British Columbia Archives

GENEALOGY RESEARCH GUIDE

FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH RESOURCES AT THE BC ARCHIVES

HP001788 Lady Amelia Douglas and family to the third and fourth generation, ca. 1885

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1 INTRODUCTION

An important source of information for those involved in family history research is the British Columbia Archives. Its holdings include government records, maps, newspapers, as well as personal, family, and other non-governmental records. Researchers who familiarize themselves with the BC Archives' holdings and how to access them will find their search for information more rewarding. Following is an outline of some of the resources available as well as related resources available elsewhere.

2 SELECTED RESOURCES

2.1 PUBLISHED MATERIAL

The BC Archives has an extensive **library** of published works dealing with British Columbia and Pacific Northwest history, politics, government, natural history, and ethnology. The library's holdings can be searched online.

Handbooks on Genealogical Research

Guides to doing family history research and to resources in the BC Archives Library can be found by searching "genealogy" as a keyword search or as a subject in Advanced Search. The public library is also a valuable source of genealogy research guides.

Family Histories

Family histories are best searched for under the name of a specific family, e.g. Rogers family.

Cemetery Listings

Mostly compiled by volunteers, these listings cover a large number of cemeteries throughout the province and may include transcriptions as well as dates. Search the online library catalogue with the truncated keyword "cemeter?" together with location or by the name of the cemetery. The BC Cemetery Finding Aid database can assist in determining place of interment.

British Columbia City and Provincial Business Directories

These directories list businesses, individuals, and occupations. Many of them have been microfilmed. Consult the Directories binders on top of the microfilm cabinets in the Reference Room for listings of holdings. The Vancouver Public Library has digitized copies of selected BC city directories from 1860-1901 on their web site. Directories can also be found as Internet Archive texts.

British Columbia Telephone Directories

Consult the *Guide to BC telephone directories* binder in the Reference Room to determine our holdings as well as the directories in which a specific community is listed.

Crockford's Clerical Directory (Anglican) 1860 [to date]

NW283 C938. BC Archives has 1868, 1896, 1910-14, 1916-18, 1920-22, 1923-27, 1929-36, 1941, 1947-50, and 1953-68. This source and the Clergy List cited below provide information on members of the Anglican clergy.

Clergy List (Anglican) 1841-1917

NW283 C629. BC Archives has 1882 and 1911-1916.

Army/Navy/Militia Lists

BC Archives has *Navy List,* 1806-1975 (*NW359 N326n*); *Royal Navy List*, 1879-1916 (*NW359 R888r*); *Mercantile Navy List*, 1857-1977 (*NW359 M553*); *Army List*, 1789-1976 (*NW355 M789*), *Canada Militia List*, 1867-1925 (*NW355 C212*); *Canada Defence Forces List*, 1934-1939 (*NW355 C212d*). Lists include name, rank and date of birth. Holdings are not complete.

Nominal Roll of Officers, N.C.O.s & Men, CEF

NW355 C212 vols. 1-24. List of World War I officers and enlisted men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force by battalion. In addition to name and rank, additional information such as name and address of next of kin, country and date of birth, and former corps, may be given. For an index to CEF personnel files at Library and Archives Canada and digital images of attestation papers, as well as of selected complete files, see the Soldiers of the First World War database.

Canadian Who's Who 1910 to date (irregular until 1981, then annual); *Index* 1898-1984

BC Archives has 1910, 1917, 1936-1939, and 1948-90 (*NW920 C212*) and *Index* (*NW920 C212c*).

Who's Who in British Columbia **1931-[1969]**

NW920 W628b. BC Archives has 1931, 1933-34, 1937-39, 1940-41, 1942-43, 1944-46, 1947-48, 1949-50, 1953, 1969 (vols. 1-10).

Who's Who in Who's Whos: an Index to Biographical Dictionaries of British Columbians

NW920 W628m. This publication is a good place to start when looking for individuals in biographical dictionaries. See also *Index of Deaths 1901-1939* and *Index of Marriages 1901-1939* (by groom and by bride) as recorded in the Victoria *Times* as well in BC biographical dictionaries, 1890-1953.

British Columbia Voters' Lists (by provincial electoral district) **1874 to date**

BC Archives has 1874-1983 (some gaps). Under the *Elections Act,* lists less than 25 years old are not open to the public. Arranged by provincial electoral district and polling division. In addition to names, the lists provide information on occupation and address (for urban areas) or community (for rural locations). Researchers need to know where the individual resided in order to determine the proper electoral district. Although names are listed alphabetically by polling divisions within each electoral district, there is no comprehensive list or index. For the larger urban ridings such as Vancouver and Victoria with a large number of polling stations (identified only by number), city directories can be used to help identify a more precise location. Note that women could not vote until 1917 and various groups were disenfranchised prior to 1952 (see *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986*, p.530).

Electoral History of British Columbia 1871-1986

NW324.1 B862e. Results, party affiliation, and names of the candidates are included in the election results. There is also an alphabetical list of the successful candidates (with election dates). Available online together with the 1987-2007 supplement. The *Electoral History* can be used to identify relevant *Statement of Votes* (*NW324.711 B862s*) which provide the occupation of each candidate. BC candidates for federal elections can be searched on the History of Federal Ridings since 1867 database.

Canadian Parliamentary Guide **1862 to date**

BC Archives has 1862-1912 (Microfiche *NW328.71 C214a*) and 1912-1994 (*NW328.71 C214*). Includes brief biographies of federal MPs and provincial MLAs.

British Columbia Gazette **1859-1860, 1863 to date**

NW320.05 B862, NW320.05 V223, NW320.05 V223g. BC Archives has 1859-1980. This weekly publication, accumulated into annual volumes, includes notices of government appointments, land grants and leases, licenses etc. An index for the year is found at the beginning of the bound volume(s) for each year starting in 1873. An index to the colonial government gazettes (1859-1872) has been compiled and copies of the indexes from 1873 to 1972 have been bound into separate volumes (*NW320.05 B862 index*). Commencing in 1958, the *Gazette* was published in two parts, Part II containing regulations, Part I continuing with the remainder of what had previously been published. For the *Canada Gazette* (1841-1997), which will cover federal activities, including appointments, in BC, see the Library and Archives database.

***British Columbia Public Accounts* 1872 to date**

BC Archives has 1880-1997 (*NW336.71 B862p*). Also available in the BC *Sessional Papers* (Microfilm *D-30*). *Public Accounts* prior to 1951 provide not only the names and remuneration of persons employed but also the position held or the service provided. From 1951 to 1954 names are listed by vote with only the position of the person in charge identified. Starting in 1954 names are listed alphabetically by Department (later Ministry) or Agency. More recent *Public Accounts* limit employee listings to those with salaries exceeding a specified minimum amount.

***British Columbia Public Schools (Department of Education) Annual Reports* 1872 to date**

BC Archives has 1872-1945 (*NW371.0171*), 1872-1950 (Microfilm *D-31*) and 1872-1982 in the BC Sessional Papers (Microfilm *D-30*). This source includes the names of teachers and information about schools.

***British Columbia Department of Mines Annual Reports* 1874 to date**

Reports issued under various names. BC Archives has 1874-1977 and indexes covering 1874-1964 (*NW971.35 B862a*), 1874-2001 (Microfiche *Df-86*) and 1874-1982 in the BC *Sessional Papers* (Microfilm *D-30*). The reports and indexes can also be found online. Older reports in particular include the names of individuals killed or injured in the mining industry.

2.2 HISTORICAL RECORDS, MANUSCRIPTS, AND GOVERNMENT RECORDS

Researchers seeking historical records, manuscripts, and government records can search the online databases (Textual Records and Fonds Descriptions) and the old, pre-1975 card catalogue in the Reference Room. Some of the contents of the catalogue have been entered into the Fonds Descriptions. Generally, the main entries in the catalogues are based on the name of the organization or individual that produced the record.

Many of the Textual Records descriptions include finding aids which provide a detailed description of the contents and allow researchers to narrow their search to particular parts of large record series. Researchers may also wish to consult the government records binders organized by ministry or agency.

2.2.1 GOVERNMENT RECORDS

Birth, marriage and death records

British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency (***Birth, Marriage and Death Records)***

Marriage and death registrations date from 1872, birth registrations from 1854. Birth registrations are available 120 years following the date of birth, marriage registrations are available 75 years after the date of marriage, and most death registrations are available 20 years after the date of death.

To search for these records see Genealogy Search on our new website which includes images for many – but not all – of the births, marriages and deaths. The old indexes are also still available but are not being updated. They are, however, currently better for searching for baptisms and include BMD data missing from the new database.
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British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency Divorce Records 1935-1983

From 1935 to 1985 the Vital Statistics Branch collected certified copies of final divorce decrees from BC court registries. Those from ca. April 1935 to mid-1983 were microfilmed and are available at the BC Archives (GR-3255). An index was created for divorces from 1901-1983 and is also available on microfilm at the Archives (GR-3254). For information on how to search these records see the reference guide. See also the guide to Divorce Records at the BC Archives.

Colonial Secretary Pre-Confederation Marriage Records (Colonial Marriages) 1859-1872 GR-3044**.**

Copies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia pre-confederation marriage records submitted to the Colonial Secretary by clergy, 1859-1872. They are indexed in both the old and new online vital events indexes. The volumes contain certified copies of marriage certificates, or returns of marriages, submitted by clergy of various, but not all, denominations. The most notable absence is that of the Church of England (Anglican Church). These records can be found in MS-0520.

Census records

A nominal census attempts to record information about every individual in a given area and is therefore of immense value to genealogists. Note that some records referred to as censuses may only provide aggregate numbers or only name heads of families.

Manitoba and Red River Censuses 1832-1847, 1849, 1856, 1870

GR-2017**.** On microfilm (reel B00396). For a list of enumeration districts consult the finding aid.

Canadian Censuses for British Columbia 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911

GR-0469**,** GR-0288**,** GR-2927, GR-3261**.** The BC Archives has the British Columbia portions of each census on microfilm. Consult the finding aids for reel numbers. Guides are available for 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911, and include information about available indexes, both online and printed. These censuses can also be searched and viewed online at Library and Archives Canada (LAC). A database of census records for Vancouver Island and parts of mainland British Columbia for 1881, 1891 and 1901 also exists and includes an 1871 municipal census for Victoria. The 1921 census is available but only on Ancestry.ca

Land records

British Columbia Crown Land Grant Records 1851-1930

Crown grants were routinely issued by the Province of British Columbia to convey surface, subsurface, and other rights. The BC Archives has a copy of crown land grant records for 1851-

1874 (GR-3139) and 1869-1930 (GR-3097); indexes for 1869-1930 (GR-3096); and auctioneers agreements for 1899-1914 (GR-3140). The records were microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah and are also available through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) local Family History Centers. The Historic Crown Grant Search is an online index searchable by personal or business name, land district, and date. The results can be used to obtain volume and grant number as well as the microfilm reel number for the record. Indexing was done by volunteers from the West Coast Family Histories Society. Note that not all crown grant information is included in these records.

British Columbia Pre-emption Records ca. 1859-1970

GR-0112 contains information on name of the pre-emptor, date, and description of the land. Consult "Government Records Relating to Crown Lands in British Columbia" in Binder 15 in the Reference room. There is an incomplete card index by name of pre-emptor. The Crown Lands Grants Index (GR-3096) and the Historic Crown Grant Search can be used to locate completed pre-emptions. See *Lands Records Guide* and *Preemption and Homestead Guide* for more information about pre-emption and homestead records. See also **Crown Land Grant Records** above.

British Columbia Surveyor of Taxes Assessment Rolls 1876-1948

GR-1999. On microfilm. The information given concerns owners of property, not necessarily residents. Use the finding aid in the Reference Room to determine taxation district before referring to the microfilm reel list. The records are incomplete. Later records are still in the legal custody of the Ministry of Finance.

Dominion Lands Branch Land Settlement Records for the BC Railway Belt and Peace River Block 1885-1930

GR-0436. On microfilm. Includes correspondence and applications to homestead in the Railway Belt and Peace River Block. Names of applicants can be searched in the finding aid. See *Preemption and Homestead Guide* for additional information about these records.

Immigration records

As immigration is a federal responsibility, the majority of official records dealing with immigration are in federal custody, mostly at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) in the case of historical records. See the Immigration and Citizenship section on the LAC website for historical background about immigration records and information about what records are available . The BC Archives has copies on microfilm of some federal immigration records (RG76) dealing with BC, including those described below.

Immigration Branch Central Registry Files

GR-1547. Includes records which deal with Asian immigration, child immigration and Doukhobor settlements in BC as well as registers of Chinese immigration at the Port of New Westminster, 1887-1908, and headquarters registers of Chinese immigrants and residents, 1885-1903. Consult the subject index in the hard copy finding aid in the Reference Room.

Ships' Passenger Lists 1900-1922 (Vancouver and Victoria)

GR-1739**.** Passenger lists were considered official immigration documents until 1935. The lists are organized by port and date of arrival and contain information such as the name, age, country of origin, occupation and destination of each passenger. An LAC database, Passenger Lists 1865-1922, provides access to passenger lists for Canadian ports, including Vancouver and Victoria for 1900-1922. It can be searched by name of ship, port and date. A related database indexes the names of Home Children (1869-1930) found in LAC records, including passenger lists. See also NW929.3711 B862d (Victoria ships' passenger departures, 1859-1861) and NW929.3711 V645 (Victoria ships' passenger lists, 1858-1861 arrivals).

Border Entry Lists 1908-1918 (British Columbia)

GR-1918**.** Border entry records document the entry of immigrants coming across the border from the United States, some American, others from other countries via American ports, starting in 1908. Prior to that date, no record exists for those crossing the border. Records include age, country of birth, last residence, occupation and destination. The lists are arranged by port and date of entry. For more information see the LAC guide. An index exists on Ancestry.ca (fees apply).

Naturalization records see below under **Court, coroner, and police records**

Court, coroner and police records

British Columbia Coroner's Records 1859-1970

The contents of these records is often of a sensitive nature, and may include autopsy reports, photographs, jury findings and police reports. Access restrictions apply to records after 1908. See the coroner's records research guide for more information.

British Columbia Court Records ca. 1849-1990

Records of civil and criminal proceedings. Holdings of both records and indexes are incomplete and vary from court registry to court registry. The "Court Records Guide" in Binder 7B is out of date but is a useful starting point. Some court records finding aids have nominal lists. Access restrictions may apply. For wills and probate records see below. For divorce records see the guide to divorce records at the BC Archives.

British Columbia Wills 1861-1980; *Index* 1861-1981

On microfilm. Wills probated in BC 1861-1980 (GR-1052, GR-2009). Indexes to BC probated wills and Victoria probate files 1861-1981(GR-1417). See the wills research guide for more information.

British Columbia Probate Case Files ca. 1861-1990

Court records relating to the probate of an estate, with or without a will. Probate files can provide information about property and heirs. Holdings of both records and indexes are incomplete and vary from court registry to court registry. See the probate research guide for more information.

British Columbia Naturalization and Citizenship Records ca. 1859-1966

Mostly County Court records, consisting of indexes, record books, registers of certificates, notices of intention to apply, etc. Coverage is incomplete with no records for some registries (e.g. Vancouver) and date coverage varying for others. Prior to 1947 immigrants to Canada could petition the court to become naturalized British subjects (those immigrants already British subjects did not need to apply). Canadian citizenship status was introduced in 1947. These court records are not the official naturalization or citizenship records which are federal documents. For more information see the LAC guide and Canadian Naturalization 1915-1932, which includes a database searchable by name and linked to information about 200,000 naturalized individuals.

British Columbia Provincial Police 1858-1950

GR-0055 includes a list of constables names and the stations at which they were serving (1889-1929) taken from the *Public Accounts*. GR-0091 consists of personnel records including applications, oath books, pay lists, and nominal rolls. Consult Binder 12 or search Textual Records for information about other BCPP records. Access restrictions apply to many of the post-1908 records.

Other government records

Health Care Records

These consist primarily of patient case files for provincial institutions such as Essondale (Riverview), Tranquille, and Woodlands. See the staff on duty in the Reference Room or contact us for information on how to access the records.

Colonial Correspondence ca. 1849-1872

GR-1372. Inter-governmental and inter-departmental correspondence as well as inward correspondence to the colonial governments of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, 1849-1871. The records are organized by sender (department or individual). The card index in the Reference Room covers files 1-1212a (A-Na), although not all files and records in that range have been indexed. The finding aid provides the required microfilm reel number.

Canadian Confederation Centennial Committee 1967 (British Columbia) and Centennial 1971 Committee (British Columbia)

GR-1489 and GR-1490. Applications for pioneer medallions that include genealogical data. Consult the finding aids for additional information.

2.2.2 NON-GOVERNMENT RECORDS (PRIVATE PAPERS)

Church Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials

Consult the card and online catalogues under church name, place name, or subject headings (e.g. "Registers of Births," "Religious Records"). Memory BC can be searched for holdings in

other BC repositories. Use the keywords "births", "marriages", "deaths", "baptisms" alone or in combination with "records" or "registers". Information about baptisms was also collected by the BC Vital Statistics Branch and can be found, if more than 120 years old, on the old and new genealogy search.

Family Papers and Family Trees

Genealogical information can often be gleaned from such family papers as correspondence, diaries, etc. The BC Archives also has a few family trees. Search the old manuscript card catalogue and Textual Records online under the family name.

Colonial Farm Settlers on the Mainland of British Columbia 1858-1871 **(1939)**

MS-0700**.**   Available on microfilm (A00819). Compiled by F.W. Laing "from original records in the Department of Lands and from documents in the Provincial Archives at Victoria." Includes an index.

Alexander Begg Collection

MS-0467**.** This collection includes three volumes of questionnaires distributed to settlers in the North West Territory in 1884-85.

Hudson's Bay Company Records

MS-2053 is a finding aid which allows researchers to determine the reel numbers for microfilmed records at the Hudson Bay Archives which can be borrowed through their local library on interlibrary loan. See the HBC Archives web site for more information and to search its holdings for additional material. To identify BC Archives holdings of HBC records, search the old manuscript card catalogue as well as online (Textual Records) for "Hudson's Bay Company", as well as names and personnel.

2.3 NEWSPAPERS

The BC Archives has a large collection of newspapers on microfilm, though major 20th century Vancouver and Victoria papers are not included, with the exception of the Victoria *Colonist* (to 1939). These can be accessed at university and public libraries. See British Columbia newspapers on microfilm which lists newspapers alphabetically by community and provides details of what issues are available. A print copy can be found in a binder on top of the newspaper microfilm cabinets. Indexes to the content of newspapers held by the BC Archives are selective and with the exception of the British Colonist 1858-1920 online and Victoria Newspapers 1858-1932, are not available electronically.

Researchers may also wish to consult the clipping file index. This microfiche index of selected newspaper articles (1858-1983) can be searched by subject, name, or place. Each entry contains the title of the article, the name of the newspaper, the date, the page number, and indicates if the article is also included in the vertical file collection. The vertical file is a collection of over 88,000 files on various subjects that provides easy access to newspaper articles on a given topic. The vertical files have been microfilmed (*D-19*) and are available in the Reference

Room. An alphabetical list of file titles, contained in four large black volumes, provides reel and starting frame number.

2.4 SOUND RECORDINGS

Consisting largely of interviews, most of the holdings are described. The descriptions can be searched online by title, creator/author, date, places shown and subject, as well as other parameters. Onsite researchers may also make use of the sound recordings card catalogue and finding aids that provide further details about some of the collections. Transcripts exist for some of the recordings and are noted on the online descriptions. A series, *Sound Heritage*, published by the BC Archives (1972-1983) includes excerpts from many oral history interviews as well as historical context.

2.5 FILM

Researchers interested in archival film and video should consult the Film page on the BC Archives web site. The Moving Images Index provides online access to descriptions of these materials through the search page. The descriptions are searchable by title, subject, creator/author, date, places shown and other parameters.

2.6 PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTARY ART (PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS AND PRINTS)

The photographs and art in our collections provide visual documentation of the history of the province from its earliest colonial days, and offer a vital resource to researchers of all kinds, from genealogists to biologists, anthropologists to art historians. Many of the visual images in the collection are accessible through the Visual Records search on the BC Archives web site. Almost 200,000 text descriptions are available on-line for searching, with about 95,000 on-line images available for viewing.

The Historical Photograph (HP) files are arranged by location (General Files), family name (Portrait Files), and subject heading (Subject Files). Copies of some photograph collections have been put into binders by theme or photographer. Colour slides and black and white photographs of art works are also available.

2.7 CARTOGRAPHIC RECORDS (MAPS, PLANS, ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS)

Card catalogues in the map reference area list the cartographic records by author, title, subject, date, and/or by National Topographic Series (NTS) number, depending upon the catalogue. There is also an online catalogue but it includes very few maps. Finding aids are available that make locating a map easier if it happens to be part of a series. Our Victoria fire insurance plans covering 1891-1913 have been digitized and are available at through the University of Victoria Library website. Created to assist insurance underwriters in determining fire insurance risk, these coloured maps, using a scale of 50 feet to 1 inch, provide detailed information about

streets and buildings including use, construction material, shape, height and number of floors, functions, fuel, and fire protection. Buildings used by Chinese, Japanese and Indians were identified.

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3 OTHER GUIDES

Genealogical Resources for British Columbians (2004)
Canadian Genealogical Resources: a Guide to Material held at the Cloverdale Library

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4 WEB ADDRESSES FOR CITED ONLINE RESOURCES NOT ON BC ARCHIVES WEB SITE

British Columbia Cemetery Finding Aid (BCCFA)
www.islandnet.com/bccfa/

British Columbia City Directories (VPL)
www.vpl.ca/bccd/index.php

British Columbia Department of Mines Annual Reports
www.empr.gov.bc.ca/Mining/Geoscience/PublicationsCatalogue/AnnualReports/Pages/AnnualReports.aspx

British Colonist
http://britishcolonist.ca/

Canada Censuses
http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx

Canada Gazette database
www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/canada-gazette/

Canadian border entry records
www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/022-908.005-e.html

Canadian Naturalization
http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/citizenship-naturalization-records/naturalized-records-1915-1951/Pages/introduction.aspx

Electoral History of British Columbia
www.elections.bc.ca/index.php/resource-centre/electoral-history-of-bc/

Family History Centers locations
www.familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp

Historic Crown Grant Search
https://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/rd/html/index.html

History of Federal Ridings since 1867

www2.parl.gc.ca/sites/lop/HFER/HFER.asp

Hudson Bay Company (HBC) Archives
www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/

Home Children
https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/home-children-1869-1930/Pages/home-children.aspx
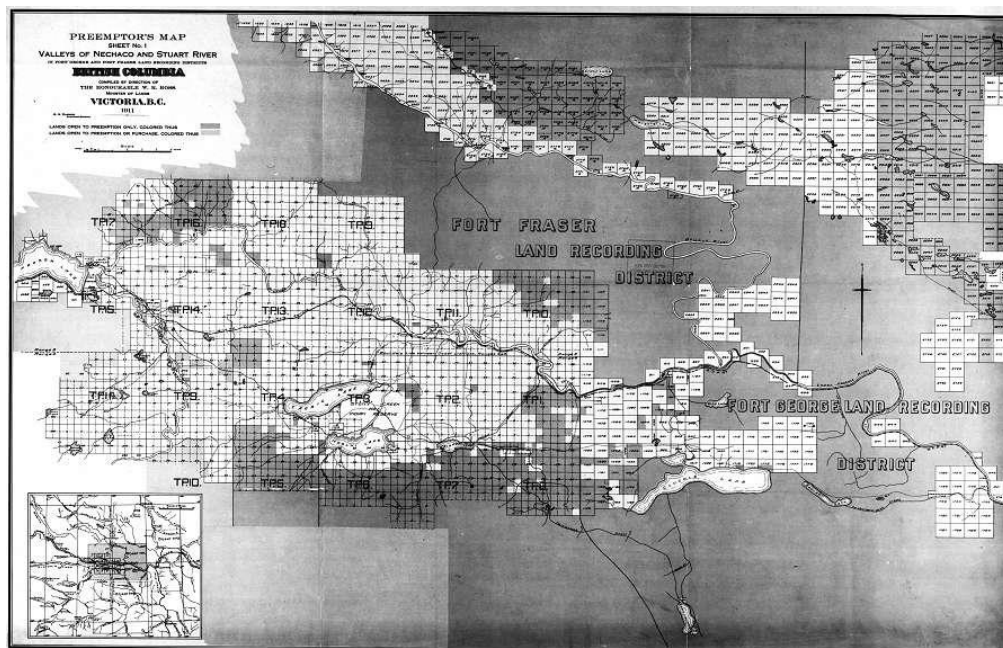
Memory BC
http://memorybc.ca/

Passenger Lists
http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/passenger-lists/passenger-lists-1865-1922/Pages/introduction.aspx

Soldiers of the First World War
http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/canadian-expeditionary-force.aspx

Vancouver Island Censuses
www.vihistory.ca/content/census/census.php

Victoria Fire Insurance Plans
http://www.uvic.ca/library/featured/collections/cartography/VictoriaFirePlans.php

Vital Events microfilm locations
www.vs.gov.bc.ca/genealogy/microfilm.html

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Notes