

University of British Columbia Library Rare Books and Special Collections

Finding Aid - Won Alexander Cumyow fonds (RBSC- ARC-1153)

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Won Alexander Cumyow fonds

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Summary information

Repository:	University of British Columbia Library Rare Books and Special Collections
Title:	Won Alexander Cumyow fonds
ID:	RBSC-ARC-1153
Date:	1888-1950 (date of creation)
Physical description:	16 cm of textual records; 82 photographs
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	Items re-housed and finding aid updated in the months of October and November of 2015 by student archivist, Dennis Michailides and in July 2019 by Jacky Lai. One item originally donated with the fonds is missing, presumably due to the disrepair of their original boxes. The missing item is BC1848/64 "Brothers Joe and Frank in front of New Westminster, general store". At any such time that the item is relocated, the finding aid will be updated to include the descriptions.

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Won Cumyow, the first Chinese-Canadian born in Canada, was born on or about March 21st 1861 in Port Douglas, B.C., located at the north end of Harrison Lake. Cumyow's parents had immigrated there from Canton and his father operated a business outfitting miners on their way to the Cariboo. In addition to Chinese and English, Cumyow also learned to speak Chinook, which would prove useful in his future career. The family later moved to New Westminster, where Cumyow was educated in law and appointed court interpreter in 1888. He eventually gained prominence as a merchant, community leader, and official Court Interpreter for the Vancouver City Police (1904-1936), and was involved with several groups, including the Chinese Empire Reform Association. He married in 1889 and had ten children, including four sons and six daughters. His son Gordon succeeded him as Court Interpreter. Won Cumyow was the first Chinese-Canadian born in Canada. He gained prominence as a merchant, community leader and official Court Interpreter for the Vancouver City Police (1904-1936). He served the Chinese Empire Reform Association as well as other related groups.

Scope and content

The fonds consists of correspondence, journals, scrapbooks, photographs, diplomas, certificates and reference and printed materials relating to Cumyow's activities and interests among the Chinese-Canadian community of Vancouver. The activities of his family are also reflected in the fonds.

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title based on contents of fonds .

Immediate source of acquisition

The majority of material in this fonds was donated to the University of British Columbia by Mrs . Hilda Cumyow, daughter-in-law of Won Alexander Cumyow, in 1975 and 1980, with some additional material donated by Aileen Cumyow in 1990 .

Arrangement

The arrangement of the fonds generally follows the arrangement according to material type established by George Brandak in 1975.

Original identifier scheme for photographs (BC1848/XX) has been replaced with current scheme (RBSC-ARC-1153-PH-XX) as part of rehousing work done in July 2019. Original identifiers listed in general note field of associated items.

Restrictions on access

No restrictions on access.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** published

Series descriptions

Biographical information

Date: [1985-199-?] (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of photocopies of various newspaper clippings, book excerpts and documents, and an invitation relating to the activities of Cumyow and his family.

Physical description: 0.5 cm textual records

<u>Publication status:</u> published				
File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-10	File - Information about W.A. Cumyow and family	[1985-199-?]		
Correspondence				
<u>Date:</u> 1900-1902, 1952-1954 (date of creation)				
<u>Scope and content:</u> Series consists of correspondence of Cumyow, including petitions and related correspondence sent on behalf of the Chinese Empire Reform Association of Vancouver to the British and United States governments concerning a political crisis in China, 1900 to 1902 . Series also includes Cumyow's correspondence with Vancouver City Archivist J.S. Matthews, 1952 to 1954, relating to the history of Chinese-Canadians in Vancouver, and the history of Vancouver in general.				
<u>Physical description:</u> 2 cm textual records.				
<u>Publication status:</u> published				
File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1	File - Chinese Empire Reform Association, Vancouver	1900-1902		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-1	Item - [Drummond, L. G., Secretary to the Governor General of Canada, to W. A. Cumyow, Secretary Chinese Empire Reform Association, acknowledging receipt of a petition to the Queen]	1900-07-10		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-2	Item - [Copy of petition to Queen Victoria of Great Britain requesting support for Kwang Hsu, Emperor of China, in establishing a joint Protectorate]	1900-06-25		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-3	Item - [Copy of petition to J. R. Conger, U. S. Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, requesting support in restoring Emperor Kwang Hsu of China to the throne]	1901-01-31		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-4	Item - [Jones, C. J., Office of the Secretary to the Governor General of Canada, to W. A. Cumyow, Chinese Empire Reform Association, acknowledging receipt of a petition to the King regarding affairs in China]	1901-02-27		

RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-5	Item - [Jones, C. J., Office of the Secretary to the Governor General of Canada, to W. A. Cumyow, Secretary, Chinese Empire Reform Association, acknowledging receipt of a memorial to the late Queen Victoria]	1901-01-24
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-6	Item - [Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada to King Edward VII of Britain, offering congratulations upon his coronation]	1902
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-7	Item - [Copy of petition to W. McKinley, President of the United States, requesting support in restoring Emperor Kwang Hsu of China to the throne]	1901-07-15
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-8	Item - [Reddie, A. C., Deputy Provincial Secretary, British Columbia, to Wm. Cumyow, Corresponding Foreign Secretary, Chinese Reform Association, regarding the citizenship status of association members]	1901-04-11
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-9	Item - [Declaration of residency and citizenship for W. A. Cumyow and his children, Grace and Frederick Cumyow]	1909-08-16
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-10	Item - [Envelope addressed to W. A. Cumyow, Esq., Secretary, Chinese Empire Reform Association]	1901-01-25
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-11	Item - [Envelope addressed to W. A. Cumyow, Esq., Chinese Empire Reform Association]	1901-02-28
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-1-12	Item - [Envelope addressed to W. A. Cumyow, Esq., Secretary, Chinese Empire Reform Association]	1900-07-11
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-2	File - Matthews, J.S.	1952-1954

Journals

Date: 1888-1992 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of a letterbook pertaining to Cumyow's various activities, including activities of a business, personal and civic nature, 1888 to 1904, and a notebook listing persons arrested by the Vancouver City Police and the offences committed, 1906 to 1925. Series also includes transcriptions of English letters and transcriptions and translations of Chinese letters in the letterbook.

Physical description: 5 cm textual material.

Physical condition:

The Cumyow Journal, 1888-1905, box 1, folder 3A, is in very fragile condition. All the letters in English have been transcribed and are available in box 1, folder 3B. Faded ink in the letterpress copybook has made a complete transcription impossible.

The transcription and translation of the Chinese portion of the Journal is available in box 1, folder 3C.

<u>Publication status:</u> published				
File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-3	File - Letterbook, December 18, 1888 to 1904	1888-1904		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-4	File - Transcription of English material in letterbook	1992		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-5	File - Transcription of Chinese material in letterbook	1992		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-6	File - Photocopy of Chinese material in letterbook	1992		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-7	File - Police court notebook	1906-1925		
Documents				
<u>Date:</u> 1918, 1924 (date of creation)				
<u>Scope and content:</u> Series consists of a 1918 educational diploma for Harry Won Cumyow, and Won Alexander Cumyow's 1924 registration card with the Department of Immigration and Colonization.				
<u>Physical description:</u> 1 diploma, 1 card.				
<u>Publication status:</u> published				
File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-9	File - Registration card under Chinese Immigration Act	1924		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-13	File - Diploma – Harry Won Cumyow	1918		
Printed material				
<u>Date:</u> 1953-1955 (date of creation)				
<u>Scope and content:</u> Series consists of a few Vancouver City Archives pamphlets concerning dinners held for Vancouver pioneers, 1953 to 1955.				
<u>Physical description:</u> 4 pamphlets.				
<u>Publication status:</u> published				

File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-8	File - Printed material	1953-1955		
Photographs				
<u>Date:</u> 1878-1949 (date of creation)				
<u>Scope and content:</u>				
Series consists of portrait and casual photographs of Cumyow and his family, as well as some photographs of the Chinese Empire Reform Association.				
<u>Physical description:</u> 36 photographs				
<u>Publication status:</u>				
published				
File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11	File - Photographs	1878-1949		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-01	Item - Won Alexander Cumyow with diploma	[1911?]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-02	Item - Won Alexander Cumyow with diploma	[1911]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-03	Item - Won Alexander Cumyow with diploma	1911		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-04	Item - Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada. First executive officers	[1903-1904]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-05	Item - Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada. First executive officers	[1903-1904]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-06	Item - Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada. First executive officers	[ca.1900]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-07	Item - Portrait of W.A. Cumyow [taken at about 30years of age]	[189-]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-08	Item - Portrait of W.A. Cumyow [taken at about 30 years of age]	[189-]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-09	Item - W.A. Cumyow and family standing in front of house	[189-]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-10	Item - W.A. Cumyow and family standing in front of house	[189-]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-11	Item - Election day (federal). W.A. Cumyow, age 88, casts ballot in first federal election since Asian vote ban. Seen with deputy returning officer, Mrs. Mollie Dobell	1949		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-12	Item - Election day (federal). W.A. Cumyow, age 88, casts ballot in first federal election since Asian vote ban.	1949		

	Seen with deputy returning officer, Mrs. Mollie Dobell	
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-13	Item - W.A. Cumyow's family. A portrait of first and second generations. [W.A. Cumyow is 62 years old]	1923
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-14	Item - W.A. Cumyow's family. A portrait of first and second generations. [W.A. Cumyow is 62 years old]	1923
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-15	Item - W.A. Cumyow's family. A portrait of first and second generations. [W.A. Cumyow is 62 years old]	1923
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-16	Item - Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada building. Officials standing on third floor balcony	[1903]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-17	Item - Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada building. Officials standing on third floor balcony	[ca.1900]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-18	Item - W.A. Cumyow with family. Formal family portrait	1903
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-19	Item - W.A. Cumyow with family. Formal family portrait	1903
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-20	Item - W.A. Cumyow with family. Formal family portrait	1903
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-21	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada	[ca. 1900]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-22	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada	[1903]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-23	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada	[1903]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-24	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada	[1903]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-25	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada	[ca. 1900]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-26	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada	1900
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-27	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada. Mr. Cumyow in group	[ca. 1900]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-28	Item - The Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada	[1900?]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-29	Item - Chinese Empire Reform Association of Canada. First executive officers	[ca.1900]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-30	Item - Won Alexander Cumyow with diploma	[1911]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-31	Item - Won Alexander Cumyow with diploma	[1911]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-32	Item - Arts class, 1919, UBC. Harry Cumyow's photograph	1919
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-33	Item - Fred Cumyow, present in group portrait	[ca. 1920?]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-34	Item - Crew of the Annie Fraser. Cumyee (coxswain), Brother of Cumyow in group	1878

RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-35	Item - Provincial Normal School, Vancouver, B .C. Harry Cumyow's photograph	1917-1918
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-11-PH-82	Item - [Portrait of W. A. Cumyow]	1911

Scrapbooks

Date: 1885-1961 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of two scrapbooks, 1885 to 1939 and 1904 to 1961, containing documents , clippings, and photographs relating to the activities of Won Alexander Cumyow and his family. Includes informal photographs of the Cumyow family, newspaper articles documenting Cumyow's career as an official court interpreter, his family life (weddings and funerals) and his activities concerning the Chinese Empire Reform Association, as well as passport certificates pertaining to Cumyow's entry into the United States.

Physical description: 2 scrapbooks; includes 46 photographs

Physical condition:

Photographs have been left in their original state, with acid-free paper interleaved between scrapbook pages for preservation purposes.

Publication status:

published

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12	File - Album - "Photographs"	[1900-1955]		Oversize
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-36	Item - Two photographs of W.A. Cumyow, aged 60 to 70; general information regarding his life	[192?-193?]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-37	Item - Two photographs of W.A. Cumyow, aged 60 to 70; general information regarding his life	[192?-193?]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-1	Item - Two articles regarding W. A. Cumyow's funeral, October 6, 1955	1955		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-38	Item - W.A. Cumyow's ninetieth birthday, with his sons	1951		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-39	Item - Harry Cumyow with motorcycle	[ca. 1920?]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-40	Item - Mr. Cumyow and friend or brother in house	[1945-1955]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-41	Item - W.A. Cumyow standing in front of illegible sign and building	[193-]		
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-42	Item - Two informal portraits of W.A. Cumyow [possibly in the latter years of his life]	[1949-1955]		

RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-43	Item - Two informal portraits of W.A. Cumyow [possibly in the latter years of his life]	[1949-1955]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-44	Item - W.A. Cumyow's daughters and sons standing in front of a giant cedar in Stanley Park, Vancouver	1918
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-45	Item - W.A. Cumyow's daughters and sons standing in front of a giant cedar in Stanley Park, Vancouver	1918
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-46	Item - New Westminster, car going over bridge [with Cumyow family, July 1914]	1914
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-47	Item - New Westminster, car going over bridge [with Cumyow family, July 1914]	1914
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-48	Item - Third Beach; Stanley Park, [Cumyow family having picnic]	n.d.
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-49	Item - Harry Cumyow on motorcycle	[ca. 1920?]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-50	Item - Harry Cumyow on motorcycle	[1920?]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-51	Item - W.A. Cumyow, Eva Cumyow and Harry Cumyow standing in front of car. Bridge in background	[193-]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-52	Item - [Eva Cumyow] in garden	1915
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-53	Item - [Eva Cumyow] in garden	1915
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-54	Item - [Cumyow's] house in New Westminster. Family standing in front of home. (postcard)	[190-]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-55	Item - W.A. Cumyow standing by shed [at boatyard?]	[193-]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-56	Item - Portrait of Mrs. Chang, Mrs. Chow (sisters of W.A. Cumyow) and Won Cumyow in home	1951
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-57	Item - Portrait of W. A. Cumyow in home in formal dress (Likely in his eighties)	1951
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-58	Item - Mr. Won A. Cumyow reading newspaper on election day [June 1949].	1949
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-PH-59	Item - Mr. W.A. Cumyow's ninetieth birthday	1951
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-2	Item - Newspaper articles, April 23, 1936 and June 2, 1949	1936, 1949
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-3	Item - Copy of request for appointment to official court interpreter by W.A. Cumyow	1904
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-4	Item - Certificate by the government of Canada to Chinese persons about to go to the U.S	1904
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-5	Item - Certificate; includes family photograph, Cumyow, daughter and son	
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-6	Item - Newspaper articles regarding return of vote after fifty-one years to Asian Canadians; newspaper photographs	

	of Alexander Cumyow; Mrs. Cumyow's funeral .	
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-12-7	Item - Newspaper articles entitled "50th Anniversary of early B.C. wedding" and "Mrs. W.A. Cumyow passes in hospital."	
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14	File - Album - "Scrapbook"	[1800-1939]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-60	Item - Vancouver, B.C., ceremonial archway with cedar columns	1912
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-61	Item - Chinatown, "Mandarin Inn"	[ca. 1900?]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-62	Item - Vancouver Pageant, Parade	1914
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-63	Item - Hastings Street, Vancouver, B .C. (postcard)	[ca. 1900?]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-64	Item - Vancouver, [New Westminster]	1913
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-65	Item - Vancouver, B .C. taken from Grandview	1914
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-66	Item - Vancouver Pageant, parade and floats on street	1914
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-1	Item - Application for Police Court Interpreter, W .A. Cumyow, and newspaper article, April 3, 1903 from World newspaper. Titled "Enjoyable was Banquet given by Chinese Reform Association."	April 3, 1903
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-2	File - Newspaper articles	[1885-1904]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-67	Item - Celebrating reign of Queen Victoria, Barkerville, B.C.	[18--]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-68	Item - [Highschool building]	n.d.
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-69	Item - Barkerville, B.C., before the fire	1868
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-70	Item - Old church in Barkerville, B.C. Built 1869	[ca. 1900?]
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-71	Item - New Westminster, white goose swimming in lake	1916
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-72	Item - Vancouver, B.C., ceremonial Chinese archway, by Hotel Balmoral, downtown	1919
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-73	Item - Lover's Walk, Queen's Park, New Westminster, B.C.	1914
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-74	Item - New Westminster, B.C., lake and reflections.	1916
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-75	Item - Unidentified docks/marinas	n.d.
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-76	Item - Unidentified docks/marinas	n.d.
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-77	Item - English Bay, women wheeling prams along sidewalk, and view of the beach	1914
RBSC-ARC-1153-1-14-PH-78	Item - Granville St. Burrard Inlet, alias Gastown	ca. 1884

RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-3	Item - Four newspaper articles entitled "Vancouver of Twenty Years Ago," mentioning Mr. Cumyow's name and various activities. One newspaper article mentioning the burning of Fort Douglas	n.d.
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-4	Item - Newspaper article entitled "Vancouver's early life."	n.d.
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-PH-79	Item - Barkerville/Lee Chong Co. Store of general merchant, Barkerville, B.C.	n.d.
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-PH-80	Item - [Colonial Theatre, Port Arthur]	[192-]
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-PH-81	Item - Barkerville, [Chinese] house boarded up	n.d.
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-5	Item - Newspaper article entitled "Pioneer Chinese Couple Fete Golden Wedding Anniversary," November 30, 1939	1939
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-6	Item - Wen Rilong, ### invitation	[192-#]
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-7	Item - [Supper tendered in honor of his excellency Kang Yu Wei]	1904
RBSC- ARC-1153-1-14-8	Item - A Chinese "Yellow Oath"	[ca. 1900?]