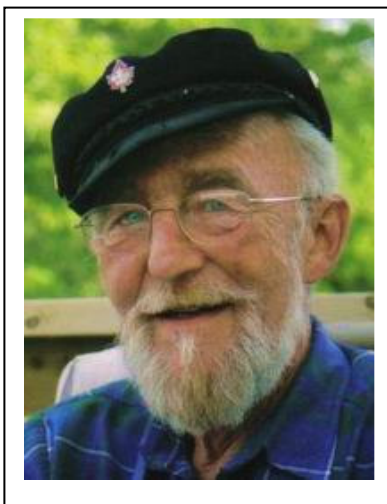


Census Records



Canadian census records are very valuable sources of family history information. Before 1851 they usually listed only the head of the household and the number of people in different age groups that were living there. Starting in 1851 and every ten years since there was a nominal census that listed each individual along with their age, sex, country or province of birth, religion, ethnic origin, occupation, marital status, and education. The recently released 1901 census also includes date of birth, year of immigration, and address or location of land.

When you want to search the census records, you must know where the person was living because the returns are organized by township in each county. For larger cities, they are organized by electoral wards. You can often find what

ward someone was living in by consulting a city directory for that year.

If you are living in or near the area that you are researching the chances are good that the local archives, library, historical or genealogical society has copies of the census microfilms for that area. Many will also have transcribed and indexed the census so that you can find who you are looking for in alphabetical order. If you are researching a more distant location then check your library for a copy of *Catalogue of Census Returns on Microfilm*. This lists all the villages, towns, townships, and counties within each province and identifies the reel numbers for their census returns. Your library can then borrow those reels from Library and Archives Canada. Check carefully, however. The village of Rawdon, Montcalm County, Quebec, is listed under Leinster County in 1825, l'Assomption County in 1831, as St-Patrice-de-Rawdon, Leinster County in 1851, in Montcalm County in 1861, as St. Patrick, Montcalm County in 1871, and as St-Patrice-de-Rawdon, Montcalm County in 1881, 1891, and 1901.

The 1881 Census has been transcribed and indexed and is searchable on the internet at: <http://www.familysearch.org>. Select the "Search" tab at the top of the page, then select "Census" from the menu at the left side. Select the Canadian Census from the drop down menu and type in the name you want (it is often better just to use the family name) and the locality, if you know it. Usually the less information you give, the better the search.

The 1901 Census is also available on line at: http://www.collectionscanada.ca/02/020122_e.html. In this case what you will see are photographs of the actual pages from the census returns. It is somewhat time consuming to go through these pages but they have the advantage that there is no chance of error by transcribers. This census has recently been indexed and is searchable online at: www.automatedgenealogy.com.

Census data is not 100% reliable because it relies on what someone (possibly even a neighbour) told the census taker and is subject to the frailty of human memory, inability to spell their own name, etc. I had one individual who was listed in the City Directory as a steamfitter and in the census for the same year as a flour salesman.

Census transcribers, who are almost always volunteers, perform an outstanding service to researchers and one has only to look at an original census page to see how errors can creep in. Bad and/or smudged handwriting sometimes make it more of a guessing game. Local transcribers usually do a much better job because they often know the names of the families. One of my favourite transcription errors is from the 1881 Canadian Census on the LDS site. It took me a while to figure out that "Lawesa Heaugh" was in fact "Louisa Keough/Kehoe".