

William Kaye Lamb Collection

Dates of Creation: 1904 - 2006

Physical Extent: 4.9 meters of textual records, 143 books, 450 photographs.

Biographical History:

William Kaye Lamb was born in New Westminster, B.C. on May 11, 1904. During his childhood, he lived first in New Westminster, and later on the family farm in Surrey, B.C. From very early days, Kaye had a passionate interest in ships, reading about them and collecting information, producing charts of their histories and construction (tonnage, length, width, passenger capacities, etc.).

When it was time for him to enter high school, his parents decided that it would be in Kaye's best interests to move to Vancouver so he was turned over to the care of his uncle, Joseph Kaye Henry, a faculty member of McGill College and later a Professor at its new successor institution, the University of British Columbia. The Henry home was located on the west side of Beach avenue, near Stanley Park, and thus, from an early age, Kaye had around him the things that would greatly influence his life – a house full of books, an academic atmosphere, an uncle with a special responsibility at UBC for the library, and, best of all, a waterfront view of the harbour traffic coming in and out of Vancouver Harbour. Watching the ships come and go, he became enthralled by seagoing vessels.

He attended King George High School in Vancouver, and after graduation, in the fall of 1923 he enrolled at UBC in the Faculty of Arts. Here he was taught by a remarkable group of professors who were major influences on his intellectual life. In addition, he also worked as a student assistant in the UBC library, thus bringing him into contact with the field that he would work in for most of his life.

His outstanding performance at UBC earned him a Nichol Scholarship, which provided for three years of post-graduate study in France. By 1928 he was in Paris, attending courses at the Sorbonne and the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques and he remained there until 1932. However, he interrupted his stay due to ill health (which had kept him out of school for several years earlier in his life) to return to Vancouver in 1929/30 where, while recuperating, he completed the requirements for an MA in History.

Following his return to Paris, he began work on his PhD for the London School of Economics under the direction of the famous Harold Laski. His work was done mainly in two great libraries, the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris and the British Museum in London, where he had an opportunity to observe much about how major libraries should be run. In 1933 he was granted his PhD from the London School of Economics, with Laski signing off his PhD thesis. Another benefit of this work was that he became comfortably bilingual, which would serve him well in his later career in Ottawa.

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He returned to Vancouver and in 1934 was named Provincial Archivist and Librarian of BC. In this dual role, he established the foundations of his career to follow. He also became Superintendent of the Public Library Commission, and started his career as a historian, founding and then editing, for ten years, the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*. He began to write for publication, concentrating on exploration by land and sea, the fur trade and British Columbia generally. After he retired from the Federal Public Service in 1969, this career picked up speed, and the next two decades were perhaps the most productive of his life, culminating in 1985 with the publication by the Hakluyt Society of his four volume edition of *Vancouver's Voyages*, the 256 page introduction of which, a book in itself, is the definitive biography of Captain George Vancouver.

His tenure as B.C. Provincial Archivist and Librarian was not long. In 1940 he was named Chief Librarian of the UBC Library, a post he held for 9 years. During his time at UBC, the library grew both in collections and in buildings. A notable achievement was the acquisition and merging of the collections of two great friends of Kaye's, Judge F.W. Howay and Robie E. Reid, constituting Canada's greatest collection of Pacific Northwest Americana and British Columbianiana.

In 1948, he accepted the appointment of Dominion Archivist with the Federal Government in Ottawa on the proviso that that the Government would agree that his assignment would also include responsibility for preparing the way for the establishment of a National Library. In 1950, the Canadian Bibliographic Centre was established as a precursor to the National Library, and on January 1, 1953, the National Library Act came into being.

Under his direction, both the National Library and the Archives grew tremendously and also occupied a new purpose-built building in Ottawa. Both were institutions of major national and international standing when he retired. He held the posts of National Librarian and Dominion Archivist until 1968 and 1969 respectively, when he retired from the Federal Service. He then returned to Vancouver, again to the west end where ships were always visible outside his high rise windows, and his major writing career as a historian carried on.

Throughout his life, his interest in ships and the sea never wavered. In a life of exceptional achievement, he set the standard for capturing the essence of the west coast's maritime history. As a young man, barely approaching his teens, he asked and received permission from the Marine Superintendent of the Canadian Pacific Railway to board and explore the Company's ships when they docked in Vancouver Harbour. "I crawled over every Empress that plied the Pacific," he later recalled. His explorations were matched by voyages aboard the "Princesses" plying BC's waters. His publications were many, and included seminal works on the Hudson's Bay Company's pioneer steamer *Beaver*, the CPR's Empresses, and the Princesses. In all of his scholarly pursuits, the maritime world always seemed to find a place. In his edited collection of Dr. John McLoughlin's letters from the Columbia Department of the Hudson's Bay Company, Dr. Lamb's notes

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and addenda on the company's Pacific Coast fleet of ships, captains and maritime activities could stand alone.

Since this historian was an archivist too, it is not surprising that this love of ships and the sea gave rise to a major collection of maritime photographs, plans and ephemera that began when as a lad he wrote to the offices of the world's major shipping lines. He asked for any and all materials they had, and, not realizing his age, they complied, and sent a wealth of brochures, berthing plans and publicity materials. All of these archives were kept and augmented by Dr. Lamb throughout his life. They are a unique and significant record of passenger travel by liner on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in the first half of the 20th century.

Dr. Lamb married Dr. Wessie M. Tipping, a French Professor at UBC, in 1939 and they had one daughter, (Mrs.) Elizabeth (Lamb) Hawkins. He died on August 24, 1999 in Vancouver at the age of 95.

He wrote extensively and a bibliography of his publications can be found in the Series Level Description – Publications.

He held many positions in national and international organizations and more on these can be found in the Series Level Description – Personal Papers.

He also received many honours, including the Order of Canada and ten honorary degrees. These are recorded in more detail in the Series level Description – Personal papers. A number of personal memoirs are also located there.

Custodial History:

The William Kaye Lamb collection at the Vancouver Maritime Museum consists of those records which are directly related to Dr. Lamb's interest in ships, and includes his collection of maritime and shipping materials, as well as research materials and original manuscripts of ship-related publications. Some personal memoirs have also been included in the fonds.

The first major accession of Kaye Lamb's records came in 1998 and consisted of books, including several Lloyd's Registers, photographs, ships' cabin plans, timetables and publicity materials and other related ephemera, mainly associated with shipping in the North Atlantic and Europe. The second major accession took place in 2000, shortly after his death and consisted of books, cabin plans and publicity materials and other related ephemera principally related to the Pacific shipping trade. Extensive materials on the CPR Empresses and CPR Princesses were included, as well as background notes and manuscripts of books that he wrote on both of these CPR fleets. Materials include deck plans, timetables, advertisements, maps, post cards, other photos and some correspondence related to Pacific shipping. In 2004, his daughter added a number of personal memoirs and other personal materials to the fonds.

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Scope and Content:

The collection consists of textual records, including ships' plans, timetables, publicity brochures, onboard publications – menus and published logs, notebooks, newspaper clippings, travel brochures, periodical articles and some commemorative materials. The collection also includes many post cards and other photographs. In addition, it includes research notes and manuscript materials relating to his publications on ships, correspondence related to marine matters and personal memoirs.

Whenever possible, shipping materials, i.e. plans, photographs, timetables and other ephemera have been interfiled in the existing Photograph and Ephemera files of the VMM. Each item has been identified as from the "W. Kaye Lamb donation", and box lists have been created listing the donation at the item level.

The remaining records have been arranged into the following series:

- I. Personal Papers and Biographic Materials, 1904- 2006
- II. Correspondence, 1936 - 1988
- III. Research, 1920 - 1988
- IV. Publications, 1967 - 1986
- V. Miscellaneous, 1907 – 1990
- VI. The Vancouver Conference, April 23-26, 1992

Notes:

Source of Supplied Title: Title based on provenance of the collection.

Conservation: A number of the textual items are suffering from significant acidic deterioration. Wherever possible, these items have been placed in acid-free or latent plastic envelopes to attempt to prevent further deterioration and to segregate them from other materials in the VMM Ephemera Files. Acidic newspaper clippings have been copied onto acid free paper, and the originals put into latent plastic folders, and then both have been filed in the Ephemera Files. Very fragile materials have been placed in acid free envelopes and a note has been added on the outside to indicate that this material is very fragile. Some acidic newspaper clippings, if found to be duplicates, were destroyed.

Accompanying Materials: In addition to textual materials, a number of books and periodicals from Dr. Lamb's collection were acquired by the VMM. Books and periodicals that the museum did not have were culled from the accession, catalogued and integrated into the museum's library holdings. Duplicate books and journals that were already in the museum's collection were sold or given away. Books that were kept were integrated into the VMM library holdings.

Related Records: The major portion of Dr. Lamb's private and professional papers and his books are housed in other institutions. The National Archives of

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Canada holds the bulk of his professional papers in their holdings, “W. K. Lamb Fonds, MG 31, D8”. The National Library of Canada also holds records which are related to his career as a librarian, and in particular, as National Librarian of Canada. The Library of the University of British Columbia, in Special Collections, houses his rare books related to British Columbia and West Coast exploration, as well as manuscript and research materials related to his published works, including his major work on Captain George Vancouver which was published by the Hakluyt Society. The Library of Simon Fraser University received a gift of the bulk of his library collection in 2000, and these works are identified with a special bookplate in each volume. Of particular historical interest is his set of the publications of the Champlain Society, which is now housed in the Library of Selkirk College, Castlegar, B.C. This set is of interest because over the years, it was subscribed to and owned, in turn, by his two very close friends, Judge Howay and Robbie Reid and then by Dr. Lamb, all of whom annotated their copies with margin notes on a regular basis.

Arrangement: Materials donated to the VMM in the two main accessions of 1998 and 2000 were arbitrarily boxed and sent to the museum where their arrangement and description took place. An initial box inventory was prepared by E. Boyd and Rachel Grant in 1998. Completion of listings and some editing of the box lists for the 13 boxes was subsequently done by Elizabeth Hawkins from 2002-2006. The fond has since been arranged by function, as there was no sense of the creator’s original order from the initial appraisal of the materials. In cases where the creator’s original order existed clearly within the defined series, all efforts were made to preserve it.

Finding Aids: There are three types of finding aids that exist for the fonds. Between 1998 – 2006 box lists were created which describe (at the item level) the complete donation as received. Because the vast bulk of the donation was integrated into the VMM ephemera, photograph, and library collections, the box lists remain as the only description of the full collection. The ultimate location or disposition of each item is noted in the lists.

The 143 books in the collection that were catalogued and kept by the museum were added to the museum’s library holdings and catalogues, with a note that each is from the William Kaye Lamb collection.