

RESEARCHING THE RIDEAU CANAL
HINTS FOR RESEARCH

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1. Be prepared for your research. The first time you visit archives you will be required to register for a researcher's pass. This may take a bit of time. You may also have to put your personal belongings in a locker, only taking paper, pencil, or computer along for research purposes.
2. Think outside the box—start with the Rideau Canal, but expand your search terms to include items such as Bytown, Royal Engineers, Lt. Col. By, Ordnance Department, Ottawa River, and Defence of Canada, which may offer other important information.
3. Copy microfilm and microfiche to a USB stick rather than printing to paper. The digital image will be easier to read on screen and can always be printed at a later date.
4. Microfilm and microfiche are your friend. Many people dislike using them, but many materials from the construction phase of the Rideau are in this format. Because this type of research can be tiring, breaks are a must. Always plan to give yourself other avenues of research to pursue when you become fatigued.
5. If you find publications from the 1800s on the Rideau, Bytown, or Lt. Col. By and it is on microfilm or microfiche, check Google Books or your library's electronic resources and databases. It may be there as an electronic edition.
6. Early on in your research, begin a list of "who's who." Place names, dates, and event occurrences are ideal search terms for primary resources in archives, libraries, and museums.
7. Books that rely heavily on archival documents make a great starting point because you can use the bibliography to provide clues as to where you might begin your own archival research.
8. Be prepared when requesting copies of images, such as the above Thomas Burrowes watercolour, at archival repositories. It may cost money and/or take several weeks to receive your image. Always ask for permission to reproduce in publications and websites, even if copyright does not appear to be an issue—there may be restrictions you do not know about, or archives may require an acknowledgement if reproductions of their holdings appear in your work.