A Guide to Researching Genealogy
At the Cloverdale Library

Updated May 2017

British Columbia

Photo 180.1.62
Courtesy of the Surrey Archives
This guide is intended to point you in the direction of our major resources for British Columbia Genealogy. Please feel free to ask staff for further assistance.

**General Research Guides**

**Planning a Genealogical Trip to the Vancouver Area: a finding aid to historical sources in British Columbia’s southwest corner.**
Kurmey, Stephanie, ed.
GEN 929.371133 ARG 2005

**Databases**

**Ancestry Library**: International genealogy resource with the largest online Canadian family history collection, searchable by surname. Includes many digitized full records. Only available at the Cloverdale Branch. This version matches the record set of Ancestry.com, with the exception of the historical book collection. However, the same online book collection can be found in Heritage Quest, also available at Cloverdale.

Ancestry includes, for example:

**Canadian Census records for BC - 1881, 1901, 1911, 1921**
Index to British Columbia Vital Statistics
(Note: Ancestry’s index does not cover the latest 9 years of releases for Marriages and Deaths, or the latest 4 years of Birth records. For these later years, go directly to the BC Archives online indexes.)

**Border crossings Canada to US 1895-1956**
Canadian Soldiers of World War 1 1914-1918

**Heritage Quest**: Although Heritage Quest is best known for its US records, the online historical book collection is valuable for BC residents as well. Heritage Quest also includes PERSI, an index of local history publications that includes the BC Genealogical Society newsletters.

**BC Census Records**

**Online**

Census returns contain a variety of very useful information such as place of birth, origin, level of education, religion, etc. Many census records for BC are available online and searchable by surname. Rather than beginning with microfilm, use one of the following online databases for faster and easier results. Ancestry Library Edition is available at Cloverdale Branch and all years of the Canada Census from 1851-1921 are available there.

  - Index of names: originals held at the BC Archives
- **1881**: LDS Family History website: [https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1804541](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1804541)
  - Index includes microfilm numbers, as well as household names, ages, district, sub-district and page numbers. Corresponding microfilms are available at Cloverdale.
- **1891**: Ancestry Library Edition at Cloverdale
• **1901 and 1911**: Automated Genealogy: [http://www.automatedgenealogy.com/index.html](http://www.automatedgenealogy.com/index.html)
  - links to full, digitized records
• **1921** only available on Ancestry Library Edition Cloverdale

**Microfilm**

**Finding Aids** in print will help you identify the correct microfilm for your ancestor, if you know the geographic location. They are arranged by province, county, sub-district and township. The following Finding Aids are related to British Columbia:

- **1921 Census:**
  This is the most recently released national Census. It is available online through Ancestry only at this time and there are no finding aids currently available. This census includes all provinces and offers information such as paternal origins, trades, and education. The census can be browsed by province, district and sub-district.

- **1911 Census:**
  Three binders marked “1911 Census,” located on the census book shelves near the print directories, summarize the census districts and sub-districts by name.

  To find the corresponding microfilm number for a certain location, go to the Library & Archives Canada website and search the 1911 Census database by geographic location: [www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/about-census.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/about-census.aspx). Ask staff if you need assistance using the database.

- **1901 Census:**
  There are several copies of *Catalogue of Census Returns on Microfilm, 1901* which is organized by province and district with relevant microfilm numbers.
  GEN CIN 304.60971 NAT 1993

- **1666-1891 Census:**
  There are several copies of this Finding Aid called *Catalogue of Census Returns on Microfilm 1666-1891*, and they include BC 1881 and 1891. They are organized by province and district with relevant microfilm numbers noted for each location.

**Information About Census Records**

General Canadian Census information:
[http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx)

**Heads of Household in British Columbia in 1874.**
GEN 929.3711 HEA 1984

**Vancouver Voters, 1886: a biographical dictionary.**
Claydon, Peter S.N. and Valerie A. Melanson, editors.
GEN 971.13303 CLA 1994
Civil registration in BC began in 1872. Privacy laws restrict public access to these records:

Births: after 120 years  
Marriages: after 75 years  
Deaths: after 20 years  

Immediate family may bypass privacy restrictions and apply for a copy of a birth, marriage or death directly to the department of vital statistics:  
http://www.vs.gov.bc.ca/questions-genealogy.html

To find a publicly available registration, use the BC Archives Index online:  
http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy/BasicSearch  . If you find an entry, “most” are digitized, but if there is no jpg.file, note the microfilm number and the registration number. To locate your document on the film, you will need the B series file film number, and the last 6 digits of the registration number, as indicated.

For Example: Marriage record;

The first 3 digits of the registration number represent the volume number, and the last three indicate the file number. In most cases you will simply find the 6 digit registration number on the film just as you saw it online. However, if you can’t find your record on the film because the numbers appear to be wrong, your number may be split: check that you searching the right volume on the film (top or bottom of the record). Once you are in the correct volume, search within that volume for the last 3 digits of the registration number, ignoring all other preceding numbers. EG: Volume 010, File 432.

www.familysearch.org is a good complimentary resource for BC Vital records that are digitized. If you find a camera icon, that means the record has been digitized.

You may find some more recent vital records in newspapers. Check what current and historical newspapers exist for BC at Library and Archives Canada:  
There is a website developed by UBC where you can search and view some BC Historical Newspapers.  
http://historicalnewspapers.library.ubc.ca/  

Baptisms: 1836-1888  
http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy/BasicSearch  .  
These are particularly useful for First Nations research, especially when searching by location.  
*Hint* Use the “Advanced” form.

Colonial Marriages: 1859-1872  
http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy/BasicSearch  .
Print

British Columbia Vital Statistics from Newspapers, 1858-1872
(Vital Statistics from Diaries, included in an appendix, covers 1852-1857)
GEN 929.3711 POR 1994

Pioneer register: Pioneers of British Columbia pre-1900.
GEN 929.3711 PIO 1991

Church Records

Microfilm

The library has an index of Western Canadian parish records that include many areas of British Columbia:
Pre-Confederation Marriage Records 1859-1872, microfilm number B09707
The corresponding full records are held at the BC Archives.

Books

Our First 75 Years St. Stephens’s Anglican Church West Vancouver, BC 1913-1988.
Prevost, Gerald. Broadway Printers Ltd.: Vancouver, BC.
GEN 283.711 PRE 1988

Brides and Grooms of the 1950’s: Marriage Information Published in the Ladner Optimist Newspaper During the Decade of the 1950’s Indexed. James, Donalda J. edit. 1999.
GEN 929.371133 BRI 1999

GEN 016.929371 NAT 1987

Guide to the Holdings of the Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon.
Archivists of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon. [Section 5, page 82].
GEN 929.3711 GUI 1993

GEN 929.371134 PAR

Divorce Records

Microfilm

The Cloverdale Library holds an index to BC Divorce Orders, 1901 – 1983. Should you find an entry, reference guides about how to obtain the full record can be found on the BC Archives website: http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/archives-collections-guides/ (click on “Vital Statistics and Genealogy”)
After confederation in 1867 and up until 1963, people wanting to divorce were required to place a notice in the Canada Gazette. The Divorce in Canada (1841-1968) database at Library and Archives Canada, includes references to divorce acts published in the Statutes of the Province of Canada, Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, Statutes of Canada and Journals of the Senate of Canada: http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/vital-statistics-births-marriages-deaths/births-marriages-deaths-recorded/Pages/divorce.aspx

**Cemetery Records**

**Books**

The library has many books containing transcriptions of cemetery tombstones for numerous locations in BC. Check our library shelves for a whole range of BC Cemetery Books in the call number area: GEN 929.509711

**Online**

BC Cemetery Finding Aid: http://www.islandnet.com/bccfa/
This site offers a province wide search by name, but is not a complete set of records.

Old Cemeteries Society (of Victoria)
www.oldcem.bc.ca

St. George’s Church Fort Langley & Hudson’s Bay Records:
http://fortlangley.ca/StGeorge.html


Locate Deceased Persons: Cemeteries, Obituaries, and Funeral Homes (Mary’s Genealogy Treasures)
http://www.telusplanet.net/public/mtoll/locate2.htm

BC Penitentiary Gravesite
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~canbc/conlist.htm

Victoria Archives Death Notice Search 1901-1939

**Estate Records**

The library has the indexes for all probated wills in BC, from 1861-1981, on microfilm. We also have copies of the actual wills for the same years on microfilm – not the more extensive probate files. Probate files can be obtained through the BC Archives.

To find a will consult the library’s guide, Canadian Family History Resources under Estate Records, Section 8 - 1 for instruction and film numbers. See https://surreylibraries.ca/ > Services > Family History > Cloverdale Family History Guide.
Passenger Lists

Online

Passenger records for Victoria, Pacific Ports and Vancouver arrivals are now available online through Ancestry at the library: 1905 to 1922, 1925 – 1935.

Microfilm

Microfilms for all Canadian incoming passenger lists are also available at the library. For details, see section 3-19 of the library’s guide: Canadian Family History Resources: A Guide to the Materials Held at Cloverdale Library: https://surreylibraries.ca/ > Family History > Canadian Family History Resources.

Print

There are also numerous books of passenger list arrivals and a variety of books on the topic of immigration to Canada. Browse the book shelves in the 929.3 area. General books about Immigration are in the 325 area.

Border Entry Records

Online

Ancestry Library Edition includes Border Crossings: From U.S. to Canada, 1908-1935 that covers border entries into BC at various locations along the US border, such as Grand Forks and Pacific Highway for example.

This Ancestry database also includes Form 30 records: from 1919 to 1924. During this time, the federal government required that these individual forms be completed and submitted when crossing the border into Canada. Information about these forms can be studied at: http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/Pages/border-entries.aspx

Microfilm

The library has microfilm records of border crossings from the U.S. to Canada between 1908-1919, organized by date and port. To view a list of ports of entry and the corresponding film numbers, check section 3-41 in the library’s guide: Canadian Family History Resources: A Guide to the Materials Held at the Cloverdale Library.

General Register of Chinese Immigration

Online

The UBC department of History recently indexed the General Register of Chinese Immigration. The following database at Library and Archives Canada includes this Register, as well as other Chinese Immigration records: http://tinyurl.com/oo67sj

Microfilm

Between 1887-1923 Chinese people wishing to immigrate were required to pay a $500.00 tax. The records of these payments provide a wealth of information about the immigrants. The microfilmed records are organized by the date immigration certificates were issued. To view these microfilms consult section 3: pages 52-55 of the library’s guide: Canadian Family History Resources: A Guide to the Materials Held at Cloverdale Library https://surreylibraries.ca/ > Family History > Cloverdale Library Family History Resources
Directories

Online


Microfilm

The library holds various city directories, crisscross directories and telephone books for British Columbia from 1860 to the present. Directories covering 1860-1993 are covered on microfilm.

Print

Directories for every year from 1980 forward can be found on the extra book shelf units on the North side of the Genealogy department. Many of these are crisscross, searchable by address. As well, a number of miscellaneous directories from the 1960s and 70s can be found there, including a variety of Electoral Voter’s Directories for BC, 1958 – 1977.

The Western Canadians, 1600-1900; an alphabetical directory of people, places and vital dates.
[3 Volumes- please ask for assistance to interpret the codes following each entry]
GEN 929.3712 WES

Geographical Resources

Land Records

BC controlled most of its own land upon entering confederation. Pre-emption was a method of acquiring provincial Crown land by claiming it for settlement and agricultural purposes, from 1859 until 1970. However, certain areas of BC known as the “Railway Belt” were controlled by the Federal Government, and homesteading was made possible through Western Land Grants, 1870 – 1930.

Online and in Print

The BC Archives holds the print records for provincial crown land grants, applications for homesteads and purchases of crown lands. Most research must be conducted on site at the archives. A very detailed research guide is available at this website http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/archives-collections(guides/ (click on “Land and Settlement Records”)

It is possible to search for Land Grants via the Crown Grant Index at the website of the BC Government (known as GATOR): http://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/pls/gator/gator$queryforms.menu
This link takes you to the Main Search Menu. Click on “Historic Crown Grants”, you can search by name, business, date and location. Search results are viewable and printable images (click on green arrow “details”).

(Homestead applications and other land documents that correspond with each grant are held by the BC Archives.)

If your people obtained a Western Land Grant from the federal government, search the online index first: http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-grants-western-canada-1870-1930/Pages/land-grants-western-canada.aspx. Unfortunately, the microfilms are currently NOT available for interlibrary loan. Digitization is in progress, so there MAY be some results available to print or save the image.
NOTE: the corresponding homestead applications and related documents for federal grants are held at the various provincial archives, including those for BC.

Secondary transaction on a property: Information about secondary transactions must be obtained through the Land Title and Survey Authority of BC. (LTSA) http://ltsa.ca/property-information/research-records

Place Names

British Columbia Geographical Name Information Service (BCGNIS): If you need to find the name of a current or historic location in BC, for example, an early post office, try searching this site: http://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/

Gazetteers: Look on the genealogy bookshelves between GEN 917.11 and GEN 917.15 for a variety of Canadian Gazetteers that include British Columbia, for example: Lovell’s Gazetteer of British North America, 1873

Atlases and Maps: Check the Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Fraser Valley in GEN 911.71133 HAY 2005. Also check the Genealogy atlas stand for a folder of miscellaneous maps of BC. The library’s non-fiction section on the main floor also has many BC atlases and maps.

Hudson’s Bay Company Indexes

The Hudson’s Bay Company was active in the development of the western provinces since its establishment in 1670. These records can be useful to research early BC genealogy. Many types of records exist including contracts, personal accounts, pension records, estate records and census information on some First Nations peoples.

Online

There is an easy to use guide to the HBC records on the Internet at: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/resource/filmlist.html

Microfilm

The library has three Hudson’s Bay Company record indexes on microfilm, that act as detailed finding aids to what’s available at the Hudson Bay Archives in Manitoba. Many of these records can be ordered by interlibrary loan.

Print

Biographical resources at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Vol. 1.
GEN 929.371 BRI 1996

Empire of the Bay: An Illustrated History of the Hudson’s Bay Company.
GEN 971.201 NEW

Local Histories

Print

The library has many local histories for BC places. To see if the library has a history of a particular town or area, look in the online catalogue under by “Subject Browse” exactly as follows, substituting the town name of your choice: Surrey (B.C.) -- History.
You may also browse the bookshelves in the call number area of **971.1**

Other local history books may fall into other call number areas, depending on what the book is *primarily* about:

**Man Along the Shore: The Story of the Vancouver Waterfront.**
As told by the Longshoremen Themselves, 1860’s-1975.
ILWU Local 500 Pensioners: Vancouver, BC. 1975
GEN 331.881138 MAN 1975

GEN 338.097133 TRE 1981

**Fifty years -- Three and a Half Million Cattle: A History of BC Livestock Producers Co-Operative Association.**
Thomas, Morrie. Kamloops, BC: Livestock Producer’s Co-operative Association, 1993
GEN 636.08 THO 1993

**Place names of the Alberni Valley.**
GEN 917.12 PLA 1988

**Online**

**Jack Brown’s Surrey History Website:**  [www.surreyhistory.ca](http://www.surreyhistory.ca)

**Mailing Lists**

Genealogical or historical interest in British Columbia women:

Queries and exchange of information, or to browse and search archived messages:

Posting of daily obituaries from the Province of British Columbia.

### First Nations

**Online**

The BC Archives Vital Event online indexes are invaluable for BC First Nations research. In particular, try restricting your search by check marking only **Baptisms (1836-1888)**, then search by location. This helps resolve the problems of searching by name, when names have been changed many times, anglicized or misspelled. Keep in mind that baptisms sometimes occurred at a later age, often right before a marriage. Full records for these entries are in print, and can only be obtained through the BC Archives.

At baptism, aboriginal names were often changed to a Western *first name only*, with the last name only noted as “Unknown”. The following generation sometimes took on the parent’s new Western first name, *as a surname*. Or, the aboriginal names of the parent’s were ignored altogether for the child:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Father's Given Name(s):</th>
<th>Mother's Given Name(s):</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Kelkrairchem</td>
<td>Seraphine Garlinak</td>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>1886/11/14 (Yr/Mo/Day)</td>
<td>Church Of St Andrews Lillooet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The **1881 Canadian Census** covers BC, and can be searched online through [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).

The **Ancestry Library Edition** database at Cloverdale, as well as the website [www.automatedgenealogy.com](http://www.automatedgenealogy.com), include a variety of BC Census records. Many have a column marked “racial origin.” This can be useful when accumulating documents to prove First Nations or Métis heritage, for “status” applications or Métis citizenship. NOTE: not all aboriginal people are noted as such on census records, which can be misleading. For example, an aboriginal woman marries a European, but the entire family is *sometimes* noted as “White” – same as the “head of household.”

**Band Lists** and other information: [http://bcafn.ca/economic-development/resources/](http://bcafn.ca/economic-development/resources/)

**Band Lists** with contact information: [http://www.joejack.com/indianbandsinbcmy.html](http://www.joejack.com/indianbandsinbcmy.html)


**Library and Archives Canada Aboriginal Research Site**: [http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/Pages/genealogy.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/Pages/genealogy.aspx)

**Métis Nation BC**: [http://www.mnbc.ca/](http://www.mnbc.ca/)

**Fraser Valley Métis Nation**: [http://www.fraservalleymetisnation.com/](http://www.fraservalleymetisnation.com/)

**Microfilm**

Any entries found in the BC Archives online index that have been filmed and available to the public, can be found at the Cloverdale Library. This includes microfilms covering “Indian” births, marriages and deaths. These can be searched as per usual using the online index.

**Print**

There are few books simply on the subject of aboriginal genealogy in BC. However, there are numerous history books, which can be useful. Below is a listing of a few of these. Unless otherwise noted, these books are kept in the genealogy department of the library.

**The Aboriginal peoples of British Columbia: a profile.**  
GEN 971.100497 ABO 1992

**Accomplishments and contributions: A handbook on Blacks in BC.**  
GEN 971.100496 GAR 1990

**Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest.**  
GEN 971.100499 KOP

**Researching the History of Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia: a guide to resources at the British Columbia Archives and Records Service and BC lands.**  
GEN 026.9711 YOU

**A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas.**  
GEN ATL 970.00479 STO 2001
Newspapers & Magazines

Cloverdale Library does not have a collection of historical newspapers.

**Genealogy magazines and newsletters** are shelved separately, to the right of the microfilm machines, and on the directory shelving facing this magazine rack. These may be borrowed with a Surrey Public Library card, excepting new arrivals less than 3 months old. Included, for example:

**The British Columbia Genealogist** (BC Genealogical Society)
Older articles are indexed in *Heritage Quest* through PERSI – an online periodical index available on site at the Cloverdale Library

**Splitting Heirs**: Vernon & District Family History Society

**The British Columbia History**: Journal of the British Columbia Historical Federation.

**Abbotsford Genealogical Society Newsletter**: published quarterly

Military Records

**Microfilm**

**World War Two Overseas Casualties**

In 2001 vital events records were released that related to the deaths of 3423 British Columbians in World War Two. Although BC death registrations normally cover only deaths that occurred in BC, these records are an exception.

Search the BC Archives online indexes as per usual by name, but try adding “Overseas” as a place name, as well as each war year between 1940 and 1945. You may also try searching by place name – most common are England, Holland, Hong Kong, India, Italy, France and Germany.

These corresponding four microfilms with the full records are available at the Cloverdale Library: B14424, B14425, B14426 and B14427

**Print**

For an alphabetical listing of Canadian participants in the South African War or Boer War, check the library shelves for this book:


GEN 929.371 IND 1999

**Online**

Search the Veteran Affairs *Books of Remembrance* for names of Canadians who fought and died either during the wars or afterwards: [http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=collections/books](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=collections/books)

Soldiers of the First World War:
Canadian Expeditionary Force

Military and naval history - Canada

Commonwealth War Graves Commission:
http://www.cwgc.org/

Canadian Virtual War Memorial:
http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial

Canadian Military Heritage Project:
http://www.rootsweb.com/~canmil/

**Guides to Other Collections**

Sources for Researching the History of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia in the Special Collections and University Archives Division
GEN 971.100495 HIV

Sources for Researching the History of Japanese Canadians in British Columbia in the Special Collections and University Archives Division.
GEN 971.100495 HIV 1991

**Other Internet Resources for BC**

BC Genealogical Society
http://www.bcgsg.ca/

Rootsweb for BC
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~websites/international/canada.html

BC School Records-Lists of school districts and contacts:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/

For more information contact BC Archives for extensive collections of school records (subject to access to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.) or The Field Services Team Ministry of Education which can supply contact information for school districts:

Field Services Team, Ministry of Education.
PO Box. 9158 St., Prov. Govt. Victoria. BC.V8W 9H3
Tel: 250-356-2575  1-888-664-2256  Fax: 250-356-8267
Email: EDUC.FieldServices@gems9.gov.bc.ca

Patients admitted to BC. Hospitals in 1878
http://www.rootsweb.com/~canbc/bchospitals.htm
People Who Died Intestate [BC] 1861-1883 (without a will)
http://www.rootsweb.com/~canbc/intestate.htm

Return Of Settlers, 1873
http://www.rootsweb.com/~canbc/settlers.htm

Doukhobor Collection, UBC
http://www.collectionscanada.ca/collectionsp-bin/colldisp/c=48/h=10/l=0/s=s

Jewish Genealogical Society of British Columbia
http://jgsbc.ca/