

LEVEL OF DESCRIPTION:

Collection

No.:

AU003

TITLE:

Robert and Shirley Hendriks collection of William Bleasdel Cameron

CREATOR:

Hendriks, Robert

Hendriks, Shirley

Cameron, William Bleasdel

DATE RANGE:

1860-2006, predominant 1885-1951

EXTENT:

258 photographs and other material

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

William Bleasdel (W.B.) Cameron was born in Trenton, Ontario on July 26, 1862 to John Cameron and Agnes Emma Cameron (nee Bleasdel), and had four siblings, Isabelle, Agnes, Maude, and Charles. Cameron was especially close to his maternal grandfather, Reverend Canon Bleasdel, who preached at St. George's Anglican Church in Trenton, Ontario after emigrating from England in 1848.

Cameron first attended school at Crown Street Common in Trenton, Ontario, from 1869-1877 and then attended high school at Union School from 1877-1879. After graduating, he began training as a druggist in Trenton under A.W. Hawley and most likely attended the Ontario College of Pharmacy as he later qualified for an Alberta pharmaceutical license.

In late 1880 or early 1881, Cameron moved out west to live in the Northwest Territories as a trader, first starting out in Winnipeg, Manitoba and then in Battleford, Saskatchewan where he became a skilled trader speaking rough Cree and Saulteaux and using trade sign language.

Prior to becoming a trader under the service of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in Frog Lake, Alberta in 1884, Cameron experimented with a number of different jobs including brief forays into teaching, railroad construction, and working as a ranch hand.

In April 1885, W.B. Cameron was present at the Frog Lake Massacre in Frog Lake, Alberta where Cree chief, Wandering Spirit and his band attacked and killed settlers in the area, including government agent Thomas Quinn. Cameron survived the attack and,

though a few other people also survived, he styled himself as the 'sole white survivor' of the massacre and wrote extensively about his experiences. Cameron returned to Frog Lake in 1925 for the unveiling of the Frog Lake Massacre Memorial Cairn and also during 1947 to conduct tours of the Frog Lake Massacre site.

W.B. Cameron married Mary Maude Wilson Atkins on July 8, 1902, and together they had two children, Owen and Douglas. After they married, the family did not settle in one place for very long, living in various towns throughout Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia until 1926 when Mary and Cameron separated.

In addition to working as a trader, Cameron wrote hundreds of stories, most of which were written only a decade after his leaving school, and had many of them published. His published literary works appeared in magazines such as *The Beaver* or *Scarlet and Gold*, and in numerous newspapers. Cameron also worked as editor of *Field and Stream* magazine for about two years starting in circa (ca.) 1878. In the 1920s Cameron published a novel, *The War Trail of Big Bear*, which told the story of his captivity at the hands of Big Bear's Renegades in the spring of 1885 after the Frog Lake Massacre. He also collaborated on a biography, *When Fur Was King*, with Henry John Moberly about Moberly's life in north-west Canada during the last half of the nineteenth century. In the mid-1940s, Cameron revised *The War Trail of Big Bear* and had it republished under a new name, *Blood Red the Sun*, his family later attempting to have a further edition published in the 1970s.

Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, Cameron also owned several drugstores in Derwent, Lac La Biche, Heinsburg, and Athabasca, Alberta. In the 1940s he worked as a curator for the Regina RCMP museum in Manitoba. W.B. Cameron died in Meadow Lake Hospital in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, in the late winter of 1951.

CUSTODIAL HISTORY:

This accession was donated by Robert and Shirley Hendriks of Heinsburg, Alberta in 2007. They received the material as a gift from Elsie N. Cameron in 1996.

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

Collection consists of the textual records, photographs, tintypes, copied photographs, postcards and copies of illustrations and paintings of W.B. Cameron, as well as the research records accumulated by Robert Hendriks during the course of writing a biography about W.B. Cameron.

The photographs depict various First Nations people, often dressed in traditional clothing with objects such as the Sioux pipe bag, as well as W.B.'s family and friends. There are also photographs of the site of the Frog Lake Massacre and the Frog Lake Massacre Memorial Cairn. The photographic postcards depict views of the various towns that W.B. Cameron resided in such as Le Pas, Manitoba and Lac La Biche and Vermilion, Alberta.

Textual records consist of correspondence to and from family members and friends, manuscripts, editions of *The Beaver*, *Scarlet and Gold* and *Saturday Night*, newspaper clippings, a scrapbook of Cameron's early writings, paperwork relating to the publishing of Cameron's book as well as the republishing of the book in the 1940s and by his family in the 1970s, certificates, letters relating to the NWMP Memorial & Indian Museum in Battleford, Saskatchewan and to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Also included is a videotape of W.B. Cameron's speech in 1950 at the Elk Point Bridge Opening.

SOURCE OF TITLE:

Title taken from the donor and contents of the collection.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Collection also contains 61 postcards. -39 copied photographs. -7 photographs of illustrations and paintings. -2 tintypes. -1 videotape. -0.48m of textual records.

PHYSICAL CONDITION:

Newspaper clippings are quite fragile and torn in a number of places. Some of the manuscripts and correspondence are printed on very thin and/or fragile paper. A few pages from the scrapbook containing Cameron's early writings have fallen out and the binding is in danger of breaking.

CONSERVATION:

Conservation copies were made of the newspaper clippings and manuscripts, and fragile documents have been encapsulated.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE:

Arrangement of the records reflects the arrangement imposed by the donor.

LANGUAGE NOTE:

The majority of the material is in English, some is in Cree.

ACCESS CONDITIONS:

None.

USE CONDITIONS:

Permission for use required. Subject to *The Copyright Act*.

FINDING AIDS:

File list and scanned images available.

INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING ACCESSIONS:

2008.008

Further accruals are not expected.

ASSOCIATED MATERIAL:

Other material related to William Bleasdell Cameron can be found in the William Bleasdell Cameron fonds and the Ralph and Kenneth Coppock fonds at the Glenbow Archives in Calgary, Alberta and the William Bleasdell Cameron fonds at the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, Ontario. Further information about materials related to Cameron is listed in *William Bleasdell Cameron: A Life of Writing and Adventure* by Robert Hendriks.

GENERAL NOTE:

Information about the biographical sketch was obtained from the records and from *William Bleasdell Cameron: A Life of Writing and Adventure* by Robert Hendriks.

The fonds level description and finding aids were created by Dayna Kwasney (summer student) in 2008.

SUBJECT HEADINGS:

Authors
Hudson's Bay Company - - Employees
Pharmacists
Indians - - Portraits
Cairns
Memoirs