

Silhouettes

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The Associates of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

The Hunt for Home Movies

ONE OF THE DEFINITIONS *The Oxford Universal Dictionary* offers for the noun *amateur* is, “one who cultivates anything as a pastime,” and you can’t argue with that. But some pastimes acquire greater value and cachet as time goes by, and that certainly is proving true with the pastime that involves making amateur films, especially the type we generally refer to as “home movies.”

Just over a decade ago, researchers and historians began to take seriously the inherent social-historical value of those old reels of film. And the result is a whole new area of archival interest and pursuit.

Home movies have been around since at least the early 1920s—in fact, a case can be made that, with some of the



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earliest movies, the difference between amateur and professional was subtle at best. To the average modern viewer, there may be little distinction discernible between, say, *A Moose Hunt in New Brunswick*, which D.W. Griffith's future cameraman, Billy Bitzer, shot in the Canaan Woods in 1905, and the films of birds and moose that a clever local guide named Bert Moore took in the Tobique country a few years later, using, incidentally, a camera he had built himself.

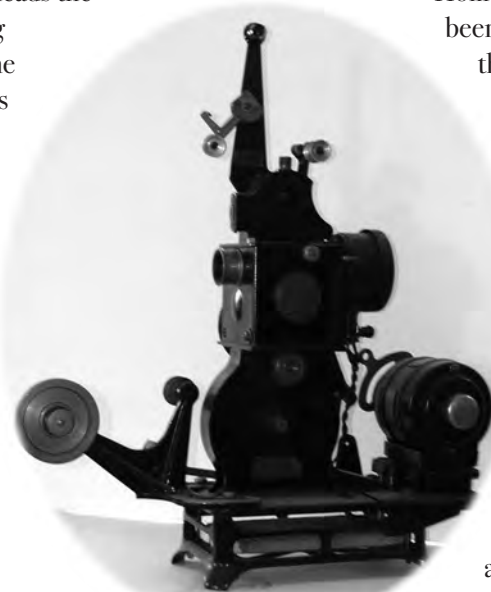
But, more important, the amateurs and home-movie-makers turned their cameras on a broad spectrum of daily life, recording it *vraisemblante* long before there was television. It is, says Denis Noel, who heads the Sound and Moving Image branch at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, "the idea that you can have an insight into everyday activities of times gone by. . . . What can appear in a film can be very surprising."

In New Brunswick, these everyday events encompassed parades, fires, log drives, snow-clearing, salmon fishing, woods work, steam trains, floods, and dozens of others—

all contained in hundreds of reels that make up the more than 25 separate collections of amateur film that are in the holdings of the Provincial Archives. And the people who took them were as varied as the films themselves, though they often turned out to be prominent members of their communities.

In St. Andrews, for example, William Charles O'Neill, a local merchant, recorded home scenes and community life for more than three decades, starting in the early 1930s; while on the Acadian Peninsula, it was a parish priest, Monsignor Arthur Gallien of Neguac, who got rare footage in 1955 as the region marked the 200th anniversary of the Expulsion.

Home movies have usually been tied to economics—the people who made them were those who could afford a camera and film. Back at the beginning, the standard film size was 35 mm, and by 1910 Kodak had achieved a virtual monopoly in its production. To save money, some amateurs resorted to doubling their film stock by slicing the 35 mm film down the middle. Kodak and another manufacturer, Bell and Howell, then tried to stifle that practice by stan-



Top photo: Dr. William Francis Ganong, a renowned New Brunswick photographer of the natural geography of the province, owned this 8mm Univex camera, manufactured by the Universal Camera Company of New York in the late 1930s. Considered small and handy in its day, it is equipped with a lens Ilex Univar 1:5, 6, and weighs a little over half a kilogram.



standardizing the film size for amateur shooting at 16 mm.

But other suppliers offered alternatives, and these included the estimable Pathe *freres* of France, who produced film stock in a 9.5 mm size, with sprocket holes running down the centre. The Provincial Archives has films in this format, including one of the army training facility at Camp Sussex, taken between the two world wars by a banker named Arnold Roswell.

When cheaper 8 mm film came out in the early 1930s, the home movie field slowly began to grow, although limited by the Depression. Meanwhile, the hobbyists willing and able to spend a little

more stuck with 16 mm film. One of them was Dr. Arthur Ross of Moncton, whose collection of 33 films includes sequences of British airmen training in Moncton during the Second World War, and also on a visit to the Reversing Falls in Saint John.

Another dedicated 16 mm film user was former Lieutenant-Governor J. Leonard O'Brien. A lumberman from the Miramichi, he shot movies of family life, river scenery, his own lumbering operations in the early 1950s (in colour), and members of the celebrated North Shore Regiment in England, playing football in the snow.

Not surprisingly, the activity surrounding timber harvesting is a frequent subject in New Brunswick home movies, and these include those taken in the 1920s and 1930s by J. Clifford MacDonald, a lumber contractor who operated in Restigouche County and Quebec. His film of log drivers at work during the Spring freshets provides a renewed appreciation of the skill and derring-do involved in that brave, arcane, and now-vanished activity.

The arrival of the less expensive 8mm film in 1932 (it would be followed by superior Super 8 in 1965) led to the greater democratization of home movie-making, although the real boom wouldn't occur until after the Second World War. But, in Grand Falls, for example, a

young man, Hugh Folster, in the mid-1930s acquired a small 8 mm camera that he used in nearby New Denmark one Winter to capture the spectacle of young Danish lads flying down a mountain on home-made skis to win Maritime jumping championships.

The spread of a home movie culture that 8 mm film led to is what helped make possible, half a century later, the recent CBC series on Canada's home front during the Second World

War. Montreal film director Karen Shopsowitz put together the entire series from the treasure trove of colour home movies she unearthed across the country. Some of the film came from the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

There is undoubtedly the stuff of many more worthwhile productions tucked away in closets and on storage shelves. But often the real cultural value of these old films is not their main subject, but, rather, what lies in the background. These may be the things that inform us most about our social history—that show us the economic state of an area, the look and location of its private and public buildings, the condition of its roads, the cars its people drove, the way they dressed, how they carried themselves, and a thousand other things, all of which add up to the way we were at a moment in time. ■



Top right photo: Arnold Roswell, a banker in Saint John, owned this 9.5mm camera and 9.5mm film projector (bottom, pg.2). Both manufactured by the famous French firm Pathe in 1922 and 1923, they were designed for home and amateur use. The new film projector used 9.5mm film. The film had a sprocket hole centered between the frames (as pictured, top left). The 9.5mm camera, the Pathe Baby, was small, with a fixed focus lens, was hand cranked and accepted film in a small cassette which held 10 metres of safety base, reversal film. There was no sprocket drive and no loops to worry about. There was a small sports style viewfinder and, embossed in the leather covering, an instruction 'Two turns per second.'

We're interested in your home movies

DO YOU HAVE old 8mm, Super 8, 16mm or even 9.5mm film stored somewhere in your home for posterity? If so, The Archives may be interested in it.

Why bother with home movies you might ask? The answer is this: most amateur motion picture film contains one-of-a-kind images that are unique and important to the history of our culture. Home movies are the moving image equivalent of a personal diary or family journal. Home movies are as important to preserve and share as old photos, old diaries, old paintings and sketches, great-grandmother's quilt or great-grandfather's carving. They are a folk art, sometimes high cinema, and always a window on the culture.

The preservation of those old movies is crucial though. Evidence of neglect abounds: too many movies reside in an attic or a wet basement, two of the worst places for storing photographic materials. Many suffer from deterioration through 'Vinegar Syndrome', mold, mildew and dust.

Archives can often give your home movies a better home and provide you with a quality copy of your original, depending on the condition of the film.

The Provincial Archives of New Brunswick would like to explore this idea of acquiring, preserving, reproducing and caring for your home movies. If you are interested, please contact Denis Noel 444-4145.

Major traffic at www.archives.gnb.ca

IMAGINE A WEBSITE, only six years old, that is visited every month by thousands of people from over 80 countries—a bilingual web-site that offers its visitors virtual exhibits,

online research, precious historical photos and so much more it's like having an archives in your own home or office.

That website is the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick: www.archives.gnb.ca

Among other New Brunswick government websites, the Archives home site is one of the busiest at an average 3.5 million hits per month.

Most people who are computer-friendly understand the tremendous potential for making archival records more widely accessible through the internet. Stripped of physical and geographical boundaries, 'surfing' the web can enable researchers to do more of their own searching, can introduce an entirely new group of people to the wonders of Archives, the excitement of archival records and how these records pertain to their family, community, or hobby.

What can you find on the PANB website?

To begin with, 1,301,110 records available to the public, including vital statistics, cemetery transcriptions, marriage bonds, name directories, Irish



immigrants, historical images, virtual exhibits and more!

Then you might want to peruse the over 45,000 digitized images, including historical photos, birth records, old soldier records, immigrant passenger lists, cemeteries, and other interesting images.

Enjoy the virtual exhibits found on the websites, including New Brunswick at War, Women at Work, Canoeing on the St. John River or Royal Visits.

There are databases to pore over, links to other interesting sites, information on records management and there's even shopping for those with the itch to purchase merchandise.

The PANB website continues to grow daily as new material is added and traffic to the site will continue to grow as content increases and more people become aware of the treasures held by archives and this means of accessibility. Archives have almost an unlimited amount of information that could be made accessible to web users; all that is required is the time and equipment to make it available. We hope you will enjoy the site and visit often. ■

ARCHIVES' DIARIES: THOMAS MILES

A Prolific Time

THOMAS ODBER MILES (1789-1858) engaged in farming in Maugerville, held the offices of Justice of the Peace, Justice of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, and Road Commissioner, was a Colonel in the militia and sat as a member of the House of Assembly representing Sunbury County for four terms. He was affiliated with the Church of England but he had strong ties with the Baptists.

While the diary entries comment on all these involvements and activities along the St. John River between Fredericton and Queens County, the excerpts that follow deal with the social life of the area.

The Diaries were transcribed by Celia Monro-Harvey, compiled and edited by Charles H. Miles of Prince George, B.C. and donated to the Archives by him in 2002.

An Unusual Family Gathering Thursday, January 1, 1818

Went to James Miles with Papa & family (except Charles) and had Thomas Odber Miles christened with James son Elijah Miles by the Rev. James Somerville. A remarkable fine day.

Friday 2nd—Returned—the weather continues warm & pleasant—the ice appears quite safe to Fredericton.

Saturday 3rd—Continues warm—very little snow on the ground. Rains at night—very fast—clear before Sunday morning 4th—wind NW—very hard—grows cooler.

February 4th—A very severe snow storm. Samuel True's first son—Amos born.

February 7th—hauled wood for Church—very cold.

Wednesday February 11th, 1818—Evening—Mrs. Dow delivered of a boy—

small tyke. Extreme cold night.

Between the first of October 1817 and the first of March, there were born in the parish of Burton within one mile of the cold spring 11 children, 5 boys, 6 girls.

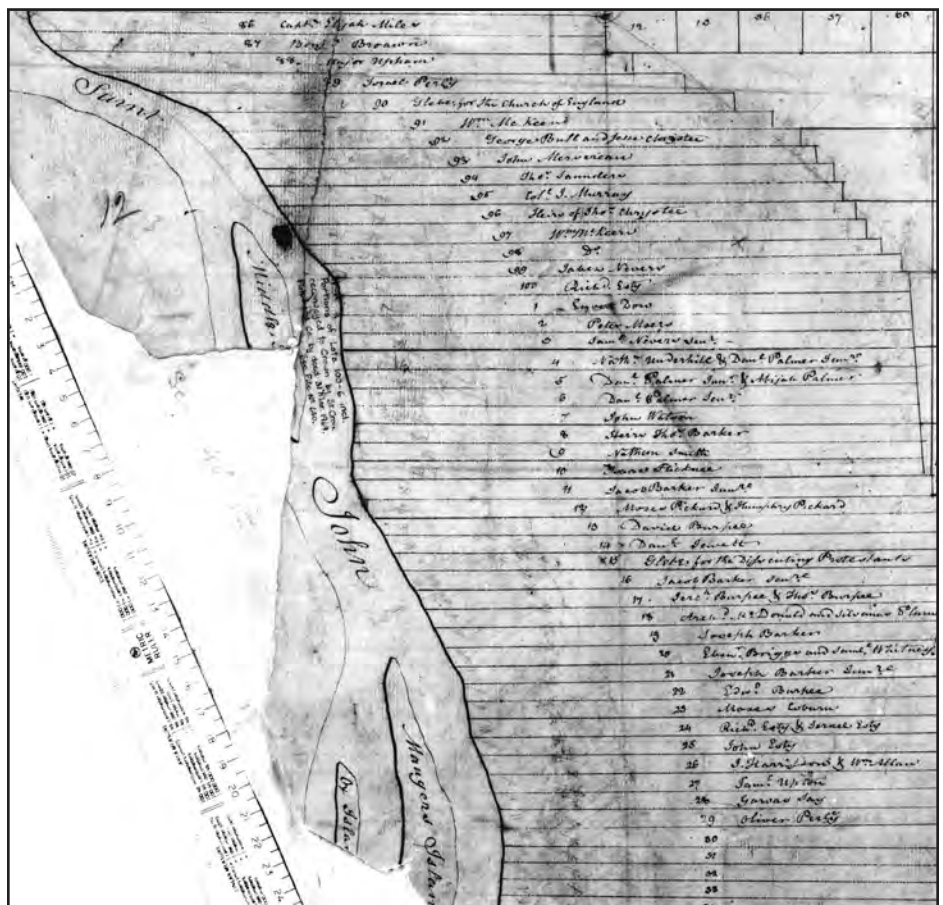
Mrs. Jones, Mrs. T. Miles, Mrs. S. Nevers, Mrs. A. Kinney, Mrs. T. Ham, Mrs. Church, Mrs. D. Neal, Mrs. Dow, Mrs. Tibbits, Mrs. Peterson, Mrs. Hachey.

February 12th Mrs. Tibbits delivered of a remarkable large boy—Continues cold until the 20th—grows warmer this evening at about eleven o'clock. Mrs. Hatch delivered of her first daughter—when the child's mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-grandmother's mother were all present.



Thomas Odber Miles

Old Mrs. Tapley, the mother of Mrs. Kimball, who is the mother of Mrs. Webber who is the mother of Mrs. Hatch, who is the mother of this infant daughter—all present at the birth of Mrs. Hatch's daughter.



Survey Plan showing Land Grants in portion of the parish of Sheffield and Maugerville, Sunbury County, c1800.

Trust Fund Established in Memory of Elizabeth Diamond

THE ASSOCIATES of the Provincial Archives announce the creation of the Elizabeth Diamond Memorial Acquisition Trust Fund. It will honor the memory of a cherished member of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick who was well known throughout Canada for her dedication to the archivists' profession.

The fund will aid the Archives in acquiring valuable New Brunswick-related records that it might not otherwise be able to obtain. Just before Christmas, 2004, a reception was held at the Archives to mark the receipt of the first contribution to the fund—from Elizabeth's husband Tony—and an event is planned later this year to launch the fund officially.

A native of Victoria, B.C., Elizabeth Diamond worked in several places in the course of her career, including in Kenya, the Seychelles, England and Canada. Before arriving in Fredericton in 1994, she was at the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa, and later at the John G. Diefenbaker Centre in Saskatoon. She also served as the City of Saskatoon's archivist.

Much of her travels resulted from Tony's work as an ornithologist. On the island of Cousin in the Seychelles, for example, there were just four inhabitants, and obviously no archives. So the only opening for her archivist's skills was to do research on property ownership, for a report on the island's reserve, during visits to the mainland.

Fully dedicated to archival work, she seized whatever opportunity their travels presented, and this positive attitude led to many interesting experiences. In



Elizabeth Diamond

Nairobi, Kenya, from 1976 to 1980, as an example, she worked at the National Museum on the papers of Joseph Murumbi, the first foreign minister and second vice-president of Kenya, and of

Mary Bazette Leakey, an Anglican missionary in the 1890s and the mother of anthropologist Louis Leakey.

In New Brunswick, she undertook contracts on a wide variety of subjects, including designing distance education for records managers, and records management work for the Literary Council, The Human Rights Commission, and Service New Brunswick. Later, when she transferred to the full-time archival work she loved, researchers and colleagues alike noted the enthusiasm she always applied to tracking down gem-like pieces of information. One book author, in particular, remembers with gratitude her directing him to the minute book of an early New Brunswick motion picture theatre, a rare find in any part of North America.

As a firm believer in the value of

Chestnut Collection to be featured at festival

THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES of New Brunswick will participate in a special 100th Anniversary celebration of the Chestnut Canoe.

The Chestnut Canoe was born in Fredericton and to mark this special anniversary, the St. John River Society will hold a **1st Annual Fredericton River Festival on June 11 and 12** in the city. The event promises to be a weekend full of paddles, music, exhibits and a Chestnut Canoe display.

The PANB will set up a small exhibit of some of the Chestnut Canoe collec-

tion housed at the PANB. As well, PANB staff will have for sale Chestnut Canoe memorabilia, books, tee-shirts, postcards and other items.

The Chestnut Canoe Company Records span 1907 to 1978 and include correspondence, minutes, accounts, catalogues, photographs, blueprints and plans.

The exhibit will be part of the festival's Exhibit and Trade Show to be staged at Officer's Square, Saturday, June 11, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and at Carleton Park, Sunday, June 12, 2-5 p.m. ■

archives, Elizabeth was active in many professional archivists groups and support organizations. She was a strong presence in the life of the Association of Canadian Archivists and is fondly remembered as much for her dancing at the annual banquet and cheering during the East vs. West baseball games as for her contributions to *Archivaria*, the association publication, and her lively participation in the debates at meetings.

Outside her archives work, Elizabeth had a wide variety of interests, as signaled by her involvement in the Saskatoon Women's Calendar Collective, the Sherlock Holmes Society of Saskatoon, the Fredericton Choral Society, annual Gilbert and Sullivan Society productions, and a host of other activities, ranging from gardening to preserving built heritage. She was also the mother of two sons, Owen and Peter. Elizabeth died in 2002.

Inquiries about the Elizabeth Diamond Memorial Acquisition Trust Fund should be directed to Marion Beyea at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. ■

NB Environmental Trust Fund grant helps create guide



HISTORICAL RECORDS hold great potential as a resource for information and analysis of our environment and changes it has undergone over time. This is true for both records created directly in regard to the environment, such as meteorological observations, or records relating to natural resources, for example, records of forest product companies that document the impact of human activities.

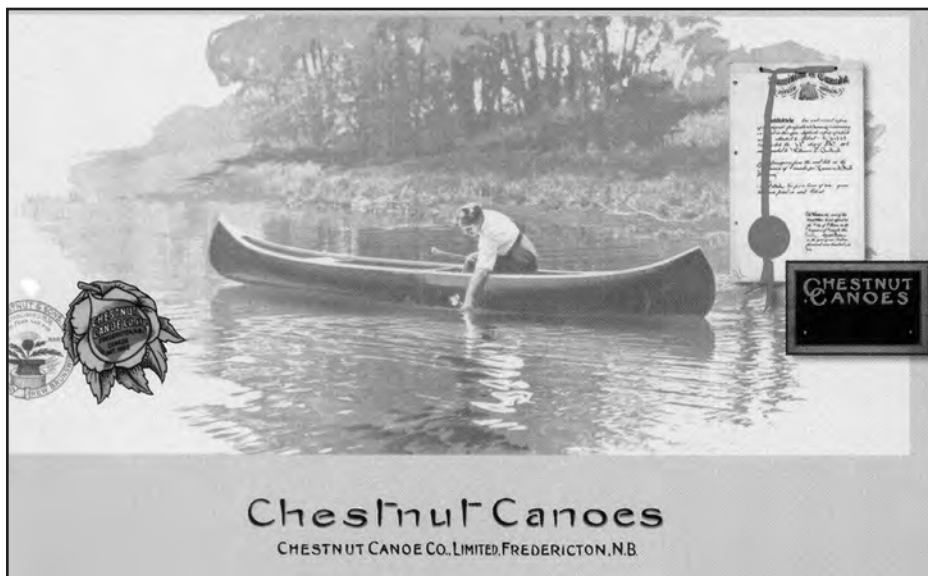
This guide provides detailed information on several fonds that contain important documentation for the study of topics related to the environment and natural resources. These are part of a large

number of collections at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick that

relate to the environment and to the use and stewardship of the natural resources of New Brunswick and that are important to gaining a knowledge and understanding of the environment. They document the state of the environment at various periods in New Brunswick's history, record methods used over time to harvest natural resources and the volumes taken, and provide a means of measuring the impact of settlement, development and industry on the environment. They provide information on conservation initiatives and research, and on the efforts of individuals and organizations concerned about the impact of pollution, unmitigated exploitation and protection of the environment.

A selection of collections related to different aspects were chosen including meteorology, natural resources harvesting, and energy resources.

A primary objective of the Guide's sponsor, the Associates of the Provincial Archives, is to assist the Provincial Archives in promoting and making available its primary research resources. The support of the Environmental Trust Fund for the "Identification and Development of Environment & Natural Resources Collections Project" has assisted the Associates in this mission and made accessible records previously unusable because they were not arranged or described. ■



P474-22

The Associates are pleased to announce that they are now carrying Chestnut Canoe clothing, decals, and other memorabilia in their sales kiosks. Also available is the definitive company history When the Chestnut Was in Flower by Roger MacGregor.

New Finding Aids

Government Records

- RS2 **Published Journals of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New Brunswick, 1786-1892** 2.8 m. Revised finding aid includes a calendar.
- RS3 **Published Statutes and Regulations of New Brunswick, 1786-2002** 7.35 m. Revised finding aid includes a calendar.
- RS110 **Fish and Wildlife Branch Records, 1880-1990** 16.5 m. New finding aid which consists of an index.
- RS111 **Forest Management Branch Records, 1914-1995** 6 m. Revised finding aid includes recently added records.
- RS134 **Government House Restoration Project, 1983-2000** 1 m. Revised finding aid includes recently received records.
- RS136 **Records of the Chief Medical Officer cum Deputy Minister of Health, 1719-1971** 3 1 m. Revised finding aid.
- RS141 / A5 **Provincial Returns of Births, 1909** (digitized images for 1900-1905 birth returns online)
- RS141 / C4 **Provincial Returns of Deaths, 1907-1910** (update to existing online database)
- RS141 **New Brunswick Vital Statistics, 1888-1987** 80 m. Updated Vital Statistics, newly accessioned material: A5/1910 Provincial Registrations of Births; A1b/1910 Late Registrations of Births; B4/1955 Provincial Registrations of Marriages; C5/1955 Provincial Registrations of Deaths.
- RS149 **Gloucester County Council Records, 1831-1964** (primarily 1902-1964) 27 m. Revised Finding aid.
- RS150 **Kent County Council Records, 1827-1964** 4 m. Revised finding aid.
- RS915 **Records Respecting the Boundary between the United States and New Brunswick, 1821-1827** 3 cm. Revised finding aid.
- RS662 **Records Relating to New Brunswick's Armorial Bearings and Official Emblems, 1868-1992** 34 cm. Revised finding aid includes newly added items.

Additions to Archives Website

- Births**—RS141A5. 1909 added, Digitized images of the originals for 1905.
- Provincial Returns of Deaths**—RS141C4. 1907-1911 added.
- Latest cemeteries uploaded:**
- St Anne De Kent Roman Catholic, Kent
 - St Jean Baptiste Roman Catholic, Kent
 - Upper Blackville United Baptist, Northumberland
 - First Doaktown Pentecostal, Northumberland
 - St Andre, Madawaska

Recent acquisitions

Private Records

- MC3232 **Mrs. Coughy Collection**
—information on Florence Ayscough, an expert on China with New Brunswick connections, and on the I.O.D.E. Tea House in St. Andrews
- MC3259 **Hugh John Folster fonds**
—movie films taken in the Grand Falls area, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.
- MC3239 **Benjamin Glasier letter**
—letter to his son on 1837 fire in Saint John, comments on how merchants are coping
- MC3238 **Georgina Mary Parry diary**
—entries by wife of a British soldier on life in Fredericton, 1868-1869
- MC3234 **Dow Bishop fonds**
—household account book, 1914-1919, Saint John.
- MC3096 **L. Leon Theriault fonds**
—road engineer; photos from around the province and of areas he worked in “out west,” 1910-1950s
- MC3224 **Bill Hogan fonds**
—editorial cartoonist, cartoons from the Miramichi
- MC3222 **Margaret Pugh fonds**
—genealogy of the Pugh, MacLaggan, Titus, McIntosh, Grant, Macgillivray, Fraser, Hartt, Eastman, Tapley, and Densmore families
- MC3216 **Gordon Ferguson fonds**
—records relate to extra mural health care in New Brunswick, 1970-1980s.
- MC3208 **Elisabeth Robinson Scovil fonds**
—nurse and author; photos of her family, and manuscripts relating to her writings
- MC3197 **Edmund Moore fonds**
—Salisbury doctor's account book. 1892-1902
- MC80/2075 **Index to Deaths in the St. Croix Courier, 1865-1957**, compiled by Melvin W. Chase
- MC3193 **J. O. Calkin fonds**
—Sackville doctor's account ledgers, 1898-1923
- MC3245 **George Fry fonds**
—records relating to crafts, art, and theatre in the province
- M23246 **Mollie Fry fonds**
—records deal with early children education and kindergarten programs
- MC3247 **Grand Falls Union Sabbath School Library fonds**
—record of books loaned, 1861-1870.