

S. J. McKee Archives



George Thorman collection

<http://archives.brandonu.ca/en/permalink/descriptions4725>

Part Of:	RG 1 Brandon College fonds
Description Level:	Sub-series
Series Number:	MG 2 2.15
Accession Number:	11-1999
GMD:	textual records
Date Range:	1801-1940, 1994;predominant 1880-1940
Physical Description:	11 m (823 items); 1 diploma; 1 certificate
History /	
Biographical:	

George E. Thorman was born in Vancouver, British Columbia on September 17, 1913. His public school education began in Rivers, Manitoba and was completed, along with his high school and part of his university education in Brandon, Manitoba. After completing his Bachelor of Arts General at Brandon College, Thorman attended the College of Education in Toronto for one year before beginning his teaching career at Essex High School, Essex, Ontario in 1935. After four years in Essex, Thorman transferred to the St. Thomas Collegiate Institute (STCI) in St. Thomas, Ontario.

In 1941, Thorman joined the Canadian Army at Brandon as a gunner in the 59th Field Battery and after five years, having served in England, Italy and Western Europe, he retired with the rank of Captain. Following the Second World War, in 1945, Thorman taught in a high school for Fifth Division in Groningen, Netherlands before moving on to teach first year university English at Kahki College in England in 1946. That same year he returned to Canada and rejoined the staff at STCI. Two years after his return George Thorman married the former Margaret Gliddon of St. Thomas and in 1953 returned to Europe where he taught in Scotland for one year on a teacher's exchange.

During the 1960's, Thorman's career reached its peak. In 1964, he became the Vice-Principal of STCI and in 1967, he attained the same position at Parkside Collegiate Institute before becoming its Principal in 1969. Three years later in 1972, Thorman retired as Principal of PCI and from his teaching career. Throughout his career Thorman's primary interests were in English and History, however he also taught Mathematics, Geography and Science. In addition to his classes following WWII, Thorman was an active instructor of the Cadet Corps, as well as a coach for various volleyball, basketball and track and field teams during his years at STCI.

Aside from being an educator, George Thorman had many other interests. He and his wife Margaret were active in the formation of the Elgin Theatre Guild in 1948 and together and separately they performed and directed several productions in the early years of that organization. Thorman was also largely responsible for the development of a local history course in the Elgin Secondary Schools in the early 1960's. In 1966, with his fellow history teacher Ralph Parker, he published a booklet to serve as an outline for teachers on the history of Elgin County.

That same year, 1966, Thorman, as the prime instigator in the re-formation of the Elgin Historical Society, became its first president and in 1971, he was elected Honorary President

of the Society for life. This was followed by a further two-year term as elected president. The re-organization marked the beginning of Thorman's continuous active involvement with the EHS, including several lectures he presented to its members and many years as a Trustee. In 1985, he received the Ontario Volunteer Service Award for over 15 years of continuous service to the Society before retiring from the EHS in 1995.

In addition to the EHS, Thorman served on the St. Thomas Public Library Board from 1979 until 1991, and was a Chairman of the Board's Personnel Committee. He was also a member of the Ontario Historical Society. From 1975 to 1978, Thorman served as an elected member of the Elgin County Board of Education and in 1979, he received from the City of St. Thomas the St. Thomas Civic Award for outstanding citizens. George Thorman was also a life member (1936) of Central Lodge No. 402, A.F. and A.M. (Masonry) of Essex, Ontario and had been an active member of the St. Thomas Duplicate Bridge Club since 1985.

As an authority on historical research relating to The Hudson's Bay Company, Thorman gave lectures and printed articles on the topic in "The Beaver" publication of The Hudson's Bay Company. In regards to the HBC he also did excavation work at Fort Albany with Walter Kenyon during several summers in the 1960's and 1970's.

As well, George Thorman was a founding member and served on the executive committee of the Elgin Military Museum since its inception in 1982 until the late 1990's. He contributed greatly to the library and files of this museum, particularly in the field of the War of 1812 and the Fenian Raid. The reference library of this small museum rates high in this country, largely through the efforts of George Thorman. Thorman's book collection was one of the finest and most extensive in Western Ontario. His personal library contained a wealth of information with particular emphasis on material relating to Elgin County, the City of St. Thomas and The Hudson's Bay company. His G.A. Henty collection was nearly complete.

As an author Thorman contributed ten entries in The Dictionary of Canadian Biography on Aboriginal and Metis peoples, co-authored "St. Thomas 100 Years a City," the centennial history of the city of St. Thomas. In 1989, he edited "Frank Hunt, Essays on Elgin County" as well as wrote and privately printed "A Brief History of Secondary Education in St. Thomas" as his contribution to the STCI Reunion, at which he was one of the honorees. In the early 1990's, Thorman co-edited "Garret Oakes, Tales of a Pioneer," authored and privately printed "Letters and Petitions and other Papers Concerning the Militia Companies of Middlesex for 1839" and "The Chisholm Family in Elgin County: Myth and Reality."

For several years, ca. 1975 to the mid 1990's, Thorman hosted a TV talk show on local television interviewing persons connected to the history of St. Thomas and Elgin County. Many older residents, who have since passed away, were interviewed and the resulting tapes are an invaluable source of historical information.

Thorman and his wife lived in the historic section of St. Thomas and in the summer months spent their time in Port Stanley. In addition, for several years in the early 1990's, Thorman traveled annually to England - each time visiting a different area of the country. As well, Thorman was also interested in the lives and activities of his former students and was available and eager to assist any student or former student who asked for his guidance. George E. Thorman passed away on January 11, 1997.

Custodial History:

The Order of the Sheaf and Thorman's Bachelor of Arts degree were transferred to the McKee Archives by Rudi Denham, Chief Librarian, St. Thomas Public Library in August 2007. George Thorman had placed his papers with the St. Thomas Public Library at some point prior to his death; the Library had decided to deaccession the records and offered them to interested institutions.

Scope and Content:

The collection consists of textbooks covering the subject areas of: Agriculture, Art, Business education, Economics, Composition, Grammar, Rhetoric, Literature, Plays, Poetry, Prose, Readers, Spelling, Phonics, Stories, Geography, Health, History, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Algebra, Arithmetic, Geometry, Trigonometry, General mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Logic, Psychology, Religion, Research, Methods, Manuals, Astronomy, Botany Chemistry, Physics, General science, Zoology, Cooking and Gardening. It also includes two notebooks.

The works found in the collection were published primarily between 1880-1940, although they range from 1801-1967, with an emphasis on history, all areas of mathematics, research and topics related to english or language arts. There are a number of works published in the nineteenth century dealing with most of the collection's subject areas. The majority of the collection focuses on public and high school textbooks, particularly in relation to the province of Ontario, with some attention to university education.

Also included is George Thorman's Order of the Sheaf, Clark Hall Guild certificate awarded to him in recognition of his outstanding contribution toward the betterment of Brandon University and Thorman's Bachelor of Arts degree from Brandon College (McMaster University).

Notes:	An inventory of the collection has been created. Also, the items have been added to the Brandon University Library catalogue. Description and inventory by Christy Henry (1999).
Language Note:	Thorman's Bachelor of Arts degree is in Latin.
Storage Location:	MG 2 Brandon College Students 2.15 George Thorman