

University of Toronto Archives



Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

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Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Table of Contents

Biographical Note	3
Scope and Content Note	4
Series 1 Diaries.....	5
Series 2 Personal Correspondence.....	5
Series 3 Personal financial records	5
Series 4 Education and miscellaneous notes	6
Series 5 University of Toronto	6
Series 6 Other activities	7
Series 8 Benson Family.....	7
Series 9 Photographs	9
Series 10 Film.....	12
Appendix 1 Series 10 Film : B2003-0008.....	13

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Biographical Note

Clara Cynthia Benson was born June 5, 1875 at the family home, Terralta in Port Hope, the daughter of Judge Thomas Moore Benson (1833-1915) and his second wife, Laura Fuller Benson (1847-1928). Judge Benson's first wife, Mary Edith (d. 1870) was the eldest daughter of Rev. John McCaul, President of University College. In addition to Clara, the Benson family consisted of two half sisters, Ethel Mary (b1867) and Emily Constance (b. 1869), her sister Jessie (b1880) and a brother, Thomas Bingley Fuller Benson (1876-1941).

Clara Benson received her early education at Port Hope High School and following graduation enrolled in University College at the University of Toronto. From 1895 to 1899 she studied math, chemistry and physics in the Faculty of Arts and was the first women to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in chemistry in 1899. She continued her studies as a graduate student in biochemistry and was one of only two women to be awarded a PhD in 1903. Her thesis "The rates of reactions in solutions containing ferrous and sulphate, potassium iodine and chromic acid" was published in the *Journal of Physical Chemistry* in May, 1903. She was appointed to the faculty of the Lillian Massey School of Domestic Science and spent 1905-1906 as lecturer in physiological chemistry at the University. In 1906 she was appointed Associate Professor in the newly created Faculty of Household Science and proceeded to develop the programme of study in food chemistry. In 1926 she was promoted to full professor and head of the Department of Food Chemistry, a position she held until her retirement. With Professor Annie Laird, principal and professor of Household Science, she left a lasting impact on this field of study. She retired as Professor Emeritus in 1945.

During her forty year career with the University of Toronto, Dr. Benson was involved in many aspects of university life in particular and the community in general. Among her academic achievements was recognition for her work in food chemistry during the World War I. She discovered that explosives could be analyzed in the same manner as the chemistry of foods. "Her methods established the accepted technique for analysis in munitions laboratories."¹ In 1921 she became the first president of the Women's Athletic Association at the University of Toronto, position she held until her retirement in 1945. One of the main goals of the WAA was the construction of a women's athletic centre, a goal that wasn't achieved for 38 years. In 1959 she returned to the University to unveil a plaque commemorating the opening of the Benson Building, named in her honour. Other honours bestowed on her included the establishment of a scholarship in her name in 1950 sponsored by the Household Science alumnae, and the presentation of a portrait by Yousef Karsh, which was hung in the Household Science building. In 1992, the Canadian Society for Chemistry established the Clara Benson Award, awarded annually to a woman who has made a distinguished contribution to chemistry while working in Canada.

She was also very involved in the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) serving on its national board. After her retirement in 1945, her work on the YWCA led to her interest in sponsoring two young French girls, Madeleine Killian and Maryse Deslandes, orphaned during World War II. One of her major interests was the making of films such as the visit of the King

¹ Winnipeg, Man. *Free press weekly prairie farmer*. April 5, 1961. UTA A1973-0026/027 (29)

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

and Queen and the University campus. She was also involved in her local church in Port Hope, and an avid stamp collector. She died in Port Hope on March 24, 1964

Scope and Content Note

186- - 1964 4.63 metres

Records; textual, graphic, architectural, cartographic, moving images, artifacts;

These personal records consist mainly of records documenting Clara Benson's non-professional activities such as work with the Women's Athletic Association of the University of Toronto, the YWCA and her relationship with family members and friends. The personal correspondence in Series 2 provides the most detailed information about her relationship with family, friends and activities. Letters from her parents and siblings provide an insight into her activities and progress at the University of Toronto during her undergraduate years. A few letters, however, will be found from colleagues at the university such as Prof. A.B. Macallum, Prof. Annie Laird and others.

Unfortunately documentation relating to her academic activities is limited to some correspondence and notes found in Series 5 relating to her efforts from 1920s onwards to have the Women's Athletic Building built. Her early education in Port Hope is documented in the school books, essays and other records in Series 4. Series 4 also contains her framed diplomas for B.A. and Ph.D. No manuscripts of her publications, including her Ph D. thesis appear to have survived. The lecture notes in Series 7 do provide some indication of the content of her courses in food chemistry, and were probably used repeatedly, year after year.

Dr. Benson also recorded her travel and sightseeing activities both abroad and in Canada on film. Series 10 contains 50 rolls of 16mm film documenting her trips to Egypt (1926), England (1937 and late 1940's and early 1950's), South America (1939) and the United States (1939, 1948). Some of her leisure time, both while at the University of Toronto and after her retirement, was spent filming events and scenery in Toronto in general, and the University in particular, as well as her family at home in Port Hope.

Access: Open. B2003-0008/007 restricted for conservation reasons. For access to film in B2003-0008/001M to B2003-0008/040M, contact Special Media Archivist.

Accessions: B2003-0008, B2004-0016, B2004-0013, B2005-0002, B2010-0008. B2018-0019, B2018-0020

Related Accessions: B1973-1099, B1984-1096

Associated Accessions: A1975-0008, A1986-0008, B1992-0039

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Series 1**Diaries**

.9 metres; textual

1889-1962

This series contains 24 appointment book diaries from 1894 to 1962. Most detail events attended but sometimes contain personal observations. Also includes one note book and several loose pages written in pencil in which Clara Benson discusses visits with friends, home life and school activities (1889-1891).

B2004-0016/001

B2003-0008/001 (01)

Series 2**Personal Correspondence**

.29 metres; textual; graphic

1885-1964; undated

This series contains mainly correspondence received by Clara Benson from family and friends. Two files contain correspondence that is undated, but seems to be predominantly created prior to her retirement in 1945. Correspondents include, among others, letters from her parents, her brother Bingley, her sisters Constance, Jessie, and Ethel, cousins, school friends, professors such as A. B. Macallum, and colleagues such as Professor Annie Laird. Subjects discussed include studies at University of Toronto, congratulations on her doctorate in 1903, postcards home to family about her trip to Europe in 1904, and 1910-1913, matters relating to her involvement on the Executive Committee of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1912), and other professional and academic activities. Also includes file of correspondence about and from French children sponsored by Dr. Benson such as Maryse Deslandes and Madeleine Killian (1958-1964). Photos removed to /001P

B2003-0008/001 (02) – (08)

B2010-0008/001(01) - (02)

B2003-0008/002 (01) – (05)

B2018-0019/001 (01)

B2005-0002/001 (01) – (09)

Series 3**Personal financial records**

.050 metres; textual

1910-1956

This series contains one file of correspondence relating to personal financial matters (1911-1956) and a collection of personal bank books (ca 1910-1939).

B2003-0008/002 (06)

B2003-0008/003 (01)

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Series 4 **Education and miscellaneous notes**

1.12 metres; textual

1888-1960 and undated

This series includes school books, essays, assignments and report cards produced while in public school and high school in Port Hope, her diplomas for Bachelor of Arts (1899) and Ph D. (1903) from the University of Toronto, and certificate as Fellow of Canadian Institute of Chemistry (1927). Also includes miscellaneous undated notes and lists of librettos and operas in her collection.

B2003-0008/003 (02) – (08)

B2003-0008/008 (01) – (03)

Series 5 **University of Toronto**

0.17 metres; textual

1898-1964

This series contains predominantly records documenting her academic activities at the University of Toronto. There is correspondence, reports, notes and plans documenting Benson's efforts, along with others, to have a women's athletic building built. The documentation dates from the 1920s through to the 1940s. There is also correspondence and notes relating to other aspects of physical education for women including a proposed affiliation with the Margaret Eaton School as well as a plan for an Ontario College of Physical Education for Women. Finally there is correspondence with colleagues and publication houses relating to the acquisition of off prints of articles as well as a few brochures on events she attended at the University.

Three items were added to this series from B2018-0019: a scrapbook mainly documenting Benson's career, a Macleans issue from April 1915 describing the graduates of the School of Household Science and a 60th Anniversary Program for the Faculty of House Hold Science, 1960.

See also Series 2.

B2004-0016/001 (01) – (09)

B2003-0008/ 003 (09) – (11)

B2018-0019/001 (03)-(05)

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Series 6**Other activities**

.46 metres; textual, architectural, graphic, 1893-1940, undated
artifacts

In 1921, Dr. Benson was elected the first president of the Women's Athletic Association of University of Toronto and was involved from the beginning in the campaign to build an athletic building for women. Among the records relating to this activity are correspondence, notes, financial statements and blueprints of proposed buildings. Also included in this series are correspondence, minutes and reports relating to her work as Chair of the Foreign Committee of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) focusing primarily on an international survey on leadership (1930-1932). Other documents include two undated and unsigned manuscripts of stories, a collection of cards acquired during a trip to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, memorabilia related to a trip to Europe in 1904 and a scrapbook of pressed flowers with identification collected by Clara Benson ca 1890's.

B2003-0008/004 (01) – (08)

B2003-0008/005 (01) – (03)

B2003-0008/007 (Fragile)

B2018-0019/001(02) -

Series 7**Teaching and research**

.18 metres; textual 1920-1943 and undated

This series consists of lecture notes and course outlines for courses in household science, mainly food chemistry. Received in some disarray, they have been arranged roughly by topic including baking powder and leavening agents, collaids, cereals, fruits and vinegars, metabolism, milk and butter, fats and spices. Many notes are undated and not specifically associated with a course. There is one file relating to a science course at Macdonald Institute in Guelph "arranged by H. L. Fulmer", ca 1935.

B2003-0008/005 (04)-(09)

B2003-0008/006 (01) – (07)

Series 8**Benson Family**

.30 metres; textual; cartographic ; architectural ca1886-1953

This series contains assorted files relating to the Benson family in general and Dr. Benson's parents in particular. Included are records relating to the family property in Port Hope, estate papers for her father Judge Thomas Benson, correspondence between Judge Benson and his second wife, Laura Fuller Benson (Clara Benson's mother), account records for the management of the house and property in Port Hope.

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Series 8 (cont'd)

Benson Family

B2010-0008 contains mainly family papers. Included are records relating to Clara Benson's sister Emily C. Morris, including estate correspondence. Other members of the Morris family for which there are records: William Morris and Alexander Morris. Correspondence, wills, clippings and memorabilia also document Benson family members, particularly Thomas Bengley Benson, son of Thomas Moore Benson and Laura Fuller. Many of the records relate to his work as a naval architect and yacht broker as well as his estate of which Clara Benson was executor. Finally there are drawings and some financial records relating to the family home in Port Hope – Terralta.

B2003-0008/006 (08) – (13)

B2010-0008/001(03) – (10)

B2010-0008/002

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Series 9

Photographs

0.51 m graphic	100 photoprints 3 engravings 1 pen and ink sketch 3 albums containing approx. 450 prints	ca. 186- - 1963
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This series contains a small number of loose photos, some of which would have been collected, others taken by Dr. Benson. Early snapshots relate to Benson's summer at Muskoka, the Blake summer residence, La Maison Rouge and La Caprice and her trip(s) to Europe. This series also contain 2 photo albums documenting the Benson/Blake families including trips, summer homes, Terralta, Port Hope.

Box (file)	Description	Date
B2003-0008/001P	(01) Early portraits – unidentified	19--
	(02) Engraving of Mr. Merritt	n.d.
	(03) Portraits of sponsored orphans Maryse Deslandes and Madeleine Killian	194-
	(04) C.C. Benson in car "Sally" at Terralta Port Hope	1919
	(05) Photos and one ink and pen sketch of Yacht designed by T.B. Benson, brother to Clara Benson	193-?
	(06) Photographs belonging to T.B. Benson of the 1915 Edmonton flood	1915
	(07) Laboratory – possibly Benson's in Household Science Building	n.d.
	(08) Engravings of early Toronto scenes by W. H. Bartlett: Fish Market, Maitland's Warf (reproductions)	n.d.
B2004-0013/001P	(01) Ping Pong at Maplehurst	n.d.
	(02) Maison Rouge, La Caprice Blake summer residences	190-
	(03) Muskoka	190-
	(04) Benson on board S.S. Canada, S.S. Rotterdam	190-
	(05) Hedwig's young cousin – Berlin	190-

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Series 9

Photographs

B2004-0013/002P (01) **Photo Album** Ca. 1895-1900
 Terralta 1895-1899
 Benson Family 1889
 Port Hope, 1897
 University of Toronto 1895-1897
 - includes women fencing
 Rice Lake 1893
 Stoney Lake 1896
 Golf Club Port Hope, 1900
 Kingston Military Camp 1900
 Point au Pic, Maison Rouge 189-
 Charlecote Warwick 190-

B2004-0013/002P (02) **Photo Album** 1880-1904
 Port Hope, 1880s
 Rice Lake
 Terralta, 1904
 Muskoka
 Maison Rouge, Pointe au Pic, Murray Bay
 189-
 Point au Pic, La Caprice 1905
 Primley. 1900
 Europe ca 1900 - 1905 – England, France
 Italy Belgium Holland
 Alverstoke – hauts march 1905
 Romaley 1904-05
 Charlecote park
 Chicago exhibition
 South Africa 1900
 On board the Rotterdam 1904

B2010-0008/001P (01)	Photo Album - most likely belonging to T.B. Benson - includes images of sailing yachts, informal shots of students on campus in the late 1890s, and cyanotypes of University College	189-
(02) – (05)	Photos of Terralta, family home in Port Hope including 4 rare stereoscopes..	187-
(06) - (08)	Old portraits, Benson and Daniel families	186- - 189-

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

B2018-0019/001P (01)	Early Portraits for Clara Benson	1875-1880
(02)	Graduation portraits, Ph.D	1904
(03)	Terralta, Port Hope (colourized print)	191-?
(04)	Snapshot of Household Science	1916, 193-
(05)	Benson at Terralta	1936
(06)	Benson at St. John's Church	1954
(07)	Benson Building (postcard)	195-?
(08)	Benson at Old Home Week, Whitney Hall	1963
B2018-0019/002P (01)	Clara Benson portrait by Milne	?
(02)	Clara Benson Portrait by Karsh	?
B2018-0020/001P (01)	Ethel Mary and Clara Cynthia Bailey	188-
/002P (01)-(02)	Women's Literary Society	189-

Clara Cynthia Benson Fonds

Series 10**Film**

ca. 1928-1960 13 rolls of 16mm film: b&w and colour; 400 ft or less
 37 rolls of 16 mm film: b&w and colour; 50ft. or less

Over several decades, Clara Benson took numerous rolls of 16 mm film documenting her family, her trips, as well as life in Toronto especially during World War II, the University of Toronto and various events. Her collection includes some unique footage of women's sports at the University of Toronto, convocation ceremonies in the 1940s, and skating shows, one of which identified Barbara Ann Scott. From her trips, there is interesting footage of Egypt and Greece in the late 1920s, the New York World Fair and South America in 1939 as well as Atlantic City in the late 1940s. There are several small rolls of film documenting military parades on the streets of Toronto as well as the Royal Visit of 1939 and 1959.

For Further Details See Appendix 1 for listing.

Appendix 1 Series 10 Film : B2003-0008

Family and Port Hope Area

Roll	Description	Length / Time	Date
/001M	<u>Benson I – Bensons and Friends</u> : show home and relatives of Clara Benson including a some footage of her. Includes people in garden, sailing on lake, at a fair, Christmas around the tree. [B&W and Colour]	200 ft/5.30 min.	Ca. 1936
/002M	<u>Bensons</u> : scenes of people playing with dogs, Christmas party (Benson on sofa), mother and baby, man in uniform with woman standing on sidewalk, children playing....m [Colour]	250 ft/7 min	Ca. 1946
/003M	<u>[Family get-together]</u> : shows family party outdoors	12 ft / 25 sec	Ca. 1943
/004M	<u>[Port Hope]</u> : Views of the Port Hope area including fields, beach, town, grounds of Benson homestead Terralta [Colour]	250 ft. / 7 min	Ca 1936 or 1956
/005M	<u>Ontario Highways</u> : shows highways in Ontario including No. 2 to Port Hope, No. 7 to Perth, No.11 around Gravenhurst and Orillia, Queen Elizabeth Way and Niagara. A short B&W section in the middle shows an ice skating show with professional skaters. [Colour and B&W]	400 ft. / 12 min	Ca. 1941-1946
/006M	<u>Clara Benson's Birthday, June 5 1960</u> [Colour]	25 ft / 45 sec.	1960

Trips

Roll	Description	Length / Time	Date
/007M	<u>Egypt – Cairo, Alexandria / Greece – Capri</u> : shows pyramids and sites of Egypt, streets of Cairo including a large air ship flying overhead, street scenes of Athens? With cars and people, panned view of Capri, boat, fisherman and children in traditional dress dancing.	400 ft. / 11 min	1926
/008M	<u>England 1937</u> : Title Cards read: Montreal Harbour, Going East (on ship), London 1937 (mainly street, squares, guards at Buckingham Palace) Kew Gardens, Beaconsfield, English Gardens in August; Windsor 1937, Near Bournemouth, Southampton, Going West.	320 ft / 10 min	1937
/009M	<u>New York World Fair</u> : shows people, building, and attractions.	35 ft. / 1 min	1939

Appendix 1 Series 10 Film : B2003-0008

Trips (cont'd)

Roll	Description	Length / Time	Date
/010M	<u>South America I</u> – views of travel on ship, arriving at port of tropical country, a market, beaches, tropical vegetation (B&W and Colour)	300 ft / 8 min	1939
/011M	<u>South America II – British Antilles – N.Y.</u> : views of streets in South American city, mausoleum, park market; b&w footage of farm and wharf; trip through mountains, market, panned view of city-line from boat; views of island in British Antilles? and sailing into N.Y city.	200 ft/5.30 min	1939
/012M	[<u>London Trip</u>] shows busy streets of London, Benson with woman?	40 ft./1.10 min	ca.1948
/013M	[Atlantic City] [Skating Carnival]: two separate segments – shows views of Atlantic City, followed by an Skating Carnival with Barbara Ann Scott (as identified on the original).	50 ft./1.25 min	1948
/014M	[<u>London Trip</u>] shows streets of London, monuments, Benson with a doctor and a nurse, miniature boats on pond	40 ft./1.10 min	ca. 1949
/015M	[<u>London Trip – Coronation of Queen Elizabeth</u>] – shows street parade [colour]	40 ft./1.10 min	1952
/016M	[<u>London Trip – Coronation of Queen Elizabeth</u>] – shows street parade [colour]	50 ft./1.25 min	1952

Toronto Streets and Parades

Roll	Description	Length / Time	Date
/017M	[<u>Visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth</u>]: shows parade route with cars and crowds along Queen's Park; also streets filled with banners [colour]	100 ft./ 2.5 min.	1939
/018M	[<u>Toronto Streets and parade</u>] : shows Queen's Park, old house possibly Spadina House; military parade in front of the Royal Ontario Museum [b&w]	40 ft./1.10 min.	ca. 1939
/019M	[<u>Santa Clause Parade</u>]: Santa Clause Parade showing floats, crowds, participants shot at Bloor and Avenue Rd in front of the Royal Ontario Museum [colour]	110 ft./3.10 min.	ca. 1940

Appendix 1 Series 10 Film : B2003-0008

Toronto Streets and Parades cont'd

Roll	Description	Length / Time	Date
/020M	[Toronto parade and other scenes]: most of the footage is of a veteran parade. Shot list includes Bands of Veterans, Soldiers March Pass, Kellies, Mounties, Greeks, UofT Dress Parades, Borden Canteen and Lounge [b&w, colour]	200 ft./5.20 min.	ca. 1940-1941
/021M	[Toronto Streets and parade]: shows bands for different regiments [colour]	30 ft./ 19 sec	ca. 1941
/022M	[Military parade] shows tanks, armoured vehicles, anti-aircraft search lights, a truck with sign "RCASC Supplies" ; end has short shot of Clara Benson darning an oven-mitt [B&W and Colour]	45 ft./1.25 min.	ca.1943
/023M	[Military parade]: shows float with banner that reads "Chinese People Suffer. You May Too", shot of plane flying above, sea cadets marching by. [colour]	23 ft. / 15 sec.	ca.1943
/024M	[Victory Parade, Snow Dec. 26, Dancing] (b&w).	45 ft. /1.25 min.	1944
/025M	[Military Parade]: parade along Avenue Rd and Bloor, good views of TTC car and large sign for Victory Bonds [colour]	45 ft./1.25 min.	1944 or 1945
/026M	[Streets of Toronto] shows area around Bloor and Avenue Rd. [b&w]	20 ft./40 sec	ca.1945
/027M	<u>In and About Queen's Park</u> : shows cars around Queen's Park Circle, shows College street down University Ave., men in uniform; scenes of campus showing Engineering building, Medical Building, children playing "London Bridge" on back campus; "Professors Garden"; troops marching and nurses in gymnasium; people on front campus [colour and b&w]	150 ft. / 4 min	ca.1945
/028M	Queen Elizabeth II: Shows Parade route with crowd, motorcade but not good shot of Queen Elizabeth herself (colour)	50 ft. / 1.24	1959

Appendix 1 Series 10 Film : B2003-0008
University of Toronto

Roll	Description	Length / Time	Date
/029M	[Graduate Parties 1899 and 1927]: Title Card reads "After Ten Years and After More" first segment is b&w of people in garden – possibly class of 1899] second segment is similar but colour	10 ft. / 20 sec	1939?
/030M	[<u>Military Parade, Graduation and Commencement</u>]: first minute of footage shows street scenes of Toronto in a blizzard and a military parade passing in front of the Royal Ontario Museum; remaining footage is UofT graduation including shots of interior of convocation hall, women graduates seated, women graduates with flowers standing on from campus, President Cody shaking hands with guests, women receiving degrees at commencement outdoors.	160 ft./4.30 min.	a.1939-1941
/031M	<u>The Household Science Building The Neighbours and the Road.</u> (colour)	12.5 ft./21 sec	ca.1941
/032M	[<u>Military on Front Campus</u>]: shows military marching with crowd watching	10 ft / 20 sec	ca.1944
/033M	[<u>Sports and Games</u>]: footage includes women's tennis, basketball and swimming.	50 ft./1.20 min.	ca.1946-1948
/034M	[<u>Gym at UofT</u>]: footage of Women's basketball, calisthenics, gymnastics and acrobatics	50 ft./1.20 min.	ca.1948
/035M	[<u>Commencement 1949</u>]: first 30 seconds is scenery followed by footage of Benson at convocation with a young man who is graduating	50 ft./1.20 min.	ca.1949

Events

Roll	Description	Length / Time	Date
/036M	[Red Cross Dresses, Gardens] shows people in old fashion dress walking across a garden – possibly type of fashion show [colour]	180 ft. / 5.00	ca.1940
/037M	[Women performing Shakespeare] : women performing play in park setting; also trailer town [colour]	20 ft / 40 sec	ca.1944
/038M	[Skating Show] : professional skating show, beautiful colours [colour]	50 ft./1.20 min.	ca.1944
/039M	<u>YWCA, Muskoka Yacht Club</u> : shows guests from various countries in traditional dress. (B&W, colour)	50 ft./1.20 min.	ca.1946
/040M	[<u>Skating Carnival</u>]: footage mainly of professional figure skating show followed by scenes of a castle near water.	50 ft./1.20 min.	ca.1948