

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**

**WESTERN ARCHIVES**



**THE WILLIAM PORTE FAMILY FONDS**

**AFC 56**

Inventory prepared by Alison Mitchell-Reid, based on student finding aid project(s) undertaken in partial fulfilment of archives course requirements - September 2009

**WESTERN ARCHIVES**  
**AFC 56**  
**THE WILLIAM PORTE FAMILY FONDS**

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**THE WILLIAM PORTE FAMILY FONDS**  
**AFC 56**  
**FONDS DESCRIPTION**

**Dates** 1862-1898, predominant 1881-1898, added material 1936-1937

**Extent** 30 cm of textual records

**Biographical Sketch**

William Porte, the eldest son of James and Mary (née Patrick) Porte, was born December 19, 1823 at Mount Heaton, near Roscrae in King's County, Ireland. After his mother's death in 1832, William and his father immigrated to Canada, landing at Culbertson's Wharf (now Desoronto, Ontario) on August 8, 1837. Having spent several years in the Belleville, Ontario area, the family built a log home on lot 4 of the North Proof Line road (now Richmond Street) at the north edge of Lucan (then known as Marystown) in Biddulph Township, Middlesex County.

After farming for several years, Porte was selected in 1843 as the teacher at the area's first school, the building having been recently vacated by the Society of Friends' Wilberforce Settlement. In 1845, Porte returned to Belleville and married Catherine Murphy (b. 1 Nov. 1835) on October 22, 1851. Returning to Lucan in 1856, William and Catherine purchased land at the intersection of what is now William and Main Street. That year, Porte succeeded his father as township clerk, and he was appointed Lucan's first postmaster in 1859 - a position he would hold for almost 40 years.

Porte was, politically, a dedicated Conservative, an adherent of the Church of England, and a charter member of the Freemasonic Irving Lodge #154. He helped form Lucan's Mechanic's Institute and was appointed to select Lucan's first library book collection. According to local lore, Porte was one of the three "Williams" after which Lucan's William Street was named, and Alice Street was named after his daughter.

During their 48 years of marriage, William and Catherine had nine children:

George Allan (b. 27 Aug. 1852, d. 1 Aug. 1887)

James Royal (b. 26 Dec. 1857, d. 4 Mar. 1858)

Mary Alice (b. 15 Feb. 1860, d. 1952)

Elizabeth Emma (b. 12 Jan. 1862, d. 1945)

Frederick William (b. 8 July 1865, d. 1943)

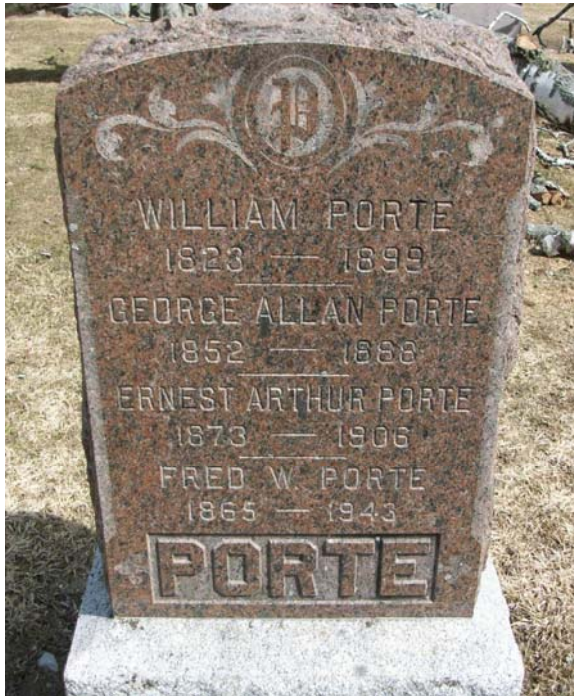
Maude (b. 28 Mar. 1867)

Ida Kate (b. 22 May 1869, d. 28 Mar. 1871)

Ida Kate (b. 21 Mar. 1871, d. 1968)

Ernest Arthur (b. 16 Feb. 1873, d. 1906)

William Porte died at home in the early hours of September 12, 1899, his wife having predeceased him by exactly three months. He, along with most of his family, now rests at the St. James Anglican churchyard near Clandeboye, Ontario. After Porte's death, his son Frederick carried on as Lucan's postmaster; after Frederick's 46 years of service, Porte's daughter, Ida Kate, succeeded her brother as postmistress. Upon her retirement in 1946, Ida Kate reminisced that her father "had us help in the post office where we sorted mail after school. He was very strict. He would not allow us to open even the family's mail, not even the newspapers."



St. James Anglican Cemetery  
Photo courtesy - Alison Reid



William Porte - ca. 1890  
Photo courtesy - Lucan Area Heritage

### Scope and Content

The fonds consist of materials related to the personal and business activities of William Porte. Included are diaries, ledgers, and albums and scrapbooks of newspaper clippings. Some material from two of his children (Fred W. and Ida Kate Porte) is included.

William Porte's papers provide an excellent snapshot in the life of a growing Ontario town in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In recent years, Porte's personal papers have been studied and cited extensively, most notably by those researching the infamous February 4, 1880 murder of the Donnelly family.

**Arrangement**

The fonds is arranged into the following series:

- Series 1 Diaries
- Series 2 Newspaper Clippings and Scrapbooks
- Series 3 Ida Kate Porte's Journal
- Series 4 Added Material

**Finding Aids**

File and item lists are available.

**Custodial History**

The fonds appear to have remained in the Porte family until its donation to the University of Western Ontario in 1976. The papers seem to have been passed to Mrs. Maude (Porte) Bawden and then to her daughter, Ms. Katherine M. Bawden, although the exact custodial history is unknown.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Donated by Katherine M. Bawden in 1976.

**Conditions Governing Access**

No restrictions on access.

**Source of Supplied Title**

Title based on contents of the series.

**Associated Material**

Extracts of William Porte's diaries can be found in the A.S. Garrett fonds, the Orlo Miller fonds, and the James Reaney fonds. All of these are held at the University of Western Ontario Archives.

**Note**

Complete transcripts of William Porte's diaries have been made by G. Stott, and publication is expected (as of September, 2009).

Porte's diaries have been microfilmed. This single reel can be found in B731 (as of September, 2009 its location is not searchable in the online catalogue).

**THE WILLIAM PORTE FAMILY FONDS**  
**AFC 56**  
**SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS**

**Series 1 Diaries**

**Dates** 1862-1898, predominant 1881-1898

**Extent** 20 cm textual records

**Scope and Content**

Series consists of records relating to the daily personal and business activities of William Porte. Items include lists of Lucan area fires and deaths, the Porte family tree, commentary on political and community activities, and accounting records relating to Porte's positions as town clerk and postmaster.

**Note**

Some titles based on contents of the items.

**Item List**

| Title                    | Dates  | Box/File  |
|--------------------------|--|-----------|
| Diary [vol]              | Jan. 1865 – Oct. 1865, 1877                  | B4940-001 |
| Daily Journal 1869 [vol] | Jan. 1869 – Dec. 1869                        | B4940-001 |
| Daily Journal 1873 [vol] | Jan. 1873 – Dec. 1873                        | B4940-001 |
| Daily Journal 1877 [vol] | Jan. 1877 – Dec. 1877                        | B4940-001 |
| Office Diary 1879 [vol]  | Jan. 1879 – Dec. 1879                        | B4940-001 |
| Diary [vol]              | Jan. 1881 – Dec. 1884                        | B4940-001 |
| Diary [vol]              | Jan. 1885 – Oct. 1887                        | B4940-001 |
| Diary [vol]              | 1862-1893, predominant Oct. 1887 – Dec. 1893 | B4940-001 |
| Diary [vol]              | Jan. 1894 – Sept. 1897                       | B4940-001 |
| Diary [vol]              | 1883-1898, predominant Oct. 1897 – Oct. 1898 | B4940-001 |

**THE WILLIAM PORTE FAMILY FONDS**  
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**SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS**

**Series 2 Newspaper Clippings - Scrapbooks**

**Dates** 1862, [ca. 1880-1890]

**Extent** 5 cm textual material

**Scope and Content**

Series consists of albums and scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and pictures. Poems, stories, medical remedies, political commentary, and election results (federal, provincial, and municipal) are all represented, clipped from unknown sources.

**Note**

Some titles based on contents of the items.

**File and Item List**

| <b>Title</b>                           | <b>Dates</b>    | <b>Box/File</b> |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Wm Porte unbound scrapbook 1862 [file] | 1862            | B4940-002-2     |
| Album [vol]                            | [ca. 1880]      | B4940-002-1     |
| Scraps [vol]                           | [ca. 1880-1890] | B4940-001       |



**THE WILLIAM PORTE FAMILY FONDS**  
**AFC 53**  
**SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS**

**Series 3 Ida Kate Porte's Journal**

**Dates** 1884

**Extent** 2 cm textual material

**Scope and Content**

Series consists of a journal kept by William Porte's daughter, Ida Kate. Ida Kate Porte's journal contains a telegram from Sir John A. MacDonald, newspaper clippings, and original poetry.

**File and Item List**

| Title                 | Dates | Box/File  |
|-----------------------|-------|-----------|
| Ida Porte Lucan [vol] | 1884  | B4940-001 |

**THE WILLIAM PORTE FAMILY FONDS**  
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**SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS**

**Series 4 Added Material**

**Dates** 1891, 1936-1937

**Extent** 3 cm textual material

**Scope and Content**

Series consists of two folders added by William Porte's son, Fred Porte, as well as a short note about William Porte's mother. A letter from William Porte regarding the Wilberforce settlement is also included.

Within the folders are newspaper pages (Toronto Daily Star, The Sunday Sun, The Globe & Mail) reporting the abdication of Edward VIII and the coronation of George VI, as well as the letter from William Porte regarding the Wilberforce ("Coloured") settlement.

**Note**

Some titles based on contents of the items.

**File and Item List**

| <b>Title</b>  | <b>Dates</b> | <b>Box/File</b> |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| King Edward VIII Abdication 1936 [file]                 | 1936         | B4940-002-3     |
| Coronation George VI 1937 [file]                        | 1937         | B4940-002-4     |
| Letter by W Porte Re "Coloured Settlement," 1891 [file] | 1891         | B4940-002-5     |
| Note  | n.d.         | B4940-002-6     |