



<http://library.mcmaster.ca>

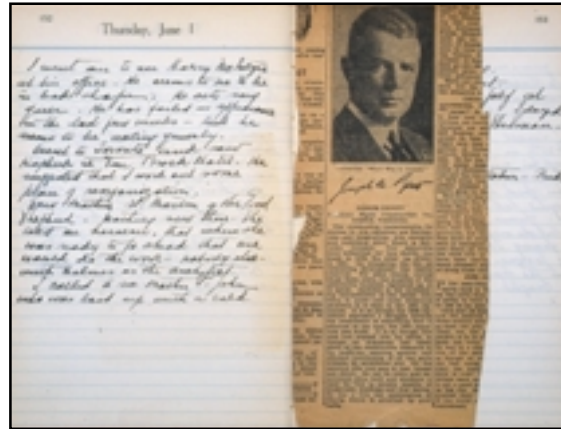
## Joseph M. Pigott Diaries

McMaster University Library was very fortunate to receive the Joseph M. Pigott fonds as a donation from some of J. M. Pigott's grandchildren in 2000. The diaries, consisting of daily journals, condensed journals and travel diaries spanning the period 1910–1968, are an extremely valuable addition to the Library's research collections. In the article below Dr. John Weaver, Professor in McMaster's Department of History, writes about Pigott's significance in the context of Canadian corporate and social history, and the importance of his diaries for primary research.

The privilege of teaching History in a university holding fine research collections is rewarded with choice student projects. After a reconnaissance of the Joseph M. Pigott fonds last winter, I directed four senior students—Greg Sworden, Emidio Santroni, Andrea Thomas, and Tara McLean—to work with the collection's diaries (daily journals from 1911–68), and produce an assessment of one of twentieth-century Canada's great city builders. After WWII, Pigott Construction was Canada's largest privately owned construction company. The students became enthusiasts of primary research, and fans of Joseph M. Pigott.

I first became aware of Joseph Pigott's public career when John Bacher, a Ph.D. student, wrote his thesis on Canadian housing policy from the 1920s to the 1950s. John observed that Joseph M. Pigott (J.M.), as the head of Wartime Housing Limited, a Crown Corporation, was a

remarkable administrator, patriot, and urban visionary. Under his supervision, Wartime Housing constructed accommodation for 50,000 war workers in a variety of Canadian industrial centres and ports. Many of the houses, meant to be temporary, survive today. J.M. envisioned



Pigott's Daily Journal 1933

building the wartime shelter to last so it would provide social housing in the postwar years, a radical proposition that the federal government rejected. J.M. built to last in any case. John Bacher's book *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (McGill-Queen's, 1993) established the importance of J.M.'s public career. The Pigott fonds confirm the brilliance of the private career.

What the diaries revealed was how J.M. operated as a highly successful building contractor; how he worked with counterparts to propose apprenticeship schemes for the building trades and public works in the Depression; how he approached national, provincial, and local governments for contracts; how he promoted city beautification in the

Depression as a way of promoting employment; how he worked with the Catholic hierarchy to secure contracts for churches, parish halls, schools, and hospitals. Pigott made and used connections, knew his business, and worked long hours.

From roughly 1910 through the 1920s the diaries depict a man in motion, for Pigott travelled the continent—usually by train—in search of contracts, skilled workers, finances, and building materials. If there was a secret to his success, it was his attention to details which led to the multiplication of pennies into dollars. Students discovered that he negotiated everything: sand, cement, cut stone, lumber, labour, legal fees, the interest he paid for operating loans. While seeking savings, he remained conscious of quality. His pride in Hamilton's Christ the King Cathedral, the original buildings of McMaster University, the Pigott Building, and the Royal Ontario Museum was palpable. To learn more about cathedral construc-

(continued on p.2)

### In This Issue:

- Joseph M. Pigott Diaries ..... 1
- What Our Users Told Us! ..... 2
- Gifts-in-Kind to the Library ..... 2
- Pierre Berton ..... 3
- High School Students as Researchers ..... 3
- Recent Notable Aquisitions ..... 4
- Recent Notable Gifts ..... 4
- Publications ..... 4
- Calendar ..... 4

---

*(Joseph M. Pigott — cont'd from p.1)*

tion, he went to New York and toured its great churches. Like many Hamilton business figures, J.M. was both a patriot and a continentalist. The family contracting business was a national and international affair before 1920.

Joseph M. Pigott was the son of Michael Pigott, a Hamilton carpenter who jumped from house construction to large projects in 1885 with a contract for Hamilton's James Street armoury. That was also the year of J.M.'s birth. During the prairie boom prior to WWI, the firm moved west (1909–14), constructing public buildings in Saskatchewan. During 1915, operations shifted to factory building in Detroit, and here J.M. established a connection with an American lending institution that he used on his return to Canada in 1916.

While the diaries offer rare insights into city-building processes, they also contain human interest details on such matters as the post-war influenza epidemic and the Depression. As an influential business leader by 1930, J.M. exchanged gifts with corporate heads in Hamilton and elsewhere. At Christmas 1931, he recorded "in previous years my desk has always been piled up with cigars, bottles, books, leather folders, and pencil sets. This year 1 book: hard times alright."

Throughout the Depression, J.M. worried about labour. The loss of skills as workers remained idle troubled him; he wrote articles on public works both as relief measures and opportunities to beautify. For a large-scale builder, the great challenge, one that J.M. faced throughout his career, was "the continuity of big jobs [1967]." In striving to secure these, the family firm built projects across Canada.

J.M.'s diaries provide rare insights into the mind of a complex, wise, energetic, and notable Canadian. My students had the privilege of working with a resource which influenced how they now regard cities. ■

*John Weaver*

---

## ***What Our Users Told Us!***

The University Library conducted a general survey in January 2003, with one version of the survey mailed to all University faculty (except for those in Health Sciences) and one handed to 1200 students in Mills, Innis, and Thode libraries.

We based the 2003 survey on the surveys done in 1997 and 1999, but made slight changes to make it easier to complete.

*What did our users say?*

Faculty and Students continue to be generally pleased with our staff and services and we are making good progress in promoting our information literacy program, with only 48% of faculty respondents ticking the "N/A" response, as opposed to 63% who said they did not use our instructional programs in 1999.

However both Faculty and Student respondents share our concern with Library collections and many took the trouble to comment that the Library should be given more money for book and journal purchases—"Add more books and periodicals!"

The debate on the provision of resources in electronic or print format continues to divide along lines of subject discipline and personal preference, although students generally seem far more willing to embrace the convenience of electronic delivery.

Our students are already feeling the shadow of the impending double cohort and make impassioned pleas for more equipment, more study space, more everything.

59% of student respondents answered that they access Library resources from home or residence (compared to 90% faculty response), but only 11% of students bring a laptop to campus (24% for faculty). We'd like to do further research to find out whether the low response rate for laptop use in the student population reflects the actual level of laptop ownership or the relative lack of Ethernet connections for laptops on-campus.

---

Over the coming months, we'll be looking more closely at the responses to identify areas where we can make improvements. In the meantime, we treasure the impassioned words of one student respondent: "I love libraries!" ■

*Sheila Pepper*

---

## ***Gifts-In-Kind to the Library***

One of the ways we are able to enrich our library collections is through in-kind gifts from our donors. Gifts-in-kind can include everything from books, art collections and equipment to real estate, stocks and bonds; those typically offered to the Library are scholarly books and journals, archives, manuscripts and maps. We have been fortunate to receive many donations of valuable scholarly materials which we could not normally have acquired. As purchased or subscribed resources become more and more costly, the research materials we receive as gifts become increasingly important in supporting the teaching, learning and research activities of the University.

Many prospective donors contact us about potential GIK donations, and we very much appreciate all offers. Before accepting a donation, we consider the item or collection in the context of the Library's existing holdings and collection policies. Occasionally we must decline offered materials for various reasons: space limitations for multiple copies, the questionable research value of outdated materials, whether or not we collect in a given subject area or language. If we are unable to accept a gift, we do our best to advise individuals about other institutions that may be interested or more suitable for a particular donation, or sometimes, ways to dispose of their collections.

*What kinds of research materials are needed as donations?*

■ recent (i.e. past 8 years) scholarly works in humanities, social sciences, science, engineering and business

*(continued on p.3)*

## Pierre Berton on *The Joy of Writing*

Pierre Berton's well-chosen title for his latest book, *The Joy of Writing*, says it all. How else to explain the prolific writer's tremendous output of best-selling books? Dr. Berton, who himself clearly derives joy out of writing, has written a book for aspiring writers to share in that joy. On Monday, March 10, Dr. Berton was at McMaster to read to some 100 students and other guests from *The Joy of Writing*. He captivated the audience with many interesting and entertaining stories, and offered practical advice from his book to the budding author. Practical advice that was worth paying attention to, considering Berton's credentials as one of Canada's most successful, longstanding and influential authors.

Dr. Berton has a long association with McMaster. In 1974, the University Library received the 1st accrual of his papers, and received the most recent one, the 12<sup>th</sup>, in 2002. The archive contains Berton's original

manuscripts, research materials, correspondence, speeches, promotional material and photographs with

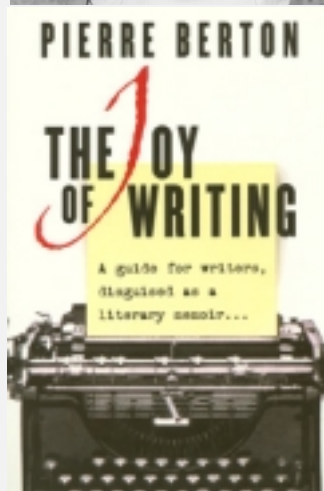
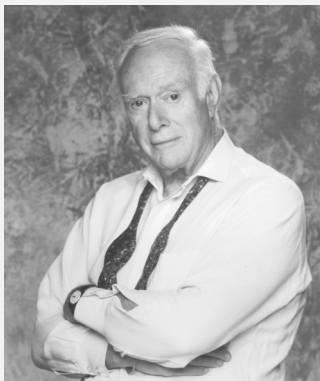


Photo and book cover courtesy of Pierre Berton

Canadian and international celebrities. Looking through the extensive Pierre Berton fonds in Archives and Research Collections, you can witness Berton's development as a journalist, writer and broadcaster.

Dr. Berton was granted an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree by McMaster on November 11, 1983. Introducing Berton at the convocation ceremony, Dr. Peter George, then Dean of Social Sciences, said this: "In a moving account of Phillips Thomson, Dr. Berton once wrote that his grandfather 'could not stop writing'. Neither, we hope, can Dr. Berton..." In the 20

years that have since passed, Dr. George's words have certainly been realized. With the publication of *The Joy of Writing*, it is evident why. ■

Anne Plessl

If you would like information on how the Library processes GIK donations, please go to: <http://library.lib.mcmaster.ca/develop/bookgift.htm> ■

Anne Plessl

## High School Students as Researchers

Early in March, reference librarians from McMaster met with representatives from the Hamilton-Wentworth and Halton Boards of Education (public and separate); Burlington, Hamilton, and Oakville public libraries; and Mohawk and Sheridan College libraries. The meeting was prompted by reference staff's growing concern with the rapidly decreasing number of electronic resources that McMaster can make available to non-McMaster users. (Most vendor licenses limit access to current McMaster faculty, students, and staff.) The purpose of the meeting was to explore the availability of other local resources for high school students as a particular group of researchers. The meeting revealed that the school boards and public libraries provide a wide variety of electronic resources appropriate for high school researchers, and that these students should be directed to McMaster's library only after exhausting these resources.

Participants agreed that the session was very worthwhile, and plans are underway to follow up with sessions which will be expanded to include high school librarians and teacher librarians.

The Library will still offer instruction sessions to high school groups when requested. What we will be recommending, however, is that incoming groups combine the library session with a campus tour or attending a class, thus making the visit to campus a broader university experience.

For further information, please contact Donna Millard, Acting

(continued on p.4)

(Gifts-in-Kind — cont'd from p.2)

- current publications by McMaster faculty
- archives, rare maps
- rare and unusual editions

Generally, the Library can't accept donations of:

- duplicates, unless there is heavy demand for them in course work
- material in poor condition, except for rare and valuable items
- newspapers, photocopies, popular paperbacks
- single issues of journals

If you are interested in donating books, archives, manuscripts, maps or

journals, please call (905) 525-9140 ext. 24865. We will be pleased to discuss your potential donation with you. Books that are added to the collection will receive bookplates acknowledging the gift.

For information on the tax implications of donating gifts-in-kind, see Canada Customs and Revenue Agency's publication *Gifts and Income Tax* at:

<http://www.ccr-aadrc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/p113/README.html>

To receive a print copy, contact your local tax services office or call: 1-800-959-2221.

## Recent Notable Acquisitions

The Library has purchased the following important research materials:

- ❖ The eleventh and final accrual of the archives of Matt Cohen, one of Canada's most distinguished writers. Cohen won the Governor General's Award for Fiction for *Elizabeth and After* two weeks before he died of cancer in December 1999. The archive includes: Cohen's earliest writings and correspondence; his report cards and certificates from Hebrew School; correspondence with George Grant, Margaret Atwood, Greg Hollingshead, Robert Fulford and many other authors and writers; research notebooks, diaries and manuscripts, including material documenting his authorship of children's books under the pseudonym of Teddy Jam. ■

## Recent Notable Gifts

The Library has received the following gifts from:

- ❖ Kevin Adams, Tremaine's *Map of the Counties of Lincoln and Welland* (1862).
- ❖ Pierre Berton, the twelfth accrual of his archives.
- ❖ Professor Elizabeth Eames, six letters from Bertrand Russell and one letter to Countess Edith Russell, 1965–9, concerning Russell's epistemology.
- ❖ Professor Robert Hanks, a note-book memoir done by G. Hanks, the Sick Bay Attendant on board the H.M.S. Carnarvon in 1914–5.
- ❖ Key Porter Books, the third accrual of the company's archives.
- ❖ Professor Christopher Levenson, the second accrual of his archives.
- ❖ Professor Eugene McNamara, the second accrual of his archives.
- ❖ Professor Alan Mendelson, a

collection of books pertaining primarily to Palestine (e.g. George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey Begun An:Dom: 1610. Fovre Bookes. Containing a Description of the Turkish Empire, of Aegypt, of the Holy Land, of the Remote Parts of Italy, and Lands Adioyning*, 1621; and Henry Rooke, *Travels to the Coast of Arabia Felix*, 1783) and an archival collection pertaining to Alex Aronson (includes a letter from Martin Luther King, Jr.).

- ❖ Denise E. Meyer, the archives of her late husband, Professor Ben F. Meyer, a theologian.
- ❖ Russ Parker, a collection of books on the topics of art, history, music and literature.
- ❖ Rogers Publishing, the ninth accrual of the Macmillan Canada archives, including incorporation documents, letters patent, minute books, ledgers of royalty contract information, and legal material.
- ❖ Stephen Leacock Associaton, 43 books nominated for the 2002 Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour.
- ❖ Professor Peter Stevens, the second accrual of his archives.
- ❖ George Whitehead, a collection of documents and manuscripts concerning Bertrand Russell and the First World War, including correspondence with Alfred North Whitehead and the holograph manuscript of "Political Ideals".
- ❖ Rose and John Wilson, the archives of the Canadian poet Ron Everson.

We are grateful to all donors for their generosity to the Library. ■

## Publications

The following recent publications made use of our collections:

Berton, Pierre. *The Joy of Writing: A Guide for Writers, Disguised as a Literary Memoir*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2003.

Russell, Bertrand. *Man's Peril, 1954–55*. Andrew G. Bone, ed. London: Routledge, 2003. Vol. 28 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*.

Russell, Bertrand. *Russell on Metaphysics: Selections from the Writings of Bertrand Russell*. Stephen Mumford, ed. London: Routledge, 2003. ■

## Calendar

Exhibit in Archives and Research Collections, Mills Library:

*May–July*: "A Showcase of Donations: A Celebration of Wonderful Books, Maps and Manuscripts Received from Donors in Recent Years". ■

It has come to our attention that the Preservation Tip in the *McMaster Library News* (fall/winter 2002) inadvertently neglected to provide attribution for this tip to the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators. We apologize for this error. ■

**McMaster Library NEWS**  
(ISSN 0024-9270)  
(Editors: C.A. Stewart, A. Plessl; typesetter: E. McLean)  
is published by:  
McMaster University Library Press  
McMaster University Library  
1280 Main St. W., Hamilton, ON Canada L8S 4L6  
☎ (905) 525-9140 x24737, x24865, x27099