

**P205- William G. (Reindeer) Walton fonds**  
**[ca. 1892-2015] (originals 1892-1947)**  
**36 cm of textual records, 87 glass slides, 3 electronic documents**

**Biographical sketch:** William Gladstone (Reindeer) Walton (1869-1948) was born in Birmingham, England and graduated from Islington Theology College run by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in London, England.

In 1892 he departed for Fort George, Canada where the CMS had sent him as a missionary. After arriving at Moose Fort in August 1892, the next month he left by canoe to Fort George where he arrived six days later on September 13, 1892. He was ordained as deacon in September 1892 and priest in March 1894 by the Bishop of Moosonee.

He met a young Métis woman, Daisy Spencer, daughter of Miles Spencer, factor of the Fort George' HBC post, and they married in 1896. They adopted a young orphaned Inuit girl, Lucy who died in 1902. They had six children: Grace (1897-1902), John (1898-1999), Olive (1906-1911), Robert (1911-1993), Violet (1901-1978), and William (1902-1916).

Walton's missionary work was not limited to church services since he and his wife would both provide health care to the community as well as teach reading and writing. Mrs. Walton also played the harmonium at the church. The Waltons were fluent in Cree and Walton himself also spoke and wrote in Inuktitut. He had the first typewriter made with the local languages' syllabic characters and with Cree lettering.

Walton would travel to different missions approximately 6 months each year. It is said that he would travel 'nearly one thousand miles' (1,609 km) by canoe, and a similar distance by sled. While travelling to the different Indigenous communities of the east coast of James Bay, Walton witnessed poverty and saw many who were malnourished, some even dying of starvation when the caribou were scarce, the winters cold, or fires ravaged the landscape.

Walton advocated for these communities informing government on their conditions of life and asking for help. Walton also came up with solutions. He had some of the flora analyzed by labs in Toronto hoping that it could be used to feed the communities in difficult times. But his main claim to fame was to campaign for the importation of reindeer from Lapland so that when the caribou were scarce there would be an alternate source of food.

In 1924 due to health problems, W. "Reindeer" Walton retired as a missionary and the family moved to Toronto. Even after retirement he continued his relentless work of informing southerners about the people of the north and he lobbied governments to provide health care and other help for the communities of Northern Canada. He also translated books into Cree and Inuktitut and was also the organizing secretary of the Church Bible & Prayer Book Society. The Waltons finally moved to London, Ontario to

live with their daughter Violet. After a major stroke, Daisy Walton died in London Ontario on April 21, 1948. WG Walton died few weeks later on May 25, 1948.

**Scope and content:** The William G Walton fonds consists mostly of his personal correspondence, reports, photographs, and of books he helped translate into Cree and Inuktitut. The documents attest to Walton's missionary work and his relentless dedication and hard work to get the governments and the population in general interested in the conditions of life of the population of the James Bay and Hudson's Bay area.

There is an extensive series of correspondence with his wife Daisy (née Spencer) and his children. In the letters to his fiancée there are some 'courtship letters' but he also reports of his daily activities at the mission or when travelling in the diocese. Later letters describe the life of the people and the missions of Kuujjuarapik and Whapmagoostui\* (previously known as Great Whale River) and Fort George as well as his different meetings and activities while in England. The correspondence with his children is more on their activities at the school they are attending in Ontario or in England.

While the correspondence with family and friends is more personal, the correspondence with HBC managers reports on the different posts, hunting, incidents and life at the post. Some of the correspondence with the Bishop of Moosonee and or with different missionaries and the Treasurer of the diocese, concerns the missionary work at different missions.

Reports, briefs, correspondence with the government and with different organizations address the life and conditions of the communities of the James Bay area and the many challenges the Indigenous Peoples were facing. The need for care, food and his project of introducing reindeers into the region is well represented and documented. Correspondence with American groups and researchers on the 'integration of reindeer in Alaska', or with different government agents do attest of all his research and efforts on this matter.

The lantern slides and images depict the culture, way of life, landscapes, and some are on the starvation of the early 1900's in Indigenous communities of the James Bay and Hudson's Bay area.

**Note: Immediate source of acquisition:** George William (Bill) Holmes, grandson of Rev. Walton, donated the records to the Laurentian University Archives in March 2015.

**Availability of other formats:** The lantern slides are also available in electronic format.

**Terms governing access:** Due to the sensitive nature & content of the documents a special authorization may be required for some documents.

Due to the fragile state of preservation of the glass slides, only the scanned copies are accessible.

**Terms governing use and reproduction/publication:** Due to the fragile state of preservation, reproduction of some documents may be forbidden.

**Finding aids:** The fonds is not processed, no finding aid is available.

**Accruals:** A first accrual was received in April 2015, and a second in September 2016. No further accruals are expected.

**Related material (this repository):** P032- Anglican Diocese of Moosonee Synod Office fonds, P032-37 St. Thomas, Moose factory fonds, P032-11 Chisasibi (Fort George) fonds, and P032-56 Waskaganish (Rupert's House ) fonds may contain more information.

**Associated material (other repositories):** The Diocese of the Arctic fonds and the MSCC fonds, held at the General Synod Archives may contain associated information.

The Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land fonds, may contain associated information.

The Hudson's Bay Company archives may also have associated material.

**General note: Custodial history:** Rev. Walton's grandson, Bill Holmes, became in possession of the original correspondence through his family and had the glass slides scanned before sending the originals and scanned copies.

**Archivist note:** The content of some documents may cause distress.

: The Laurentian University Archives condemn the use of derogatory and racist terms. To preserve the context, the documents are preserved in their original formulation.

: Kuujjuarapik is the Inuk name for Great Whale River and Whapmagoostui is the Cree name for Great Whale River