



Researching Your New Westminister Heritage Home

Corporation of the City of New Westminster

Development Services Department

This guide provides a list of institutions and organizations that may help New Westminister residents and homeowners to learn about the history of their home. The New Westminister Public Library's Heritage website has additional resources and photographs of historical buildings (www.nwheritage.org).

New Westminister Public Library

Historical information is available at the Reference Department located on the second floor. The following sources may be helpful in locating the previous owners, the architect or construction date of your home.

Heritage Resource Inventory (compiled 1984-1990)

Your home may be one of the 900 buildings listed in the heritage inventory which was published by the Development Services Department. To find your home look for the volume containing your neighbourhood and check the index for your property. The information contained in this inventory will serve as a good starting point. In 1995 a draft update was prepared containing information on demolitions, significant renovations, and recent additions to the inventory.



City Directory (1860 to present)

The city directory documents each house and lists many of the former occupants. Start by looking up your name and address in the most recent directory and work your way backward to trace the owners or occupants of the house to 1925. Prior to 1924, the directories covered all of B.C., locate New Westminister and then continue using the listed names rather than the address.

As the Sapperton, West End and Queensborough neighbourhoods were not originally part of New Westminister, many houses were omitted from the pre-1890 directories. It may be easier to check the Fire Insurance Plans first.

Fire Insurance Plans

The library has fire insurance maps of New Westminister for the years 1897 revised in 1905, 1907 revised 1914 and 1919, and 1957. These maps show the outline of all buildings and their exact locations. Each map was continually revised over time with updates pasted in over the original map.

Photograph Collection

The library has an extensive photograph collection that can be searched in the card catalogue for your house address, street name and family names. A large portion of the collection can now also be searched online at www.nwheritage.org. Photographs donated by other institutions are only available in the Library.

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Information File

The information file includes information on New Westminster collected from newspapers, magazines and other sources. It contains all sorts of information on houses, architects and individuals.

Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings (compiled 1973)

This inventory contains photos of over 350 houses and buildings located primarily in the Queens' Park, Brow of the Hill, Downtown, West End and Sapperton Neighbourhoods. This information is available at the Library and the Museum.

Newspapers

Newspaper indexing may uncover biographical information on previous owners of your house.

BC Land Title Offices

The Land Title Offices will conduct a search on all land transactions since 1859. Each property transaction must be researched individually and may require 5 to 100 transactions. A fee will be charged for this service, a complete list can be found at www.bconline.gov.bc.ca

New Westminster Museum/Archives

Staff at the Irving House Historic Centre and the New Westminster Museum/Archives(604-527-4640) are available to assist you with your search. Be prepared with a chronological list of homeowner names or a list of your properties various street numbers if changes have occurred since construction. The archives may reveal information through the following sources:

- Building File
- People Files
- Photographs
- Water Connection Records
- Manuscripts
- Cemetery Records and Obituaries
- Community Records and Personal Papers

Fire Insurance Plans

The Fire Insurance plans are located at Irving House and may contain personal information on the previous owners and tenants of the house. These records may lead to home owner names or names of relatives still living in the area.

BC Assessments

Assessments will give you a legal description of the property which will be useful in your search beyond the library.

City Hall

Staff in the Development Services Department (604-527-4532) and the Engineering Department (604-527-4580) can also assist you in your search. Building permits are recorded back to 1911 so most additions and other changes should be recorded. The Development Services Department also has a heritage library for renovation ideas and 'heritage' product literature.

The Community

It can be a valuable exercise to speak with neighbours about the history of your home. You may be able to discover the names of relatives that once lived in the house, who may be able to provide an anecdotal history.

Good luck in your search. Prior to starting any alterations to the exterior of your heritage house, please contact the City of New Westminster Development Services Department.

For additional information on local organizations with historical or archival resources check the New Westminster Heritage Website at www.nwheritage.org.



For more information, contact:
Development Services Department
City of New Westminster
511 Royal Avenue
New Westminster BC V3L 1H9

Telephone: 604-527-4532

Fax: 604-527-4511

E-mail: plnpost@city.new-westminster.bc.ca

Web Site: www.city.new-westminster.bc.ca