

Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

Finding Aid - MILTON F. GREGG, V.C. FONDS (MC498)

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MILTON F. GREGG, V.C. FONDS

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Summary information

Repository:	Provincial Archives of New Brunswick
Title:	MILTON F. GREGG, V.C. FONDS
Title [parallel]:	Milton Gregg Fonds
ID:	MC498
Date:	1880, 1892-1991 (date of creation)
Physical description:	10.9 metres, including: 9.0 metres of textual documents 0.9 metres of photographs (1749 items) 1.0 metre of photo albums (23 volumes)

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Milton Fowler Gregg, educator, soldier, politician, diplomat. (b. at Snider Mountain, NB 10 April 1892; d. at Fredericton 13 March 1978). He attended the Provincial Normal School and taught in NB county schools from 1910 to 1912. After a preparatory year at Acadia Academy in 1912/13, he enrolled at Acadia University in the fall of 1913. Then in October 1914, he withdrew from his sophomore year and enlisted in the Canadian Army Medical Corps for service in the First World War.

In February 1915, he went overseas as a stretcher bearer (private). In England he transferred to the 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada (Black Watch) and proceeded to France in April. In May he was wounded and was evacuated to England for hospitalization and recovery. During his convalescence, the Medical Corps took him back on strength at that hospital. While there he was promoted to corporal, then to sergeant, and volunteered for officer training. In April 1916, he began that training at Cambridge and upon its completion in September, he was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, a British regiment. In November he transferred to the Royal Canadian Regiment as a lieutenant and returned to France in 1917 where he was again wounded. In an action separate from his being wounded in 1917, he was awarded the Military Cross and in 1918, he was awarded a bar to his Military Cross. (A bar is the second awarding of the same medal which is indicated by a bar attached to the ribbon.)

During the battle at Cambrai in September-October 1918, as a company commander, he was again wounded. Upon his recovery (in France), he returned to his unit and led his company in action to liberate Mons, Belgium, on 10 and 11 November 1918. For his extended heroic actions at Cambrai as a company commander, he was awarded the Victoria Cross. He returned to Canada as the adjutant of the regiment in March 1919.

Immediately after the war, Milton Gregg worked for the federal Soldiers' Settlement Board and then undertook a number of business ventures. These included distributing British films in Canada, promoting a mining operation, and managing Gregg Motors (a car dealership in Halifax). In the early 1930s, he was an advertising executive with the Halifax Herald, a position he held when he was appointed the sergeant-

at-arms of the House of Commons in 1934. He held that position until the outbreak of the Second World War.

Between the wars, he was also active in Canadian domestic and international veterans' activities. He was a founder of the Halifax Branch of the Canadian Legion, was Honorary National Treasurer of the Legion and helped establish a boy scout troop for sons of soldiers killed in the Great War. Representing Canada internationally, in 1929 he was the commandant of the contingent of Canadian veterans that went to London for the celebration of the 11th anniversary of the armistice, and attended the dinner given by the Prince of Wales to honour VC winners. He was also the commandant of the Canadian veterans honour guard at the inauguration of the Vimy Memorial in 1936.

Gregg also continued his attachment to the military in the inter-war years, serving in the New Brunswick Rangers, with the New Brunswick military district, and with the Governor-General's Foot Guards. His continued training included staff officer training, promotion to captain, then to major and qualified as brigade major. He was an officer in the honour guard for the Ottawa portion of the royal visit in 1939. When war was declared in 1939, he was a company commander with the Governor General's Foot Guards in Ottawa.

He returned to active service at the outbreak of the Second World War, and on 18 September was appointed a member of the Voluntary Service Registration Bureau. He rejoined the Royal Canadian Regiment in November and went overseas as its second-in-command in December. Early in 1940, he was promoted to Lt.-Col. and was appointed commanding officer of the West Nova Scotia Regiment. In 1941, he was appointed commandant of the Canadian Officer Training Unit in England. He returned to Canada in 1942, and successively was appointed to officer selection boards, was promoted to colonel and became commandant of the officer training school at Brockville, ON. As the Bellville camp grew, he was promoted to brigadier. In 1943, he assumed command of the School of Infantry in Vernon, BC. From February to June, 1944, he was on temporary assignment as the commandant of Camp Sussex, NB, where he oversaw the CanLoan officer training program. He briefly returned to Vernon but in August was 'recruited' to become president of the University of New Brunswick and retired from active service as a brigadier. (Since the 1960s, that rank is designated brigadier-general). As president of UNB from 1944 to 1947, he was responsible for the administrative reorganization of the faculty and the university, oversaw the growth of UNB from 401 to 1280 students, and successfully integrated returning soldiers into the university through Alexander College.

In 1947, he was again 'recruited', this time to the federal cabinet by Prime Minister MacKenzie King and was appointed Minister of Fisheries on 2 September 1947. After joining the cabinet, he was elected to parliament on 20 October 1947. On 19 January 1948, he was appointed Minister of Veterans' Affairs and served in that position until 6 August 1950 and served as Minister of Labour from 7 August 1950 until 21 June 1957.

After his electoral defeat in 1957 when Diefenbaker swept to power, he was successively the UNTAB representative in Iraq (1958); with the International Labour Organization in Geneva (1959), at UWO attached to Medway Hall (1959-1960), was the UNICEF representative in Indonesia (1960-63), and a member of the Canadian delegation to the United Nations (1963) where he was elected Chairman of the (budgetary) 5th Committee. In January 1964, with travel arrangements made and while beginning his journey to Pakistan as the UNICEF representative, at the request of the Canadian government he was released from that UN commitment to be appointed Canadian Commissioner to British Guiana and subsequently became High Commissioner to Guyana (1964-67).

In 1967, at 75 years of age, he retired from international public life and turned to Canadian domestic activities. He was active in the transformation of the Office for International Cooperation to the Canadian Council for International Cooperation and was the first president of the latter from 1968-1971. With Hugh-John Flemming, the former premier of New Brunswick, he was a co-founder of the League

for Rural Renewal promoting and facilitating preservation of rural built heritage, primarily, but not exclusively, covered bridges. He was a force behind the formation of Katimivik, and was on its board of directors until his death. On 12 March 1978, he was in telephone communication with the chair of the board of OPCAN (Katimivik), and made reservations to attend the board meeting in Quebec a week later. On 13 March, he wrote the chairman, summarized their conversation of the previous day, and informed him that his travel arrangements had been made. He died later that day.

Milton F. Gregg, V.C., received many civilian honours during his lifetime, including the Order of Canada in 1967, Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1946, six honorary degrees, the last in 1977 from RMC, and numerous honorary memberships and titles. His friends included such well known names as Dr. W.I. Smith, Dominion Archivist, and Hon. Barney Danson, Minister of National Defense, both of whom were alumni of his WWII officer training camps. They, along with their many comrades, always referred to him as “the Brig”.

In 1976, he introduced John Diefenbaker as the speaker at a dinner to honour a Maritime businessman. In reply to Gregg’s introduction, Diefenbaker remarked:

“I am happy to be here to meet colleagues such as the Hon. Milton F. Gregg, who in our own day has joined the immortals of our country. Over many long years, I have been introduced under various circumstances but never have I been more touched by the introduction just given me by one of Canada’s greatest heroes, a man who devoted himself to his country and joined that galaxie of heroism of which there is no greater. He served in both World Wars and as an educator, parliamentarian, minister of the Crown and above everything else, one of Canada’s finest gentlemen.”

Custodial history

The documents in this fonds were created or accumulated by Milton Gregg during the course of his life and through all his many careers. The first meetings to arrange for the donation and transfer of these documents to the Provincial Archives were held in 1977 and 1978, just prior to his death. His widow began the transfers of portions of the fonds in 1979 and continued making incremental transfers at irregular intervals until 1997.

The donations to the Provincial Archives were simultaneous with those of the Kjeld and Erica Deichmann fonds and the documents were intermingled with those of that fonds. Erica Deichmann had become Erica Gregg after the death of her husband. Milton’s first wife, Dorothy Alward Gregg had died four years earlier. The Gregg and Deichmann fonds had been packed, moved, placed in storage, transferred from multiple locations several times, and inevitably intermingled, before the donation of both fonds to the Provincial Archives. In the multiple relocations, they had lost any semblance of order. After they returned to Canada in 1967 and after they moved to Fredericton, both Milton and Erica made some efforts to identify individual items.

With one exception, these were always within the complete control the Greggs. The exception was the temporary deposit in the late 1960s of 1 metre of Gregg documents with the Dominion Archivist. That accession was retrieved in 1981 by Mrs. Gregg and joined the other Gregg papers then being transferred to the Archives.

Scope and content

These documents were the personal papers of Milton Gregg. They were not the papers of the offices which he held. They include his copies of a few of his many reports from official positions and well as his

personal observations to family on several assignments. The Biographical Sketch information above was gleaned from this fonds.

The fonds also included many private papers, including several hundred letters during the First World War to his fiancée in Canada, personal correspondence to family, and observations on his work in Indonesia in the form of letters to his sister. He and his family kept clippings of his exploits from his time as a student at the Provincial Normal School, throughout his life, and until his death and funeral.

After his death, his wife, Erica Deichmann Gregg, continued to add to the collection of clippings. Various organizations kept in contact with Erica Gregg after his death, notably the Victoria Cross Association and the Royal Canadian Regiment Association. Some files continue beyond his death in 1978.

The fonds contains 1656 photographs from ca.1880 to 1988 and cover all aspects of his life. In addition, it contains a number of photo albums, including 2 which were presented to him in Indonesia, one of which graphically shows the affects of yaws on the children in that country. Also in the photo series are images of Gregg with King Edward VIII, King George VI, and Queen Elizabeth II. Although George V presented him with the MC and VC, there are no photos with that monarch. There are also photos with Lord Beaverbrook, Senator John F. Kennedy, Golda Meir and several Canadian prime ministers.

Notes

Title notes

Finding aids

Series and sub-series arrangement with file level and content description, or item level description, as appropriate.

Related material

MC498. Kjeld and Erica Deichmann fonds

MC81, Nos. 2 & 3. Labour and Business in New Brunswick.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
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Access points

- Textual record (documentary form)
- Graphic material (documentary form)
- WWI & WWII Thematic Guide (subject)
- Military (subject)
- Sussex (place)
- England (place)
- Cambrai (place)

- Mons (place)
- Halifax (place)
- Ottawa (place)
- Brockville (place)
- Vernon (place)
- Fredericton (place)
- Iraq (place)
- Geneva (place)
- Indonesia (place)
- Pakistan (place)
- Guyana (place)

Collection holdings
