

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

WESTERN ARCHIVES



THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS

AFC 21

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WESTERN ARCHIVES
THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FONDS DESCRIPTION	4
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS	
Series 1 Publications	7
Series 2 Graphics	8
Series 3 Art Activities	9
Series 4 Rock Art	10
Series 5 Correspondence	11
Series 6 Personal Materials	12
Series 7 Family History	13
Series 8 Christmas Cards	14
Series 9 Private Papers	15
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Series 1 Publications	16
Appendix B: Series 6 Personal Materials	17

THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
FONDS DESCRIPTION

Dates

[193-] - 1979; added material 1855, [1909?], 1988

Extent and Material

3.5 m of textual records

13 photographs

ca. 150 drawings

Biographical Sketch

Selwyn Hannington Dewdney was born October 22, 1909 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. He and his family moved to Kenora, Ontario soon after his father, Alfred Daniel Alexander Dewdney, was named the second Bishop of Keewatin. Selwyn received his primary and secondary education in Prince Albert and Kenora before attending the University of Toronto and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Astronomy and English in 1931. He received a High School Assistant's Certificate, Science and Mathematics, and an Art Specialist's Certificate from the Ontario College of Education in 1932. From 1934 to 1936, Dewdney attended the Ontario College of Art, and was named an Associate, OCA, with Honours. He spent several summers travelling thousands of miles, often by canoe, in northern Canada, accompanying his father on visits to northern missions as a student missionary and as a member of a Geological Survey of Canada crew.

Moving to London, Ontario in 1936, Dewdney accepted a position as High School Assistant and Art Specialist at Sir Adam Beck Collegiate Institute, teaching Geography, Art and English until his resignation in 1945. From then on, he devoted his efforts to writing, art and research. Dewdney published his first novel, *Wind Without Rain*, in 1946, and his second, *Christopher Breton*, in 1978. *Daylight in the Swamp*, his memoirs, were edited by his son A. K. Dewdney and published posthumously in 1997. He wrote *They Shared to Survive: the native people of Canada* and *The Hungry Time*, co-authored *Social Studies for Canadians*, contributed a chapter on the St. Lawrence for *Rivers of the World*, and edited Norval Morrisseau's *Legends of My People: the great Ojibway*. Dewdney wrote and illustrated *The Map That Grew* and illustrated a number of textbooks and books for young readers.

One of the first London artists to paint abstracts in the 1940s and early 1950s, Dewdney painted a number of murals on commission for several clients, including Sir Adam Beck Collegiate and Victorian Hospital. He had virtually stopped painting by the end of the 1950s to devote his time to other interests, but remained active in the local art community. Dewdney served as president of the Western Art League in 1957 and 1960, and from 1960 to 1962 was Executive Director of the short-lived Artists' Workshop in London which provided art classes to adults and employed as instructors a number of young London artists,

including Jack Chambers, Greg Curnoe, Bernice Vincent, Tony Urquhart, Gillian Saward and John O'Henly,

In 1953, Selwyn Dewdney was appointed psychiatric art therapist at Westminster (now Parkwood) Hospital and began using art to help in the treatment of psychiatric patients. He was soon joined in this work by his wife Irene. Selwyn published a number of journal articles and lectured on their art therapy approach. Together, the Dewdney's pioneered an objective, client-oriented technique that developed into the first art therapy program in Canada. While Irene continued with art therapy work, Selwyn began to devote more of his time to his pioneering studies of Canadian native rock art. Conducting extensive field work for a number of museums, foundations, government departments and the Canada Council, Dewdney recorded 290 rock art sites in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, the Northwest Territories, Michigan and Minnesota, and conducted studies of selected sites. He lectured on native art at various museums, universities and conferences; submitted a number of reports and articles for journals and museum and government department publications; and wrote, with Kenneth E. Kidd, *Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes*, published in 1962. Dewdney co-founded and was elected Senior Associate of Canadian Rock Art Associates. His continuing interest in Canadian native art extended to publishing a number of journal articles, lecturing at the Ontario College of Art, writing *Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway* (1975), his contribution to Morrissette's book, and serving on the boards of N' Amerind, the Ontario division of the Indian-Eskimo Association, and Indian Crafts of Canada.

Dewdney married Irene Maude Donner in 1936. The Dewdneys had four sons: Donner, Keewatin, Peter and Christopher.

Selwyn Dewdney died following heart surgery on November 18, 1979.

Scope and Content

Fonds consists of records illustrating the career of Selwyn Dewdney as writer, artist and pioneer in the field of native rock art, and also contains personal materials and records relating to his background and family. Included are printed editions of published articles and books, source materials, manuscript drafts, sketches, drawings, notes, exhibition catalogues and slides, articles about Dewdney's rock art studies, financial records, correspondence, notebooks and albums, genealogical charts and notes, photographs, family Christmas cards, and newspaper clippings.

Arrangement

The fonds is arranged into the following series:

- Series 1 Publications
- Series 2 Graphics
- Series 3 Art Activities
- Series 4 Rock Art
- Series 5 Correspondence

Series 6 Personal Materials
Series 7 Family History
Series 8 Christmas Cards
Series 9 Private Papers

Conditions Governing Access

Access to Private Papers series restricted until 2015.

Related Material

1. The Dewdney Art Therapy Collection is available in The University of Western Ontario Archives.
2. The Royal Ontario Museum holds an extensive collection of Dewdney's rock art studies. The Selwyn Dewdney Ojibway Scrolls Project collection and the Selwyn Dewdney Petroglyph Project collection are held at the Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by A. K. Dewdney in November, 2002.

THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series 1 Publications

Dates

1931 - 1979

Scope and Content

Series consists of printed editions of articles and books authored, co-authored or illustrated by Selwyn Dewdney. Included are journals; a copy of the manuscript of the unpublished *Image of Forgotten Dreams*; and source material, original and edited manuscript drafts, pencil drawings, cover paste-up, publisher's correspondence and original drawings for *Daylight in the Swamp*.

Notes

1. Published materials authored, co-authored or illustrated by Selwyn Dewdney have been removed and placed in Special Collections. A list of the titles and their call numbers can be found in Appendix A.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 2 Graphics

Dates

[195-] - 1979; added material 1988

Scope and Content

Series consists of records documenting Selwyn Dewdney's artistic work. Included are sketches, drawings, notes, inventory, correspondence, and newspaper clippings relating to his murals; illustrations, sketches and scratch books; and a catalogue and slides of a 1988 London Regional Art Gallery exhibition of his work.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 3 Art Activities

Dates

1955 - 1963

Scope and Content

Series consists of records relating to Selwyn Dewdney's involvement in the local art community and his interest in native art. Included are Western Art League pamphlets, exhibition notices, and catalogues showing Dewdney's works; Artists' Workshop of London financial statements, budgets, reorganization plans, schedule of classes, memos to directors, and newspaper clippings; and background information, publications, photographs and newspaper clippings about Inuit and Amerindian art and artists.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 4 Rock Art

Dates

1952 - 1975

Scope and Content

Series consists of records relating to Selwyn Dewdney's interest in and study of Canadian native rock art. Included are articles about his contribution to the field, photocopies, and newspaper clippings; photo of the memorial plaque to Dewdney at Agawa Bay, and an invitation to the unveiling ceremony.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 5 Correspondence

Dates

[193-] - [197-]

Scope and Content

Series consists of correspondence to and from Selwyn and Irene Dewdney. Included are letters, cards, announcements from friends and relatives; correspondence with publishers; and business correspondence with Sir Adam Beck Collegiate Institute and the London Public Library.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 6 Personal Materials

Dates

[193-] - 1970; added material [1909?]

Scope and Content

Series consists of personal materials, including a “Personal Windmills” file containing letters to editors and newspaper clippings about political issues and public policy; cash books; day book and autograph album; photographs; miscellaneous correspondence; “Loon Island Diaries” containing references to Dewdney’s memoirs; minute and attendance books from Sir Adam Beck Collegiate Institute; a Bible and a copy of the New Testament in Inuktituk; maps; a Cree dictionary; a poetry book from Dewdney’s high school days in Kenora; a manuscript of a “Mount Egabrag” essay and a copy of the newspaper article that inspired it; and a diary. Also included are assorted identification cards, baptismal certificate; passports; copies of Dewdney’s *curriculum vitae*, will and certificate of cremation; biographical articles and newspaper clippings; and medical notes.

Note

1. Published materials have been removed and placed in Special Collections. A list of titles and their call numbers can be found in Appendix B.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 7 Family History

Dates

[19--] - 1979; added material 1855

Scope and Content

Series consists of materials related to the history of the Dewdney, Hannington and Donner families; and records related to Alexander Dewdney. Family materials include correspondence, genealogical notes and charts, house plans, photographs and newspaper clippings. Materials related to Bishop Dewdney include background information, correspondence, copies of picture writing and notes, and sketches for his memorial.

Note

1. The Alexander Dewdney fonds at the Archives of Ontario includes prints and negatives of photographs taken by Bishop Dewdney.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 8 Christmas Cards

Dates

[193-] - 1970

Scope and Content

Series consists of family Christmas cards designed and produced by Selwyn Dewdney. Included are original sketches; a complete set of cards created 1936 and 1969; a proof of the 1970 design; samples of earlier, undated cards; engraving blocks; a poster, reproduced in the *The London Free Press*, of the 1936-1960 cards; and a chronological list of subjects.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 9 Private Papers

Dates

[193-] - [197-]

Scope and Content

Series consists of personal correspondence between Selwyn and Irene Dewdney, Dewdney and the Donner family correspondence, notebooks and diaries.

Restrictions Governing Access

Access restricted until 2015.

**THE SELWYN DEWDNEY FONDS
AFC 21
APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Series 1 Publications

Title	Call Number
Algonquin Story	F1059.A33S3
Canada and the Americas	E18.B84
Canada and the Commonwealth	DA16.C3135 1953
Christopher Breton	PR9299.D52C47
A History of Ontario	F1058.A85
Indian Rock Art	E78.S2D48 1963
The Map That Grew	PR9299.D52M3
Rivers of the World, Vol. 1	GB1203.R65 1961
Relevés et travaux récents sur l'art rupestre amérindien	E98.A7T38
Social Studies for Canadians	LT1001.971.C67 1938
They Shared to Survive	E78.C2D48
University College: A Portrait	LE3.T6U5B6
Wind without Rain	PR9299.D52W7

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AFC 21
APPENDICES**

Appendix B: Series 6 Personal Materials

Title	Call Number
A Dictionary of the Cree Language	PM988.W3 1938
The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ	BS345.E85 1920
Shorter Poems	PR1175.A41 1924