

AR 394
Archie H. Wills fonds



Cover photo: Archie and Lydia Wills, 30 May 1939 on the occasion of George VI and Elizabeth's visit to Victoria. AR 394, 3.8

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Fonds level description

Archie H. Wills fonds. – 1890-2004. – 1.5m of textual records and other material

Archie H. Wills (Henry Archibald Wills) was born in Victoria, British Columbia on 11 September 1892. His parents, Frank Henry Wills (1864-1953) and Sarah Ann Porter (1861-1946) were born in England and emigrated to Canada in 1887 and 1890, respectively. Frank Wills was a carpenter and built many houses in Victoria, including his own family's which was located in the Spring Ridge area of the Fernwood neighbourhood. Archie attended Spring Ridge School and Victoria High School.

Upon seeing an advertisement for an editorial room office boy at the Victoria Daily Times, Archie immediately decided he wanted to be a newspaperman, and left school to do so at age fifteen. Within a few months he had begun to write short pieces for the Times. In 1910 he was made Marine Editor for the paper, a position he held for five years until he enlisted for World War I. Archie embarked upon a round-the-world trip in 1913 but only went as far as Toronto, where he met Lydia Mary Knapp, a successful amateur singer. He returned for a visit in 1914 and they were engaged. Unable to join an aerial corps (he had a life-long interest in aviation), Archie joined the 62nd Battery, Canadian Forces Artillery, the right section of which was absorbed by the 58th Howitzer Battery in 1917.¹ He trained at Fort MacAulay, Petawawa, and Witley (England) and then saw sixteen months of action in France, rising through the ranks from Gunner to Bombardier, Corporal and Sergeant. During the war, Archie established "The O-Pip" (The Observation Post) paper with Gordon A. Cameron and J. M. Mitch Inglis. Lydia and Archie married on 3 September 1919. They had three children, Kenneth (b. 1922), Eileen (b. 1924), and Dorothy (b. 1928).

When he returned to Victoria and the Times in 1919 Archie was assigned the police beat. Other assignments followed: he was Sports Editor from 1920-27, City Editor from 1928 to 1936, and Managing Editor from 1936 until his retirement from the Times in 1951. During his career at the Times he also served Victoria in a number of public offices: as police commissioner for two years, Chairman of Fire Wardens for seven years, a Director of the Chamber of Commerce for twelve years, a member of the War Board for the duration of WWII, and an alderman on City Council for ten years (1934-44), the last three of which he was Acting Mayor of Victoria. Archie was a charter member of the Victoria Gyro Club, a member of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and a member of the Royal Canadian Legion. He was connected with the YM-YWCA throughout his life and was a lifelong member of the congregation of the Metropolitan United Church (earlier the Metropolitan Methodist Church).

After 1951 Archie continued to sell stories and act as Victoria correspondent of the Seattle Times. He continued to write for the Victoria Times and the Daily Colonist until the early 1980s. In 1951 on retirement from the Times he began a career in public relations, including work for the Victoria Milk Distributors Association. He assisted with local labour adjudications,

¹ See the entries for the 62nd and 58th Batteries in <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/Documents/artillery.pdf>. See also article in "The O-Pip" (AR394_WAH_03_10_008).

and, along with Lester Patrick, revived the Victoria Cougars hockey franchise. Archie was Managing Secretary of the Victoria Downtown Business Association when it formed in 1953, and he worked with the Association until 1969. He retired from public relations in 1969, the year of his and Lydia's golden wedding anniversary. He continued to write, travel, and spend time with his by then extensive family. Lydia died in 1985. Archie died 5 April 1988 in Victoria, aged 95.

The fonds consists of records relating to his career as a journalist and to his family life in Victoria. It has been arranged in two series, Autobiography and Writing. Records include typed manuscripts, clippings of Archie's published articles, photographs including photograph albums, diaries, scrapbooks, war medals, and ephemera.

Title based on contents of fonds

Donated to UVic Archives by Kenneth A. Wills in 2005

Acc. No. 2005-036

Fonds contains significant amount of material (published articles and photographs) that may be subject to copyright restrictions

File list available that lists titles of articles written for various newspapers

58th Battery, Canadian Forces Artillery; Armed Forces; Journalism; Local History; Veterans; Vancouver Island Coast Region; Wills, Archie H.

Series level descriptions

Autobiography series. – 1890-1985. – 0.6 m of textual records and other materials

The series consists of Archie's autobiographical works, which document his service in World War I and his family life and career. It has been arranged into three sub-series: All in A Lifetime, My Life in the Army, and Travel.

The All in A Lifetime sub-series consists of his autobiography (approximately thirty chapters) written circa 1976. It covers his birth to family life in the 1970s, with chapters on different phases of his career and his particular interests. It was self-published in an abridged version. Includes ca. 200 photographs, 1 photograph album (ca. 100 photographs).

The My Life in the Army sub-series consists of his war diaries (1916-1919) which document his training in Canada, England, action in France, and his return. It includes 1 photograph album (ca. 260 photographs), and ca. 40 photographs.

The Travel sub-series consists of records documenting various family trips around North America.

Writing series. – 1913-2004, predominant 1913-1982. – 0.9 m of textual records and other materials

The Writing series consists of his published and unpublished work, and background material for it. The series shows his interest in making new generations of Victoria residents aware of their city's history and aware of World War I history. It has been arranged into two sub-series: Articles and Stories, and Broadcasts.

The Articles and Stories sub-series consists of articles he wrote for the *Victoria Times*, the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, the *Toronto Star Weekly*, *B.C. Magazine*, the *Province* and other magazines, spanning the years 1913-1982. It also consists of longer biographical and historical stories. Photographs used with the published articles accompany the articles and stories, are gathered in files of draft material, or are filed together by their media (ca. 160 photographs).

The Broadcast sub-series consist of stories prepared for CBC radio broadcasts in the 1950s, on Victoria's aviation, shipping and hockey history, and records relating to Archie's appearance on the CBC television show *Front Page Challenge* in 1978. Includes ca. 20 photographs.

File lists

Box 1:

- 1.1 All in A Lifetime – A son is born [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.2 All in A Lifetime – Childhood into Boyhood 1897-1907 [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.3 All in A Lifetime – A Newspaperman 1907-1915 [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.4 All in A Lifetime – Marine Editor 1910-1915 [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.5 All in A Lifetime – War, 1914-1918, The Fun and the Horror [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.6 All in A Lifetime – Police 1919-1920 [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.7 All in A Lifetime – City Editor, Managing Editor 1927-1951 [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.8 All in A Lifetime – Marriage and Births [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.9 All in A Lifetime – A New Career Beckons [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.10 All in A Lifetime – Royalty 1939 [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.11 All in A Lifetime – Esquimalt [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.12 All in A Lifetime – SS Queen Elizabeth 1942, HMCS Prince Robert and the W[?] 1940 [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.13 All in A Lifetime – The Church [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.14 All in A Lifetime – Politics [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.15 All in A Lifetime – Aviation [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.16 All in A Lifetime – Karluk Expedition [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.17 All in A Lifetime – Auto-Racing and Automobiles [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.18 All in A Lifetime – Sealing [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.19 All in A Lifetime – Fishing [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.20 All in A Lifetime – Whaling [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.21 All in A Lifetime – Disasters and Centennials, Merchandizing, railroad building, churches, wars, banks, saloons, Judgement Day, opium [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.22 All in A Lifetime – My Life with the Movies [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.23 All in A Lifetime – Exploration [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.24 All in A Lifetime – Characters [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.25 All in A Lifetime – Sternwheelers [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.26 All in A Lifetime – The End of the World [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.27 B.C. Nicholas [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 1.28 Patricks [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976

Box 2:

- 2.1 Interesting Papers [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 2.2 All In A Lifetime [textual record] / Archie H. Wills. – [Victoria, B.C.?], 1985
File contains the self-published version of the autobiography which was edited by Eileen Wilson.
- 2.3 Dunsmuir [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1946-77
File includes article by A.W. “Coal Miner who promised his bride a castle”; circa 13 articles on Dunsmuir by various authors; draft of A.W. Dunsmuir article; various notes on the family; letter to A.W. regarding Dunsmuir and coal land; telegram and letter correspondence between A.W. and Dola Dunsmuir Cavendish, 1957-60; historical sketch of Royal Roads/Hatley Castle and early history of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo (E&N) Railway.
- 2.4 Trips [textual records]. – 1959-1966
File contains typed stories of trips to New York City, Hawaii, Peace River, Virginia.
- 2.5 Articles (1) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1939, 1969-1982.
- 2.6 Articles (2) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1928-1976
- 2.7 Articles (3) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1924-1981
- 2.8 Blue Lines, Sea Lanes, Sky Trails [textual records]. – 1952
File contains material for CBC broadcasts given by A.W. on hockey, shipping and aviation history in Victoria.
- 2.9 Sydney Cornstalk [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1926, 1976
File contains the story of Frank Slavin, boxer; and accompanying materials. Bound copy of sixteen chapter manuscript.
- 2.10 White Magic [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1950-1955
File relates to the history of the B.C. Cement Co. (Butchart’s).
- 2.11 Stories [textual records]. – 1927-1951
File includes mss of published stories: “Happy”, “Boston Jean”, “Go North Young Man”, “Premiers”, “Double-Cross that Paid Off”, “Sure Cure”.
- 2.12 Drafts, sources, photos for various stories (1) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1936-1970
- 2.13 Drafts, sources, photos for various stories (2) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1920s-1970s
- 2.14 Drafts, sources, photos for various stories (3) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1920s-1950s
- 2.15 Drafts, sources, photos for various stories (4) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1920s-1970s
- 2.16 Drafts, sources, photos for various stories (5) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1920s-1970s
- 2.17 Drafts, sources, photos for various stories (6) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1920s-1982

Box 3:

- 3.1 War Reminiscences and Reunions [textual records, 1 photograph: b&w]. – 1916-1978
- 3.2 All in a Lifetime - Archie H. Wills Memoirs - Various Items [textual records]. – 1939-1959

- 3.3 All in a Lifetime – Marine Editor chapter [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1976
- 3.4 P.E.O [Professional Engineers Ontario] Talk on Ottawa [textual records]. – 1972.
File relates to a speech given to Chapter K. P.E.O.
- 3.5 Marine and Other Stories (1) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1923-1976
- 3.6 Marine and Other Stories (2) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1970-1978
- 3.7 Royal Tour (1) [textual records and other material]. - 1939
File contains documentation of George VI and Elizabeth’s Canadian tour of 1939; A.W. part of official press. Quebec to Jasper section of tour.
- 3.8 Royal Tour (2) [textual records, photographs: b&w, ephemera]. – 1939
File contains documentation of George VI and Elizabeth’s Canadian tour of 1939; AW part of official press. Calgary to Victoria section of tour.
- 3.9 All in A Lifetime – War 1914-18 – pictures [ca. 260 photographs: b&w, textual records]. – 1916-1954
File includes album, appendage to Chapter “War 1914-18: the Fun and the Horror”, and 2 loose prints. Photos mostly taken and album assembled by A.W.’s friend Ernest Greenwood who also served in the Canadian Field Artillery. A.W. added his own photos, clippings, etc. Subjects include but are not limited to the following: newspaper clippings of A.W. joining regiment, brother Percy leaving and wounded; Ypres – ruined buildings; Courcellette; Vimy; trench scenes; ‘going over’; Cambrai; Petawawa, Fort MacAulay (training); Valenciennes; Witley, Godalming (England – training); guns in action and transport; ‘girls I met’; stretcher cases; prisoners, ‘Dead Fritz’s” [sic]; members of Sergeant’s Mess – 58th Battery, C.F.A.; leaving Victoria; aboard troopship *Cameronia*; troopships and escort ships; brigade reunion; copy of A.W.’s discharge certificate; copy of ceasefire, Nov. 11th.
- 3.10 O Pip Paper [textual records, 1 photograph: b&w]. – 1917-1919
File includes issues of the Observation Post paper, “official organ of the 58th Battery, C.F.A.” Archie Wills Editor, Gordon A. Cameron, Business Manager, and J.M. Mitch Inglis, cartoonist and illustrator. Issues of paper bound into volume; volume also contains staff description, photo, newspaper clipping of A.W.’s death, diamond anniversary programme for 15th brigade C.F.A., clipping notifying of new “O” Pip issues released, clipping about life and career of Inglis.
Contents fragile.
- 3.11 War Diaries (1) – My Life in the Army [textual records]. – 1916-1917
File includes the first four of eight volumes of war diaries. They are:
- Volume 1. My Life in the Army. By Archie H. Wills. Fort MacAulay. Feb. 1 – May 28. 1916
- Volume 2. My Life in the Army Petawawa May 28 to Sept. 8, 1916
- Volume 3. My Life in the Army England Sept. 22 to Feb. 9. 1917 Witley, Aldershot, Salisbury Plains
- Volume 4. My Life in the Army England Feb. 10, 1917 August. 16. Ready for France
- 3.12 O Pip Paper and Reunions [textual records, photographs: b&w, cartographic records]. – 1916-1974

- File contains records of 58th reunions in Victoria as well as issues of “O” Pip: Volume 1, Nos. 1-3 (Witley Camp), incomplete issues, ‘Easter Number’, France. “The Staffer”, 66th Battery C.F.A. paper, No. 4 – Western Front, Christmas 1918.
- 3.13 Stories Around Ship Chandler’s Stove [textual records]. – 1913-1914
File contains approximately 70 articles from when A.W. was Marine Editor of Victoria Times, dating January to spring 1913 and January to March 1914.
- 3.14 War Diaries (2) – My Life in the Army [textual records]. – 1917-1919
File includes latter four of eight volumes of war diaries. They are:
- Volume 5. My Life in the Army. France Aug. 16 to Dec. 31. [1917]
- Volume 6. My Life in the Army France Jan 1, 1918 to Dec. 31. Last Hundred Days, Armistice at Mons.
- Volume 7. My Life in the Army. Archie Wills. The March to the Rhine. Personnel of B-Sub and instructions re: equipment Start made Nov. 18, 1918 [minimal entries, not diary form]
- Volume 8. My Life in the Army. Archie Wills. On way home. Camp Borden, Rhyl [Wales], Halifax, Toronto, Victoria. Dec. 31, 1918 – March 2nd [1919]
Some volumes fragile.
- 3.15 Articles, trip to Ottawa [textual records]. – 1968-1988. – Some contents collected by donor not creator.
- 3.16 Articles (4) [textual records]. – 1971, 1977
- 3.17 Articles (5) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1911-1982, 1980-1982
predominant

Box 4:

- 4.1 Interesting papers [textual records]. – 1606-1954
- 4.2 The Capers of Caddy (1) [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1933-1972
File relates to A.W.’s creation of ‘Cadborosaurus’ to interest and entertain 1930s Victoria.
- 4.3 The Capers of Caddy (2) [textual records, photographs: b&w, graphic materials]. – 1933-2004
- 4.4 Caddy [textual records and photographs: b&w]. – 1933-1979
- 4.5 Family trip – Toronto to Victoria [textual records]. – 1926
File contains copy of transcribed correspondence. Transcription, undated.
- 4.6 YMCA Camp photo album [ca. 105 photographs: b&w]. – 1911-1916.
- 4.7 Front Page Challenge [textual records and photographs: colour]. – 1978
- 4.8 Photos, mostly Naval, subjects of articles [photographs: b&w]. – ca. 1900-1981
- 4.9 Photos, subjects of articles [photographs: b&w, textual records]. – 1890s-1940s
- 4.10 Photos, War [photographs: b&w]. – 1916-1918
- 4.11 Army and Reunions [textual records, 1 photograph]. – 1916-1969
File includes documents relating to 58th battery reunions, and A.W.’s army pay book labeled by him as part of “All in A Lifetime”.

Box 5:

- 5.1 Islander and other articles by Dad and other authors [textual records]. – 1955-1971. – Scrapbook compiled by Kenneth Wills.

- 5.2 All in a Lifetime - Highlights of the life of Archie H. Wills as prepared by his wife Lydia [textual records, photographs: b&w, ephemera]. – 1912-1965
File includes photos, newspaper clippings and ephemera relating to athletics, YMCA camp at the Gorge, meeting Lydia; the army, marriage, children and grandchildren; newspaper life, city council, and the Gyro Club.
- 5.3 Medals and Pins [objects]. – 1913-1970s
Includes:
- British War Medal and Victory Medal, WWI; both inscribed 1260347 SJT. H.A. WILLS. C.F.A.
 - Miniature pair of same
 - Pin, 62nd overseas field battery
 - 25 year I.A.F. pin
 - Rotary pin
 - Enameled tie clip
 - Victoria Carnival Week 1913 pin
 - JBAA pin [?James Bay Athletic Association]
 - C.E.F “For Service at the Front” pin
 - “British Empire Service League Canadian Legion” pin
 - Past President, Victoria Gyro Club pin
 - 200th anniversary of California medal, given to A. & L.W. at their golden Anniversary
 - Commemorative Medal, “British Columbia Centennial ’71 Pioneer”
- 5.4 62nd Battery & Amm. Col. Of the 15th Artillery Brigade C.E.F. [1photograph: b&w]. – ca. 1916
- 5.5 France, Amiens – St. Quentin – Cambrai – Douai – Arras region [1 map]. – ca. 1918
Item is accompanied by the following typed note: Field map used by Sergeant Archie H. Wills in First World War, 1914-1918. Sergt. Wills served with the 58th Battery, CFA., unit of Canadian Corps Artillery. Map shows area of Vimy Ridge, captured April 9th, and Amiens, where Canadians spearheaded dramatic breakout Aug. 8th, 1918, heralding “The Last Hundred Days”. Corps moved north captured Valencienns [sic] and Mons, where he was on Armistice Day.