



COLONIAL ERA RECORDS AT THE BC ARCHIVES

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Archivist

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The “colonial era” in BC

- Fur trade and exploration
 - ca. 1825-1849 (HBC – Columbia Department)
 - ca. 1810-1871 (Admiralty/Royal Navy)
- Colony of Vancouver Island
 - 1849-1858 (HBC and Colonial administration)
 - 1859-1866 (Colonial administration)
- Colony of British Columbia
 - 1858-1866 (Mainland; colonial administration)
 - 1866-1871 (United colony; colonial administration)

What is meant by colonial era records?

Records created while what is now BC was under British control until it became a province in 1871, i.e. pre-Confederation, and were either:

- created in what is now British Columbia by individuals, government officials and corporate bodies (e.g. churches, companies)
- created elsewhere (e.g. London) by individuals, government officials and corporate bodies but concerned with or related to BC

Public and Private Records

- Official, or government, records
 - Correspondence (inward, outward, internal)
 - Official documents
 - Court records
 - Admiralty records (maps)
- Private records
 - Individuals or families
 - Corporate bodies

Government Records - Correspondence

- Between Secretary of State for the Colonies (aka Colonial Office) in London and governors of Colony of Vancouver Island and Colony of BC (or other local colonial government officials)
- Outward from local colonial government officials
- Inward to local colonial government officials
- Between Colonial Office and HBC officials (in London or in BC)
- May include enclosures such as maps, reports, statistics, etc.

Government Records – Documents

- Proclamations, ordinances, laws
- Land registers
- Commissions, instructions and warrants
- Notices
- Surveys (maps and field note books)
- Reports
- Financial accounts
- Minutes of executive and legislative bodies
- Court records

Government Records – Army and Navy

- Admiralty (Royal Navy)
 - Maps
 - Reports
 - Correspondence
 - Sketches and drawings
- Royal Engineers
 - Maps and surveys
 - Reports
 - Correspondence

Private Records - Corporate

- Hudson's Bay Company
- BC Land and Investment Agency
- Puget Sound Agricultural Company
- BC and Victoria Steam Navigation Company
- Churches
 - Anglican (Church of England)
 - Catholic
 - Methodist
 - Presbyterian

Private Records - Individuals

- Personal and/or professional e.g. Crease family fonds ([MS-0054 etc.](#)) and H.P.P. Crease fonds ([MS-0055](#))
- Includes correspondence, diaries/journals, reminiscences, financial accounts, etc.
- Some pre-date 1849, e.g. William Fraser Tolmie ([MS-0557](#)), Donald Ross ([MS-0635](#)), and A.C. Anderson ([PR-1052](#)) papers as well as many of the James Douglas papers ([PR-1428](#))

Colonial Office Records – Despatches

- Correspondence outward (sent from Colonial Office to governors, other British government departments, and individuals and companies)
- Correspondence inward (received by Colonial Office from governors, other British government departments, and individuals and companies)
- Often included one or more enclosures
- Multiple copies to ensure at least one reached recipient

Colonial Office Records – Entry books and registers

- Entry books of correspondence: letter book copies of sent letters
- Entry books with details of letters and enclosures
- Registers of correspondence
- Colonial documents (acts, minutes of executive and legislative bodies, blue books)

Colonial Office Records at BCA

- CO 60 Correspondence with and relating to Colony of British Columbia
- CO 305: Correspondence with and relating to Colony of Vancouver Island
- CO 381/18: Entry books for Colony of British Columbia
- CO 381/77: Entry books for Colony of Vancouver Island
- CO 398: Letter book copies of despatches from Colonial Office to governors of Colony of BC or to others relating to colony
- CO 410: Letter book copies of despatches from Colonial Office to governors of Colony of Vancouver Island or to others relating to colony

Other Colonial Office Records at BCA

- CO 61/1: British Columbia Acts
- CO 134: Correspondence with HBC re Vancouver Island
- CO 306/1: Vancouver Island Acts
- CO 307/1-2: House of Assembly, Legislative Council and Executive Council minutes
- CO 308: Government Gazettes Vancouver Island
- CO 338/1-3: Register of correspondence British Columbia
- CO 373/1-2: Register of correspondence Vancouver Island
- CO 383/27 and 91: Register of acts British Columbia and Vancouver Island
- CO 478: Blue books Vancouver Island

Colonial Despatches Database

<http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/>

Colonial Despatches

The colonial despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871

[Home](#) [About](#) [Introduction](#) [Browse](#) [Search](#) [MS images](#) [Maps](#) [Indexes](#) [Schedules](#)

Search the document collection

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| | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Document type | <input type="text"/> | Colony | <input type="text"/> |
| Author | <input type="text"/> | From | <input type="text"/> |
| Addressee | <input type="text"/> | To | <input type="text"/> |
| Repository | <input type="text"/> | Class (series) | <input type="text"/> |
| Registration # | <input type="text"/> | Volume | <input type="text"/> |



Colonial Despatches Database

- CO 1: General
- CO 6: British North America, boundaries
- CO 60: British Columbia correspondence
- CO 305: Vancouver Island correspondence
- CO 398: British Columbia entry books of correspondence (letter books)
- CO 410: Vancouver Island entry books of correspondence (letter books)

Colonial Government Records

- Records created by colonial officials and departments in both colonies
 - Correspondence, reports, maps, etc.
- Records created by executive and legislative bodies
 - Minutes of proceedings, journals, acts, reports, etc.
- Records created by the courts
 - Registers, decisions, orders and judgments, correspondence, etc.

GR-1372 “Colonial Correspondence”

- Records of the governments of the Colony of Vancouver Island (1849-1866), the Colony of British Columbia (1858-1866) and the United Colony of British Columbia (1866-1871). Covers ca. 1857-1872.
- Consists of correspondence inward to and between officials and departments, often accompanied by enclosures such as reports, sketches and maps which were considered part of the file.
- Originally organized more or less chronologically as records of the department or agency to which they were sent, e.g. Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General, Commissioner of Land and Works, etc. Letters when received were logged into a register and assigned sequential numbers with the last two numbers of the year appended, creating the file number, e.g. 105/62. Some of these registers still exist, e.g. GR-0625.
- Sometime during the 1920s and 1930s, Archives staff undertook to re-organize these records into a single alphabetical series organized primarily by the name of the originating office or sender (road tolls and petitions are notable exceptions). Formerly separate records were intermingled and the original order was lost. The records were indexed using new file numbers assigned for that purpose.
- The indexing - on cards by name of sender, recipient and subject - was never completed.

GR-1372 “Colonial Correspondence”

- A rich source of information about the activities and concerns of the colonial administrations of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, as well as the .
- Use the index as starting point but will also need to use names of people, departments and royal Navy ships to locate correspondence, etc. about specific events (e.g. Begbie for trial of Klatassin (F142f/16); Cameron for trial of A-chee-wun (F260/8) as well as H.M.S Devastation account (F1210))
- Use secondary sources (printed and online) for references citing specific files.
- Correspondence outward is often found as correspondence inward (i.e. received) in other colonial records, e.g. GR-1784 Lytton Gold Commissioner correspondence inward.
- Often has the only detailed records of court cases.
- Does not contain other government records (e.g. registers) or even all correspondence.

F 142f
16a

1865.
Begbie, [Sir] Matthew Baillie
Draft of Proposed bill, 31st
January, 1865.

F 142f
16a

Indians - Native Evidence bill.
Begbie, Matthew Baillie.
Draft of Proposed bill, 31st
January, 1865.

Examples from card index : author card and subject card.

F142,

16a

Preamble

[Tribes of]
omitted from
imp: act
M.P.

introduced
M.P.

no witness
to be incompetent
solely on
the ground
of religious
ignorance

Whereas there are resident within
the ~~limits~~ of or in countries adjacent
to this Colony, various barbarous &
uncivilized people who being destitute
of the knowledge of God, and of any
[sufficient] religious belief are incapable
of giving evidence on oath in any
Court of justice in the Colony;

Be it enacted &c

It shall not be lawful in any
proceeding in the Colony for the Court
to exclude the evidence of any witness
on the sole ground of his religious ig-
norance and consequent incapacity
to give evidence on oath - But every
such witness shall notwithstanding any
ignorance on his part of the existence
or of the attributes of God be admitted
to give evidence upon his mere declaration
to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
but the truth.

GR-1372,
F142/16a

F189

1

Indians - New Westminster.

4

Brew, Chartres.

6

Letters to Colonial Secretary, 24th
January, to 5th May, 1860.

9

7 Letters.

12

14

17

Multiple pieces of correspondence listed on single subject card.

We, the undersigned Chiefs of the Nishka
tribe of Indians at base River promise
in the name of the tribe, to deliver
the property taken from the schooner
'Prosperail' in October 1861 to any
recal of war that may demand it,
or to any person who may be
authorized by H.B. Governor Douglas to
receive it.

Fort Simpson.

22nd September 1861.

Kiitsahdah
his X mark

Akshahlah
his X mark.

Kithron
his X mark.

Noywun
his X mark

Ahuah
his X mark

Shahowhan
his X mark

Neeashkinwah
his X mark

Kamighyan
his X mark

Pellahshkah
his X mark

Gay
his X mark

GR-1372,
F1210/1

Court Records

- Fragmentary and incomplete
- Detailed records of cases often found in GR-1372
- GR-0419, Attorney General document series – boxes 1-10 cover 1859-1871
- Only one judge per colony; also magistrates and justices of the peace
- UBC Rare Books and Special Collections has a collection of colonial court records ([Keenleyside Legal Research Collection](#)), much of which has been digitized.

“Old MSS catalogue”

- A card catalogue for public and private records catalogued and organized under a system used by the Archives from the mid-1930s to 1974.
- Some records have been converted to GR and MS accessions
- Colonial Office and government records, Fort Victoria records, HBC correspondence and many of the James Douglas records are still catalogued under the old system.
- Many old MSS numbers are found in fonds descriptions on the database, e.g. [PR-1428](#) (James Douglas) but not always the record descriptions.

RESTRICTED

A Fort Simpson. Book
B Journal
20 May 12, 1842-Je.22, 1843
Si2.1 Kept by John Work and Roderick Finlayson

MFLM

A 1412(4)

Examples of "Old MSS" catalogue cards showing a main entry card with the assigned subject headings on the back of the card and one of the subject cards.

2ndry Work, John, 1792-1861
" Finlayson, Roderick, 1818-1892
Hudson's Bay Company - Fur trade
Hudson's Bay Company - Forts
Fur trade - Northwest coast of North America
Stikine River
Nass river
Indians - Northwest Coast of North America

RESTRICTED

A Indians - Northwest Coast of North America Book
B Fort Simpson.
20 Journal.
Si2.1 May 12, 1842 - Je. 22, 1943.

MFLM

Kept by John Work and Roderick Finlayson.

A 1412(4)

“Old MSS” Records

C Anderson, Alexander Caulfield, 1814-1884. MS
B British Columbia - Lands and Works Dept.
30.7K Correspondence inward; from A.C. Anderson.
An2

14 letters
1866, 1868-1871.

Example of colonial government correspondence not in GR-1372

Hudson's Bay Company records

- Mostly located in HBC Archives in Winnipeg
- GR-0332 Transcripts of correspondence between Colonial Office and the HBC relating to the conveyance, settlement, and re-conveyance of Vancouver Island
- “Old MSS” A/C and A/E records including Fort Vancouver, Fort Victoria, HBC Land Office, James Douglas (originals and/or transcripts)
- Record of individuals associated with company, e.g. James Murray Yale (MS-0105)

Church Records

- Most church and missionary records are found in church/diocese archives
- BC Archives has copies (mostly on microfilm) of some church records which consist mainly of registers of baptisms, marriages and deaths
- [MS-2250](#) Church Missionary Society papers relating to BC on microfilm
- [MS-1513](#) Oblates of Mary Immaculate records relating to BC on microfilm

Published Documents

- Parliamentary Papers (Great Britain)
 - *Papers Relative to the Affairs of British Columbia 1859-1862*
 - *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company, 17 August 1857*
- Government Gazettes (Vancouver Island and British Columbia)
- Acts, proclamations, ordinances (Vancouver Island and British Columbia)
- Journals and minutes of executive and legislative bodies (Vancouver Island and British Columbia)
- Sessional papers (reports, etc. submitted to legislative bodies)

Journals of the Vancouver Island House of Assembly

SECOND HOUSE, 2ND SESSION

317

Tuesday, the 8th day of October, 1861

Present: Mr. Speaker, The Attorney General, and Messrs. Crease, Gordon, Franklin, Tolmie, Waddington.

The former Minutes having been read & confirmed.

2nd Reading of An Act to apply the sum of £4550. out of General Revenue for the payment of certain Salaries and expenses for the service of the year 1861.

Committed.

2nd Reading of An Act to apply the sum of £15100 out of the General Revenue of the Colony of V.I. and its Dependencies to the service of the year 1861.

Committed.

House in Committee on Mr. Tolmie's Resolutions.

Mr. Crease in the Chair.

Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.

The Chairman reported progress, that the Committee having the Resolutions under their consideration had made amendments thereto and agreed to the same.

3rd That a renewed application be made to the Home Government for the extinction of the Indian title in districts partially, or soon to be occupied, such as Barclay's sound—Kawitchin and Komax, and that aid be asked from the Mother Country to enable us to keep the Indians under proper control in outlying settlements.

Reprinted Documents

- Hudson's Bay Record Society, e.g. *Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851*
- Archives of British Columbia Memoirs
 - *Minutes of the Council of Vancouver Island : commencing August 30th, 1851 [to] 1861.*
 - *House of Assembly. Minutes of the House of Assembly of Vancouver Island [1856-1858]*
 - *House of Assembly. House of Assembly correspondence book : August 12th, 1856 to July 6th, 1859.*
 - *The Journal of John Work : January to October, 1835.*

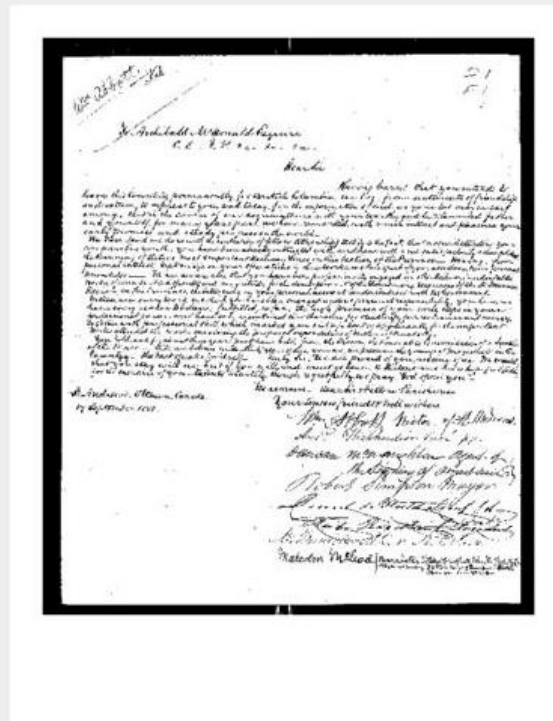
Newspapers

- [*British Colonist*](#) (1858-1920 digitized)
- *Victoria Gazette*
- *New Westminster Columbian*
- [*Cariboo Sentinel*](#) (1865-1875, digitized)

Online Documents BC Archives Collection Search

File GR-1372.1.1 - Abbott, William

COLONIAL CORRESPONDENCE » Abbott, William



Online Documents

Other Websites

<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/klatsassin/aftermath/thetrials/indexen.html>



GREAT UNSOLVED MYSTERIES IN CANADIAN HISTORY

We Do Not Know His Name

KLATSASSIN and the CHILCOTIN WAR



HOME | CONTEXT | WAR | **AFTERMATH** | INTERPRETATIONS | ARCHIVES | TIMELINE

Introduction
The Trials

The Trials

Colonial Correspondence

- **Matthew Baillie Begbie, Letter to Birch, August 18, 1864**
- **Matthew Baillie Begbie, Begbie to the Governor of British Columbia Including Notes Taken by the Court at the Trial of 6 Indians, September 30, 1864**
- **William George Cox, Letter to the Colonial Secretary of British Columbia, October 2, 1864**
- **Arthur N. Birch, Draft Letter to Cox, October 8, 1864**
- **John Boles Gaggin, Letter to the Colonial Secretary of British Columbia, October 27, 1864**
- **William George Cox, Letter to the Colonial Secretary of British Columbia, November 8, 1864**

Colonial Dispatches

- **Frederick Seymour, Letter to Cardwell, No. 69, November 23, 1864**
- **Edward Cardwell, Letter to Seymour, No. 10, February 24, 1865**

Government Documents

- **Executive Council, Colony of British Columbia, Executive Council Minutes, October 31, 1864**
- **Frederick Seymour, Death Warrants for Telloot, Klatsassin, Piell, Tahpit and Chessus, October 12, 1864**

For more information

- GR-1372 [FINDING AID](#)
 - Petitions file list
- Colonial Office records at the BC Archives list
- “Old MSS” Colonial Secretary records at the BC Archives list
- “Old MSS” Land records at the BC Archives list
- “Old MSS” Royal Engineers records at the BC Archives list
- “Old MSS” James Douglas records at the BC Archives list
- Colonial and other early records relating to births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials at the BC Archives list
- GR-0328 Colonial Office despatches about Vancouver Island 1847-1856 [FINDING AID](#)
- GR-0332 Colonial Office correspondence with the HBC 1822-1880 [FINDING AID](#)

<http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/staffprofiles/author/frederikeverspoor/>