

**University of Toronto Archives
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Elsbeth Steuart Clark fonds
B2005-0032

Garron Wells, February 2007

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Biographical note

Mrs. Elspeth Steuart¹ Clark was born in Pernambuco (now Recife), Brazil on April 7, 1903 where her father was working as a locomotive engineer. She was educated in England and traveled across Canada to China where her father was working after World War I. She returned to England in 1925 to marry Royal Navy Officer, Lt. Commander 'Win' Clark from whom she was divorced in 1936. In 1939, Mrs. Clark "was living in a rented house in Berkamsted with her mother[Mrs. Isabella Tripp] who had been widowed some 10 years previously."² In 1940, she and her two children, Edwin Fripp (E.F.) age 12 and Shirley, age 8, traveled by ship (the *Duchess of Bedford*) to Montreal and then by train to Toronto as part of a temporary relocation project during World War II. Under the auspices of the University of Toronto Women's War Service Committee, a sub-committee was formed to bring children from Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester and Birmingham to Canada. The Committee for British Overseas Children (CBOC) was comprised of volunteers (often wives) from the faculty of the University. Mrs Clark and her two children set sail for Canada on July 21, 1940 and arrived in Toronto on July 30. Through the assistance of the CBOC, the Clarks were billeted first with the Brandon family and then with Prof. Edgar Allcutt of the Department of Mechanical Engineering and family. They were finally placed in their own apartment at 2 Gormley Avenue in February 1941 where they remained for the duration of their stay in Canada.

Mrs. Clark and her daughter, Shirley, remained in Toronto until May, 1944; her son, Edwin, had returned to England in July 1943. Their return trip to England had been arranged by Lord Davies (1880-1944) whose wife, Henrietta Margaret ("Lady D") and 4 children had been in Toronto but had returned a few months before. Mrs. Clark died at the age of 97 on July 12, 2000 in Bedford, England.

¹ Spelling of name according to E.F. Clark: "spelling of her middle name is correct. The unusual version is derived from an ancestor Hew Steuart who was with the East India Company in the 18th century".

² EFC Notes to memoir of Mrs. E.S. Clark. B2005-0032/004(10)

Scope and content

1940-2000

0.50 m of textual and graphic records (5 boxes)

This accession comprises the entire fonds of personal letters of Mrs. Elspeth Clark to her mother, Mrs. Isabella Bertram Fripp, dating from embarkation by ship with her two children, Edwin and Shirley, in July 1940 until May 1944, shortly before their return to England. The letters written on a weekly basis describe travel conditions aboard ship and overland to Toronto, and details regarding day to day life of herself and her children as guests of the CBOC in Toronto. Details of daily life include living conditions, children's schooling (Edwin at U.T.S. and Shirley at Bishop Strachan) illnesses and other medical needs, summer camps, and Mrs. Clark's work with the Red Cross, Hart House, and the War Guest Mothers' Club, among others. In addition to the letters from Mrs. Clark are also the occasional enclosed letters of her children, Edwin and Shirley, to their grandmother. Additional notes by her son, E.F. clarify context of some information such as her memoir. Letter log books (1940-1949) provide dates, to whom sent and summary of contents of each letter. The log books also include lists, name and addresses and other notes relating to their stay in Toronto. Also included are photographs documenting Mrs. Clark, her children and other people relating to their stay in Canada.

Note: Transcripts of the letters, provided to the Archives by Clark's family, are available. To obtain a copy, contact the Archives.

Access: Open

Boxes:

B2005-0032/001 - /004

B2005-0032/001P

Related material:

University of Toronto. Women's War Service Committee fonds (B1968-0002 & B1972-0004)

Content listing

Box number	Description	Date range
B2005-0032/001	Letters of Elspeth Clark to her mother, Mrs. Isabella Fripp. For photos removed see /001P	July 1940 - October 1941
B2005-0032/002	Letters of Elspeth Clark to her mother, Mrs. Isabella Fripp. For photos removed see /001P	Nov. 1941 – Aug. 1942
B2005-0032/003	Letters of Elspeth Clark to her mother, Mrs. Isabella Fripp. For photos removed see /001P	Sept. 1942 - June 1943
B2005-0032/004(01)-(08)	Letters of Elspeth Clark to her mother, Mrs. Isabella Fripp	July 1943 - May 1944
B2005-0032/004(09)	Letter log books with notes	1940-1949
B2005-0032/004(10)	Memoir of Elspeth Clark with typescript and notes by her son, E.F. Clark; newsletter article on Mrs. Clark	[ca. 199-]; Spring 2000
B2005-0032/001P(01)	2 photographs enclosed with letter dated September 28, 1941 with captions on back: "Lady D (in stripes) [and] Mrs Ben Davies in our garden at Oakville – with the 'washing'. ; "Life at Oakville. The Broom, The --- & Loblaw shopping Basket"	1941
B2005-0032/001P(02)	4 photographs taken at a summer camp, enclosed with letter dated Feb.25, 1942 with captions: "Mrs Ben Davies, Hope [Davies] & S[hirley Clark] by the swimming pool & landing stage"; "S[hirley] in camp uniform green jersey & shorts, socks yellow shoes"; [group photograph] "Miss Hamilton the owner of Tanamakoon"; "S[hirley] & me [Elspeth Clark]"	1942
B2005-0032/001P(03)	4 photographs of landscape taken on a canoe trip from Camp Ahmek enclosed with letter September 20, 1942 (see (05) F and G below)	1942

Box number	Description	Date range
B2005-0032/001P(04)	3 photographs enclosed with letter of November 14, 1942: Elspeth Clark, her son Edwin and daughter Shirley in garden of Mrs LeFroy "who lived across from 2 Gormley Avenue". See similar photographs (05) below.	1942
B2005-0032/001P(05)	8 photographs (marked A to H) of Clark family members and friends in Canada. Descriptions from notes forwarded by Mrs. Elspeth Clark's son, E. (Edwin) F. Clark	1940-1942
B2005-0032/001P(05) A	Group photograph "taken at the Allcutt's summer cottage in the summer of 1940 before we went to live with them in their house at 48 Foxbar Road. Left to right the figures are Monica Allcutt, Mrs. Allcutt, EFC [Edwin Clark], Stella Allcutt, Shirley Clark, Elspeth Clark"	
B2005-0032/001P(05) B	"is EFC in his newly acquired UTS Cadet Corps uniform, taken at the back of 48 Foxbar Road in the autumn of 1940"	
B2005-0032/001P(05) C	"is of EFC and LAC (Leading Aircraftsman) Dawes. It is taken on the sidewalk outside 2 Gormley Avenue. LAC Dawes had been sent to Canada, probably under Empire Air Training scheme as potential aircrew..."	
B2005-0032/001P(05) D	"is of the same occasion as C above, but now included in picture (R to L) are Elspeth Clark, Shirley Clark, and the friend whom LAC Dawes had brought with him. The visit was probably made some time in 1942..."	
B2005-0032/001P(05) E	"is of EFC and Elspeth Clark in the garden of an old lady called Mrs. LeFroy who lived across from 2 Gormley Avenue...This photograph was probably taken to show how much EFC had grown, probably in 1942".	
B2005-0032/001P(05) F and G	"are of EFC on a canoe trip from Camp Ahmek. The fishing was memorable".	

Box number	Description	Date range
B2005-0032/001P(05) H	"is of EFC and Shirley in Mrs. LeFroy's garden...taken on same occasion" [as E above]	
B2005-0032/001P(06)	1 colour photograph of Mrs. Elspeth Clark taken at Christmas	[199-]
B2005-0032_df001	Group photograph of War Guest Mothers Club [.jpg]	[ca. 1940-1944]