

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

WESTERN ARCHIVES



JAMES EVANS FONDS

AFC 135

Inventory prepared by Alison Mitchell-Reid, based on student finding aid project(s) undertaken in partial fulfilment of archives course requirements – February 2010

**WESTERN ARCHIVES
AFC 135
JAMES EVANS FONDS**

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JAMES EVANS FONDS
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FONDS DESCRIPTION

Dates

1829-1846, added material 1865, 1873, 1882, 1923, 1926, 1930-1940, 1950, 1958, 1994

Extent

58 cm of textual records

Biographical Sketch

James Evans was born in Kingston-upon-Hull, England on January 18, 1801 to James and Mary Evans. Educated at a Lincolnshire boarding school, in 1822 Evans followed his family who had immigrated to Canada two years prior. He obtained a teaching position near L'Orignal, Ontario and married Mary Blithe Smith, with whom he had two daughters.

James Evans and his family moved to Augusta Township, Ontario about 1826; while he had been interested in scripture since his youth, Evans only officially converted to Methodism in 1828. That same year, He accepted a position teaching at the Rice Lake School for Indian Children and after being immersed in the Ojibway language, Evans was soon able to speak it fluently and perform some scriptural translations.

Evans studied for the Methodist ministry for three years beginning in 1830, and was ordained in 1833. His first missionary posting was to the St. Clair Mission, near what is now Sarnia, Ontario. By 1839, the Hudson's Bay Company agreed to allow Methodist missionaries, under the direction of London, England's Methodist Missionary Society, to work in its large territories in Northern Ontario and in the Canadian west. Evans was appointed to Norway House, Manitoba in 1840 and ministered there for five years. In 1844, Evans accidentally killed his interpreter, Thomas Hassall, while duck hunting. Evans experienced considerable remorse over this event, and this likely weakened his health.

Evans often spoke openly about his concerns that the Hudson's Bay Company was mistreating Norway House's indigenous peoples, and clashed with the company over some of its official policies. In 1845, Evans was charged with sexual improprieties relating to an aboriginal girl in his care, and the Hudson's Bay Company asked that he be removed from Norway House. It has been suggested that his outspokenness with the Hudson's Bay Company led to false allegations. Evans was recalled by the Wesleyan Society to England, where he was tried and acquitted of the sexual misconduct charges.

James Evans died of a sudden heart attack in November, 1846. In 1955, his body was disinterred and reburied in Norway House. During his time amongst Canada's indigenous peoples, Evans wrote many books and articles about native language and culture. He is best known as the person who devised the system of Canadian Aboriginal syllabics, first working with the Ojibwa and Cree languages, between 1836 and 1840.

Scope and Content

This fonds contains documents relating to the personal and professional life of James Evans. Correspondence, diaries, and writings and research relating to Evans' work in the Cree language are included. Writings about the life and work of James Evans, as well as documents relating to Evans' 1846 trial, collected and added by researchers and early custodians of the records, are also included.

Arrangement

The fonds is arranged into the following series:

- Series 1: Pamphlets and clippings about James Evans
- Series 2: Correspondence
- Series 3: Diaries
- Series 4: Poems and hymns
- Series 5: Sermons, lectures, and theological notes
- Series 6: Cree language and syllabics documents
- Series 7: Notes on North American aboriginal peoples
- Series 8: Trial documents

Finding Aids

File and item lists are available.

Custodial History

Most of the material was presumably donated by a descendant of Ephraim Evans, James Evans' brother, in 1927.

Availability of Other Formats

Many of the documents in this fonds have been microfilmed and recorded on compact discs. Please see individual series for more information.

The reading room facilities cannot accommodate CD reading at this time; researchers with laptops are, however, welcome to request the CDs (B729).

Language

Sections of this fonds, including occasionally individual words interspersed in a predominantly English text, have been written using Cree syllabics.

Associated Material

An extensive collection of James Evans material is available at the Victoria University Library in Toronto, Ontario.

Conditions Governing Access

For preservation reasons, access is restricted to microfilm and compact disc copies where available. Please consult the responsible archivist for more information.

**JAMES EVANS FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS**

Series 1 Pamphlets and clippings about James Evans

Dates

1882, 1923, 1926, 1930-1940, 1950, 1958

Extent

4 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains pamphlets and newspaper clippings about James Evans, written long after his death. Biographical sketches and writings on his work in the Cree language are included.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Pamphlets	1882, 1926, 1930, 1932	M580
Pamphlets and clippings	1923, 1926, 1938, 1940, 1950, 1958	M580

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS

Series 2 Correspondence

Dates

1829-1832, 1834-1846, 1865, 1873

Extent

20 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains correspondence written to, written by, or written about James Evans.

Arrangement

This series is arranged in the following sub-series:

Sub-series 2.1: James Evans' correspondence

Sub-series 2.2: Letters concerning James Evans

Availability of Other Formats

The correspondence in this series is also available on compact disc. The reading room facilities cannot accommodate CD reading at this time; researchers with laptops are, however, welcome to request the CDs (box B729).

Conditions Governing Access

For preservation reasons, access is restricted to microfilm and compact disc copies where available. Please consult the responsible archivist for more information.

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS

Sub-series 2.1 James Evans' correspondence

Dates

1829-1832, 1834-1846

Extent

20 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains letters addressed to, and written by, James Evans. Letters from other missionaries in Canada, family members, and Evans' Wesleyan Methodist sponsors in London, England are included. Letters from James Evans to his wife and daughter are also included.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Correspondence	1829	M580
Correspondence	1830	M580
Correspondence	1831	M580
Correspondence	1832	M580
Correspondence	1834	M580
Correspondence	1835	M580
Correspondence	1836	M580
Correspondence	1837	M580
Correspondence	1838	M580
Correspondence	1839	M580
Correspondence	1840	M580

Title	Dates	Box/File
Correspondence	1841	M580
Correspondence	1842	M580
Correspondence	1843	M580
Correspondence	1844	M580
Correspondence	1845	M580
Correspondence	1846	M580
Correspondence	[before 1846]	M580

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Sub-series 2.2 Letters concerning James Evans

Dates

1865, 1873

Extent

1 folder of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains letters concerning the life of James Evans, written after his death. Two letters are addressed to Rev. John Carroll, author of an 1882 article on James Evans in the Canadian Methodist Magazine (see file B4734-1). Other letters are addressed to Rev. Ephraim Evans, brother of James Evans.

File/Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Correspondence concerning J. Evans	1865, 1873	M580

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Series 3 Diaries and journals

Dates

1830, 1834, 1838-1839, 1841-1842, 1846 [transcribed 1931-1932, 1976]

Extent

10 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains diaries and journals written between 1830 and 1846. Most are written by James Evans but one, untitled, is attributed to Evans' interpreter Thomas Hassall.

Arrangement

This series is arranged in the following sub-series:

Sub-series 3.1: James Evans' diaries

Sub-series 3.2: Diary attributed to Thomas Hassall

Availability of Other Formats

The diaries in this series are also available on compact disc. The reading room facilities cannot accommodate CD reading at this time; researchers with laptops are, however, welcome to request the CDs (box B729).

Conditions Governing Access

For preservation reasons, access is restricted to microfilm and compact disc copies where available. Please consult the responsible archivist for more information.

**JAMES EVANS FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS**

Sub-series 3.1 James Evans' diaries

Dates

1830, 1834, 1838-1839, 1841-1842, 1846 [transcribed 1931-1932, 1976]

Extent

10 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains journals and diaries kept by James Evans. Entries relating to his missionary activities, work with the Cree language, family life, and other topics are included.

Language

Large sections of the 1846 journal are written in Cree syllabics.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Diary including transcript	1830, 1976	M580
Diary	1834	M580
Diary including transcripts	1838-1839, 1931	M580
Diary including transcript	1841-1842, 1932	M580
Journal including partial transcript	1846, 1976	M580

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Sub-series 3.2 Diary attributed to Thomas Hassall

Dates

1844 [transcribed 1931]

Extent

1 folder of textual records

Biographical Sketch

Thomas Hassall was born around 1811 near Churchill, Manitoba. Educated under David Thomas Jones at Red River Settlement's Anglican mission, the young Chipewyan was soon also fluent in English, French, and Cree. Thomas was baptized in June, 1827 and given the name Thomas Hassall after the person who had recommended Jones, his teacher, for missionary work. The name given to him at birth is not known.

Hassall began working for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1831, travelling as an interpreter for expeditions throughout the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. He was first introduced to Methodist missionaries James Evans and Robert Rundle in Norway House, Manitoba, in 1840. Impressed by Hassall's personality, piety, and language skills, Evans made him an interpreter, teacher, and lay minister for their mission. Hassall worked primarily at the school in Norway House, and the school thrived under his leadership.

In August and September, 1844, Hassall, Evans and others were making their way toward Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan in order to reinforce missionary teachings they had already performed there. Several days from their destination, Evans accidentally shot Hassall during a duck hunt. Thomas Hassall died on September 11, 1844.

Scope and Content

This series contains a diary, along with a typewritten transcript, attributed to James Evans' interpreter, Thomas Hassall (variously spelled Thomas Hassel).

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Journal of Thomas Hassall	1844, 1931	M580

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Series 4 Poems and hymns

Dates

1829-1846

Extent

1 folder of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains poetry and hymn lyrics written by James Evans. Religious and natural themes predominate.

Availability of Other Formats

The poems and hymns in this series are also available on compact disc. The reading room facilities cannot accommodate CD reading at this time; researchers with laptops are, however, welcome to request the CDs (box B729).

Conditions Governing Access

For preservation reasons, access is restricted to microfilm and compact disc copies where available. Please consult the responsible archivist for more information.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Poetry and hymns	1829-1846	M1364

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Series 5 Sermons, lectures, and theological notes

Dates

[ca. 1840]

Extent

15 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains sermons, lectures and notes written by James Evans.

Availability of Other Formats

The theological documents in this series are also available on compact disc. The reading room facilities cannot accommodate CD reading at this time; researchers with laptops are, however, welcome to request the CDs (box B729).

Conditions Governing Access

For preservation reasons, access is restricted to microfilm and compact disc copies where available. Please consult the responsible archivist for more information.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Acts and I Corinthians	[ca. 1840]	M1364
II Corinthians, Daniel, Deuteronomy, Ephesians	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Exodus, Ezekiel, Galatians, Hebrews	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Hebrews, Isaiah	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job, Joel, John	[ca. 1840]	M1364
John, Jonah, I Kings, II Kings, Leviticus, Luke	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Luke, Malachi, Matthew	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Matthew, Micah	[ca. 1840]	M1364

Title	Dates	Box/File
Micah, Numbers, I Peter, Philippians, Proverbs	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Psalms, Revelation	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Revelation, Romans	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Romans, II Timothy, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, Zechariah	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Sermon fragments	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Lectures, papers, miscellaneous notes	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Lectures, papers, miscellaneous notes	[ca. 1840]	M1364
Lectures, papers, miscellaneous notes	[ca. 1840]	M1364

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Series 6 **Cree language and syllabics documents**

Dates

[ca. 1835]-[ca. 1837]

Extent

2 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains documents outlining James Evans' work in the Cree language. Translations of religious and secular texts and terms, grammar and vocabulary notes, and documents relating to the development of Cree syllabics are included.

Availability of Other Formats

The documents in this series are also available on compact disc. The reading room facilities cannot accommodate CD reading at this time; researchers with laptops are, however, welcome to request the CDs (box B729).

Conditions Governing Access

For preservation reasons, access is restricted to microfilm and compact disc copies where available. Please consult the responsible archivist for more information.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Notebooks of hymns and Biblical verse in Cree syllabics	[ca. 1837]	M1365
Non-religious Cree syllabics material – grammar, vocabulary, notes, letters	[ca. 1835]	M1365
Notes and translations – Cree syllabics work	[ca. 1835]	M1365

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Series 7 **Notes on North American aboriginal peoples**

Dates

1836-1842, photocopied 2001

Extent

6 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains James Evans' notes on aboriginal people. Notes about customs, language, and legends are included. Early writings about the ancestors of North American aboriginal people possibly having emigrated over a land bridge from Asia are also included.

Availability of Other Formats

The documents in this series are also available on compact disc. The reading room facilities cannot accommodate CD reading at this time; researchers with laptops are, however, welcome to request the CDs (box B729).

Conditions Governing Access

For preservation reasons, access is restricted to microfilm and compact disc copies where available. Please consult the responsible archivist for more information.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Notes on customs and languages of North American aboriginal peoples compared to peoples of Asian origin	[ca. 1840]	M1365
Notes on customs and languages of North American aboriginal peoples compared to peoples of Asian origin	photocopied 2001 (original material [ca. 1840])	M1365
Legends	[ca. 1840]	M1365
Miscellaneous notes on aboriginal peoples	1836-1842	M1365
Booklet of notes on various ethnic groups worldwide	[ca. 1840]	M1365

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Series 8 Trial documents

Dates

Photocopied and transcribed 1994 (original material 1846)

Extent

1 folder of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains a transcript of James Evans' February, 1846 sexual misconduct church trial in Rossville, Manitoba. A copy of a letter to the Wesleyan Mission House in London, England, detailing some of the accusations against him, is also included.

Custodial History

The trial documents were copied from the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London, England, and were donated by G.M. Hutchinson in 1994.

File List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Trial transcript and correspondence	photocopied 1994 (original material 1846)	B4735-28