

Researching at the Provincial Archives of Alberta

Planning your visit to the Provincial Archives of Alberta

The Provincial Archives of Alberta is the repository for one-of-a-kind records that mark our shared history. If these documents are lost, stolen or irreparably damaged they can never be replaced and the information they contain is lost forever. To preserve these records, we ask you to please keep the following in mind:

- Please visit our website to check hours of operation
- All researchers must fill out a researcher registration form and wear a registration card when in the Sandra Thomson Reading Room
- Researchers must sign-in at the public reception desk
- Certain items including coats, bags, purses, backpacks, briefcases and pens are not permitted in the Reading Room. These items can be placed into a locker located in the foyer area. Paper, pencils, binders, laptop computers, tablets and cell phones are permitted
- Cell phones must be set to silent mode
- Photography is permitted but the flash may not be used
- Exercise care and caution when handling materials
- When in doubt, ask for help!



What is an archives?

An archives is a repository for records of historical value. Archives are similar to libraries and museums, as all three institutions organize and provide access to information. However, they differ in that:

- Libraries focus on published information like books and periodicals
- Museums focus on artifacts/physical objects
- Archives focus on unpublished original records





How do you access the records?

Records are located through catalogues and other types of finding aids. A finding aid is a list of the contents of a particular set of records. It is important to remember that not all finding aids are online and not all finding aids are complete.

Retrieving material

All records cared for by the Provincial Archives of Alberta are kept secure in climate-controlled vaults to help preserve their condition. To retrieve materials, fill out a retrieval slip and a retrieval aide will bring the materials to your table. Retrievals are available from 9:00 to 11:30 am and 1:00 to 3:30 pm.

Original order

Archival facilities keep records in the original order they were placed in by their creator. It is important to maintain the original order of the records, even if the order does not make sense to you.

Reproduction

All photocopying must be done by Provincial Archives of Alberta staff. Please do not attempt to make photocopies yourself or leave the Reading Room with the records. Photocopy orders of ten pages or fewer may be done at the Reference Archivist's discretion. Some records may not be photocopied due to their fragile condition or specific access restrictions; in these circumstances, speak to the Reference Archivist about other reproduction options. Also, some photographs and audiovisual material may not be duplicated; see staff to discuss copyright considerations and reproduction costs.

Microfilm use

Many records are stored on microfilm. Handle the microfilm with care and ask for assistance if needed. Report any machine malfunctions to the Reference Archivist, and do not remove any parts from these machines or attempt any repairs.

Computer terminals

The Provincial Archives of Alberta provides public-access computers in the Sandra Thomson Reading Room for the convenience of researchers. Each computer has a list of archival, historical and genealogical websites bookmarked for ease of access. Access to Ancestry.ca is also available on these computers.

Returning material

When finished with materials, please assist Provincial Archives of Alberta staff by returning them to the proper location:

- Archival materials go on the blue returns cart in the Sandra Thomson Reading Room
- Microfilm is returned in the basket provided
- Finding aids go back to the proper shelf where they came from
- Library books can be placed in the library cart in the reference library section
- Photos should be returned to the filing rack in the photo viewing area

contact us for more information

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