

Researching Atlantic Canadian Ancestors

Class 3: Church and Vital Records

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New Brunswick

- Legislation
 - a. Marriage Act (1791) - first New Brunswick act to regulate marriage and divorce
 - b. Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian or Quaker clergyman could perform marriage for men and women over the age of 21 (or with parental consent if younger) after banns were published for three consecutive weeks.
 - c. If banns were not published or if clergyman did not know the couple, a marriage bond and license was issued.
- Anglican
 - a. Original parish records held at the Diocese of Fredericton - <https://nb.anglican.ca>
 - b. Anglican Registers Project - <https://nbgs.ca/cpage.php?pt=250>
 - c. Marianne Grey Otty Database - <https://motty.lib.unb.ca>
 - i. Transcriptions of Anglican church records from the Gagetown area (1786-1841)
- Roman Catholic
 - a. Drouin Collection (1679-1758)
 - b. Four diocese:
 - i. Bathurst
 - ii. Edmundston
 - iii. Moncton
 - iv. Saint John
- Baptist
 - a. Original records held at the Maritime Baptist Archives at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia - <https://archives.acadiau.ca/baptist>
- Methodist
 - a. Records kept at the Fundy-St. Lawrence Dawning Waters and Regional Council in Sackville - <https://ucceast.ca/fundy-st-lawrence-dawning-waters-regional-council-14>
- United Church
 - b. Records held at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick - <https://archives.gnb.ca/archives/?culture=en-CA>

- Civil Registration
 - a. Started in 1888
 - b. Births, 1800-1924
 - c. Marriages, 1790-1969
 - d. Deaths, 1815-1951
 - e. Late registrations of births, 1810-1899
- Online Databases:
 - a. FamilySearch
 - i. Canada, New Brunswick Births and Baptisms, 1819-1899 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1805645>
 - ii. Canada, New Brunswick Provincial Returns of Births, and Late Registrations, 1810-1906 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1726660>
 - iii. Marriage Bonds, 1810-1932 (Index, 1810-1932) - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/635203>
 - iv. New Brunswick Marriage Registers, 1792-1889 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/163870>
 - v. New Brunswick Provincial Returns of Deaths, 1815-1919 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1719804>
 - vi. New Brunswick Provincial Returns of Marriage, 1887-1919 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/778304>
 - vii. Canada, New Brunswick Provincial Returns of Marriages and Late Registrations, 1920-1950 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2001065>
 - b. Ancestry
 - i. Acadia, Canada, Vital and Church Records, 1757-1946 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1110/>
 - ii. New Brunswick, Canada Births and Late Registrations, 1810-1906 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61510>
 - iii. New Brunswick, Canada, Deaths, 1888-1938 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61512>
 - iv. New Brunswick, Canada, Marriages, 1789-1950 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61511>
 - v. New Brunswick, Select Births and Baptisms, 1819-1899 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60082>
- Vital Record Substitutes

- a. Daniel F. Johnson's New Brunswick Newspaper Vital Statistics - <https://archives.gnb.ca/Search/NewspaperVitalStats/FullText.aspx?culture=en-CA>
- b. St. John County Burial Permits, 1889-1919 (FamilySearch) - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/199873>
 - i. Index also available at <https://archives.gnb.ca/Search/RS315A/?culture=en-CA>

Nova Scotia

- Roman Catholic
 - a. Drouin Collection (1679-1758)
 - b. Three Diocese: Antigonish, Halifax, and Yarmouth
- Anglican
 - a. Record at the Diocese Archives in Halifax - <https://www.nspeidiocese.ca/pages/diocesan-archives>
- Baptist
 - a. Records held at the Maritime Baptist Archives at Vaughan Librarian, Acadia University in Wolfville - <https://archives.acadiau.ca/baptist>
- Presbyterian
 - a. Three presbytery: Cape Breton, Pictou, Halifax and Lunenburg
- United Church
 - a. Records kept at the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Archives at Sackville, New Brunswick - <https://ucceast.ca/fslwdw-region-15-archives>
- Lutheran
 - a. Lunenburg parish records (1782-1793) transcribed by Priscilla Haines - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/61479>
- Quakers
 - a. Original records for Dartmouth Meeting Minutes (1787-1798) held at Rhode Island Historical Society. Also microfilmed and digitized on FamilySearch - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/191065>
- Civil Registration
 - i. Pre-1864
 - ii. Vital records were entered in township books starting in 1702. The township system was abolished in 1859.
 - iii. Not all township books survive
 - 1. Many township books digitized on FamilySearch
 - 2. Township records microfilmed and available at the Nova Scotia Archives (Vital Records category in FamilySearch catalogue)
 - 3. Published township records at American Ancestors Research Center:

- a. Argyle
 - b. Aylesford
 - c. Barrington
 - d. Cornwallis
 - e. Douglas
 - f. Farlmouth
 - g. Horton
 - h. Newport
 - i. Yarmouth
 - iv. No townships on Cape Breton Island
 - v. Mandatory registration started in 1864
 - vi. In 1876, the government stopped registration for births and deaths (only marriages were recorded)
 - vii. On 1 Oct. 1908, birth and death registrations resumed.
- Online Databases
 - a. FamilySearch:
 - i. Canada, Nova Scotia Marriages, 1711-1909 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1810409>
 - ii. Nova Scotia, Antigonish Catholic Diocese 1823-1905 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1392507>
 - iii. Nova Scotia Births, 1864-1877 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2243378>
 - iv. Nova Scotia Church Records, 1720-2001 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1925428>
 - v. Nova Scotia Deaths, 1864-1877 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2242825>
 - vi. Nova Scotia Deaths, 1890-1955 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2251294>
 - vii. Nova Scotia Deaths, 1956-1957 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2251301>
 - viii. Nova Scotia Delayed Births, 1837-1904 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2241429>
 - ix. Nova Scotia Marriage Bonds, 1763-1871 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1054293>
 - b. Ancestry:
 - i. Acadia, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1757-1946 -
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1110/>

- ii. Nova Scotia, Canada, Antigonish Catholic Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1823-1905 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61506/>
 - iii. Nova Scotia, Canada, Births, 1840-1921 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1643/>
 - iv. Nova Scotia, Canada, Deaths, 1864-1877, 1890-1970 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1645/>
 - v. Nova Scotia, Canada, Marriages, 1763-1945 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1644/>
 - c. Nova Scotia Archives - <https://archives.novascotia.ca/vital-statistics/>
 - i. Births (1864-1877, 1908-1921, delayed registrations 1830-1921)
 - ii. Marriages (1864-1946) and marriage bonds (1763-1864)
 - iii. Deaths (1864-1877, 1908-1972)
 - iv. City of Halifax deaths (1890-1908)
- Later Nova Scotia Vital Records
 - i. Recent Nova Scotia records must be obtained from Vital Statistics, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations department - <https://beta.novascotia.ca/programs-and-services/vital-statistics>
 - Births 1922 to present
 - Marriages 1947 to present
 - Deaths 1973 to present
- Vital Record Substitutes
 - ii. Nova Scotia Coroners Inquisitions 1755-1928 (FamilySearch) - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/177813>
 - iii. Divorces and Matrimonial cause case files 1759-1951 (FamilySearch) - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1022397>
 - iv. Newspapers at the Nova Scotia Archives - <https://archives.novascotia.ca/newspapers/>
 - v. Cemetery transcriptions, Nova Scotia, 1700's-1900's - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/37814>

Prince Edward Island

- Anglican Church
 - No separate diocese; records are with the Diocese of Nova Scotia in Halifax - <https://www.nspeidiocese.ca/pages/diocesan-archives>
- Roman Catholic Church
 - Many records have already been microfilmed and digitized on FamilySearch
- Baptist Church

- Records kept at the Maritime Baptist Archives at the Vaughan Library, Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia - <https://archives.acadiau.ca/baptist>
- Methodist Church
 - Methodist Conference organized in 1874
 - In 1893, divided into two districts (Charlottetown and Summerside)
 - Records microfilmed and available at the Public Archives of Prince Edward Island - <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/search-public-archives-material-online>
- United Church
 - Records microfilmed and available at the Public Archives of Prince Edward Island - <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/search-public-archives-material-online>
- Civil Registration
 - Mandatory registration started in 1906
 - Marriage records date back to 1787
 - Some gaps between 1813 and 1824
 - Clergy provided marriage registers between 1832 and 1923
 - Marriage licenses 1787-1919
 - Marriage bonds 1849-1902
 - 1906-present vital records are at the Office of Vital Statistics in Montague
- Online Databases
 - FamilySearch
 - Marriage Registers, 1832-1888 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1827167>
 - Canada, Prince Edward Island Baptism Card Index, 1721-1885 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1827217>
 - Canada, Prince Edward Island Death Card Index, 1721-1905 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1827236>
 - Prince Edward Island Church Records, 1777-1985 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1937794>
 - Ancestry
 - Prince Edward Island, Baptism Index, 1788-1943 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9195/>
 - Prince Edward Island, Canada, Baptisms, Marriages, Burials 1780-1982 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61501/>
 - Prince Edward Island, Canada, Death Card Index, 1810-1913 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61503/>
 - Prince Edward Island, Canada, Marriage Registers, 1832-1888 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61502/>
- Vital Record Substitutes

- Cemetery Transcript Collection - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/569230>
- Master Name Index - <https://peigs.ca/search-master-name-index/>
- Island Newspapers at the Robertson Library, University of Prince Edward Island - <https://islandnewspapers.ca/>

Newfoundland and Labrador

- Anglican Church
 - Records digitized and available through FamilySearch
- Methodist Church
 - Records digitized and available through FamilySearch
- United Church
 - Records kept at the First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council Archives in St. John's - <https://ucceast.ca/first-dawn-eastern-edge-regional-council-16/fdee-archives>
 - Also has pre-1925 records of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational congregations in the Maritimes which joined The United Church of Canada in 1925
- Roman Catholic Church
 - Records digitized and available through FamilySearch
- Baptist
 - No Baptist Church or minister
 - Revs. J. B. McDonald, George Armstrong, spent a few weeks in missionary work in 1875.
 - Rev. George Armstrong evangelized for nine weeks in 1879.
 - Records kept at the Maritime Baptist Archives at the Vaughan Library, Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia - <https://archives.acadiau.ca/baptist>
- Civil Registration:
 - Begins 1891/1892
 - Clergy submitted information until 1948
 - Microfilmed BMD:
 - Births, 1891-1899
 - Marriages, 1891-1922
 - Deaths, 1891-1949
 - Late registrations of births, 1840-1915
- Online Databases
 - FamilySearch:
 - Canada, Newfoundland, Vital Records, 1840-1949 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1790939>

- Canada, Newfoundland Vital Statistics, 1753-1893 (Church transcripts mostly from Protestant churches) -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1793777>
 - Newfoundland, Church Records, 1793-1945 -
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1939435>
 - Ancestry
 - Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada Death Certificates, 1950-1968 -
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/70925/>
 - Newfoundland, Births, Marriages, and Deaths, 1757-1901 (Church Records) -
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61507/>
 - Newfoundland, Canada, Births, Marriages, and Deaths, 1850-1949 -
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61508/>
 - Newfoundland, Church Records, 1793-1899 -
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61509/>
- Vital Record Substitutes
 - Newspapers:
 - *Births, Deaths & Marriages in Newfoundland Newspapers* by Gertrude Crosbie
 - Also available as an index online at Gert Crosbie Collection: Births, Marriages, Deaths, 1810-1890 -
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9275/>
 - Memorial University, Digital Archives Initiative - <https://collections.mun.ca/> (Newspapers tab)
 - *Royal Gazette and Newfoundland Advertiser: Vital Statistics and Other Items, [1810-1873]* by Mildred Howard
 - *Vital Statistics and Items from Newspapers, 1831-1872* by Mildred Howard
 - Cemeteries:
 - Family History Society of Newfoundland Labrador – Transcription Project Cemetery Database - https://www.fhsl.ca/?page_id=1976
 - StonePics – Cemeteries of Newfoundland - <https://stonepics.com>

Divorce Records

- Legislation
 - From 1840-1968 – Many divorces were granted by acts of Parliament
 - From 1867-1968, some provinces required the person wanting to obtain a divorce to place a notice in the newspapers.

- From 1867-1963, a transcript of the act of divorce was published in the Statutes of Canada.
- 1968 – First federal Divorce Act passed by Parliament
 - Central Registry of Divorce Proceedings is created.
 - Request search at <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/divorce/crdp-bead.html>
- Online Databases:
 - Acts of Divorce, 1841-1968 <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/vital-statistics-births-marriages-deaths/divorce-1841-1968/Pages/search.aspx>
 - Canada Parliamentary Marriages and Divorces, 1867-1919 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5776/>
 -
- New Brunswick
 - 1847-1990 – Records are at the Provincial Archives (indexed 1847-1984)
 - Note: post-1940 records are the Archives are housed offsite. Order them at least 24 hours ahead of time.
 - For the 1984-present records, contact the Central Registry Office Court House in Fredericton
- Nova Scotia
 - Pre-1960, records are at the Archives for Nova Scotia in two series:
 - Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes case files
 - Divorce Cause files
 - 1960-present – Divorces kept in area where divorce occurred.
- Prince Edward Island
 - 1867-1946 – at the Senate of Canada, Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel
 - In 1930, the court granting divorce was dissolved and divorces had to be obtained through an act of Parliament.
 - 1946-1980 – Index is at the Sir Louis Henry Davis Law Courts in Charlottetown; Original records are at the Prince Edward Island Archives
 - 1981-present – records are at the Davis Law Court
- Newfoundland and Labrador
 - Required an Act of Parliament to grant a divorce
 - Held by the Unified Family Court in St. John's, Newfoundland for 60% of province
 - Remaining records are at the local records office (six centers) where divorce occurred

Other Vital Record Substitutes

- Cemetery Records
 - Canadian Headstones - <https://canadianheadstones.ca/wp/>
 - Canadian Headstones: Cemetery Heritage Records of Canada - <https://www.americanancestors.org/search/databasesearch/2814/canadian-headstones-cemetery-heritage-records-of-canada>
- Newspapers
 - Canada, Obituary Collection, 1898-Current (Ancestry) - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8961/>
 - Canada, Newspapers.com Obituary Index 1800s-Current - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62226/>
 - InMemoriam.CA - <https://www.inmemoriam.ca/?lang=en>

Published Sources, Indexes, and Guides

De Ville, Winston, *Acadian Church Records: 1679-1757: Being a Compilation of Miscellaneous Baptismal, Marriage, and Funeral Records* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1975)

Griffin-Allwood, Philip George Allister, *Baptists in Canada, 1760-1990: A Bibliography of Selected Printed Resources in English* (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1989)

Medjuck, Sheva, *Jews of Atlantic Canada* (St. John's, Nfld: Breakwater, 1986)

Punch, Terrence M., *Erin's Sons: Irish Arrivals in Atlantic Canada* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2008-2010).

Punch, Terrence M., *Genealogist's Handbook for Atlantic Canada Research* (Boston, MA: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1997).

Websites

- American Ancestors <https://www.americanancestors.org>
- Ancestry <https://www.ancestry.com>
- Canada Church Records (FamilySearch Wiki Page) - https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Canada_Church_Records
- FamilySearch <https://www.familysearch.org>
- Nova Scotia Archives - <https://archives.novascotia.ca/>
- Provincial Archives of New Brunswick <https://archives.gnb.ca/Archives/?culture=en-CA>
- Public Archives and Record Office (PEI) - <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/search-public-archives-material-online>
- The Rooms (Newfoundland) - <https://www.therooms.ca/>
- United Church of Canada Archives - <https://www.unitedchurcharchives.ca/>