

P226- Albert (Bert) Weir and Family fonds

ca. 1925- 2021 (predominant dates 1968-2012)

9.66 linear meters of textual records, photographs and other document types

Biographical sketch: Canadian artist Albert George (Bert) Weir (1925-2018), the son of Emily and Percival Weir, was born in 1925 in Sandwich, Ontario. With his first wife Elena Zebrauskaite (1919-1995), he had three daughters. After serving in the navy during World War II, he worked in Northern Ontario lumber camps. Following these years, Weir attended art school. He graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1952. After his graduation, Bert returned to Northern Ontario, moving to McKellar with his young family. Together they lived an “off-the-grid” lifestyle and opened Loon Studios in 1974. Years later, he would move back to Southern Ontario, teaching art at W. D. Lowe Vocational School in Windsor. He would reside there for the next 13 years. Weir was also heavily involved with the youth of different communities – he directed summer studios at McKellar, led summer art programs in Southern Ontario, and he even taught art to underprivileged students in Knoxville, Tennessee. In 2002, after the death of his first wife Elena, Weir would remarry fellow artist Joy Allen.

Bert Weir had a close connection with nature. The way he lived his life and the subject matter of much of his art reflects this connection. Frequently Bert would take part in canoe trips, in places such as Waswanipi, Algonquin Park, Rupert River, and Quetico. He would construct canoes, and shared these skills with students. Bert Weir has been involved with countless exhibitions, displaying his art in Windsor and London, Ontario, with features in Toronto Galleries. He is the recipient of over a dozen awards and grants for his art. From the 1970s to the 2010s he took part in over 50 solo exhibitions, along with 16 group exhibitions. As well, he has been the subject of a book celebrating his work titled: *The Art of Bert Weir. A man of many interests*. Bert spent much of his life enjoying the outdoors, spending time with family and teaching others. Weir passed away on March 29, 2018, at the age of 92.

Scope and content: The Albert (Bert) Weir and Family fonds, consisting of correspondence, reports, newspaper clippings, sketches and publications, depicts Bert Weir’s professional, artistic and personal life. The documents depict his activities and achievements as a painter, sculptor, environmental activist and teacher. Bert’s life as a teacher and youth mentor is outlined through handwritten notes, photos, e-mail messages and newspaper clippings. These items document the many summer studios that he directed at his home in McKellar, as well as art programs in Southern Ontario in which he was involved. The documents also illustrate his time teaching art to underprivileged students in Knoxville, Tennessee (SSSP Knoxville Team), as well as his time as the art teacher for W.D Lowe Vocational in Windsor, ON. Photos, maps and journal entries outline personal interests of Weir. Maps with outlined routes give insight into the canoe trips that Weir undertook in such places as Algonquin Park and Quetico. Included as well are Weir’s sketches, documents relating to his construction projects and social activism. Correspondence, legal documents, and account books detail the business side of Weir’s activities. Weir and his first wife opened and ran Loon Studio, where they offered art courses. The fonds also includes documents relating to Elena’s work, as she was an accomplished painter and sculptor in her own right.

Original sketches, books, photos and thumbnails relating to personal matters reflect the everyday life of Bert Weir and his family. Insight into his family life is provided by Weir family creations. Though there are no original paintings included in the fonds, promotional work, such as fliers and posters for exhibitions, and books on his work, attests to his acclaimed stature as an artist, and illustrates the evolution of his art. Correspondence with former students, other artists and owners of art galleries provide an insight in Weir's artistic world and his friendships.

Note: Immediate source of acquisition: The Fonds was donated by Bert Weir's wife, Joy Allen, and his 3 daughters in 2019.

Language(s) of material: English

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Accruals: The first accrual was received in June 2019. A second accrual was received in May, 2022.

Finding aid: A preliminary list can be accessed at the Laurentian University Archives.