

Guide to Genealogical Resources at The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives

Our Archives has a large number of resources that may be helpful to family historians and genealogists. From local church records and microfilmed registers from across the country, to reference books and biographical files, we may have the resources that allow you to trace your family tree back a little farther.

Types of Genealogical Resources

1. Local Church Records:

As we have a national collection mandate, the Archives holds original church records for several hundred Presbyterian congregations from across the country, as well as microfilm copies for many more. In fact, we hold about 450 collections (called fonds) in total. For detailed descriptions of these fonds, please visit the "Finding Aids" section of our home page.

Please note that many Presbyterian congregations voted "yes" to Church Union in 1925, and became part of the United Church of Canada in 1925. If that was the case, the records of that church (even the pre-1925 ones) would be with the United Church, rather than with us. As a result, a fair amount of pre-1925 Presbyterian church records are held at the United Church of Canada Archives, either the national archives in Toronto at 40 Oak Street, <http://www.united-church.ca/local/archives/on>, or at one of their regional conference archives.



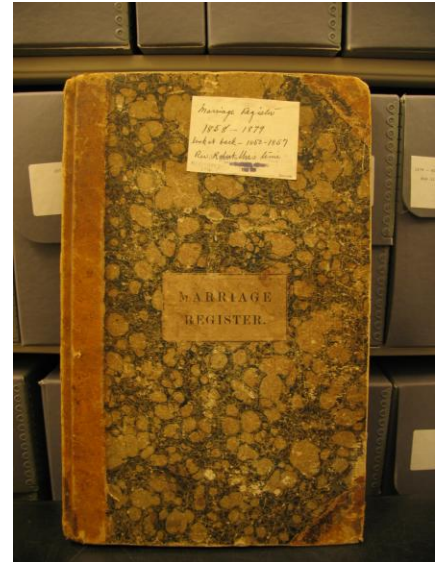
Types of local church records that may be helpful in tracing your family tree include:

- i) Vital statistics registers: births/baptisms, marriages, and deaths/burials. Just as a note, death or burial registers are not common in our archives. If they were created, it was generally as a personal record of the minister, and not an official record of the church.
- ii) Congregational histories: these publications sometimes provide a fair bit of biographical information on ministers that have served at the church. They may also provide information on families that were active in the congregation or played a role in significant events in the church's history.
- iii) Communion Rolls and Registers: provide lists of church members that received communion. These may help in identifying if an individual was a member of the church.
- iv) Session minutes: in some instances notices of new members were entered in the session minutes. Therefore, if communion rolls are not available it might be possible to find information in the session minutes. Please note: access to session records that are less than 50 years old is restricted.

Our local church records collections are arranged alphabetically by the name of the city, town or village in which the church resided. It is important, therefore, to have a fairly certain idea of the location in which the ancestors you are researching lived, or at least some of the place names in the area.

2. Biographical Reference Books and Files:

If you are researching an ancestor that served the church, either as a minister, or mission worker, we may have some biographical information on that individual. The Archives has an index of minister's obituaries found in the yearly Acts and Proceedings of the Church, and from the Presbyterian Record, as well as several reference books which provide basic information on the careers of ministers - when they were ordained, where they served, etc. We also have an index of students that attended Knox College, Toronto, which often provides birth and death dates.



3. Private Papers:

The Archives also has a small number of archival collections (known as fonds) of private papers of prominent Presbyterians and individuals that served the church, including ministers, mission workers, and professors. For a listing of these "fonds" see the "Finding Aids" section on our home page.

4. Photographs:

Our photographic collection currently consists of over 27,000 catalogued images and another 5,000-10,000 or so waiting to be described. It includes pictures of ministers, mission workers, and others connected with The Presbyterian Church in Canada, as well as pictures of churches from across the country. Digital copies may be made of any image for which the Archives or The Presbyterian Church in Canada holds copyright in compliance with current copyright legislation. Please see our "Copying Fees" document for costs.



For more information please visit our website at:
www.presbyterianarchives.ca