

# Guide to Finding Obituaries

## Cloverdale Branch



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## General Information about Obituaries

- **Death notices** are usually submitted to the newspaper by the undertaker or funeral home. Their purpose is to inform people of the place and time of funeral services and contain little more than this basic information.
- **Obituaries** are submitted by family members and generally contain detailed information about the deceased and their family.
- The information in an obituary may come from family members or strangers and therefore should be verified through other sources.
- Neither are mandatory so not every death will have a death notice and/or an obituary.
- Obituaries provide valuable clues in furthering your research, such as names of surviving family members or the name of the church where the deceased was buried. The church may also have baptismal and marriage records for the family.

## Where to Look

- Obituaries can be published in more than one locality if the deceased lived in more than one place. For example, if someone grew up in British Columbia then moved to Manitoba where they died, they may have an obituary published in both provinces to inform friends and family of the death.
- If a person's death was extraordinary for any reason, such as murder or an accident, there may also be an article accompanying the obituary in the newspaper.
- An average citizen's death is more likely to be published in a local newspaper than in a national publication.

## When Published

- Death notices and obituaries are usually published within a week of death, but in some situations the gap may be longer.

## Tips

- There are some useful tips on obituary research in *Researching Canadian Newspaper Records* by Ryan Taylor (GEN 929.10971 TAY 2002).

## How to Find an Obituary

### If you know the date of death

1. If you know the **exact date** and **place** of death, you can then identify the newspapers that are most likely to have published an obituary.
2. Use one of the newspaper directories to identify which newspapers were published in the area at the time the person died. You will find a list of resources to help you locate newspapers below under **Newspaper Resources**.
3. Some may be available locally, either in print or on microfilm, in which case you can consult them yourself. If they are not available locally, you may be able to order them through **Interlibrary Loan**. Ask at the Genealogy Information desk for more information.
4. If the newspaper is not available locally or through interlibrary loan, then it may be necessary to hire a professional researcher or use a local contact.
5. You will find a list of some local newspapers and where they can be found on page 7 of this Guide. While this information is valid at the time of writing, you should call the institution to ensure they have the publication for the dates you are interested in before planning a trip there. There are often gaps in dates of records held by each institution.
6. When you have found the newspaper, look at the death notices and obituaries for at least two weeks after the date of death. Most notices and obituaries are published within two weeks but a few may be published later.

### If you don't know the date and place of death

1. You cannot look for an obituary without this information so you should start by trying to figure it out. Some of the ways to do this include:
  - a. If they died in British Columbia more than 20 years ago, you can search **the B.C. Vital Events Index** online at:  
<http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy/BasicSearch>
  - b. Join **mailing lists and message boards**, such as those found at <http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/intl/CAN/>, to see if anyone else is researching your ancestor.
  - c. Check **obituary transcriptions and indexes** which can be found both in print and on the internet. They are usually organized by place and date, so you will need a general idea of where and when your ancestor died in order to use them. You will find a list of some of these resources below under **Obituaries in Print** and **Obituaries Online**

## Information you may find in an Obituary

- Name and age of deceased
- Cause of death and length of illness
- Residence at time of death and former residences
- Place of death and location of services and burial. The place of burial may also have other records for the family, such as baptisms or marriages.
- Occupation and places of employment
- Military service
- Membership and affiliations with organizations
- Names of parents, siblings, children of deceased, including maiden name of mother, and their places of residence
- Married names of female relatives

SWALLOW — Dorothea Jessie, passed peacefully away in Como Lake Nursing Home, Coquitlam, on February 16, 1987, aged 90. She was predeceased by her husband, Al in 1980. Surviving are sons, Ken and wife, Marie, of Aldergrove, Bill and wife Irene of Mission, daughter, Kathleen and Ron Farrell, of Coquitlam, sisters-in-law, Florence Chaster, of Gibsons, Mabel Chaster of Courtenay, 8 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many dear friends. Mrs. Swallow came with her parents, Mrs. and Mrs. James Chaster from Manitoba in 1905 to pioneer in Gibsons, B.C. She also lived in Victoria and Vancouver, working for several years in Spencers Department Store. She and her husband returned to live in Gibson in 1962. Private Memorial service to be held March 22. Flowers gratefully declined. Donations to the Heart Fund if friends so desire. Arrangements through the Memorial Society of B.C. and First Memorial Services.

*Obituary published in Vancouver Sun, Feb. 1987*

## **Newspaper Resources – Directories**

These directories at Cloverdale Library will help you determine which newspapers were being published at the time and place of death.

*Union Catalogue of British Columbia Newspapers, Vol. 3*  
Komorous, Hana (comp.)  
Call No. GEN 071.11 UNI 1987

*Union List of Canadian Newspapers held by Canadian Libraries*  
National Library of Canada  
Call No. GEN 071.1 NAT 1977

*New Brunswick Newspaper Directory, 1783-1988*  
Craig, Helen (comp.)  
Call No. GEN 015.7151 CRA 1989

*Early Toronto Newspapers, 1793-1867*  
Firth, Edith G. (ed.)  
Call No. GEN 071.13 EAR 1961

*A Historical Directory of Manitoba Newspapers, 1858-1978*  
Loveridge, D.M.  
Call No. GEN 071.127 LOV 1978

*Inventory of Ontario Newspapers, 1793-1986*  
Gilchrist, J. Brian (comp. & ed.)  
Call No. GEN 071.13 INV 1987

## **Newspaper Resources – Newspapers on Microfilm**

Most historic newspapers are in this format. The following links will help you locate institutions that have the particular newspaper you are looking for. Some microfilms are available through **inter-library loan**. You will need to know the date and place of death in order to find an obituary on microfilm.

**B.C. Archives:** [www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/library/newspapr/newspapr.htm](http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/library/newspapr/newspapr.htm).  
Newspapers available at the Archives in Victoria are not available through inter-library loan but they are open to the public.

**Canadian Newspapers on Microform held by Library & Archives Canada:**  
<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/newspapers/newspaper-collection/Pages/microform-holdings-geographical-list.aspx> . The list is organized by Province.

## **Surrey Archives**

Located next door to Cloverdale Library, the Archives has the following newspapers on microfilm: *Surrey Leader* (1929-2004), *The British Columbian* (1864-1885), *The Daily Columbian* (18-1910 & 1949-1951), *The British Columbia Fraser Valley Edition* (1890-1922), *Westminster Columbian* (1964-1966), *The Surrey Gazette* (1917-1929), *The Surrey Times* (Apr-Oct 1895).

## **Surrey Public Library – City Centre Branch**

City Centre Branch has the following newspapers on microfilm: *Province* (from 1993), *The Vancouver Sun* (1979+), *Surrey Leader* (1929+), *Surrey Now* (1984-89; 1994+). Visit City Centre yourself or check with Information Staff about obtaining copies of obituaries from these microfilms.

## **University of British Columbia:**

<http://guides.library.ubc.ca/newspapers?hs=a>

Lists newspapers both in print and on microfilm held at Koerner Library which is open to the public.

**Vancouver Public Library** has a large collection of newspapers on microfilm, a list of which can be found at: general guide found at ;

<http://guides.vpl.ca/genealogy/newspapers>

You can also request Vancouver Public Library staff to do up to two free look-ups for an obituary in up to two newspapers. They will send a transcription of the obituary to you. To request this service, e-mail [info@vpl.ca](mailto:info@vpl.ca) or fill in the form on the library home page.

## **Newspapers Online**

Many newspapers have their own website; however access to obituaries varies from paper to paper. Many offer free access to obituaries from the past 30 days but charge a fee for older ones. Obituaries older than 2004 are harder to find. Check the website of the newspaper you are interested in for details. The following links will help you locate online newspapers where you can search the obituary section.

- **The British Columbia Digital Library** provides links to current and historic newspapers world-wide. <http://bcdlib.tc.ca/links-subjects-newspapers.html>.
- **The Surrey Leader** provides free online access to obituaries from 2005 to the present. [www.bclocalnews.com/surrey\\_area/surreyleader/obituaries/](http://www.bclocalnews.com/surrey_area/surreyleader/obituaries/)
- The Vancouver Public Library website offers access to digital images of the **Globe & Mail** from 1844-2001 and **Gale NewsVault** (includes various British Newspapers 1780-1950). You will need a Vancouver Public Library card to access these records. [www.vpl.ca/electronic\\_databases/alpha/](http://www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/alpha/)

## Obituaries Online

The following are just a few of the sites where you will find obituaries online.

- **Alberta Newspapers 1885-2001:** Digital images of Alberta newspapers [www.ourfutureourpast.ca/newspapr/](http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/newspapr/)
- **BC Genealogical Society:** List of BC newspapers with links to obituaries online: [http://www.bcgs.ca/?page\\_id=541](http://www.bcgs.ca/?page_id=541)
- **Canadian Obituary Links:** Gateway site to Canadian obituaries. [www.obitlinkspage.com/obit/canada.htm](http://www.obitlinkspage.com/obit/canada.htm)
- **Free Obituaries Online:** Links to free obituary sites world-wide. [http://www3.sympatico.ca/bkinnon/obit\\_links.htm](http://www3.sympatico.ca/bkinnon/obit_links.htm)
- **Google:** Search, for example, “obituaries Mission” or “obituaries Maple Ridge,” to see what is available online for the area you are interested in.
- **Google News Archive:** <https://news.google.com/newspapers>
- **Library & Archives Canada:**
  - Links to online obituaries. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/vital-statistics-births-marriages-deaths/Pages/births-marriages-deaths.aspx>
- Search for obituaries in AVITUS database by locality: (type “obituaries” in subject field) [http://www.bac-lac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/genealogy/avitus/Pages/search.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/genealogy/avitus/Pages/search.aspx)
- **Nanaimo Family History Society:** Obituaries extracted from three Nanaimo newspapers from 1998-2004. [http://www.members.shaw.ca/nfhslibrary/nanaimo\\_obituaries.htm](http://www.members.shaw.ca/nfhslibrary/nanaimo_obituaries.htm)
- **ObitFinder** includes several Canadian newspapers with obituaries from the end of 2004, including the *Vancouver Sun* and *Province*. Free access to obituaries from the past 30 days; US\$2.95 for access to the full obituary. [www.legacy.com/Obituaries.asp?Page=ObitFinder](http://www.legacy.com/Obituaries.asp?Page=ObitFinder)
- **Obituary Daily Times:** includes Canadian obituaries mostly post-1996 <http://obits.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/obit.cgi>
- **Obituary Lookup Volunteers:** free look-ups by volunteers world-wide. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~obit/>
- **Victoria Daily Times:** Index to death notices from 1901-1939. <http://web.victoria.ca/archives/obitsearch.asp>

## Obituaries in Print at Surrey Public Library

Search the Surrey Public Library catalogue for collections of obituaries in print using keywords or subject headings such as:

- **Obituaries – Ontario**
- **Obituaries – Canada**

## Obituaries from Electronic Resources at Cloverdale Library

- **Ancestry Library Edition** has a few Canadian obituary databases and many more U.S. ones. Most are indexes only but a few have digital images of the newspaper. Search the **Newspapers & Periodicals Records** database:
  - enter the name and the keyword “**obituary**”
  - choose country, province/state and a year range
- **CD-ROM Collection:**
  - Some of the CDs in the Genealogy collection include obituaries and death records
  - Ask at the Information Desk for more information

## Newspapers & Locations

<b>Title</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Format</b>
<b>Abbotsford News/Post/Times</b>	News: 1922+ Post: 1910-24 Times: 1992+	Matsqui-Sumas-Abbotsford Museum & Archives	Print
<b>Langley Advance</b>	1931-1979	Langley Centennial Museum Archives	Microfilm & clippings
<b>Maple Ridge Gazette</b>	1922-1980	Maple Ridge Museum & Community Archives	Print
	1943-1984	Maple Ridge Library (FVRL)	Microfilm
<b>Peace Arch News</b>	1977-Present	White Rock Museum & Archives	Print
<b>Surrey Leader</b>	1929 – 2005 & Apr-Sept 2006	City Centre Branch, Surrey Public Library	Microfilm
	1929 - 2004	Surrey Archives	Microfilm
<b>Surrey Now</b>	1984 – 1989; 1994+	City Centre Branch, Surrey Public Library	Microfilm
<b>Globe &amp; Mail</b>	1844-2001 1992-2002	Vancouver Public Library City Centre Branch, Surrey Public Library	Online CD-ROM Print
	Current + prev. 6 months		
<b>Vancouver Sun</b>	July 1979 – Nov 2007	City Centre Branch, Surrey Public Library	Microfilm
	Feb 1912-Present	Central Branch, Vancouver Public Library & Metrotown Branch, Burnaby Public Lib. Note: <i>Vancouver Express</i> replaced the <i>Sun</i> Feb-May 1970 & Nov/1978-June/1979 during a labour strike	Microfilm