Frequently Asked Questions

When did my ancestors arrive in Victoria?
A search through city directories gives an idea as to when a person arrived in Victoria. Passenger lists (see below) and the census records are also useful. Federal immigration records are available through Library and Archives Canada.

Where can I find passenger lists?
In the early days, passenger lists were published in the daily newspaper. Historical newspapers are available on microfilm at the Greater Victoria Public Library and online (British Colonist only) at www.britishcolonist.ca.

What if my ancestor is not buried in Ross Bay Cemetery?
In 1927, Royal Oak Burial Park became the main cemetery for the Greater Victoria area. In 1932, Hatley Memorial Gardens opened to serve the Western Communities. There are also numerous small church graveyards in Greater Victoria.

How can I get a death notice outside of the years 1901-1939?
After establishing a date of death (check BC Archives’ genealogy search page online), you can search for death notices in historical newspapers available on microfilm at the Greater Victoria Public Library and online (British Colonist only) at www.britishcolonist.ca.
This brochure describes tools available for family history research at the Archives, and how you can use them.

**City Directories**

1860-1999

City directories can be a good resource for genealogists. They list names and addresses of residents of the City and environs, and often include information about an individual’s occupation. Some directories pertain only to the City, while others include Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia. Directories for 1860-1955 can be found online through the Vancouver Public Library: bccd.vpl.ca.

**Death and Marriage Notices**

1901-1939

Obituary and marriage notices from the Victoria Daily Times are available for 1901-1939. The marriage and death notice indexes are available in the Archives reference room and online through the Archives’ website.

**Ross Bay Cemetery Records**

1872-1987

The information in these records includes name, place of birth, place of death, date of death, and plot location. Ross Bay Cemetery records are available online through the Archives’ website.

**Canadian Census**

1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, and 1921

Copies of the 1881 and 1891 federal census data, Victoria section, compiled by the Public History Group at the University of Victoria, are available at the Archives. 1881 was the first year a census was compiled for British Columbia, because BC had joined confederation during the previous census year (1871). Census records can be useful as they show name, marital status, birthplace, religion, age, sex, occupation, relationships within a household, etc. Information about these records can be found through Library and Archives Canada.

**Voters Lists**

1908-1996

These records mainly cover the period from 1908 to 1996, although a few earlier lists also exist. These records provide names and addresses.

**Newspaper Clippings**

These extensive clipping files can be useful for information on prominent residents, ethnic groups, sports, etc.

**Photographs**

The Archives has an extensive photograph collection from a variety of sources. Browse scanned images from our collection through the Archives’ Online Search: archives.victoria.ca. Print reproductions of images are available for purchase through the Archives.

**Community Records**

Community records - also called Private Records (PRs) - consist of documents created by a business, organization, or family. These records include correspondence, journals, ledgers, photographs, and property files. Descriptions of Private Records are available online through the Archives’ Community Records page.

**Reference Library**

The Archives has a modest collection of publications dealing mainly with Victoria local history. Although these items cannot be signed out of the Archives, visitors are welcome to consult them in the reference room. An index is available online through the Archives’ Reference Library page.