

Vancouver Heritage FOUNDATION

# OLD SCHOOL COURSES

## How to Research the History of a Building (at the City of Vancouver Archives)

**Time:** 6:30 pm- 8:30 pm, various dates in Spring and Fall

**Location:** City of Vancouver Archives (1150 Chestnut Street)

**Instructors:** John Atkin and a City of Vancouver Archivist

### Overview of the Course

Searching for information on a building or site can reveal important details about its original design, architectural evolution and stories about the building's inhabitants over the years. This vital information is used to guide future conservation decisions. Using the City of Vancouver's Archives and the Vancouver Public Library resources, this course will illustrate the types of resources available to researchers. This two-part evening course will be of specific interest to building owners, renovators, planners, architects, engineers, interior designers, realtors, historians and local government staff as well as members of local community organizations.

### Course Outline— City of Vancouver Archives

#### Learning Objectives

The objectives of the second part of the course are to:

- provide an overview of the resources available for research at the City of Vancouver Archives
- to differentiate between the resources at the Vancouver Public Library and the City of Vancouver Archives
- illustrate the steps involved in undertaking archival research on a building and its site using the Mission to Seafarers Building as a case study
- engage participants in the process of researching a building and/or site or their choice

#### 6:30 – 6:45 pm Welcome and Introductions

**The Art of Research:** Older buildings and sites have many tales to tell: when was it built? by whom? who owned it? who lived in it? what did it originally look like? what changes have been made?

#### 6:45 – 7:35 pm Key Sources of Information in the City of Vancouver Archives

##### 1. The City of Vancouver Heritage Register

- information on the City's heritage program, including the Register, can be found on the City's web site: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/heritage/default.htm>

## 2. City History

- The City of Vancouver comprised three municipalities prior to 1929: Vancouver; South Vancouver; and Point Grey
- Resource books: Vancouver A Visual History (Macdonald), Historical Atlas of Vancouver (Hayes)
- The history of local areas can be found in Community Profiles:  
[http://vancouver.ca/community\\_profiles/CommunityList.htm](http://vancouver.ca/community_profiles/CommunityList.htm)

## 3. Tracing the Construction History of a Building and/or Site

### 1. Water Connection Applications

- provides an approximate date of construction, name of applicant

### 2. Building Permit Registers

- provides the owner, architect/contractor, estimated value of work
- arranged alphabetically by owner, chronologically by date of permit, or legal description

### 3. Fire Insurance Maps

- shows location on site, heights, some uses, porches (dotted)

### 4. Architectural Plans

- some house plans available at the Archives and City Hall
- Building Plans Property Information Counter 604-873-7537 – 2nd floor East Wing City Hall. Owner's permission required.

### 5. Photos

- two collections at the Archives: Major Matthews, CVA
- also scanned photos available:  
<http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/archives/photos/index.htm> (Archives)  
<http://www.vpl.ca/branches/LibrarySquare/spe/hisphoto.html>  
(Vancouver Public Library)

7:35 – 7:45 pm      **Break—Questions and Discussion**

7:45 - 8:20 pm      **Sources of Information on People Associated with the Building and Site**

### 1. City Directories

- who lived at an address, their occupation
- arranged by address, and by name

### 2. BC Assessment Records

- provides information on ownership, and assessed values of land & improvements

### 3. Land Title Searches

- (for a fee) land title search companies can provide records of sales

### 4. Genealogical Records

- BC Genealogical Society: <http://www.bcgs.ca/>
- Mountain View Cemetery Records. Some are at the Archives such as burial records. MVC has some on-line records too:  
<http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/nonmarketoperations/mountainview/index.htm>

8:20 – 8:35 pm      **Sleuthing Tips**

- for physical changes to your house: look for a 'twin', a similar house
- planbooks: e.g. CMHC pamphlets on housing styles
- learn about architectural styles—refer to the Vancouver Heritage Foundation's booklet, "What Style is It?"

- get a family name and then telephone number. Talk to neighbours.
- Other resources are at the Vancouver Public Library; Northwest Room, The University of British Columbia, including Special Collections
- VanMap has many layers of information (zoning, air photos, property assessments):

<http://vancouver.ca/vanmap/>

**8:35 - 9:30 pm Individual Research Time**

- Bring your own building to research or join the course in conducting research on the Mission to Seafarers Building

## City of Vancouver, Historic Building Research Guide

City of Vancouver, Community Services, Planning download from the Current Planning Website: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/planning/heritage/researchguide.htm>

### Selected Books:

Atkin, John. *Strathcona: Vancouver's First Neighbourhood*. North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1994

Atkin, John and Michael Kluckner, *Heritage Walks Around Vancouver*, North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1992.

Atkin, John and Michael Kluckner. *Vancouver Walks: Discovering City Heritage*. Second Edition, Vancouver: Steller Books, 2005.

Barrett, Scott. *What Style is It? A Guide to Historic Housing Styles*. Vancouver: Vancouver Heritage Foundation, 2002.

Davis, Chuck. *The Greater Vancouver Book*. Vancouver: Linkman Press, 1997.

Davis, Chuck. *The History of Metropolitan Vancouver*. To be published by Harbour Publishing, 2009. <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/>

Hayes, Derek. *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006.

Kalman, Harold and Ron Phillips and Robin Ward. *Exploring Vancouver: The Essential Architectural Guide*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993.

Kluckner, Michael. *Vancouver Remembered*. North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2006.

Kluckner, Michael. *Vancouver: The Way it Was*. North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1984. (Tenth Anniversary Edition, 1993).

Luxton, Donald, Ed. *Building the West: The Early Architects of British Columbia*. Vancouver, Talonbooks. 2003.

MacDonald, Bruce. *Vancouver: A Visual History*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1992

Roy, Patricia, E. *Vancouver: An Illustrated History*. Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1980.

Walker, Elizabeth. *Vancouver Street Names*. Vancouver Historical Society, 1999.