

ARCHIVES

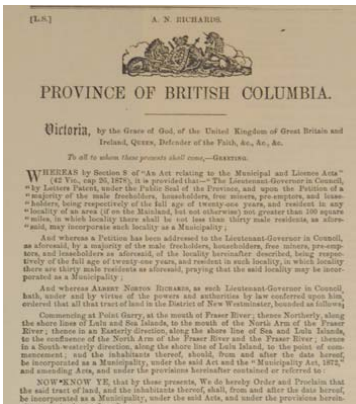
news

Focus on the Record: “Letters Patent”

This is the first of a series of articles on the types of government records housed at the City of Richmond Archives. This issue of Archives News examines the “letters patent,” the foundation document for the municipality and its government.

A number of letters patent have been issued which have defined Richmond as a municipality. These letters patent have demarcated Richmond’s geographic boundaries and have specified the nature and composition of its governing Council.

“Letters patent,” as a documentary form, date back to medieval England. Initially, they were created by the monarch to be read aloud as a proclamation granting status to an entity. Letters patent were in contrast to “letters close,” which were documents from the king directed privately to particular recipients. By the late middle ages, letters patent were most often written to grant petitions from citizens, a use which is still prevalent today.



Contents of 1879 letters patent as published in the BC Gazette.

“The Corporation of Richmond” was incorporated as a municipality by means of letters patent, issued on November 10, 1879, in the name of the Queen under the Public Seal of the Province, in response to a petition of residents submitted to the provincial government. In addition to defining the first geographic boundaries of the municipality, these letters patent mandated the date of the first municipal election (January 5, 1880) and the date of the first Council meeting (January 12, 1880). The contents of the letters patent were subsequently published in the British Columbia Gazette as required by statute.

These first letters patent were revoked in 1885 in order to change Richmond’s boundaries. New letters patent gave the municipality all of the islands in the North Arm of the Fraser River and some islands in the South Arm, and ceded the east end of Lulu Island (Queensborough) to New Westminster. They also renamed the municipality “The Corporation of the Township of Richmond.”

In This Issue

“Letters patent” are the subject of the first of a new series of articles in the *Archives News* describing the types of government records in the holdings of the City of Richmond Archives.

This issue of the *Newsletter* also highlights recent activities and projects at the Archives and recaps some of the events organized by the Friends of the Richmond Archives.



Top part of first page of new letters patent of 1892.

(continued on Page 2)



Archives Reference Room Now a Wi Fi Zone

Free wireless internet is now available in the Reference Room at the City of Richmond Archives, thanks to the Richmond Public Library.

With your laptop or other wireless device, connect to “Richmond Public Library”.

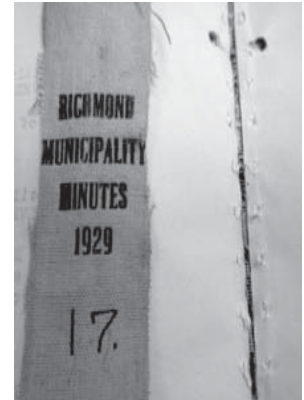
You can log on with your RPL library card and PIN (phone number), or if you are just visiting, you can obtain a one-day login from the Library’s Info Desk.

Council Minutes Preservation Project

The Archives is pleased to announce the completion of Phase Two of the Council Minutes Preservation Project.

This phase of the project was made possible with funding from the National Archival Development Program through Library and Archives Canada and the Canadian Council of Archives and funds from the City of Richmond and the Friends of the Richmond Archives.

The project has allowed for the disbinding, rehousing, conservation treatment and redescription of Council minutes from 1929 through to 2005.



Closeup of 1929 minutes with stitching and paper damage.



Disbound 1929 minutes showing paper damage and information in the margins previously hidden by the binding.



1942 minutes prior to disbinding showing paper with various levels of damage, including degradation to attachments.

Recent Donors of Records to the Archives

- Graham Turnbull
- Richmond Photo Club
- Yvonne Robinson
- Doreen Braverman
- Textile Arts Guild of Richmond
- Carrie Thomas
- Minoru Seniors Society
- William Twiss
- Dr. Norah Lewis
- Edward Samworth
- Sheldon Wong

Focus on the Record: “Letters Patent” (continued from Page 1)

In 1892, the second letters patent were suspended due to irregularities occurring during the conduct of the municipal election. New letters patent re-established the municipality and mandated a new election date, but were written in a manner that caused some confusion as to the municipal boundaries. An amendment was made to these letters patent in 1896 to redefine the boundaries to correspond exactly with those of the letters patent of 1885.

Supplementary letters patent were issued in 1910 which reduced the municipal limits of Richmond by extending the boundaries of the municipality of South Vancouver. In 1957, supplementary letters patent increase the number of councillors from five to six. Similarly in 1966, supplementary letters patent increased the number of councillors from six to eight.

1990 marked the issuing of new letters patent reincorporating the “Corporation of the Township of Richmond” as the “City of Richmond”, an action that was celebrated as a coming of age for the municipality. In 1996, supplementary letters patent extended municipal boundaries to include Sturgeon Bank.

The holdings of the City of Richmond Archives include some of the original, sealed letters patent, along with copies of the contents of all of the letters patent as published in the BC Gazette. Researchers are welcome to make an appointment to consult these records.

Turkish Scholar Visits the City of Richmond Archives

Dr. Niyazi Cicek, Professor of Archival Science and Diplomats at the University of Istanbul, recently visited the City of Richmond Archives to tour the facilities and discuss its operations.

Dr. Cicek is working on a project to establish a municipal archives for the City of Istanbul and is touring select city archives in Canada for examples of successful archival institutions.



Bill Purver welcoming Dr. Cicek to the Archives.

John Campbell -- New Volunteer at the Archives



John at work in the Archives.

Powell River's loss is the City of Richmond Archives' gain as we welcome John Campbell to our volunteer fold.

John, a recently-retired engineer and a published industrial historian, has taken on the task of enhancing access to the Archives' reference files.

John's resume as a historian includes research on various aspects of the industrial history of the west coast, and includes the book, "Hulks, The Breakwater Ships of Powell River," a detailed history of the design and uses of concrete ships.

Historical Publications Available Through New Online Bookstore

Books published as part of the historical publication program of the City of Richmond Archives and the Friends of the Richmond Archives are now available for purchase online at the new BC Historical Federation online bookstore. The Friends are a member body of the Federation and are one of the first groups to take advantage of this exciting new opportunity to promote historical publications in the province.

Check out the selection of books on sale at <http://bchistory.ca/publications/store/index.html> by clicking on "View the Book Store Inventory." Books can be purchased online by using the Federation's Paypal link.



Sharing reminiscences with old and new friends at the Archives Tea.

14th Annual Archives Tea - Recap

The Friends of the Richmond Archives' annual Archives Tea was another resounding success this fall with over 150 attendees.

The "Tea" served as the launch for the Archives' new publication, *"The Country: Richmond's Eastern Neighbourhoods"*, authored by the late Mary Keen. A digital exhibit of historical images of eastern Richmond was displayed.

The annual address to the Friends by Mayor Malcolm Brodie was warmly received, as was the participation by students from the Richmond Museum's Heritage Fair.

Annual General Meeting Friends of the Archives

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Richmond Archives will be held Wednesday, March 16 at 7:00 pm at the Archives Reference Room. This is the yearly business meeting at which the Friends elect a new Executive, report on financial matters, and set a budget for the coming year.

The Friends would also like to remind members that the membership year runs from October 1 to September 30. Those members who are in arrears are encouraged to send their annual fee (a very low \$5 per person) to the Friends of the Richmond Archives, c/o City of Richmond Archives, 7700 Minoru Gate, Richmond, B.C. V6Y 1R9. Phone 604-247-8305 if you are unsure about your membership status.

The Friends also welcome donations. The society is a registered charity and can issue tax receipts for amounts over \$10.00

Friends of the Archives at Remembrance Day Reception

The Friends of the Richmond Archives were honoured to take part in the Remembrance Day reception held at City Hall following the formal cenotaph ceremonies.

Copies of material from the holdings of the City of Richmond Archives were used in an exhibit commemorating the lives of those from Richmond killed in the two world wars.

Volunteers from the Friends met with visitors young and old to discuss the exhibit and the historical significance of the archival records displayed.



Barbara Williams, Judith Hutson and Jon Henderson at the City Hall Remembrance Day reception. (Photo by Christine McGilvray)

"Volunteer of the Year" at the City of Richmond Archives

Barbara Williams was the recipient this year of the City of Richmond Archives "Volunteer of the Year" award.



Presentation of "Volunteer of the Year Award" to Barbara Williams.

Barbara wore a number of volunteer hats over the last year working with the Archives. In addition to her many duties as Membership Chair for the Friends of the Richmond Archives, Barbara coordinated the volunteer effort at the Archives during the O Zone celebrations, was a key organizer of the annual "Archives Tea", and spearheaded various new volunteer initiatives, including participation of the Friends at the Remembrance Day reception at City Hall.

Thank you, Barbara, for your dedication to the Archives and for your hard work on its behalf.



**CITY OF RICHMOND
ARCHIVES**

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Email: archives@richmond.ca

www.richmond.ca/archives

Public Reference Room Hours
Monday - Thursday 9:00-4:30
Appointment recommended