Researching the history of your house

Saanich Archives

Explore Saanich Archives Resources for Researching Your House
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1. Saanich Archives Reference Material

These resources are available in the Saanich Archives reference room and are the best starting point for research. After signing in, visitors are welcome to consult this self-serve material. Archives staff will be available to answer any questions.

City Directories

Listings in city directories are arranged by last name and by street. By looking up your street address, you may find the name and occupation of past owners or tenants, which could open up further lines of research. Saanich Archives does not have a complete set of directories; however additional volumes may be viewed online through the Vancouver Public Library: [http://www.vpl.ca/bccd/index.php](http://www.vpl.ca/bccd/index.php)

Directories available at Saanich Archives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PUBLISHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>Victoria City Directory</td>
<td>Edward Mallandaine</td>
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<tr>
<td>1860-1903</td>
<td>BC Directory/ Saanich and Victoria</td>
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<td>1874-1899</td>
<td>BC Directory/ Saanich</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900-1920</td>
<td>BC Directory/ Saanich</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>City of Victoria &amp; Suburbs</td>
<td>Henderson</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>BCD/ Vancouver &amp; Victoria</td>
<td>Wrigley</td>
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<td>1929</td>
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<td>BCD/ Vancouver &amp; Victoria</td>
<td>Wrigley</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>BC &amp; Yukon Directory</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>Victoria City Directory</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Victoria City &amp; Vancouver Island</td>
<td>BC Directories</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>Victoria &amp; Suburban Directory</td>
<td>BC Directories</td>
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Saanich GIS Mapping
Enter your address in this interactive viewer and use the “Identify” icon to access your property's legal description. This information can be useful in searching archival records, as some refer only to legal description rather than address: [http://www.saanich.ca/services/gis/index.html](http://www.saanich.ca/services/gis/index.html)

Early Landowners Finding Aid & Reference Maps
The finding aid includes owner and purchase information (price, number of acres) listed by Legal Section number for the Victoria and Lake land districts of Saanich. Your section number is part of your legal description (see Saanich GIS Mapping, above). A separate list of early landowner names includes all sections owned by each. Reference maps show the location and boundaries of the sections, as well as early landowner names.

Vertical Files
Our reference room filing cabinets include subject files (green label, arranged alphabetically) containing general information on the history of neighbourhoods, businesses, public buildings, groups, and more. These files may provide useful background information on the area in which your house is located. The pioneer and resident files (yellow label, arranged by last name) may contain biographical information on individuals associated with your home.
Fire Insurance Plans 1925 and 1968
These plans include structure information such as building materials and type of structure. They are also useful for neighbourhood research, old street names and routes, old street numbering, location of greenhouses, and location of outbuildings (barns, sheds, garages, etc.). While they do not cover all parts of Saanich, they are worth consulting.

Saanich Archives Online Photograph Search
Search for photographs relating to your house and neighbourhood on the Saanich Archives website. If entering your street name as a keyword does not return results, try searching by your local area (pull-down menu). [http://www.saanicharchives.ca](http://www.saanicharchives.ca)

Saanich Archives Census Project
View complete Saanich data from the 1911 and 1921 census to find out about who lived in your house during these years. Includes information like occupation, religion, and country of birth. [http://www.saanicharchives.ca](http://www.saanicharchives.ca)

Reference Books
2. Saanich Archives Original Records

These resources are held in the Saanich Archives vault and may provide additional information not found in the reference room. Visitors may request to have this material brought forward for viewing. Finding aids are available for some collections. Please ask staff for assistance.

Maps & Plans Collection
This collection includes approximately 3,500 plans, 1906-1980, including residential and commercial structures, sketch plans of proposed additions and outbuildings, subdivisions, and public works proposals. This collection is not exhaustive and does not include all structures in Saanich. The Saanich Planning Department, Inspections Division, also has some building plans. They may be reached by phone at 250-475-1775 Extension 5457.

Inset of Cadboro Bay, Wall Map, ca. 1912

Clerk’s Office Correspondence 1906-1980
This extensive collection consists of correspondence to and from the Clerk’s Department from the time of incorporation to 1980. The records are arranged by year, and grouped by categories. If you know the year in which your house was built (or had additions, etc.), you may wish to look through categories such as Buildings and Plumbing, Drainage and Water, Taxes, Board of Variance, Inspections, and Zoning for that year.
Aerial Photographs Collection
This small collection includes aerial photographs from the 1950s through 1970s. Staff can also direct you to larger resources for aerial photographs of Saanich and the Victoria area. Aerial photographs can be useful for seeing buildings, roads, and trees in your neighbourhood at a specific point in time.

Street Files Collection
This collection, mostly from the 1950s and 1960s, contains plans, petitions, correspondence and copies of legal documents relating to such topics as subdivisions, road and sidewalk construction, sewers and drainage. The records have been indexed by street.

Heritage Structures Inventory Files & Photographs
These files and accompanying photographs were compiled during the research for the Saanich Heritage Structure Inventory (1991). Files are available for heritage homes of note, for those both on the registry and those that were not included.

Voters Lists
Voters Lists can provide information similar to that from directories (see above). Saanich Archives holds voter's lists from as early as 1874.

Saanich Archives holds building permits for 1918-1920, and building permit lists for 1937-1970 and 1966-1976. The Saanich Planning Department, Inspections Division, may also have building permits. They may be reached by phone at 250-475-1775 Extension 5457.

BC Assessment Authority Photographs
This collection consists of photographs taken by BC Assessment of various houses, 1980s and 1990s. Photographs are arranged by street and house number.
Saanich Heritage Foundation Collection
For heritage home owners, this collection includes photographs, as well as correspondence, reports, restoration guides, and other material.

Public Works and Engineering Photographs
These collections include some photographs of specific properties as well as general street views, 1970s.

Land Tax Assessments 1895-1906, 1913
These volumes contain early landowner names; legal description, size, and values for the properties; and notations. The assessment information in listed in oversized ledgers, but certain years are available in spreadsheet format.
3. Other Resources & Links

Saanich Archives Online Photograph Search
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Saanich Heritage Foundation
Information on the House Grants Program, which can provide assistance with the cost of preserving or restoring the exterior of your heritage house. The Saanich Heritage Foundation also works with the Saanich Planning Department in reviewing heritage designation and alteration applications. [http://www.saanich.ca/discover/artsheritagearc/heritage/index.html](http://www.saanich.ca/discover/artsheritagearc/heritage/index.html)

Hallmark Heritage Society
Services include heritage consultation, office with archival material and a lending library, advice on proper restoration practices, publications, heritage legislation research, heritage building and landscape inventory and research. [http://www.hallmarksociety.ca/](http://www.hallmarksociety.ca/)

BC Land Title & Survey Authority
Historical records relating to title, plan or other reference numbers; land owner names; boundary descriptions and descriptions of rights that have been granted or reserved. Fees apply. [http://www.ltsa.ca/cms/](http://www.ltsa.ca/cms/)

BC Archives
Searchable online photograph and genealogy database [http://www.bcarchives.bc.ca](http://www.bcarchives.bc.ca)

Victoria Heritage Foundation
Resources for owners of heritage homes, including “Your Old House” technical pamphlets [http://www.victoriaheritagefoundation.ca/](http://www.victoriaheritagefoundation.ca/)

Saanich Pioneer & Log Cabin Museum
Historical records relating to the Saanich Peninsula [http://www.saanichpioneersociety.org/](http://www.saanichpioneersociety.org/)

Oak Bay Archives
Online photo search [https://www.oakbay.ca/our-community/archives](https://www.oakbay.ca/our-community/archives)

Esquimalt Archives
Online photo search [http://www.esquimalt.ca/cultureHeritage/archives/](http://www.esquimalt.ca/cultureHeritage/archives/)

Canada’s Historic Places
Searchable database of historic places and buildings across Canada, including Saanich [www.historicplaces.ca](http://www.historicplaces.ca)