

# Former City of Toronto Records

Even when it was a modest city of 9,000 and was known as “Muddy York,” Toronto was the commercial and financial hub of its large agricultural county. The history of the City of Toronto is the history of not only the city government but also of the people, organizations, and businesses that have shaped the city. The City of Toronto Archives has many records, created by municipal governments as well as private groups and individuals, about the city. These records include Council proceedings and departmental files; personal papers; published books and reports; and visual material, including maps and photographs.

## Important Dates

- ◆ August 27, 1793: The town of York is founded by Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada John Graves Simcoe
- ◆ March 6, 1834: York is incorporated as the City of Toronto
- ◆ April 15, 1953: Toronto becomes one of 13 municipalities in the new Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto
- ◆ January 1, 1967: Forest Hill and Swansea amalgamate with Toronto
- ◆ January 1, 1998: Toronto ceases to be an individual municipality and becomes part of the amalgamated City of Toronto



*A milkman makes his rounds on the Island, February 18, 1944, Globe and Mail collection, SC 266, Item 89253*

## Types of records

### Council proceedings

The Archives has the proceedings of City of Toronto Council from 1834 to 1997. They are available in the Research Hall Library.

Most by-laws are printed with the bound Council minutes. For help in finding by-laws, please consult Reference Desk staff.

### Assessment rolls

Assessment rolls on microfilm from 1834 to 1996 are found in the self-serve cabinets in the Microfilm Room at the back of the Research Hall. For information on how to use the assessment rolls, please see Research Guide #1, “Researching Your House.” Assessment rolls from 1997 onwards are available on the 1st floor, West Rotunda, City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, 416-392-7036.

## Other municipal records

The Archives has many other records created by the former City of Toronto, including records on public health; public works, such as water filtration; transportation, such as roads and public transit; emergency services such as police and firefighters; social services; and many standing committees of Council, as well as special committees formed to investigate particular issues. It also has records from former municipalities that were annexed to Toronto, such as Parkdale, North Toronto, and

Yorkville. For more information, see the binder entitled "Guide to Record Groups."

The records of the former Metro (regional) government and its agencies, boards, and commissions also include information about matters relevant to Toronto, including public works, such as water mains; transportation, such as roads and the TTC; planning; parks; and social services. To find these records, search on your research topic in the Gencat database, or speak to Reference Desk staff.

## Reports

Published reports regarding Toronto involve a wide range of topics, such as public transit, social services, and Toronto neighbourhoods, as well as official plans. Look in the Research Hall Library in the "Government Reports" section under the category you are interested in, consult one of the three "Reports Collection" finding aids, and search the Gencat database. For best results, consult all of these sources, since there is no comprehensive list of all reports.

## City directories

The Archives has city directories for every year from 1834 to 2001, with a few exceptions. Directories from 1834 to 1940 are available on microfilm, found in the self-serve cabinets in the Microfilm Room at the back of the Research Hall. Directories from 1941 to 2001 are available in hard copy on the shelves in the Research Hall.

## Fire Insurance Maps

The Archives has fire insurance maps on microfilm from a variety of years. The earliest is the Boulton Atlas of 1858. Most of the maps cover various years from 1880 to the 1920s, although there are a few covering mostly industrial and commercial areas of the city up to the 1940s. Not all areas of the city are covered for all years.

Fire insurance maps are available in boxes titled "Goad's" or "Underwriter's," plus the years, in the metal cabinets in the Microfilm Room at the back of the Research Hall.

## Maps

To find maps showing Toronto, look in the binder in the Research Hall labelled "Cartographic Collection," or use the Gencat database. Reference Desk staff can show you how to use the database. The Archives also has several atlases that may be useful. They are found in the section titled "Atlases" in the main area of the Research Hall. Maps of particular interest include the earliest map the archives has of Toronto, Bouchette's 1792 *Plan of Toronto Harbour* (MT 171); Phillpotts' Plan of York (1818, MT 109 and 172); Cane's *Topographical Map of the City and Liberties of Toronto* (1842, MT 255); Bryce's *New Index Map of Toronto* (1888, MT 243, 1-3); and several 19<sup>th</sup>-century "bird's-eye" illustrated views (MT 278, 301, 797, and 1048).

## Aerial photos

The aerials cover the Toronto area from 1947 to 1992. Each aerial shows a part of the city, not the entire city. Use the index maps for each year, available on the large tables by the lockers, to find the identification number of the aerial photograph(s) you wish to see. The identification number for a particular area changes from year to year up to 1983, so before 1983, you must look up each area separately for each

year. Starting in 1983, the identification numbers stay the same for each year. Once you have an identification number, you may then look at the aerials, which are arranged by year and identification number in the large map cabinets by the lockers.

When using the aerials, please wear the white cotton gloves provided, to protect the photographs from fingerprints.

## Books

These general reference books are available in the Archives Research Hall Library and are a good place to start your research:

Frederick H. Armstrong, *Toronto, The Place of Meeting* (Burlington: Windsor Publications 1983)  
971.3541 AR5 1983

Eric Arthur, *Toronto, No Mean City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1974 and 1986)  
720.9713541 AR7 1974 or 1986

J.M.S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: J. Lorimer 1984)  
971.3541 C18 1984

James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Lorimer and National Museum of Man 1985)  
971.3541 L54 1985

Jesse Edgar Middleton, *The Municipality of Toronto Canada: A History* (3 volumes) (Toronto and New York: Dominion Publishing Company 1923)  
971.3541 M58 1923

Books on more specific Toronto topics may be found by searching in the Gencat database. These topics include places (such as the Toronto Islands and Yonge Street), institutions (such as the TTC), people, and events.

## Other Information

For general information, see the information files with titles beginning with "Toronto." You may find other information files about more specific topics, such as places (like Allen Gardens and Fort York), people (such as Mary Pickford and Ned Hanlan), events (such as Hurricane Hazel), and institutions. For a list of information file titles, please consult Reference Desk staff. For a list of Toronto mayors and other municipal information, please ask Reference Desk staff for the binder entitled "Toronto Reference Highlights." To see

whether a street name has changed, see the binders titled "Street Names" and "Name Present" on the shelves on the south side of the Research Hall.

Other holdings about the former City of Toronto include those created by individuals, businesses, and groups as diverse as the Children's Aid Society (SC 1), the House of Industry (SC 35), residents' and ratepayers' associations, the Bureau of Municipal Research (SC 3), and many former elected officials, including Allan Lamport, Nathan Phillips, Philip Givens, and John Sewell.

# Photographs

Major photographic collections include the Globe and Mail collection (Fonds 1266), which includes images of major national events (such as the Royal Visit of 1939 and World War II home front activities) as well as local highlights (such as the annual Santa Claus Parade and the Canadian National Exhibition) and fashion and entertainment coverage in the 1930s and 1940s; the William James Family fonds (Fonds 1244), which documents a wide range of Toronto locations, events, and people from the early 1900s to the 1940s; and the Department of Public Works collection (RG 8), which shows the construction of water filtration plants, roads, bridges, and other major public works from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1940s. Many (but not all) photograph collections are listed in the black folder titled "Guide to Photo Collections," kept beside the photographic finding aids. Please note that there is no comprehensive list of all photographs. You may also search on your research topic in the



*York Street to Bay Street (Osgoode Hall in upper left), 1856, Photographer: Armstrong, Beere & Hime, Foreign & Commonwealth Office collection, SC 498, Item 17*

Gencat database. For help finding photographs, please feel free to ask the Reference Desk staff.

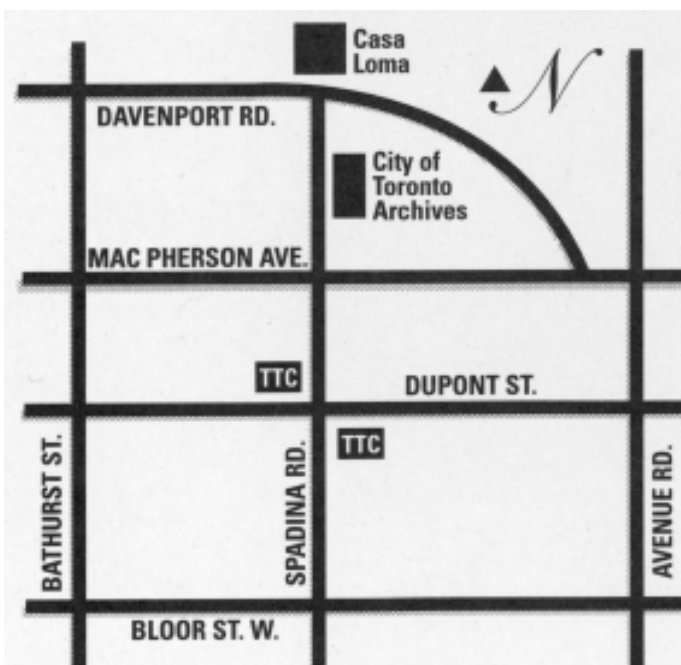
There are reference copies of some photographs in binders near the photographic finding aids; other photographs may be viewed on microfilm or microfiche found in the self-serve cabinets in the Microfilm Room at the back of the Research Hall.

City of Toronto Archives  
255 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2V3  
phone: 416-397-0778  
fax: 416-392-9685  
[www.toronto.ca/archives](http://www.toronto.ca/archives)

9:00-4:30 Monday to Friday  
10:00-4:30 Saturdays (September to June)  
Closed Sundays

Our archival heritage is unique and irreplaceable. Please help us preserve it for future researchers by using only pencil when taking notes, wearing cotton gloves when handling photographs, and checking with Research Hall staff before making photocopies. Please do not remove any archival materials from the Research Hall. Thank you for your consideration!

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The City of Toronto Archives is easy to get to by public transit. Exit the University subway line at Dupont station and walk north.