

British Columbia

Research Outline

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This outline describes major sources of information about families from British Columbia. As you read this outline, study the *Canada Research Outline* (34545), which will help you understand terminology, contents, and uses of genealogical records.

RECORDS OF THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

The Family History Library has many of the records described in this outline. Some of the sources described in this outline list the Family History Library's book, microfilm, microfiche, and computer numbers. These are preceded by *FHL*, the abbreviation for *Family History Library*. You can use these numbers to locate materials in the library and to order microfilm and microfiche at Family History Centers.

You can use the computer number if you have access to the Family History Library Catalog on computer. Using the "Computer Number Search" is the fastest way to find a source in the catalog.

Most microfilms available at the library can also be distributed to its Family History Centers. A current list of Family History Centers in your area can be obtained from the Family History Library.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

When researching in this province, begin by checking the following records in the order suggested:

1. Vital records
2. Church records
3. Census records
4. Probate records
5. Local histories

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

See also the “Societies” section of this outline.

The following archives and libraries may be useful:

- British Columbia Information Management Services

Archives and Information Access

P.O. Box 9419

Stn. Prov. Govt

Victoria, BC V8W 9V1

CANADA

Telephone: 250-387-5885

Fax: 250-387-2072

The archives building is located at:

655 Belleville St.

Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

CANADA

Telephone: 250-387-1952

Fax: 250-387-2072

- City of Vancouver Archives

1150 Chestnut Street

Vancouver, BC V6J 3J9

CANADA

- Cloverdale Public Library

5642-176 A Street

Surrey, BC V3S 4G9

CANADA

Telephone: 604-598-7320

Fax: 604-598-7321

- Family History Library

35 N. West Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3400
USA

- Greater Victoria Public Library

735 Broughton Street
Victoria, BC V8W 3H2
CANADA
Telephone: 250-382-7241

- Headquarters of Court Services Branch

Ministry of Attorney General
6th Floor, 850 Burdette Ave.
Victoria, BC V8W 1B4
CANADA
Telephone: 250-356-1550
Fax: 250-356-8152 or 250-356-9758

- National Archives of Canada

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N3
CANADA
Telephone: 613-996-7458

- New Westminster Public Library

716 Sixth Avenue
New Westminster, BC V3M 2B3
CANADA
Telephone: 604-527-4660
Fax: 604-527-4674

- University of British Columbia

Koerner Library
1958 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2
CANADA
Telephone: 250-387-1952
Fax: 604-822-9122

- Vancouver Public Library

350 W. Georgia St.
Vancouver, BC V6B 6B1

CANADA

Telephone: 604-331-3740 (newspapers, magazines)

Telephone: 604-331-3710 (history, government, genealogy)

Fax: 604-331-3744

- Simon Fraser University

W.A.C. Bennett Library

Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6

CANADA

Telephone: 778-782-4626

Fax: 778-782-3023

Computer Networks and Bulletin Boards

Computers with modems can be useful tools for obtaining information from selected archives and libraries. In a way, computer networks themselves serve as a library. The Internet, certain computer bulletin boards, and commercial on-line services help family history researchers:

- Locate other researchers.
- Post queries.
- Send and receive E-mail.
- Search large databases.
- Search computer libraries.
- Join in computer chat and lecture sessions.

You can find computerized research tips and information about ancestors from British Columbia in a variety of sources at local, state, national, and international levels. The list of sources is growing rapidly. Most of the information is available at no cost.

Addresses on the Internet change frequently. As of September 1997, the following sites are important gateways linking you to many more network and bulletin board sites:

- Canada GenWeb

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~canwggw>

A cooperative effort by many volunteers to list genealogical databases, libraries, bulletin boards, and other resources available on the Internet for each county and province.

- Canadian Genealogy Resources

<http://genealogy.about.com/hobbies/genealogy/msubcanada.htm>

Lists county, provincial, and national sources; personal pages; and publications.

- Roots-L

<http://www.rootsweb.com/roots-l/canada.html>

A useful list of sites and resources. Includes a large, regularly updated research coordination list.

CENSUS

- 1871 First British Columbia census (incomplete).
1881 First Canadian census to include British Columbia. (For an index, see the British Columbia Genealogical Society listed in the “Societies” section of this outline.)

The 1891 and 1901 censuses are also available to the public. The Family History Library has these censuses (1871–1901) on microfilm.

CHURCH RECORDS

The earliest denominations were Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational. Their records can be found in the archives building of British Columbia Information Management Services.

Roman Catholic records for the Diocese of Victoria date from 1864 and from 1892 for the Diocese of Vancouver. The registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials are held in the parishes.

The Anglican Church records date back to 1837 in the Victoria area and to 1859 in the Vancouver area. The registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials are usually held in the parishes.

The Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational Churches were combined in 1925 to form the United Church of Canada. Many of the registers are located at the central archives in Union College, University of British Columbia, or in the parishes and churches.

COURT RECORDS

Contact the Headquarters of Court Services for current Courthouse listings (see the “Archives and Libraries” section of this outline).

DIRECTORIES

Many British Columbia directories up to and including 1900 are available on the following microfiche:

Pre-1900 Canadian Directories. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, 1988. (On 4219 fiche, beginning with FHL 6360453; computer number 758652. These fiche do not circulate to Family History Centers.)

EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

The National Archives of Canada has Vancouver and Victoria passenger lists for 1905–1919. These can be ordered through public libraries on interlibrary loan. These lists are not indexed.

Canadian Border Crossing Records

The United States kept records of people crossing the border from Canada to the United States. These records are called border crossing lists, passenger lists, or manifests. There are two kinds of manifests:

- Manifests of people sailing from Canada to the United States.
- Manifests of people traveling by train from Canada to the United States.

In 1895 Canadian shipping companies agreed to make manifests of passengers traveling to the United States. The Canadian government allowed U.S. immigration officials to inspect those passengers while they were still in Canada. The U.S. immigration officials also inspected train passengers traveling from Canada to the United States. The U.S. officials worked at Canadian seaports and major cities like Québec and Winnipeg. The manifests from every seaport and emigration station in Canada were sent to St. Albans, Vermont.

The Family History Library has copies of both kinds of manifests. Because the manifests were sent to St. Albans, Vermont, most are grouped under *St. Albans District Records of Aliens Arriving from Foreign Contiguous Territory*. These manifests are from seaports and railroad stations all over Canada and the northern United States, not just Vermont.

Border Crossing Manifests. Manifests may give the following information about each passenger: name, port or station of entry, date of entry, literacy, last residence, previous visits to the United States, and birthplace. The manifests are available in two series:

- *Manifests of Passengers Arriving in the St. Albans, Vermont, District through Canadian Pacific and Atlantic Ports, 1895–January 1921.* (608 rolls; FHL **films 1561087–499**; computer number 423848.) Includes records from seaports and railroad stations all over Canada and the northern United States. These manifests provide two types of lists:

—Traditional passenger lists on U.S. immigration forms.

—Monthly lists of passengers crossing the border on trains. These lists are divided by month. In each month, the records are grouped by railroad station. (The stations are listed in alphabetical order.) Under the station heading, the passengers are grouped by railroad company.

- *Manifests of Passengers Arriving in the St. Albans, Vermont, District through Canadian Pacific Ports, 1929–1949.* (25 rolls; FHL **films 1549387–411**; computer number 423848.) These concern travel to the United States from Canadian Pacific seaports only.

Border Crossing Indexes. In many cases, index cards were the *only* records kept of the crossings. These cards are indexed in four publications:

- *Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries through the St. Albans, Vermont, District, 1895–1924.* (400 rolls; FHL films 1472801–3201; computer number 423848.)

The Soundex is a surname index based on the way a name sounds rather than how it is spelled. Names like Smith and Smyth are filed together.

- *Soundex Index to Entries into the St. Albans, Vermont, District through Canadian Pacific and Atlantic Ports, 1924–1952.* (98 rolls; FHL films 1570714–811; computer number 423848.)
- *St. Albans District Manifest Records of Aliens Arriving from Foreign Contiguous Territory: Records of Arrivals through Small Ports in Vermont, 1895–1924.* (6 rolls; FHL films 1430987–92.) The records are arranged first by port and then alphabetically by surname. These are only from Vermont ports of entry: Alburg, Beecher Falls, Canaan, Highgate Springs, Island Pond, Norton, Richford, St. Albans, and Swanton.
- *Detroit District Manifest Records of Aliens Arriving from Foreign Contiguous Territory: Arrivals at Detroit, Michigan, 1906–1954.* (117 rolls; FHL films 1490449–565; computer number 432703.) These are for Michigan ports of entry: Bay City, Detroit, Port Huron, and Sault Ste. Marie.

GENEALOGY

A recent index to many published biographies, census records (1881–1891), directories to 1913, genealogies, local histories, and vital records in newspapers is:

Elliot, Noel Montgomery, ed. *The Western Canadians, 1600–1900: An Alphabetized Directory of the People, Places, and Vital Dates.* 3 vols. Toronto: Genealogical Research Library, 1994. (FHL book 971 D22w.) Indexes about 300,000 names from various sources for the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and Yukon (also includes Alaska). Sources are listed at the end of each volume.

HISTORY

1778	Captain James Cook claimed the coast for the British Isles.
1788	East India Company built a trading post at Nootka.
1789	A Spanish party settled in Nootka.
1795	Spain renounced claims to the area.
1843	The Hudson's Bay Company founded Fort Victoria.
1846	The 49th Parallel Treaty was created.
1849	Vancouver Island became a Crown colony, with Victoria as the capital.
1858	The mainland became a Crown colony, with New Westminster as the capital.
1860	The Cariboo gold rush began.
1866	The colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia were united.

1869	Victoria became the capital of both former colonies.
1871	The Province of British Columbia was formed on 20 July 1871.
1885	The Canadian Pacific Railway line was completed to the coast.

LAND AND PROPERTY

The early applications for preemptions and Crown grants began in the mid-1800s and are at the British Columbia Information Management Services. They have an index for the preemption land records (1859-1971) which they can search for you. (See the “Archives and Libraries” section of this outline.) Copies of Crown grants can be made only for legal or court purposes. They give the name of the grantor and grantee, a description of the land, the date of transaction, and sometimes names of relatives. For copies, write to the appropriate land title office. If you have the legal description of the land, they can trace the title of the land back to previous owners. For addresses, contact the Headquarters of Court Services. Original Crown grants are at:

Surveyor General
 Crown Lands Registry Services
 Ministry of Environment
 Lands and Parks
 3400 Davidson Avenue
 Victoria, BC V8Z 3P8
 CANADA

MILITARY RECORDS

World War I (1914–1918)

Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) service records are at the Personnel Records Unit of the National Archives of Canada (for the address, see the “Archives and Libraries” section of this outline). To request information, please give the name, rank, and regiment (if known).

Service records give detailed information from enlistment to demobilization (discharge). They may include:

- Birth date and place
- Address at time of enlistment
- Name and address of next of kin
- Marital status
- Occupation
- Personal description (eye and hair color, height, weight, distinctive marks or scars)
- Religion

NATURALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Until 1947, British immigrants from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland automatically became citizens of Canada; they did not need to be naturalized. Non-British immigrants, however, were required to make oaths of allegiance before receiving land grants. Files containing these oaths and petitions for citizenship covering the years 1817 to 1846 are found in the archives building of British Columbia Information Management Services (see the “Archives and Libraries” section of this outline).

Records created after 1917 are more detailed than earlier records and are found at:

Department of Citizenship and Immigration

Public Rights Administration

300 Slater Street, 3rd floor, section D

Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1

CANADA

Telephone: 888–242–2100 (in Canada only; outside Canada, write to the above address)

NEWSPAPERS

Major newspaper collections are at the sources below. Write for information about their holdings:

- Greater Victoria Public Library
- New Westminster Public Library
- Vancouver Public Library
- University of British Columbia Koerner Library
- Simon Fraser University W.A.C. Bennett Library
- British Columbia Information Management Services

PERIODICALS

Many local periodicals are indexed in:

PERiodical Source Index (PERSI), Ft. Wayne, Ind.: Allen County Public Library Foundation, 1987–. (FHL book 973 D25per; 1847–1985 on **fiche 6016863** [set of 40]; 1986–1990 on **fiche 6016864** [set of 15]; computer number 658308.) Indexes thousands of family history periodicals. Annual indexes have been published yearly since 1986. For further details, see the *PERiodical Source Index Resource Guide* (34119).

The British Columbia Genealogist, Richmond, B.C.: British Columbia Genealogical Society, 1971–. (FHL book 971.1 B2g; computer number 222886; for the address, see the “Societies” section of this outline.)

PROBATE RECORDS

The probate records for British Columbia date back to 1859. Write to:

Surrogate Registrar
Law Courts Building
850 Burdett Avenue
Victoria, BC V8W 1B4
CANADA

The Family History Library has probate wills (1861–1939), indexes (1861–1981), and estate files (1881–1927).

SOCIETIES

British Columbia Genealogical Society
#211 12837 76th Avenue
Surrey BC
CANADA
Telephone 604-502-9119

Mailing Address
PO Box 88054 Lansdowne Mall
Richmond BC V6X 3T6
CANADA

Nanaimo Family History Society
PO Box 1027
Nanaimo BC V9R 5Z2
CANADA

Prince George Genealogical Club
PO Box 1056
Prince George BC V2L 4V2
CANADA

Vancouver Historical Society
PO Box 3071
Vancouver BC V6B 3X6
CANADA

Société Historique Franco-Colombienne
9 Avenue Broadway East
Vancouver BC V5T 1V4
CANADA

TAXATION

Assessment records (mostly for 1888-1924) are at the British Columbia Information Management Services (for the address, see the “Archives and Libraries” section of this outline).

Records are available for these districts:

Alberni	Nelson
Barkerville	Prince George
Comox	Princeton
Cowichan	Quesnel
Fort Steele	Revelstoke
Gulf Islands	Rossland
Kamloops	Slocan
Kettle River	Vancouver
Lillooet	Vernon
New Westminster	Victoria

Assessment records may provide an individual's year of birth, religion, occupation, number of people in household, and value of buildings owned.

VITAL RECORDS

Official registration of births, marriages, and deaths began in 1872. The early records are very incomplete. These records are at:

Vital Statistics Agency
818 Fort St.
Victoria, BC V8W 1H8
CANADA
Telephone: 250-952-2681 or 1-800-663-8328
Fax: 250-952-2587

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 9657
STN. PROV. GOVT.
Victoria, BC V8W 9P3
CANADA

Many births, marriages, and deaths are listed in:

Master Index Card File, B.C. Salt Lake City: Filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1986-7. (FHL films 1464497-501; computer number 481508.) The original records were filmed at the British Columbia Genealogical Society, Richmond, BC.

An index of birth, marriage, and death registration is available on the Internet.

FOR FURTHER READING

Bracken, Susan, editor. *Canadian Almanac & Directory*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., [annual]. (FHL book 971 E4ca; computer number 160632.)

Catalog of Canadian Census Returns on Microfilm 1666–1891. Ottawa: National Archives of Canada, 1987. (FHL book 971 X23ht; computer number 449615.)

Canadiana Company Limited, a subsidiary of Grolier Society of Canada Limited. *Encyclopedia Canadiana*. Ottawa, 1957. (FHL book 030.71 En19; computer number 597759.)

Corpus Almanac and Canadian Sourcebook. Toronto: Don Mills, Ontario Corpus Information Services, [annual]. (FHL book 971 B5c; computer number 490918.)

Dominion Bureau of Statistics. *The Canada Year Book*. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1942. (FHL book 971 A7cb; computer number 213422.) This is available for 1910–1942 and 1978–79.

Jonasson, Eric. *The Canadian Genealogical Handbook*. 2nd ed. Winnipeg: Wheatfield Press, 1978. Indexed. (FHL book 971 D27j 1978; computer number 31188.)

United Church of Canada. *Yearbook 1984*. Toronto, 1984. (FHL book 971 K25y, computer number 163788; Volumes 1–2 of the 1982 edition are on film 1320688 items 8–9, computer number 163788.)

Tracing your Ancestors in Canada. 12th ed. Ottawa: National Archives of Canada, 1997. (FHL book 971 D27k 1997; computer number 804791.)

Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories. Ottawa: National Archives, 1975. (FHL book 971.A3CP; film 1036731; 1976 supplement, computer number 188356; 1977–78 supplement, computer number 143195; 1981–82 supplement, computer number 488894.)

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Family History Library welcomes additions and corrections that will improve future editions of this outline. Please send your suggestions to:

Publications Coordination
Family History Library
35 N. West Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150–3400
USA

We appreciate the archivists, librarians, and others who have reviewed this outline and shared helpful information.

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