

University of British Columbia Library Rare Books and Special Collections

Finding Aid - Arthur H. Evans fonds (RBSC-ARC-1181)

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Arthur H. Evans fonds

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Summary information

Repository: University of British Columbia Library Rare Books and Special Collections

Title: Arthur H. Evans fonds

ID: RBSC-ARC-1181

Date: 1926-1944 (date of creation)

Physical description: 30 cm of textual material

**Dates of creation,
revision and deletion:**

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Arthur was born on 24 April 1890 in Toronto, Ontario to English and Irish immigrant parents Samuel and Mary Ann Evans (nee Bryan). Arthur left school at age 13 to support both of his parents, who were of ill health. He worked at a variety of jobs including selling newspapers, driving a team of horses, and apprenticing as a carpenter. He left Toronto in 1911, at that time a journeyman carpenter. He travelled west working on farms in Saskatchewan. He also travelled to the United States where he became involved in labour rights movements. He was arrested and jailed for three years in Kansas City for reading the Declaration of Independence at a free speech rally. In 1913, Arthur was shot in the leg by a machine gun at a coalmine strike in Ludlow, Colorado.

Ethel and Arthur met while Arthur was working in Drumheller. Ethel had four sisters and six brothers, and the family was involved in militant movements to establish a union in the coal mining community. Ethel and Arthur married on 4 August 1920 in Drumheller. They had their first child, a son named Stewart who was born on 13 April 1922 and died in 1925 during the diphtheria epidemic in Vancouver. Their daughter Jean Stewart was born on 12 February 1927.

Arthur joined the Communist Party in 1926. In 1932, he became the British Columbia organizer of the National Unemployment Association, and later leader of the Workers' Unity League. His opinions of workers' rights were not always popular and throughout his career, he was kidnapped, jailed, shot, and had his car demolished. Arthur Evans is most well known for leading the On-to-Ottawa Trek in 1935 during which over 1,000 unemployed men rode the rails to Ottawa to appeal to the government for better working conditions at the government organized labour relief camps. This Trek ended in Regina on 1 July 1935 when a riot broke out among Trekkers, supporters, local police, and the RCMP.

On 23 January 1944, he stepped off a streetcar and was struck by an automobile while crossing the street at Kingsway and Joyce, Vancouver. At the time of the accident, he was employed at West Coast Shipyards as the shop steward in the Amalgamated Shipwright's Union. He died on 13 February 1944 at the age of 54.

Custodial history

The fonds was donated to UBC Rare Books and Special Collections in 2008 from the On-to-Ottawa Historical Society. The files were not organized, and were received by the Historical Society intermingled with files created and assembled by Ben Swankey and Jean Shiels, co-authors of a book about Evans called *Work and Wages!* David Yorke from the Historical Society has attempted to return the files to their original order when possible, though some remain incomplete. When no original order could be ascertained, Yorke organized the papers in a way which reflects the nature of the documents, their origin, and the relationship to Evans' life story. The documents created or assembled by Shiels and Swanky were removed and made an accrual of The Jean Shiels—Ben Swankey On-to-Ottawa Research Collection.

Scope and content

Fonds consists of legal documents, reports, publications, speeches, newspaper clippings and other material related to Evans' labour activities, including the On-to-Ottawa Trek and resulting Regina Riot Commission, and the defence of Trek members arrested in the Regina Riot. There is also material related to the Canadian Labour Defence League, the Communist Party of Canada, and material in support of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War.

Notes

Title notes

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

Physical condition

Some documents in this fonds are very fragile. Care should be used when viewing the materials.

Arrangement

Arranged and described by David Yorke prior to arrival at UBC Rare Books and Special Collections. Processed at Rare Books and Special Collections, and finding aid created by Nicole Maunsell in 2008. In 2018 a small accrual was made in the form of a single file. This has been described intellectually as a part of Series A On-To-Ottawa, and has been physically arranged to follow the last physical file in the fonds.

Finding aids

File and some item lists available.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** published

Series descriptions

Series A On-to-Ottawa 1935

Date: 1935-1936 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of material related to the relief camp worker's strike and the On-to-Ottawa Trek. It also includes evidence used in the Regina Riot Commission which followed the Trek, and legal statements drawn up on behalf of participants in the Trek. There are also transcripts of the Regina Riot Commission hearings. These files include some photocopies (incl. silver microfilm copies), some originals, and some retyped transcripts with original page numbers in the margins. Some of the transcripts have been annotated.

Physical description: 20 cm of textual material

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-1	File - BC Relief Camp Strike			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-2	File - On-to-Ottawa Trek in Regina			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-3-6	File - Legal proceedings flowing from July 1 Regina Riot			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-3	File - Transcripts and charges			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-4	File - Coroner's inquest-Det. Miller			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-5	File - Trekker's legal preparations for RRC and related material			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-6	File - Witness statements prepared for RRC			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-7	File - Citizens Defence committees-Vancouver and Regina			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-8	File - Summaries and analysis of the Trek post-July 1 (mostly Evans)			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-9	File - Guide to the records of the Regina Riot Inquiry Commission, 1935, from the Saskatchewan Archives Board	1935		
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-10	File - Regina Riot Commission: Vol. 1 pp 14-16, Vol. 4 pp 79-80, 157-208, Vol. 5 p 120, Vol. 7 pp15-162			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-11	File - Regina Riot Commission: Vol. 8 pp 3-68, 127-140 (some missing), pp140-146, pp22-89, pp 91-118			
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-12	File - Regina Riot Commission: Vol. 9 pp 3-90 (marked as 3-159), pp 203-143, 153			

RBSC-ARC-1181-1-13	File - Regina Riot Commission: Vol. 11 pp 88-89; Vol. 12 pp 3-8; Vol. 24 pp 84-115; Vol. 29 (complete)
RBSC-ARC-1181-1-14	File - Regina Riot Commission: Vol. 30 pp 3-4; Vol. 36 (complete); Vol. 37 (complete), Vol. 38 (complete)
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-1	File - Regina Riot Commission: Exhibit: Burgess Telegrams
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-2	File - Regina Riot Commission: Report of the Commission
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-3	File - Fragment of poster (fragile) and other documents
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-16	File - [An open letter to the Riot Commission] January 13 1936

Series B: Other Activity 1926-1944

Date: 1926-1944 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists material related to other left-wing and labour activity in Evans' life, including the Princeton mine workers strike, his work in support of the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War and the Canadian Labour Defence League and the Communist Party of Canada.

Physical description: 10 cm of textual material

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-4	File - Miscellaneous Political and Labour items 1926-1943	1926-1943		
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-5	File - Canadian Labor Defence League			
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-6	File - Princeton Mine Strike 1933	1933		
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-7-8	File - R. v Evans			
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-7	File - trial transcript			
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-8	File - charge to the jury (missing p. 16) and fragment of sentencing			
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-9	File - League against War and Facism	1936		
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-10	File - CPC Campaign for Spanish Civil War Support and Ambulance 1937	1937		
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-11	File - Worker's Unity League (predominant 1935-36)			
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-12	File - Communist Part of Canada			
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-13	File - Publications	1936, 1937, 1953		
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-14	File - Personal and Miscellaneous items			
RBSC-ARC-1181-2-15	File - Arthur Evans Memorial			