

BC Archives Research Guide

Old MS COLONIAL GOVERNOR RECORDS

This inventory provides a chronological list (by start date) of records related to the following colonial governors:

- Colony of Vancouver Island, 1849–1866 (Richard Blanshard, James Douglas, and Arthur Edward Kennedy)
- Colony of British Columbia, 1858–1866 (James Douglas and Frederick Seymour)
- the united Colony of British Columbia, 1866–1871 (Frederick Seymour and Anthony Musgrave)

The records were predominantly catalogued under a BC Archives system used from the mid-1930s to the early 1970s, known as the “Old MS” system. These records are only fully catalogued in the “Old MS” card catalogue, located within the BC Archives reference room.¹ Additional relevant records will also be found within the Old MS card catalogue and the [BC Archives Collection](#) search.

Digital copies of [colonial despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871](#) have been made available by the University of Victoria.

Reference Number	Date(s)	Creator and Title
A/B/40/M22K Book	1826-1837	McLeod, John. Correspondence inward 1826-1837. Letter dated 12 Mar. 1832 [from James Douglas].
A/B/40/D75.2 Book	1827-1844	James Douglas. Journal in five parts. Transcripts available. Includes: (1) diary of a trip to the northwest coast, 22 Apr.-2 Oct., 1840; (2) diary of a trip to California, 2 Dec. 1840-23 Jan. 23 1841; (3) notes on the traditions and population of Indigenous communities on the northwest coast; (4) voyage records for HBC Co. ships 1837-1844; and (5) diary of a trip down Connolly's River, 14-16 Aug. 1827.
A/B/20/V2D [digitized]	1830-1849	Fort Vancouver. Correspondence outward. Letters signed by James Douglas.
A/B/20/L3A MS	1830-1859	McDonald, Archibald et al. Correspondence relating to Fort Langley.
G/V27/D28 MS	1835	Davidson, W. M. “The forgotten colony”.
A/B/20/V9 MS	1837	Fort Vancouver. Register of marriage licences: (1) James Douglas and Amelia Connolly and (2) Benjamin McKenzie and Katherine Campbell.
A/B/20/C72M.1 MS	Apr. 1838- May 1842	Correspondence of Archibald McDonald relating to Fort Colvile. Letter-book copies.
A/B/20/V Book [digitized]	1839-1841; 1866-1867	Fort Vancouver. Establishment of servants, Columbia District out. Formerly known as "Distribution of Gentlemen and men, outfit" and "Fort Vancouver. Correspondence outward. Letters signed by James Douglas at Fort Vancouver and on inspection tours to northwest coast and California".

¹ The notation “Book” after a call number means that the record is a bound volume; “MS” means loose pages. Different records may have duplicated reference numbers: one for a Book and one for a MS.

Reference Number	Date(s)	Creator and Title
A/B/20/V2DK MS [digitized]	1840	Fort Vancouver. Correspondence inward. Typescript of letter signed by James Douglas.
A/B/40/D75.4 MS	1841, 1843	Douglas, James. Diary continuation of a voyage to Sitka. Transcript available.
A/B/40/F49 MS	1844	Finlayson, Roderick. Correspondence outward [to James Douglas]. Transcript available.
A/E/R731/D741 MS [digitized]	1846	Douglas, James. Correspondence outward.
A/B/20/L3YK/A MS	1847-1848, 1852, 1856, 1858	Fort Langley. Correspondence inward from Fort Vancouver and Fort Victoria.
A/B/10/D75 MS	1848	Douglas, James. Correspondence outward. Photocopy. Transcript available.
C/AA/10.5/1 MS	1849-1851	Vancouver Island. Governor (Blanshard). Correspondence inward. Transcript available.
A/B/20/V2/Od MS [digitized]	1849-1854	Fort Vancouver. Correspondence outward. Letters signed by Peter Skene Ogden and James Douglas.
A/C/20/Vi7 MS	1849-1859	Fort Victoria. Correspondence inward (from HBC, London) to James Douglas. Transcript available.
A/C/20/Vi8 MS	1849-1859	Fort Victoria. Correspondence and papers (from HBC) re chaplain.
C/AA/10B/3 Book	16 Jul. 1849	Vancouver Island. Governor (Blanshard). Instructions to Richard Blanshard.
A/B/20/G76 MS	25 Oct. 1849	Report on Vancouver's Island by Capt'n W.C. [Walter Colquhoun] Grant. Report to James Douglas, Acting Governor, on southern Vancouver Island re land use, resources and Indigenous population.
C/AA/10.4/1 MS	1850-1851	Vancouver Island. Governor (Blanshard). Correspondence outward. Letters to J.S. Helmcken, official and private, in Fort Rupert, HBC and naval officers. Transcript available.
A/C/20/Vi3D MS Reels A01360(3) and 738A	1850-1859	Fort Victoria. Correspondence outward. Letters signed by James Douglas. Transcript available.
A/C/20/Vi2 Book	16 May 1850-6 Nov. 1855	Fort Victoria. Correspondence outward to HBC on the affairs of Vancouver Island colony. Letter-book. Letters from James Douglas to Archibald Barclay. Transcript available.
C/AA/10.4/1 Book	22 Jun. 1850-5 Mar. 1859	Vancouver Island. Governor (Blanshard and Douglas). Correspondence outward. (1) 22 Jun. 1850-12 Aug. 1850; ² 14 Oct. 1851-5 Mar. 1859 and (2) calendar (correspondence list) and original book cover. Index included. Transcript available.
C/AA/10.3/2 MS	12 Aug. 1850	Vancouver Island. Governor (Blanshard). Proclamation re riots at Fort Rupert.
B/90/1 [digitized]	[ca.1851]	Douglas, James. Private account journal.

² Previously titled: Vancouver Island Miscellaneous Letters June 22nd, 1850 to March 5th, 1859.

Reference Number	Date(s)	Creator and Title
A/C/15/H86P Book	1851-1858	Hudson's Bay Company Land Office, Victoria. Correspondence outward [to Governor James Douglas]; signed by J. D. Pemberton.
A/C/20.1/N15 Book	Aug. 1852- Sep. 1853	Fort Nanaimo. Correspondence between James Douglas and Joseph William McKay. Transcript available.
B/20/1853 MS	3-25 Jan. 1853	Private papers of Sir James Douglas. Transcription of James Douglas' personal notes, diary entries from 3-25 Jan. 1853, and a census created in regards to the surrounding First Nations populations.
C/AA/10.3/1 Book	26 Mar. 1853- 8 May 1858	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Proclamations. Official letter-book copies.
B/40/1 Book	1854-1857	Douglas, James. Correspondence outward. Letters to Martha.
C/AA/10.7 MS	1855	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Census. Partly in handwriting of James Douglas.
A/C/20/Vi5 MS	1855-1858	Fort Victoria. Correspondence outward. Letter-book copies; letters signed by James Douglas. [note: nothing from 1858]
A/C/20/Vi3 Book	11 Dec. 1855- 8 Jul. 1859	Fort Victoria. Correspondence outward to HBC on the affairs of Vancouver Island colony. Letter-book. Letters from James Douglas to William G. Smith and Thomas Fraser. Transcript available.
C/AA/10/L26 MS	1856, 1860	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Correspondence inward; from E. E. Langford. Includes files F966a/1 (land issue), 4, and 5 (position of Chief Justice and unsuitability of David Cameron) originally in GR-1372 .
C/AA/20.2K/1 Book	27 Nov. 1856- 20 Jul. 1860	Vancouver Island. House of Assembly. Returns, messages [from Governor James Douglas], etc. to the House.
A/C/20/Vi4 Book	21 Dec. 1856- 25 Jan. 1858	Fort Victoria. Correspondence outward. Letters signed by James Douglas. See photocopy.
C/AA/30.1KI/1 Book	1857-1864	Vancouver Island. Colonial Secretary. Index to correspondence inwards. The letters can be found in GR-1372 .
A/C/20/M191.1 MS	1858	McKay, Joseph William. Report of journey through a part of the Fraser River and adjoining districts.
D/A/Un3N MS	1858	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Papers and correspondence from and relating to John Nugent, Special Agent for the United States Government on the Pacific Coast. Includes letters from British Minister to the United States, Lord Napier, to Governor James Douglas re appointment; letters from Nugent to Douglas re lack of legal counsel for Americans being tried in criminal cases; response from A.F. Pemberton.
E/B/M148 MS	1858	McDonald, Archibald, Jr. Correspondence outward. Letter to James Douglas seeking employment.
B/90/4 MS	1858-1859	Douglas, James. Financial transaction papers. Contains an indenture for land between James Douglas and Alexander Dallas, a receipt for a sale of land, and a

Reference Number	Date(s)	Creator and Title
		photocopy of Supreme Court Order re: Section 96, Esquimalt District and Rosebank.
B/20/1858 MS	1858-1860	Private papers of Sir James Douglas. File consists of a typescript of private papers from James Douglas. Includes: (1) diary 24 May-14 Sep. 1858; (2) diary 14-16 Aug. 1827 (3) diary 3 Mar.-27 Oct. 1835; (4) diary 28 Aug.-4 Oct. 1860; (5) "further diary" Nov. [1835?]; and (6) extracts from letters. Only available as a typescript, originals presumed lost.
C/AB/30.1KI/I Book	1858-1863	British Columbia. Colonial Secretary. Index to miscellaneous correspondence inwards.
74-A-541[1]	1858-1878	Vancouver Island. Governor. Correspondence from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Board of Trade, Treasury re lighthouses at Race Rocks and Fisgard Island; schedule of correspondence re Vancouver Island lighthouses.
C/AB/10.2i/1 MS	Jul. 1858- Oct. 1863	British Columbia. Governor. Index to despatches to British Columbia.
C/AB/10.4/1 Book Reel B04716	14 Jul. 1858- 30 May 1859	British Columbia. Governor (Douglas). Correspondence outward. Original letter-book copies.
C/AB/10.2B/1 Book	16 Jul. 1858- 14 Jul. 1863	British Columbia. Governor (Douglas). Register of despatches from London.
C/AB/10/1 MS	19 Sep. 1858	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Proclamation of Indemnity. Indemnifying Governor for acts done before establishment of any legitimate authority in British Columbia.
A/C/20/Vi3B	24 Nov. 1858	Fort Victoria. John Work, Dugald Mactavish, Chief Factors Hudson's Bay Company to James Douglas, Governor of British Columbia, re land in BC claimed by HBC and confirmation of title.
B/90/3 MS	[ca.1859]	Douglas, James. Receipt, memo, and envelope.
E/B/Sh1 MS	1859, 1861	Shanks, Hugh. Correspondence outward to Colonel Moody, CCL&W, suggesting methods by which Colony of BC should be ruled, 17 May 1859; to James Douglas complaining of too few British subjects as settlers, 27 [Dec.] 1861.
A/C/15/V66D MS	1859-1861	Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria. Correspondence outward [to Governor James Douglas]. Originals and some transcripts.
B/40/2 MS	1859, 1862	Douglas, James. Correspondence outward.
GR-0722	1859-1866	Vancouver Island proclamations.
C/AB/10.6/1 to /12 Book Reels B11283 and B11284	1859-1870	British Columbia. Governor. Blue books of statistics. 12 vols.: 1859, 1860, 1861 (excerpts only), 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865 (c. 1-2.), 1866 (c. 1-2), 1867, 1868 (c. 1-2), 1869 (c.1-2), 1870 (incomplete).
K/RS/Sa5.1 to .5 MS	1859-1871	Correspondence re San Juan boundary dispute. Comprised largely of documents taken from files in GR-1372 for Royal Navy officers and ships as well as colonial government departments and officials.

Reference Number	Date(s)	Creator and Title
C/AA/10.4/2 Book Reel B02650	7 Jan. 1859- 13 Sep. 1859	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Correspondence outward. Many letters signed by W. A. G. Young, Colonial Secretary. Two letters signed by W. E. Cormack. Official letter-book copies. Transcript available.
C/AA/10.4/3 Book Reel B02650	27 May 1859- 9 Jan. 1864	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Correspondence outward. Private official letter-book. Also contains many letters relating to Colony of British Columbia.
C/AA/10D/D16 MS	19 Aug.-12 Sep. 1859	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Correspondence with A.G. Dallas (inward and outward) re financial arrangements with HBC, responsibility for civil expenditure, revenue from land sales, new government buildings, Colonial Surveyor.
C/AA/30.1J/1 to /6 Book	14 Sep. 1859- 29 Nov. 1866	Vancouver Island. Colonial Secretary. Correspondence outward. Official letter-book copies.
C/AB/10.4/2 Book	30 Nov. 1859- 8 Dec. 1863; 19 Mar. 1869- 2 Nov. 1869	British Columbia. Governor (Douglas). Correspondence outward. Miscellaneous letters and notes.
E/B/C26.9	1860-1861	Casamayon, Antoine. Papers relating to Land grant No. 218 for Lot 3, Block 5, Town of New Westminster, 1860; indenture between Casamayon and James Douglas, 7 May 1861.
C/AA/20.2K/2 Book	27 Jul. 1860- 11 Mar. 1864	Vancouver Island. House of Assembly. Correspondence with the House of Assembly. Returns, messages from James Douglas, etc.
E/B/B261 MS	1861	Barnston, John George. Correspondence outward to Douglas re "exploring trip...from Alexandria to the North Bentinck Arm".
C/AA/10/V66 MS	1862	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas). Report of the Victoria Harbour Commission.
A/C/15/D75 MS Reel A01360(5)	1863	Douglas, James. Confidential report on officers.
C/AA/10.6/1 Book Reel B02650(1)	1863	Vancouver Island. Schedule of taxes, duties, fees and all other sources of revenue.
J/G/C81 MS	1863-1865	Douglas, James. Correspondence regarding direct steamboat communication between England and Vancouver Island.
C/AA/10K/1 MS	26 Oct. 1863	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Commission to be "Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Island of Vancouver and its Dependencies".
C/AA/10K/2 MS	11 Dec. 1863	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Instructions re "administering the Government of our said Island".
C/AA/30.1KI/2 Book	1864-1866	Vancouver Island. Colonial Secretary. Index to correspondence inwards. Letters in GR-1372 .
C/AA/10.2B/1 Book	1864-1866	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Register of despatches received from Colonial Office.
C/AA/10.4/2 MS Reel B02650	1864-1866	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Correspondence outward to Governor Frederick Seymour.

Reference Number	Date(s)	Creator and Title
C/AB/10.2B/1 MS	1864-1867	British Columbia. Governor (Seymour). Register of despatches to London.
C/AB/10.9S MS	1864-1869	British Columbia. Governor (Seymour). Transcripts of Commission, instructions, and death certificate.
C/AA/10.5/1 Book	11 Feb. 1864- 31 Aug. 1866	Vancouver Island. Governor (Douglas and Kennedy). Correspondence inward. Communications from House of Assembly.
C/AA/10.4/4 Book	2 Apr. 1864- 3 Aug. 1866	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Correspondence outward. Messages to House of Assembly.
B/20/1864 MS	14 May 1864- 16 May 1865	Douglas, James. Diary. Trip to Europe. Transcript available.
C/AA/30.1JI Book	Sep 1864- Nov 1866	Vancouver Island. Colonial Secretary. Index to correspondence outward.
74-A-617	1865	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Letters from Elwood Evans, Acting Governor of Washington Territory re seized ships.
C/AA/30.71/D74 MS	1865	Vancouver Island. Colonial Surveyor. Indenture between James Douglas and B.W. Pearse, Colonial Surveyor, for lease of piece of land on Fairfield Estate.
E/B/M594.9 MS	1865	Miles, Elizabeth. Indentures. Drafts sent to Colonial Secretary: (1) Miles to the Queen. Conveyance of Section 75 Victoria District [part of Fairfield Estate] – reference to Indenture of 25 May 1861 between Douglas and G. H. Cary and (2) the HBC and Miles to the Queen. Conveyance of portion of Section 68 Victoria District.
C/AA/10.5/2 MS	1865	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Correspondence inward from Governor Frederick Seymour.
MS-2789	1 Jan. 1866- 3 Apr. 1869	Harris, Martha (Douglas). Journal, Vancouver Island. 30 Nov. 1867-3 Apr. 1869 in handwriting of James Douglas. [previously E/B/H24 Book]
C/AA/30.1J MS	8 Oct. 1866	Vancouver Island. Colonial Secretary. Correspondence outward. Reconveyance of Vancouver Island.
C/AA/10K/3 MS	22 Oct. 1866	Vancouver Island. Governor (Kennedy). Commission to the Governor of Vancouver Island revoked.
B/40/3 MS	15 Dec. 1866- 16 Mar. 1867	Douglas, James. Correspondence outward. Transcripts available.
C/AB/10/2 MS	1867	British Columbia. Governor (Seymour). Proclamation establishing ports of entry in BC (Victoria, New Westminster, Esquimalt, Nanaimo, Burrard Inlet).
PR-1444	1867	Buttle, John. Correspondence with Governor Seymour and letters of reference from Governor Kennedy and Robert Brown. [previously E/B/B97 MS]
B/40/2	22 Mar. 1867- 11 Oct. 1870	Douglas, James. Correspondence outward
C/AB/10.1 MS	21 Nov. 1868	British Columbia. Governor (Seymour). Despatch to London re appointment of Philip J. Hankin as Colonial Secretary.
C/B/10/M97 MS	1869	British Columbia. Governor (Musgrave). Draft of instructions.

Reference Number	Date(s)	Creator and Title
74-A-658	1871	British Columbia. Governor (Musgrave). Correspondence inward (draft) from E.G. Alston, et al.
C/AB/10.2B/2 MS	1869-1871	British Columbia. Governor (Musgrave). Register of despatches to London.
C/AB/10.5/3 MS	1869-1871	British Columbia. Governor (Musgrave). Correspondence inward from Governor General of Canada.
B/20/1869 MS	1 Apr. 1869- 8 Sep. 1871	James Douglas weather diary
C/AB/10.2B/2 Book	17 Jul. 1869- 5 Jul. 1871	British Columbia. Governor (Musgrave). Register of despatches from London.
C/B/20.1J MS	Feb.-Apr. 1870, Jan.-Mar. 1871	British Columbia. Legislative Council. Correspondence outward to Governor Anthony Musgrave. Official Council communications, signed by P.J. Hankin.
B/40/6 MS [digitized]	1871	Douglas, James. Observations on the Oregon Treaty of 1846.
C/AB/10.5/4 MS	1871	British Columbia. Governor (Musgrave). Correspondence inward.
E/C/H21 MS	1873	Hardie, Alexander. Correspondence with Government Agent Yale re application to pre-empt land on the South Thompson River and application for water rights.
B/40/5 MS	1874, 1877	Douglas, James. Family correspondence
B/20/1874 MS	1874, 1 Mar. 1876- 2 Aug. 1877	James Douglas diary in two parts
F/52/D74 MS [digitized]	14 Oct. 1874	Correspondence outward: James Douglas reply to I.W. Powell re "laying out of Indian reserves".
B/90/C87 MS	1878	Cridge, Edward. Characteristics of Sir James Douglas.
PR-2406	1878	Tod, John. "History of New Caledonia and the Northwest coast." Photocopy. [previously E/A/T56 Book]
C/AB/10/G74 MS	1969	Gundry, Frances and George Newell. "The Governors of Vancouver Island and British Columbia: a study in the continuance of the royal power".