

GENEALOGY

This reference guide provides an overview of the types of records from the City of Vancouver Archives that relate to researching family history, including examples of specific fonds or collections. Please keep in mind that additional records may be found among the total Archives' holdings.

Records may be accessed either through record requests submitted for retrieval from our secure storage, self-serve microfiche access copies in the Reading Room, or, if digitized, viewed as a digital copy from our online database. Record retrievals run Monday-Friday, 10:00-4:30.

CITY RECORDS

Reading Room (microfilm) & Storage

ca. 1880s-present

City records used as primary sources related to City operations and departmental functions in connection to local citizens. Search the Archives' database for Departmental records, including maps and photographs. Suggestions of related records are:

- **Mountain View Cemetery Registers ([COV-S152](#))**
 - Determine name, age, birthplace, burial date, cause of death etc. about those buried in Mountain View Cemetery from 1887-1965

- **Elections - Voter's Lists ([COV-S59](#))**
 - Used to verify Vancouver residency of men and women who were eligible to vote from 1886-2002
 - Arranged in sets first by election year, then by wards or polling districts, and therein alphabetically by name; please note that voters' lists records can be time-consuming to review
 - Note that political franchise historically excluded: Chinese and South Asian individuals until 1947, First Nations and Japanese individuals until 1949; Caucasian women until 1917 (property owners earlier); age restrictions - below 21 (1886-1970), 19 years (1971-1992); and 18 years old (1993-present)
 - Since only property owners were eligible to vote on money by-laws, owners and residents were separated
 - Holdings also include voter records for the former municipalities of Point Grey, 1910 and 1913 ([COV-PG-S273](#)); and South Vancouver, 1893-1899, 1901-1916, 1918, 1922-1927 ([COV-SV-S220](#))

- **Business license registers ([COV-S383](#))**
 - Annual registers listing information such as name of applicant, address, business name for a range of local businesses, professions and trades from 1886-1939
 - Arranged chronologically and alphabetically by type of business

PRIVATE SECTOR HOLDINGS

Storage

ca. 1870-1980

Private records used as primary sources on individuals, families, businesses, clubs, and other organizations. Our holdings of private records, identified as “AM” (or formerly “Add. Mss.” for “Additional Manuscripts”) can be searched using our online database. Suggestions of related fonds are:

- **Major Matthews Collection ([AM54](#))**
 - See Series 18 - Obituaries ([AM54-S18](#)) for two obituary scrapbooks, mainly related to Vancouver pioneers
 - See Series 14 - Mayors of Vancouver ([AM54-S14](#)) for clippings and records
 - See Series 22 - Street and place names, Vancouver and area ([AM54-S22](#))
 - See Series 23 - Topical and categorical files ([AM54-S23](#)) for subject files containing compilations of notes, correspondence, pamphlets, and ephemera
- **Mountain View [Cemetery] Tombstone Inscriptions ([AM1377](#))**
 - Microfilm copy of tombstone inscriptions, 1886-1983, created by the BC Genealogical Society (see also City Records guide section for more cemetery records)
- **British Columbia Registrar of Voters fonds ([AM636](#))**
 - Three bound volumes of voter lists including name, address, and occupation for Vancouver, 1889-1900
- **Canadian Pacific Railway fonds ([AM42-S11 - Staff registers](#))**
 - Series consists of employee records, including age and position etc., 1880-1911

CITY DIRECTORIES

Reading Room

1860-1996

Annual directories produced by private firms listing names of residents, properties, and business listings. Directories can be used to determine names, addresses, years of residency, and occupations of Vancouver residents (some years are B.C. directories). Please note that directories were compiled by private firms for business purposes so they are convenient and broad in scope, but not authoritative and there are demographic omissions. Directories can be reviewed as bound books as well as on microfilm in the Reading Room. Aspects to consider for the directories:

- Demographic omissions include married women, children, and individuals who spoke no English
- Married women’s names were excluded or represented as follows: not included before 1934; given name listed secondary to husband starting from 1934; if working, listed as a separate entry from 1976-1996
- Children were not listed
- Individuals of Chinese or Japanese background not otherwise represented in the main alphabetical listing might appear in a separate directory section, “Chinese and Japanese Firms”; found in directories up to 1923
- Occasionally, there may be an addendum to the alphabetical sequence

See also our reference guide on city directories for more a more detailed overview. City directories for the years 1860-1955 have also been digitized and can be viewed online through the Vancouver Public Library.

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PHOTOGRAPHS ca. 1860-1990

Online & Reading Room (photo binders)

City and private photographic records used for showing people, houses and other buildings, and neighbourhoods. A large amount of photographic material has been digitized to search, view, and download directly from our database. Suggestions of related records are:

- **Major Matthews Collection ([AM54-Series 4 - Collected Photographs](#))**
 - Photographs available online from the Archives' database or access prints can be viewed in the Reading Room
- **City of Vancouver Archives Photograph Collection ([AM1376](#))**
 - Photographs available online from the Archives' database; a smaller amount of access prints can also be viewed in the Reading Room
- **City of Vancouver Heritage Survey 1978 - photographs ([COV-S535-F4](#))**
 - Photographs showing buildings and streets from various neighbourhoods
- **City of Vancouver Heritage Inventory 1986: Photograph Survey ([COV-S639](#))**
 - Photographs showing buildings, schools, parks, and monuments from various neighbourhoods

NEWS CLIPPINGS ca. 1860-2005

Reading Room (microfiche)

Used for information about individuals, families, businesses, and other organizations, industries, events and issues etc. Clippings are accessed by microfiche and can be searched by either card indexes or finding aids available in the Reading Room. Search headings such as individual names, clubs, businesses, ethnic and religious groups, subject etc. There are four sets of microfiche, each with its own alphabetical sequence:

- **Major Matthews Collection (AM54-Series 17- News clippings) 1860-1970**
 - [See card index](#)
- **City of Vancouver Archives News Clippings Collection 1972-2005**
 - [See card index](#)
- **Pacific Press I and II ca. 1930-1985**
 - [See finding aid binder](#)

BOOKS

Storage

ca. 1920-present

Secondary sources used for biographies, biographical data and information about family-related activities. The Archives' has its own reference library collection that can be accessed when visiting the Archives. Some general suggestions are:

- **City of Vancouver Archives Library Collection**
 - *Early Vancouver* by J.S. Matthews (FC 3847.49 M37 E2 1932): a seven volume account of conversations between Matthews and early residents. An index to all volumes is available in the Reading Room. *Early Vancouver* has also been transcribed and can be searched online from our website: [Major Matthews' Early Vancouver](#)
 - *Early Births: Vancouver and Vicinity* by J.S. Matthews (FC 3847.25 V2 M37 E27 1949): notes on individuals born in Vancouver 1857-1889
 - *Vancouver Voters, 1886: A Biographical Dictionary* eds. Claydon and Melanson (FC 3847.25 C53 1994)
 - *Greater Vancouver Social and Club Register* (FC 3847.21 V2 R9 1927)

Other Genealogical Resources

BC Archives

- Provincial archives holds records such as vital stat records (marriage, births, deaths), land records, wills etc.

Library and Archives Canada (LAC)

- National archives holds records under federal authority such as census, military, immigration records etc.

Municipal archives: Richmond, North Vancouver, Victoria etc.

Vancouver Public Library (VPL)

BC Genealogical Society

Search our holdings: <https://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/>

Please contact the Archives for further questions about our holdings
or to discuss a research topic with an archivist

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