

## BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES RESEARCH GUIDE

### CENSUS OF CANADA, 1881: BRITISH COLUMBIA

The British Columbia Archives (BC Archives) holds microfilm copies of the census returns for British Columbia for 1881, 1891 and 1901. The census, unlike other research sources identifying individuals such as city/business directories and voters lists, intended to capture information about every individual in British Columbia. Although attempts were made to include returns for the native and Chinese population, this was not a systematic enumeration until 1901 when the native population was, for the first time, enumerated by "Indian agency".

The federal Department of Agriculture organized the 1881 census. British Columbia was divided into five census districts (Cariboo, New Westminster, Vancouver, Victoria and Yale) and 26 sub-districts. Local census enumerators were appointed to record detailed information about the population: name, age, sex, racial origin, religion, profession, wages, education and health. This information was written down in what is known as Schedule 1. This schedule is the only one of eight different schedules prepared by the enumerators that survived until it was microfilmed. The microfilm version of the 1881 census is not very clear and the original was destroyed. Scratches on our copy of the film make it even harder to read. There are some published indexes, described below, which may help you. Please follow the instructions below in order to find a census entry on the BC Archives microfilm copy for a particular individual:

#### A) IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INDIVIDUAL WHO LIVED IN VICTORIA OR ON VANCOUVER ISLAND IN 1881

1) Unless you wish to verify the accuracy of the information, you do not need to consult the microfilm version. A nominal index to all individuals recorded on **VANCOUVER ISLAND** was published. To request the BC Archives Library copy through the retrievals desk, fill out a call slip, place it in the box on the desk, and staff will retrieve the index for you. The call number for the nominal index for Vancouver Island is **Ref. NW 317.1 C215 1881**, and the title is "1881 Canadian Census, Vancouver Island". See the end of this guide for a reference to an online version of this publication.

2) The index is arranged alphabetically within each sub-district; Victoria entries begin on page 1. You may also need to check outlying areas such as Esquimalt, Metchosin and Saanich; use the "Contents" listing on page ii to determine where those sections begin. It's a good idea to read the introduction carefully, as it will explain how the index was prepared, and give you further information about the census itself.

3) When you find the name you are interested in, note that the information about that individual has been reduced to a series of computer codes; pages 4 through 11 of the publication will tell you what the codes mean.

4) If you are looking for an individual outside of Victoria, the "Contents" listing on page ii will show you where the entries for each sub-district begin.

#### B) IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INDIVIDUAL WHO LIVED ON THE BC MAINLAND IN 1881

1) You may not need to consult the microfilm version. A nominal index to "heads of households" for all of British Columbia was published. To request the BC Archives Library copy through the retrievals desk, fill out a call slip, place it in the box on the desk, and staff will retrieve the index for you. The call number is **NW 317.11 M224** and the title is "Index to 1881 Canadian Census of British Columbia".

2) The index is arranged alphabetically within each sub-district. If you find the name you are interested in, write down the enumeration area, district and sub-district from the top of the page. Also, note the household number which is recorded beside the name; all these pieces of information will be needed if you wish to look up the microfilm entry.

3) This index DOES NOT include Chinese or native Canadians, nor does the index provide any information other than placing an individual in a geographic area. You will need to consult the microfilm to determine the age, nationality, religion, occupation of any individual you find, and the names of any other family members residing at the same address.

### TO VIEW THE MICROFILM VERSION OF AN ORIGINAL CENSUS ENTRY FOR 1881

Follow the instructions in either parts A or B to obtain the District, Sub-District and household numbers that apply to the individual you are seeking, or use the finding aid (**GR-0469**) or reel list summary below to identify and browse the two reels of microfilm.

The boxed finding aid for the 1881 census (**GR 0469**) is on the GR finding aid bookshelf in the reference room. The blue finding aid inside the box describes the microfilm content in two lists. One list is organized by place name, and the other, which begins on page 15 of the finding aid, is organized by enumeration districts. Use either to determine the reel number you require (either **B00389** or **B00390**) and help yourself to the self-serve microfilm from the cabinets along the wall to the left of the retrievals desk. Use the list on page 15 to guide you through the microfilm to the correct sub-district. You will find the district and sub-district numbers at the top of each page of the census. The black finding aid contains describes the entire 1881 census, along with microfilm reel numbers not held by the BC Archives.

If you know the enumeration district and wish to browse the two microfilm reels directly, use this reel list to **GR 0469**:

BCA REEL NUMBER	[CENSUS DISTRICT NUMBER]	CENSUS DISTRICT	NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA REEL NUMBER
<b>B-00389</b>	[187]	New Westminster	C-13284
<b>B-00389 and B-00390</b>	[188]	Cariboo	C-13284 and C-13285
<b>B-00390</b>	[189]	Yale	C-13285
<b>B-00390</b>	[190]	Victoria	C-13285
<b>B-00390</b>	[191]	Vancouver	C-13285

### TO MAKE COPIES

You can make your own copies, at the current price per page, during the Archives regular hours. It will probably require two sheets to print out one page of the census.

### OTHER RESOURCES AT THE BC ARCHIVES

There are also a number of published sources that deal with a number of different census returns. Please use the following subject headings as a guide to locating some of these resources in our library catalogue:

<b>Canada – Census</b>	<b>Canada – Census, 1784</b>	<b>Canada – Census, 1890-91</b>
<b>Canada – Census, 1901</b>	<b>Canada – Census, 1911</b>	<b>Canada. Census and Statistics Office.</b>
<b>Canada. Dept. of Agriculture Statistical Office.</b>		

### INTERNET/WEB RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE BC ARCHIVES

Vancouver Island 1881 Census (<http://history.mala.bc.ca/content/census/1881/>). Based upon the 1990 publication *1881 Canadian Census, Vancouver Island* (Call number: Ref. NW 317.1 C215 1881), this database corrected many transcription errors and offers a wide range of search options.

British Columbia GenWeb (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~canbc/>). This site is a gateway to databases and transcripts relevant to BC genealogical research.