

Canadian Genealogy – Quebec Research Records (Part 2)



Part 1 introduced Quebec Genealogy Research methods and some online resources.

Because of the many facets of record keeping in Quebec, Part 2 will cover genealogy records for your French Canadian ancestors and where to find them online. (Though in the past the name Quebec may reference a geographic area, for the purposes of this article it is used generally to refer to the areas of Canada in which French Canadian genealogy is prevalent.)

Part 1 introduced a research strategy dubbed the Five Steps to Successfully Finding Your French Quebec Ancestry:

1. Look for previously researched family data.
2. Identify your ancestor in as many of the census records as you can.
3. Identify if your ancestor was Catholic or Protestant
4. Identify the Catholic Church Parish or village where your ancestor lived.
5. Use birth, marriage, and death indexes to find names, dates and other relationships.



Part 1 also explained how to complete steps 1 through 3 and hopefully from those steps you were able to identify the religion of your ancestor and in the process have added more generations to your family tree. In Step 4 we will look at some resources that will help to identify the name of the Catholic Parish or village where your ancestor lived. This article only focuses on online research for your Catholic ancestors. The next section will cover researching online your Protestant Quebec ancestors.

Good News and Bad News



The good news is that the Priests of the Catholic Church were excellent record keepers and that there are hundreds of published resources online that could extend your genealogy back to the 1600's. The bad news is that several of the websites that post large collections of searchable records require some sort of fee payment and that some of the records are images of handwritten documents in French.

Quebecois versus Acadian versus French Canadian



The term French Canadian is used generally to refer to those of French descent who settled in Canada, and the terms Quebecois and Acadian refer to a more specific subset region of French Canadians. Historians use the word *Quebecois* to refer to people with ties to the province of Quebec. The moniker of *Acadian* is used to refer to people who have ties with the Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick.

A very high percentage of French Canadians in general descended from about 5,000 early settlers. The result is that the number of family names in French Quebec today is a few thousand as compared to the hundreds of thousands of family names in France.

Step 4: Identify the Catholic Church Parish or village where your ancestor lived

Prior to 1969 all marriages had to take place in a church. Registrations of births, marriages, and deaths were recorded in the churches as early as the 1600s. Yearly these records were copied and sent to the civil authorities. Civil registrations for those who did not belong to a church began in 1926.



The number of Catholic Parishes in Quebec is enormous, and to make things even more difficult for the genealogist, many of them have similar names. Locating the Parish of your ancestors' marriage record will help you identify at least one of the Parishes where your ancestors lived. Normally the Parish in which they married and the surrounding Parishes would cover most all of the vital records you are seeking for that particular family.

Researchers looking for French Canadian Catholic families find the following indexes to be most helpful for locating a marriage in church records.



Drouin Collection

In the latter part of the 1940s the Institut Généalogique Drouin filmed the vital records that had been given to civil authorities by the churches. This filmed set of records became known as the Drouin Collection. Most of the records in this database cover the time period 1621-1947.

The Drouin Collection, or at least portions of it, are available online at several websites all of which are subscription sites.

Drouin Collection 1621-1967 at Ancestry.ca ([Search Birth, Marriage and Death records](#)) (subscription site) is divided into six databases:

1. Quebec Vital and Church Records, 1621-1967
2. Ontario French Catholic Church Records, 1747-1967

3. Early U.S. French Catholic Church Records, 1695-1954
4. Acadia French Catholic Church Records, 1670-1946
5. Quebec Notarial Records, 1647-1942
6. Miscellaneous French Records, 1651-1941



[BMS2000 \(subscription site\)](#)

Over 20 genealogical societies in Québec and Ontario have contributed to this site making it one of the largest online sources of indexed baptism, marriage, and burial (sépulture) records. The records cover the period from the beginning of the French colony until the end of the 20th century. [Click here](#) to investigate the cost of accessing their records.



[The PRDH database](#) has 3 separate but related sections.

- [Genealogical Dictionary of Families, 1621-1799](#) - The Genealogical Dictionary contains a reconstruction of the genealogies of families who settled in the St. Lawrence Valley which is roughly the current territory of today's province of Quebec. The dates include the beginnings of French colonization to the year 1799. Catholic Parish registers from the periods 1621-1799 are used to link individuals to their baptismal, marriage, and burial certificate. Whenever possible the record of the individual will include the names of their parents, spouses, and children.
- [Repertory of Couples and Filial Relations - 1821 to 1799](#) - The Repertory of couples specifies for each spouse the names of his or her parents and the names of his or her other spouses, if applicable, with a link to these couples. Also a list of marriages of the couple's children if they married; 1800 is shown.
- Baptismal, Marriage, and Burial Certificates 1621–1849 - This part of the collection includes about 2,400,000 baptismal, marriage, and burial certificates that were registered in Catholic parishes prior to 1850. Part of the data includes 26,000 Protestant marriages recorded before 1850 and more than 20,000 certificates of other valuable genealogy data like: census records, marriage contracts, confirmations, lists of immigrants, etc. The names in this database have been standardized making it easier to locate names that are often misspelled.

You can do searches at the PRDH site without a subscription and it will return a list of references to certificates, individuals or families, or marriages. This allows you to see whether the PRDH database has information on your ancestor. A subscription is necessary to see all the information on the certificates. [Click here](#) for information on their fees

Repetitive Names in Quebecois genealogies The [PRDH, Research Program in Historical Demography at the Université de Montréal](#) has two excellent articles about [the names of the](#)

[pioneers that settled "New France" \(Quebec\)](#) and the [frequency of first and last names in Quebecois genealogies](#).

These articles have a significant amount of research data behind them and are helpful when choosing name variants to use in other online search engines that may not have standardized the names in their index. PRDH has standardized the spelling of names for its site and provides a tool so you can see what other spellings may have been used.



Another helpful piece of information about naming children provided by the PRDH site follows: In 1703 the "Rituel du Diocèse de Québec" gave the rules to follow for naming children, "*The Church ... commands that the child be given the name of a male or female Saint, depending on its sex, so that it can imitate the virtues and feel the effects of God's protection.*" An appendix to the Rituel provided a list of accepted names – 1,251 for boys and 373 for girls.

You will find that an individual would often use their middle name as their first name. This can make identification of ancestors more difficult and so it is paramount that you verify other facts about your ancestor before adding them to your family tree.

In 2015 the [PRDH](#) added 1,700,000 baptisms, marriages and burials for the 1800-1849 period, from the Drouin Institute and the University of Quebec à Chicoutimi's Balsac project. Subscription access at the PRDH site now includes a link to the original document on the [Drouin Institute website](#), allowing those with a "[Quebec Records](#)" [subscription](#) to access the original document directly. Plus, Quebec Records subscribers who wish to subscribe or renew their subscription to the PRDH website will be gifted an additional 10% hits on their purchase.

[The Quebec Records](#) is another subscription site worth searching; however you don't get a free look. Here is a short list of the searchable databases they provide on the site:

- LAFRANCE BMD records - baptisms and burials 1621-1849 plus 1850-1861 in progress, 60,000 records 1851-2008 marriages up to 1913. Linked to original records. More than 3.1 million records.
- Drouin Collection records - 3.6 million images of baptisms, marriages and burials.
- Great Collections (books and archives) - All the great collections from the Drouin Institute such as the Men and Women series, History, Acadian File and others.
- Marriages and deaths 1926-1997 - 5,260,202 marriages and deaths of Quebec from the 1926-1997 in collaboration with the SGQ and the SGCF.
- Little BMD's (BMD index).
- Connolly File (BMD index) - In collaboration with the Genealogical Society of Eastern Townships 6,404,852 BMD records.

- Kardex File - Marriage files from Drouin Institute 1 million marriage files from 72,000 families, sorted by men.
- Loiselle File - Marriage files produced by priest Antonin Loiselle.
- [450 Family genealogies](#) produced by the Drouin Institute from 1913 to 1957.
- Databases on Quebec 1881 and 1901 censuses and Ontario 1881 census.

This [pdf](#) contains a more detailed explanation of the databases available in their collection.

Loiselle File - Marriage files produced by priest Antonin Loiselle is available online at the [Quebec Records](#) website listed above. Also it is available on microfilm through the Family History Centers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). The index and the supplement cover the time period of the mid-1600s to about 1960. 520 Catholic parishes in Québec were indexed and a few parishes, where there was a large population of French Canadians, were also indexed.



Examples would include Madawaska County, New Brunswick, and Manchester, Hillsboro County, New Hampshire. The supplement covered the Montréal region, including the Ottawa River Valley in both Québec and Ontario, and some parishes in western Canada.

Rene Jette Dictionary of Genealogies of Families of Quebec is not available online -

This collection lists Quebec marriages, births and deaths up to 1730 using parish records, census records, notarial records, and more. Jette may include generations of a family back to their origins in France. The book retails for around \$325 Canadian.

The Rivest Marriage Index is another source for Québec marriages. It is only available on microfilm. The index includes over 230,000 marriages. Most entries are handwritten and entries are filed by the bride's surname.

[FamilySearch.org](#) has a sizeable collection of Quebec vital record data. Plus their wiki provides links to many [Quebec online searchable records](#). Here is a brief list of records located at FamilySearch.org.

- [Canada Births and Baptisms, 1661-1959](#)
- [Canada Deaths and Burials, 1664-1955](#)
- [Canada Marriages, 1661-1949](#)
- [Quebec Births and Baptisms, 1662-1898](#)
- [Quebec, Catholic Parish Registers, 1621-1979](#)
- [Quebec, Quebec Federation of Genealogical Societies, Family Origins, 1621-1865](#)



Step 5. Use birth, marriage, and death indexes to find names, dates, and other relationships.

Once you find your ancestors' marriage you can find the location of the marriage and from the location you can find the original marriage certificate and often birth and death records for the whole family. A few tips and caveats that might help:

- Some of the indexes list names by surname, then parish, then first name. Some are alphabetical by the bride's maiden surname
- Don't forget to record the witnesses to the marriage. Witnesses are often related to the couple in some way. The record may even record the relationship.
- Baptism names will not always be the common name that your ancestor used. Individuals would commonly use their middle name for their first name.
- View an image of the original Catholic marriage registration if possible. There may be notes in the margins or relationships that were not extracted for searching.
- If you cannot find a church marriage record, search notarial records for a marriage contract. Roughly two-thirds of marriages prior to the mid-1800s had marriage contracts. Notarial records will be covered later.
- If the record is in French handwriting, it would be helpful to know that generally the record was recorded in chronological order and followed a fairly standard format. Details about this subject will have to be saved for a separate article.
- Marriage contract dates and places represent the date and place where the notary drew up the contract and witnessed the signing of it.
- Dates for births and deaths recorded in Church registers are the date of the church sacrament. The actual birth or death date was, however, often recorded in the text of the registration.
- Women kept their maiden names and used them on records throughout their lives.
- Usually a couple married in the bride's parish and then returned to the groom's parish to reside. Check there first for the birth of children.

Armed with your ancestors' name, their spouses name, marriage date and parish, and possibly their parents' names you will be prepared to search other resources such as:

- Notary Records
- Land Records
- Migration Records - Passenger Lists and Border Crossing Lists
- Military Records

These will be covered in Part 3 of the Quebec Genealogy Research available records.