

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

WESTERN ARCHIVES



THE JAMES REANEY FONDS

AFC 18

Inventory prepared by Bev Brereton - September, 2004
Revised and reformatted by Bev Brereton - December, 2006

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THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
AFC 18

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THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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FONDS DESCRIPTION

Dates

1932 - 2000

Extent and Material

20.4 m textual records

Biographical Sketch

James Crerar Reaney was born in South Easthope, Ontario on September 1, 1926. After completing his primary and secondary education in South Easthope and Stratford, Reaney studied English language and literature at University College, University of Toronto, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948 and a Master of Arts degree in the following year.

From 1949 to 1956, Reaney held the position of Lecturer at the University of Manitoba. Reaney returned to the University of Toronto in 1956 and received his Ph.D. in 1957. He resumed his teaching position at the University of Manitoba, remaining there until he joined the Department of English at Middlesex College at the University of Western Ontario in 1960.

In addition to his career as an educator, Reaney has established himself as one of Canada's foremost authors of poetry, drama and prose. He has published several volumes of poetry, two of which have received the Governor-General's Award for Poetry. His theatrical activity includes numerous plays, including his epic trilogy *The Donnelly's*; plays and puppet plays for children; libretti; participation in drama workshops and summer theatre; and co-organizing a theatrical company dedicated to the production of Canadian plays. In addition, he has written several short stories and essays, published a novel for children, and founded and edited the arts magazine *Alphabet*.

James Reaney has received honorary degrees from Carleton University, McMaster University, and The University of Western Ontario. He was invested as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1976, and named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1978.

In 1951, Reaney married poet and short story writer Colleen Thibaudeau. The Reaneys have three children: James Stewart, John Andrew and Susan Alice Elizabeth.

Scope and Content

The fonds consists of records illustrating Reaney's academic, writing and theatrical activities; and personal materials. Included are manuscripts and drafts, research materials, notes and correspondence related to his poems, plays, libretti and prose works; records related to his graduate studies and teaching career; biographical and family records; photographs and slides; painting and drawings; and audio recordings.

Arrangement

The fonds is arranged into the following series:

- Series 1 Poetry
- Series 2 Notebooks
- Series 3 Dramatic Works
- Series 4 Donnelly Trilogy
- Series 5 Prose Works
- Series 6 *Alphabet*
- Series 7 Theatrical Activities
- Series 8 Correspondence
- Series 9 Academic Records
- Series 10 Teaching Records
- Series 11 Personal Records
- Series 12 Family Records
- Series 13 Graphics

Restrictions Governing Access

Diaries (1939-2000) restricted during the lifetimes of James Reaney and his wife Colleen Thibaudeau.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by James Reaney in September, 1992 and August, 2000.

**THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 1 Poetry

Dates

1949 - 1999

Scope and Content

Series consists of records documenting James Reaney's career as a poet. Included are early drafts for poems in *The Red Heart and Other Poems*, his first volume of poetry, published while he was still a student at the University of Toronto, which won the Governor-General's Award for Poetry in 1949; correspondence related to and poems featured in *A Suit of Nettles*, his second publication which won the Governor-General's award in 1958; slides related to his *Emblem* poems; manuscript drafts of performance poems; and research notes and drafts related to unpublished autobiographical and other poems.

**THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 2 Notebooks

Dates

[1944] - [1951?]

Scope and Content

Series consists of records illustrating James Reaney's early creative work while a student at the University of Toronto and Lecturer at the University of Manitoba. Included are notes for poems and stories, poetry and story manuscripts, reprints of early stories, essays, a novelette manuscript, and newspaper clippings.

Note

1. Material has been maintained as a Series at the request of James Reaney.

**THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 3 Dramatic Works

Dates

[1959] - 2000

Scope and Content

Series consists of records relating to the creation and production of James Reaney's dramatic works. Included are manuscripts, correspondence, research materials and notes for libretti written for *Night Blooming Cereus*, *Taptoo*, *Crazy to Kill*, *The Shivaree* and *Zamorna* with John Beckwith; manuscripts, correspondence, research materials and notes for libretti written for *Serinette* with Harry Somers; correspondence, scripts and recordings for the children's plays *Apple Butter*, *All the Bees and Keys*, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, *Names and Nicknames* and *Ignoramus*; notes, correspondence, research materials, scripts, photographs and drawings for *The Killdeer*, *Antler River*, *The Sun and the Moon* (originally *Rules of Joy*), *Gyroscope*, *Listen to the Wind*, *Three Desks*, *King Whistle!*, *Colours in the Dark* and *I, the Parade*; and manuscripts, notes, background materials, photographs and reviews of *Balloon*, *The Canadian Brothers*, *The Dismissal* and *Wacousta!* that were premiered by the Ne'er-Do-Well Thespians. Also included are rough manuscripts and drafts for plays that were neither produced nor published.

**THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 4 Donnelly Trilogy

Dates

[196-?] - 1975

Scope and Content

Series consists of manuscripts, research and other related materials for *The Donnellys*. Manuscript materials include scripts, annotated drafts, notes, production slides and correspondence for the trilogy plays: *Sticks and Stones*, *The St. Nicholas Hotel* and *Handcuffs*. Also included are the French translations of the plays by C. Bedard. Research materials include the work of students William Butt and J. A. Anderson; copies of contemporary newspaper accounts; letterbooks and diaries; copies of court and registry documents, birth and burial registers; index cards; photographs and genealogies. Related materials include a recording of Reaney's talk about the plays; rough drafts and the script for *Sleigh Without Bells*, a ghost story about the Donnellys; and material for *14 Barrels from Sea to Sea*, Reaney's book about the Ne'er-Do-Well Thespians' 1975 Canadian tour of the plays.

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series 5 Prose Works

Dates

1949 - 1994

Scope and Content

Series consists of material related to James Reaney's novels, short stories, essays and editorial activity. Materials related to his novel writing include early manuscript versions and files for *Take the Big Picture*, a novel for young readers; fragments and notes for unpublished novels; and background materials, rough and final manuscript versions, and correspondence related to the finished but unpublished novel *Father Bought a Tollgate*. Short stories materials include notebooks and early versions of works featured in *The Box Social and Other Stories*, and the manuscript for the children's story *The Boy with an R in His Hand*. Essays included relate to Donnelly research, the theatre at The University of Western Ontario, regional culture, poetry and iconography. Included are all four issues of *Here and Now*, a literary review edited by Reaney, Colleen Thibaudeau and Paul Arthur in 1949.

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Series 6 *Alphabet*

Dates

1960 - 1972

Scope and Content

Series consists of records related to *Alphabet: A Semi-annual Devoted to the Iconography of the Imagination* launched by James Reaney in 1960. Reaney hand set many of the issues and printed the magazine on a platen press. *Alphabet* published a variety of poets, including Jay Macpherson, Margaret Atwood, Al Purdy, Milton Acorn and bpNichol; and the work of such artists as Tony Urquhart and Greg Curnoe. With artist Jack Chambers, Reaney published *Dance of Death in London* under the *Alphabet* imprint. Included are a complete run of the magazine's 19 issues, correspondence, financial statements and records, and submissions.

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 7 Theatrical Activities

Dates

[196-?] - [198-?]

Scope and Content

Series consists of records relating to Reaney's involvement in the theatre community. Included are correspondence, fundraising materials and mailing lists for his summer theatre activities; a slide show presentation entitled "My Life in the Theatre"; and materials related to the Ne'er-Do-Well Thespians (NDWT). Organized in 1975 by Reaney, director Keith Turnbull and a number of actors, the NDWT was based in Toronto at the Bathurst Street Theatre until 1980, and folded in 1982. During its existence, the company produced a number of Reaney's plays and took the Donnelly plays on a national tour in 1975. The NDWT records include correspondence, minutes of board meetings, proposals and project files, and Reaney's lecture on the background of the company.

Notes

1. The Ne'er-Do-Well Thespians fonds is located in the University of Guelph Library.

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 8 Correspondence

Dates

1948 - 1991

Scope and Content

Series consists of personal and professional correspondence from Reaney's wife Colleen Thibaudeau, colleagues, friends, and agent Sybil Hutchinson. Extensive correspondence with Hutchinson, documenting three decades of Reaney's income from writing, includes financial and royalty statements, and accounts of works sold.

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Series 9 Academic Records

Dates

[1948?] - 1957

Scope and Content

Series consists of materials related to James Reaney's studies for his graduate degrees at the University of Toronto. Included are essays; *Novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett*, his Master's thesis; *The Influence of Spenser on Keats*, his Ph.D. dissertation; notebooks for his dissertation; scrapbooks on various aspects of English literature used in preparation for his Ph.D. generals; and papers and notes related to Northrop Frye, his supervisor.

**THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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Series 10 Teaching Records

Dates

1951 - 1991

Scope and Content

Series consists of materials related to James Reaney's career as an educator. Included are class outlines, assignments, exams, roll books and class lists, student opinion surveys, student papers, letters of recommendation written by Reaney, and minutes of meetings of the English departments at the University of Manitoba and The University of Western Ontario.

**THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 11 Personal Records

Dates

1932 - 2000

Scope and Content

Series consists of biographical records and personal materials of James Reaney. Biographical records about Reaney include a copy of his entry in *Contemporary Authors*, his high school diploma, *curricula vitae*, fragments of an autobiography/memoirs, transcripts and recordings of interviews, articles written about him, and correspondence and newspaper clippings relating to his involvement with the Highway Operation Committee. Personal materials include diaries, notebooks, scrapbooks, appointment and address books, photographs, a snapshots diary, Stratford Music Festival programs, magazines, and newspaper clippings.

Conditions Governing Access

Access to Diaries (1932 - 2000) restricted during the lifetimes of James Reaney and his wife Colleen Thibaudeau.

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series 12 Family Records

Dates

[19--?] - [19--?]

Scope and Content

Series consists of records created by or related to the Reaney family and its history. Included are Crerar and Thibaudeau family genealogies; a history of the family farm; correspondence; photograph and scrap albums and slides. Also included are diaries, correspondence, stories (mostly unpublished), notes, photo albums, scrapbooks and sundry personal papers of Elizabeth Cooke, Reaney's mother, who inspired her son to become a writer; and photographs, slides, films and newspaper clippings relating to Reaney's cousin James Anderson.

**THE JAMES REANEY FONDS
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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

Series 13 Graphics

Dates

[194-?] - 1999

Scope and Content

Series consists of paintings, drawings and slides of paintings by James Reaney, his children and his associates. Included are Christmas cards created and produced by Reaney, wood cuts and slides.