

A publication of the City of  
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# ARCHIVES

news

Richmond's new City Hall under construction, June 10 1999.

## In The Works...

In recent months the City of Richmond Archives has received some very significant donations of photographs.

The E.H."Ted" Clark photographs depict British Columbia Electric Railway operations throughout the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley. Ted Clark was a long-time Richmond resident with a passion for the BCER. His many fine black & white and colour photographs will be much in demand by researchers once they have been processed by the Archives. For a sneak preview of one of these images see page 4 of this newsletter.

Graham Elliston was a professional librarian with a love of West Coast fishing boats. During the 1970's he photographed hundreds of fishing boats in local waters and near his family's summer home in Bamfield. His collection of 35mm colour slides provides a wonderful resource for researchers as well as those who simply love the lines of West Coast boats.

## Web Statistics

The Archives web site has been busy. From June to December 1998, 3130 users retrieved 22,117 records from the Archives web site. The site can be found at [www.city.richmond.bc.ca/archives](http://www.city.richmond.bc.ca/archives)



## Archives and the new City Hall

Richmond's new City Hall is already an impressive sight as construction has reached the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the office tower. The 6<sup>th</sup> floor will be home to the City Clerk's department with the north side being the new home of the Archives. While many archives programs around the country dream of a new building, this will mark the second new facility for the City of Richmond Archives in less than a decade. The new space will include all the features found in the present facility: climate-controlled secure records storage area, walk-in vault for vital records, staff work room and a comfortable reference room for use by the public and city staff.

Why move? The tremendous success of the Library and Cultural Centre means that there will be no shortage of good uses for the space vacated by

## A Day in the Life of the Archives

The daily routines of an archives can be divided into front-of-house activity and background work. The front-of-house work involves assisting people with their reference inquiries both in-person and via mail, telephone and e-mail. This work varies according to the demand of researchers and can result in the archives being very quiet all day or so busy that the entire day is spent handling inquiries.

The background work consists of appraising records for retention, describing records for access, computer database maintenance, special project planning, grant writing and administration, preparing outreach materials – displays, newsletters, brochures, and usual office administration things like budgets etc. In short, the background work selects records of value and makes the tools to allow them to be accessed. At the same time processes are developed and maintained to ensure the preservation of records of long-term usefulness.

In medium to large institutions, staff are divided between all of these tasks with varying degrees of specialization. In a small archives, such as the City of Richmond Archives, all of these duties are handled by one person. The advantage of this is a constant variety in the workday routine. The disadvantage can be a feast or famine variation between a quiet reference day and a very busy one.

Although there is no “typical” day in the Archives, here is an example of the inquires and work flow of a single morning recently:

A researcher from Richmond Hill Ontario had discovered the Archives via the Internet and used a visit to this area to come in to research tax records for Sea Island 1919-1940 as part of a family genealogy project.

An owner of a vintage aircraft came in to discuss an inter-institutional loan of microfilm between the National Archives of Canada and the City of Richmond Archives.

A quilter who had been assisted by the Archives in locating resource photographs for her work brought in the finished panel of a large community quilt project to say a personal thank you for the assistance.

An historical consultant used the Archives as the resource for photo mural prints to be used as part of a major retail opening. He contacted the

the Archives. Moving the Archives to City Hall will make access to the Archives’ resources much more convenient for city staff, while still affording full public access. The Archivist is planning orientation sessions for city staff who have not yet discovered at first hand the potential that the Archives resources have for assisting them in their work.

Someone once described chores as “work that won’t stay done”. In life generally, and in government certainly, there are issues that seem to keep coming back. The Archives affords staff the opportunity to review how these recurring issues were dealt with in the past. This goes beyond knowing simply what decision was reached. Reviewing the records gives insight into what information was available to the decision makers, how and why they made the choices they did. Archives can help those making decisions today to benefit from the experiences of those who may have ventured down the same path before. Taking the time to do this background research can reduce the total time required to complete the job and produce a stronger result into the bargain.



## Recent Donation: Sexsmith family photographs

The image shown above is one of several portraits recently donated to the Archives by a member of the Sexsmith family. John Wesley Sexsmith was a prominent farmer and Reeve of Richmond 1890-1892. This image shows the Sexsmith daughters (l to r) Myrtle, Frances Louise, and Annie, ca. 1900. (1999-8-3)

## Council Minutes Indexing Project

Lynne Waller is working on a grant-funded project to index early Council Minutes. Lynne is using DB/TextWorks database software and a data structure developed by the City of Richmond Archives to index the years 1905-1912.



As of the end of June 1905-1908 is complete with printed versions of the index available in the Archives' reference room. A printed index is prepared for each year by Subject and Name-as-Subject. Online searching at the Archives features search by all fields including keyword search through topic statements for multiple years. With the completion of this phase of the project later this summer, the database will be complete from 1880 to 1922. This project is funded with the assistance of the provincial government's Community Archives Assistance Program.

## Friends of the Archives News

At the Friends AGM in March the following slate of officers was elected for 1999-2000:

Mary Keen (President), Mike Corrigan (Vice President), Bernice Anderson (Secretary), Lynne Waller (Treasurer) and Geraldine "Dody" Wray (Member at Large).

The "Friends" were unanimous in their appreciation for the many years of excellent service of out-going Treasurer Larry Burton. Larry was active in establishing the Friends of the Richmond Archives in 1987 and has been tireless in his work in support of the Archives ever since. Thank you Larry.

**ARCHIVES Online**, the City of Richmond Archives software add-on for use with Inmagic database software has continued to sell across the country and in three foreign countries as well. To date 41 copies have been sold. Revenue from sales is shared among the seller, Andornot Consulting Inc., the City, and the Friends of the Archives. Proceeds from sales have been used by the Friends to support the Archives through purchase of equipment and software.

## A Day in the Life of the Archives, *continued...*

Archives this day to complete details of photo lab price estimates and method of payment for his client.

In addition to public inquiries the Archivist responded to city staff requests and worked on the following "behind the scenes" items:

City Clerk's staff e-mailed a request for search and fax of a specific Council resolution.

The Law Department phoned the Archives needing an original right-of-way agreement for dyking from 50 years ago as part of current day negotiations.

The Archivist discussed database indexing and report format design with contract archivist working on database index to early Council minutes.

The Archivist worked on detailed space planning for Archives area in the new City Hall.



## Who uses the Archives?

My name is Jen Farreau and I am a third year History major at Simon Fraser University. I have been using the Archives this past semester to research a paper for my Rural Canadian History class, using both School Board and Richmond Council minutes.

## Using Archives

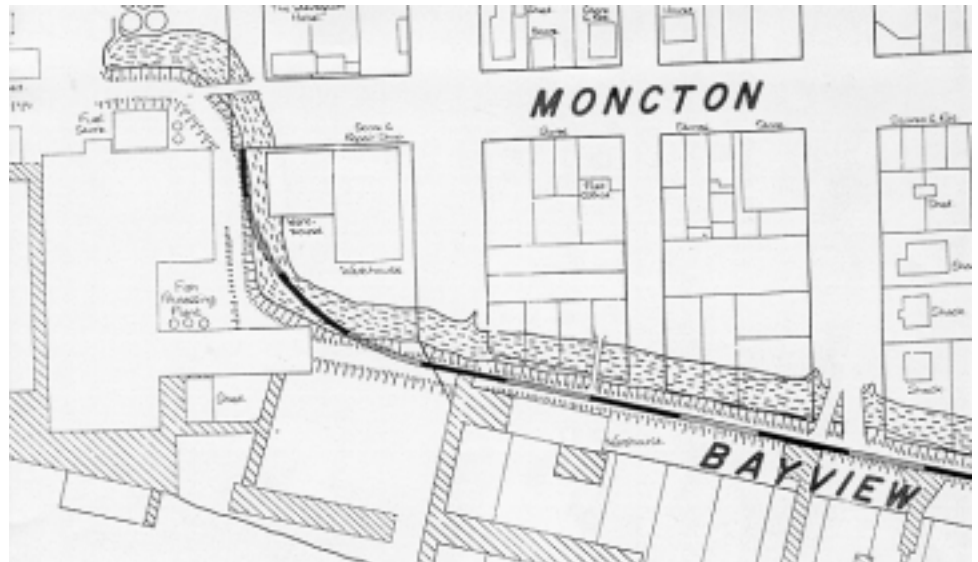
The photograph shown at right is part of the recent donation of the Ted Clark photographs. The photographer's note on the negative envelope said "Steveston – end of track". One viewer looked at the image and said that the building on the left looked like the Gulf of Georgia Cannery. Was the end of track at the Gulf of Georgia? One way to find out is to look for other archival sources to answer the question.

Most maps show the BCER line ending at the foot of No. 1 Road. A later Planning Department map of the Steveston waterfront shows a rail line running along the dyke at Bayview and ending beside the Gulf of Georgia Cannery. If you are as skeptical and cautious as an archivist, or if you have ever been annoyed by a highway map showing a road that was not yet built, you might want further confirmation that the map depicts what was actually there, rather than a plan for something that never was completed. A check of aerial photographs in the Noel McConnell fonds produced the image shown below which clearly shows the location of the railway line right beside the Gulf of Georgia Cannery.

Archives provide you with a variety of source documents that you can use to determine or confirm the answers to a wide range of questions. Using multiple sources reveals more detail and strengthens your result.



"Steveston - end of track" by Ted Clark, BCER 1208 beside Gulf of Georgia Cannery c.1952. Accession 1999-4



( Middle) Planning Department map of Steveston waterfront showing railway line to Gulf of Georgia cannery. Archives item number 1987 25 22.

(Bottom)1951 Aerial view of Steveston waterfront by Noel McConnell . Archives item number 1997 16 78.



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Public Reference Room Hours  
Monday - Thursday  
9:30-11:30 and 1:00-4:00