
Trent Valley Archives
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New Accession: John A I Young fonds

With exceptional help from Josh MacFarlane and Don Willcock, Elwood Jones processed the John A I Young fonds. This is a very complex fonds, as John Young and his wife, Mary (nee Baldwin) were very active in Peterborough, but both were inveterate genealogists who thoroughly researched several families; one family researched was that of the long-time girlfriend of his father. At every turn, the papers combine original letters, diaries, memos and photographs with research notes.

John Young's life was closely connected with Canadian General Electric. The papers document his interest in radio and wireless technology in the 1930s. During the war he was a radio specialist with the Air Force, and after the war went to the University of Western Ontario to pursue a degree in radio physics. After going to CGE, his knowledge was channeled into the developing field of computers, as he designed computers for specialized purposes at CGE. It is fascinating to see how much was done locally in the era before computers became ubiquitous. While at CGE, his inventive mind led directly to over 40 patents, for which the documentation is in these papers. The papers also document John's local interest in the United Nations, and in the Unitarian Church.

The papers are very rich for war years, and as he effectively became the historian of the 143 Wing, the war years are supplemented with shared memories, and the text of the history. There are letters received from several friends, including Mary Baldwin and his mother. The ephemera includes souvenirs of the liberation of Brussels, 1944; the Maple Leaf Scrapbook Souvenir; telegraphs related to D-Day; the log of a flight from Longueil to Patricia Bay; and war-time identification.

Mary Baldwin Young's career is also well-documented. We can trace her through teaching in British Columbia in the late 1930s, working as a dietitian with the provincial government in the 1940s, a remarkable mother of five children, and a participant in the making of Peterborough educational policy as a parent and as a school board trustee.

The lives of John Young's parents are richly preserved. His mother, Louie Arrowsmith Young, saved mementos from the 1890s, including a dance card and postcards. The letters 1915-22, from his father to his mother, illustrate ways to keep in touch while one is working on geological expeditions. We have her letters, primarily to and from her son, 1937 to 1958; the letters create a virtual diary of both lives. As for his father, George A M Young, there are eleven diaries covering 1902 to 1919. There are two short science fiction

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pieces written by John Young's father, and an exceptional recreation of his career as a university football player with Osgoode Hall.

John Young's extensive research efforts uncovered a great deal about his grandfather, James McGregor Young, and his more distant ancestor, Captain Rowland Young, of Nova Scotia fame. He traced this part of the family to Prince Edward and Northumberland counties in Ontario, but also to the 1760s, to the Planters of Nova Scotia. This led them to York, Maine and other fascinating connections.

The ancestors on his mother's side also opened surprising doors. John Young grew up in Creston, British Columbia, where his in-laws, the Arrowsmith family had settled by the 1890s. The collecting bug was deeply rooted on this side of the family, and is documented in photographs and memorabilia. His mother's family was part of the western migration along the Mormon trail and his research into the Huscroft family uncovered many difficulties tied to emigration. The Huscroft family genealogy is extraordinarily detailed.

John Young loved to follow the red herrings, as when he found family connections to Sir John A Macdonald and to Peter Gzowski, or when he learned of the first electronic piano in Creston. The most interesting diversion was his work on the Merrill family, partly because Helen Merrill had been his father's long-time girl friend before a geological trip to British Columbia led him to Louie Arrowsmith. The Merrill family and its connections with the Denison family and with Bon Echo, Ontario are the stuff of Canadian legend, and Michele Lacombe is writing a biography of Merrill Denison's mother, Flora.

Mary Baldwin Young's family proved equally colorful. She researched primarily the interconnections between the Baldwins, the Burritts and the Howes. However, this led her to uncover much about Chesley, Yeoman, Williams, Lyman, Lovejoy, Henderson, Landon, Ford, Holt, Crandall, Brown and Schofield families. There are about a dozen photo albums in this fonds, and many other photographs as well, all related to the families they researched. Many of Mary's ancestors were in Vermont and the Ottawa valley; one, Dr Burritt, lived for awhile in Victorian Peterborough.

The memorabilia includes a list of "Favorite Flies" in which her grandfather, F W Baldwin, listed his thirteen favorite fishing flies. We have been able to match these flies with the coloured plates in Mary Orvis Marbury's exceptional 1890s work on fishing flies. It appears, indeed, as if the list were created in response to the questionnaire that Marbury's father sent to proficient fishermen using flies to catch trout and bass. How many other single items in this fantastic collection likewise is filled with stories waiting to be uncovered?

The fonds, totaling 23 cu ft, not counting computer discs and books, is organized around the four distinct sous-fonds, and the genealogical research. There is a file list finding aid at the Trent Valley Archives.

Sous-fonds 1	Mrs GAM Young (nee Louie Arrowsmith), 1890s-1960, 1 cu ft
Sous-fonds 2	John A I Young, 1930s-1997, 11 cu ft
Sous-fonds 3	Mary Baldwin Young, 1870s to 1994, 6 cu ft
Sous-fonds 4	GAM Young, 1902 to 1930s, 1 cu ft

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Sous-fonds 5

Genealogical research in Young, Merrill and Huscroft families, 4 cu ft

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