-578-7777 (Canada and the United States)
Fax: 613-995-6274
E-mail: genealogy inquiry form available at http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/022-300.001-e.php
Website: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/index-e.html

Citizenship and Immigration Canada
All immigration records for Canadian land and sea ports from January 1, 1936, on are held by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. For instructions on how to request another person’s post-1935 immigration record, visit http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/022-908.007-e.html.

Canadian Archival Information Network
Primary records are also held at many smaller provincial, regional, county, and local archives throughout Canada. To search across their collections, browse digitized items, and locate contact information for Canada’s archives, visit http://www.archivescanada.ca/english/index.html.

That’s My Family Federated Search
That’s My Family allows you to conduct a single search for names across over 50 record indexes (some with online images) from Library and Archives Canada and several provincial archives.
http://recherche-c.voicimafamille.info/ecis.jsp?locale=en
Family History Library (FHL) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS)
The Family History Library of the Church of Latter-day Saints has microfilmed a large quantity of Canadian records. To identify the relevant microfilms, do a “Place Search” in the Family History Library Online Catalog, https://familysearch.org/#form=catalog, first using the town name, and then using the province name.

LDS microfilms can be ordered online for viewing at any LDS Family History Center including the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute. The ordering website is http://www.familysearch.org/films. Further information and instructions on ordering microfilms for viewing at the Genealogy Institute can be found at http://www.cjh.org/p/34#microloans. Many LDS microfilms of Jewish interest are available at the Genealogy Institute on long-term loan. A list of these microfilms can be found at http://www.jgsny.org/microfilms-at-cjh.

The Family History Library has been digitizing its collections, and, therefore, many records are already available on its site either image only, index only, or both image and index. To browse the digitized collections by country, visit https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list.

Web Resources

General Resources
Ancestry.com and World Vital Records are vast databases of all types of digitized genealogical records [Fee]. The Center for Jewish History offers free access to Ancestry.com in its reading room.

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies provides links to Canada’s local genealogical societies.
http://iajgs.org/members/members.html


Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online allows you to search for biographical and bibliographical information on notable Canadians who died prior to 1930.
http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html

The Canadian Jewish Heritage Network offers a database of several genealogy record groups available at its partner institutions. It currently includes information extracted from Jewish Immigrant Aid Services’ client name lists (1922-1952), Jewish Colonization Association’s individual farm settler reports from Western Canada and Quebec (1906-1951), Translated Yiddish obituaries from the Keneder Adler (1908-1932), Hebrew Sick Benefit Association of Montreal's membership listings (1897-1945), and a list of Jewish casualties in the Canadian Armed Forces from World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

Cemetery/Obituary Records
The JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) is a searchable database of names and other identifying information from cemeteries and burial records worldwide.
http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/
Canadian Genealogy & History Links offers a centralized list of cemetery and obituary databases.

CanadaGenWeb’s Cemetery Project allows you to browse and search for Canadian cemeteries and provides locations of cemetery transcripts, indexes, and photos, including links to those online.
http://cemetery.canadagenweb.org/

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies’ International Jewish Cemetery Project is in the process of compiling a comprehensive list of Jewish burial sites worldwide. Some listings include contact information, location description, brief history, burial societies, and/or links to cemetery websites.
http://www.iajgsjewishcemeteryproject.org/

The Canadian Headstone Photographic project is an ongoing effort to photograph and index Canada’s grave monuments. You can browse the photos by cemetery or search by surname.
http://canadianheadstones.com/

Census Records
The following websites provide links to online Canadian census records (indexes, images, or both):

Automated Genealogy is working to index national censuses, link the transcribed pages to the original images hosted by Library and Archives Canada, and link various records associated with a person together. The current searchable indexes (in-progress) include: 1851, 1901, 1906, and 1911 censuses.
http://www.automatedgenealogy.com/

Directories
Canada411 is an online directory of current Canadian telephone listings.
http://findaperson.canada411.ca

Internet Archive has digitized historical business and residential directories for several Canadian cities. Search for “[city name] AND directory.” To search within a directory, select the full text link and type Control + F to open a search box.
http://www.archive.org

Immigration/Naturalization Records
Can Genealogy provides a list of links to online immigration records (indexes, images, or both).
http://www.cangenealogy.com/immigration.html

The Nanaimo Family History Society is developing a database of passenger lists for Quebec ports (including Montreal). It currently covers only a small date range, but there are plans for expansion.
http://members.shaw.ca/nanaimo.fhs/indexY.html

Olive Tree Genealogy features pre-1865 passenger lists. To search within a record, type Control + F.

Military Records
Olive Tree Genealogy features transcribed military records from Canada’s 18th- and 19th-century wars, such as muster rolls and regiment lists. To search within a record, type Control + F.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission offers two searchable databases: names and cemeteries of World War I and World War II Commonwealth forces’ (including Canadian) casualties.
http://www.cwgc.org/

The War Graves Photographic Project is an ongoing effort to photograph and index the graves of all Commonwealth military personnel from World War I to the present day. To search by name, visit:
http://twgpp.org/index.php

The Canadian Merchant Navy War Dead Database is a searchable registry of merchant seamen who died in World War I or World War II.
http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/history/secondwar/atlantic/merchant_search

Canadian Virtual War Memorial is a searchable registry of military war casualties since the Korean War.
http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/virtualmem

Canadian Post-War Military & Dependant Graves is a searchable registry of service members and their dependants who died overseas during postwar deployments.
http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/pwmg/names

Veterans Affairs Canada has digitized the Books of Remembrance, which record the names of Canadian military war casualties from the Nile Expedition (1884-1885) to the present. Only images are available.
http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/books/listing

Newspapers
Can Genealogy features links to a range of digitized provincial and local newspapers (1769-present).
http://www.cangenealogy.com/newspapers.html

Multicultural Canada is an online repository of newspapers from Canada’s minority cultural communities, including a few Jewish publications. You can browse or search all of the newspapers.
http://multiculturalcanada.ca

Vital Records
Vital Statistics Council of Canada provides links to provincial vital statistics offices.
www.vscouncil.ca

The Canadian Births or Baptism, Deaths and Marriages Exchange is a partial list of names (with accompanying date and location of event) taken from vital records, organized first by record type and then by first initial. Once you locate the relevant page, you can search for a name using Control + F.
http://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/can/bdm/index.shtml

Sources at the Center for Jewish History
In addition to general histories of the Jews in Canada, both the American Jewish Historical Society and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research have library and archival resources containing genealogical information about Jews in Canada. Additional resources are available in the Genealogy Institute.
Books and Periodicals


*American Jewish Historical Society* JV 7500 .B3


*YIVO Library* 00001116 and 01503811


*YIVO Library* 00001063


*American Jewish Historical Society* E 1035 .J5 .C1


*YIVO Library* 01500981


*Genealogy Institute*


Grossman, Vladimir, ed. *Canadian Jewish Year Book*. Vols. 1-3 (1939-1942). Includes articles and statistics about the Jews of Canada and the world. Lists Jewish organizations, histories of the organizations (including some discussion of individuals), and books published that year.


*Jewish Residents in the Canadian Census*. Montreal & Quebec City (1871-1901); Toronto (1861-1901); Western Canada (1861-1901); Canadian Maritime Provinces (1901); Greater Quebec Province (1871-1901). Alphabetical listings within districts.

*Genealogy Institute* Avotaynu’s Microfiche Box CS 88


*Genealogy Institute*
Nayland, 1926-. Yiddish monthly journal published by the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada. YIVO Library 01500175


Genealogy Institute


Genealogy Institute


Genealogy Institute F 1035 .J5 .F76 1992

Archival Collections

Baron de Hirsch Fund. The Baron de Hirsch Fund was established in 1891 to aid new Jewish immigrants through port work, temporary aid, land settlement, training in agriculture and trades, and general education. Material includes documentation on the agricultural colonies started or subsidized by the Fund in Canada.

American Jewish Historical Society I-80

Industrial Removal Office. The Industrial Removal Office was established in 1901 to aid new Jewish immigrants in finding employment and settling into North American communities outside of the major urban ports of entry. From 1901 to 1922, the IRO distributed approximately 79,000 individuals throughout the United States and Canada. Material includes correspondence regarding individual cases and immigrant records.

American Jewish Historical Society I-91

National Jewish Welfare Board, Bureau of War Records. Includes individual service records on Jewish soldiers who won awards, were wounded, were taken prisoner, or died during World War II.

American Jewish Historical Society I-52

United HIAS Service, Main Office, N.Y. Collection includes materials on Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, Canada. Consult the finding aid, which will help locate correspondence and some immigrant lists from specific European countries to Canada for the period of 1944-1962.

YIVO Archives RG 245.8

Forthcoming Resource

The Jewish Canadian Military Museum is currently working on digitizing and indexing Canadian Jews in World War II (Parts I and II). It will be searchable and viewable in pdf format.

http://www.jcmm.ca/home.html