

WILFRED WATSON FONDS FINDING GUIDE

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



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PART I - FONDS LEVEL DESCRIPTION



Watson, Wilfred. Drawing. n.d. Box 1 Series 3 File 1, Wilfred Watson Fonds. Special Collections, John M. Kelly Library, University of St. Michael's College

WILFRED WATSON FONDS

BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY*

Wilfred Watson was born in Rochester, England in 1911 and at the age of fifteen immigrated to Canada with his family, settling in Duncan, British Columbia. Watson attended the University of British Columbia from 1940 to 1943, earning a B.A. in English literature. During the Second World War, he served in the Canadian navy and after the war he continued his education at the University of Toronto, receiving an M.A. in 1946 and a Ph.D. in 1951. In 1949, Wilfred Watson was employed as a special lecturer in English at the University of British Columbia and from 1951 to 1953 he was a professor in the Department of English at the University of Alberta, teaching at the Calgary campus. In 1954, he transferred to the Edmonton campus, remaining there as Professor of English until his retirement in 1977.

Wilfred Watson married Sheila Martin Doherty in 1941, who as Sheila Watson published *The Double Hook* in 1959. The Watsons both taught at the University of Alberta and participated in an intellectual circle that included the painter Norman Yates, and actor-directors Gordon Peacock and Thomas Peacocke among others. Watson co-founded the Jazz Club "Yardbird Suite" in Edmonton in the early 1960's, and joined the editorial group of *White Pelican*—a quarterly review of the arts—in 1972. Wilfred Watson retired from the University of Alberta in 1977 and moved in 1980 to Nanaimo, B.C. with his wife Sheila. He passed away very shortly after his wife Sheila in Nanaimo in 1998, at the age of 87.

Wilfred Watson's writing career was prolific and continuously evolving and developing. T.S.Eliot accepted his first volume of poetry, *Friday's Child*, for Faber and Faber, publishing it in 1955, and Watson received the 1955 Governor General's Award for it. Between 1955 and 1956, Watson lived in Paris as the recipient of a Canadian Government Overseas Fellowship. Here he was introduced to the theatre of the absurd, and in the following years explored this interest with his own writing and directing activities. In the early 1960s, Watson made contact with Marshall McLuhan and developed a growing interest in McLuhan's theories, culminating with their collaboration on the study, *From Cliche to Archetype*. Watson started work on his first major play, *Cockcrow and the Gulls*, in the mid-1950s, and it was first performed at the University of Alberta's Studio Theatre in March 1962.

During the 1960s Watson had his most prolific period of playwriting; *Trial of Corporal Adam* was produced in 1963; *Wail for two Pedestals* in 1964; and *Let's murder Clytemnestra according to the principles of Marshall McLuhan* in 1969. A play for Canada's centennial, *O holy ghost, dip your finger in the blood of Canada, and write, I love you* was produced in 1967. During the 1970s, Watson concentrated on writing poetry, and his second volume of poetry, *The Sorrowful Canadians and Other Poems*, was published in 1972. This volume of poetry experimented with using different typefaces and repetitions, and Watson later introduced number-grid verse in a volume titled *I Begin With Counting*. A second volume of number-grid verse, *Mass on Cowback*, was published in 1982.

The 1980s also saw Watson return to writing for the stage; *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, a short play, was performed at the Edmonton Fringe Festival in 1987 and a major play trilogy, *Gramsci x 3* was produced by Studio Theatre in 1986. Wilfred Watson also wrote some short stories, essays, and a novel, although most went unpublished.

***Source:** University of Alberta, Wilfred Watson finding guide (some grammatical changes were made): <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson.html>

ARCHIVAL HISTORY

Wilfred Watson's records were donated to the John M. Kelly Library as part of a Sheila Watson accession (accession number 2006 01). Sheila Watson identified her friend Dr. Fred T. Flahiff as her literary executor and sent her archives to him between 1994 and 1998. In 2006, Flahiff donated Sheila Watson's archival material, a portion of which was accumulated and created by Wilfred Watson and later formed into the Wilfred Watson fonds, to the John M. Kelly Library, Special Collections.

DATES

1941 - 1998 ; predominant 1956 - 1996

EXTENT OF FONDS

13.8 cm of textual material
2 bound notebooks
3 sound recordings
17 drawings ; ink, gouache and pencil
1 photograph : col. ; 12.9 x 9.3 cm

NAMES OF CREATOR(S)

Wilfred Watson

IMMEDIATE SOURCE OF ACQUISITION OR TRANSFER

Dr. Fred T. Flahiff

SCOPE AND CONTENT OF FONDS

Fonds consists of correspondence, manuscripts, sound recordings, drawings and diaries created and accumulated by the poet and playwright Wilfred Watson, husband to Sheila Watson. Material has been arranged to align with the Wilfred Watson fonds held by the University of Alberta Archives.

Fonds is comprised of 8 series:

1. Journals and Notebooks
2. Literary Drafts/Writings
3. Sketches/Artwork
4. Correspondence
5. Student Records-Watson (held within the University of Alberta's Wilfred Watson fonds)
6. Reference Material
7. Personal Papers
8. Audio-Visual Records

RELATED UNITS OF DESCRIPTION

- Sheila Watson fonds (fonds #2)
- Dr. Fred T. Flahiff (fonds #4)

NOTE

- Title based on contents of the fonds.
- Series level descriptions available with associated boxed list.
- Access is restricted on some material.
- A more comprehensive Wilfred Watson fonds is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit:
<http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson.html>
- Fonds arrangement made to align with the University of Alberta's Wilfred Watson fonds.

PART II - SERIES LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

SERIES 1. JOURNALS AND NOTEBOOKS

Date range: 1958, 1984-1993

Physical Extent: 2 bound notebooks

Scope and Content:

Series consists of two diaries kept by Wilfred Watson during his writing career and includes a diary created by Watson after 1958, and a second diary kept between 1984 and 1993.

Notes:

A more comprehensive collection of Wilfred Watson's journals and notebooks is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit: <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson1.html>

Title based on series system of Wilfred Watson fonds at the University of Alberta.

Location: Files 001 – 002 Box 1

SERIES 1. FILE 001

Title: Diary from Edmonton

Date range: ca. 1958

Physical extent: 1 bound notebook; 11.3 x 18 x 1.5 cm

Scope and content:

File consists of a bound journal kept by Wilfred Watson after 1958. The journal contains an illustration on the cover, presumably by Watson, and is titled "True & Free = Man". The journal contains 110 pages of hand written reading notes, reflections on academia, sexuality, Canadian literature, Wyndham Lewis and other writers.

Notes:

Title based on contents of the file.

Location: File 001 Box 1

SERIES 1. FILE 002

Title: Diary from Nanaimo
Date range: May 9, 1984 - December 11, 1993
Physical extent: 1 bound notebook; 13.4 x 19.6 x 3 cm

Scope and content:

File consists of a bound journal kept by Wilfred Watson between 1984 and 1993. The journal contains 132 pages of hand written reflections on his health and wife Sheila Watson's hospitalization after a fall, descriptions of visits from friends and other writers, letters he received, ideas for stories, and current events.

Notes:

Title based on contents of the file.

Location: File 002 Box 1

SERIES 2. LITERARY DRAFTS/WRITINGS

Date range: 1950-1981
Physical Extent: 2.8 cm of textual records

Scope and Content:

Series consists of Wilfred Watson manuscripts, typescripts, drafts and notes regarding his writing, poetry, plays, short stories, miscellaneous papers and publications. Specifically, the series contains handwritten notes regarding an unknown philosopher; a typescript and published copy of the essay "McLuhan's collective wordplay"; manuscripts of poems; and a reflection paper titled "Mettre en conte le dream".

Notes:

A more comprehensive collection of Wilfred Watson's literary drafts and writings is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit: <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson2.html>

Title based on series system of Wilfred Watson fonds at the University of Alberta.

Location: Files 001 - 004 Box 1

SERIES 2. FILE 001

Title: Notes on [Boleuphoke?]

Date range: ca. [195-?]

Physical extent: 0.3 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

File consists of a three pages of handwritten notes regarding a philosopher [Boleuphoke?] and his support of natural religion.

Notes:

Title based on contents of the file.

Location: File 001 Box 1

SERIES 2. FILE 002

Title: McLuhan's collective wordplay

Date range: 1981

Physical extent: 1 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

File consists of a typescript and published copy of Wilfred Waton's essay "McLuhan's collective wordplay". The typescript contains inscriptions and notes made Watson. The published copy, featured in The Canadian Forum (Vol. LXI, No. 709, May 1981), contains notes made by, his wife, Sheila Watson.

Notes:

Location: File 002 Box 1

SERIES 2. FILE 003

Title: Manuscripts of twenty two poems

Date range: 1951-1956

Physical extent: 1 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

File consists of 22 typed poems, including "Sermon on bears"; "The Hyacinth" (dated Paris, 1956), "The Canticle for the birds"; and a 19 page anthology of poetry (dated Point Grey, 1951), including the poems "Anchises and the Goddess of Love", "A Dialogue", "Simon Barjona" (2 copies), "Et Incarnatus Est", "Erischithon", "Verse-Letter to E.J.", "At the Corner of Bloor and Yonge", "Sad Bulletins", "This Was My Day" (2 copies), "Totem Park, Point Grey" (2 copies), "A Riddle for Gillian Espinasse : 'Saga hwaet ic hatte'", "And Should She Ask", "Like One of Us", "On An Ash Wednesday Hill", "Lines Composed at Calgary Airport", and an untitled poem beginning "She is more fair than fair can say".

Notes:

Title based on contents of the file.

Location: File 003 Box 1

SERIES 2. FILE 004

Title: Mettre en conte le dream

Date range: ca. 1950

Physical extent: 0.5 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

File consists of a 19 page typed reflection titled "Mettre en conte le dream".

Notes:

Location: File 004 Box 1

SERIES 3.0. SKETCHES/ARTWORK

Date range: ca. 1941 - 1998

Physical Extent: 17 drawings : graphite, ink, coloured pencil and watercolour

Scope and Content:

Series consists of drawings created by Wilfred Watson; the series is comprised of seventeen ink, pastel, crayon, watercolour, gauche and graphite drawings. The majority of these drawings are figurative and most likely from the period when Watson was living in Nanaimo, B.C.

Notes:

A more comprehensive collection of Wilfred Watson's sketches and artwork is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit: <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson3.html>

Title based on series system of Wilfred Watson fonds at the University of Alberta.

Location: **Files 001** **Box 1**

SERIES 3. FILE 001

Title: Sketches and artwork

Date range: ca. 1941 - 1998

Physical extent: 17 drawings

Scope and content:

File consists of a three pages of handwritten notes regarding a philosopher [Boleuphoke?] and his support of natural religion.

Notes:

Title based on contents of the file.

Location: **File 001** **Box 1**

SERIES 4. CORRESPONDENCE

Date range: 1953 - 1998

Physical Extent: 1 cm of textual material – 1 photograph : col. ; 12.9 x 9.3 cm

Scope and Content:

Series consists of correspondence—specifically letters, cards, and notes with occasional enclosures that includes manuscripts, publications and photographs—created and accumulated by Wilfred Watson. Series is primarily composed of personal correspondence from friends and colleagues (Fred Flahiff, Northrop Frye, Ruth Humphrey, Janet Lander, M.E. Madsen, Marshall McLuhan, Rob Sanders, and Keith Swift), as well as correspondence from publishers (Northern Review Press and ECW Press, as well as the periodicals "Experiment" and "The Fiddlehead").

Notes:

A more comprehensive collection of Wilfred Watson's correspondence is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit: <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson4.html>

Title based on series system of Wilfred Watson fonds at the University of Alberta.

Access is restricted on some material.

Location: Files 001 - 012 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 001

Title: Note from Diane Bessai

Date range: May 3, 1991

Physical extent: 1 folder, containing 1 item

Scope and content:

File consists of a note, dated May 3, 1991, from Diane Bessai

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 001 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 002

Title: Postcard from Anne [Blott]

Date range: August 26, 1995

Physical extent: 1 folder, containing 1 item

Scope and content:

File consists of a postcard, dated August 26, 1995, from Anne [Blott].

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 002 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 003

Title: Letter and photograph from Pauline Boote

Date range: March 9, 1998

Physical extent: 1 p. - 1 photograph : col. ; 12.9 x 9.3 cm

Scope and content:

File consists of a handwritten letter from Pauline Boote, sent March 9, 1998. A photograph of red socks in foreground and a snowy landscape in background is adhered to the letter.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 003 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 004

Title: Letter from David Kent, ECW Press

Date range: December 22, 1993

Physical extent: 1 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a letter, dated December 22, 1993, from David Kent on behalf of ECW Press (Toronto, ON).

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 004 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 005

Title: Letter from Roland Ryden-Smith

Date range: November 25, 1953

Physical extent: 1 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a letter, dated November 25, 1953, from Roland Ryden-Smith, editor of the periodical "Experiment", regarding Watson's submitted poem "Valediction".

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 005 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 006

Title: Letter from Fred Cogswell

Date range: November 2, 1953

Physical extent: 1 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a letter, dated November 2, 1953, from Fred Cogswell, editor of the periodical "The Fiddlehead", regarding Watson's submitted poem "An Admiriation for Dylan Thomas".

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 006 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 007

Title: Letter from Fred Flahiff

Date range: August 27, 1982

Physical extent: 1 folder, containing 1 item

Scope and content:

File consists of a postcard, dated August 27, 1982 and featuring a Piet Mondrian painting, from Fred Flahiff.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 007 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 008

Title: Letter from Northrop Frye

Date range: May 1, 1961

Physical extent: 1 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a letter, dated May 1, 1961 on Victoria College letterhead, from Northrop Frye.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 008 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 009

Title: Letter from Ruth Humphrey

Date range: March 28, 1960

Physical extent: 4 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a handwritten letter, dated March 28, 1960 from Ruth Humphrey.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 009 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 010

Title: Letters from Janet Lander

Date range: August 10 - September 16, 1964

Physical extent: 20 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of nine letters from Janet Lander, including three short poems, from August 10 to September 16, 1964, including a letter draft by Wilfred Watson.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

These letters were found in the Watson Library's copy of John Pearson's "An Exposition of the Creed". This file is restricted.

Location: **File 010** **Box 1**

SERIES 4. FILE 011

Title: **Letter from Mrs. M.E. Madsen**

Date range: **September 23, 1953**

Physical extent: **1 p.**

Scope and content:

File consists of a poem, presumably by Mrs. M.E. Madsen, postmarked September 23, 1953.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Poem, with no distinguishing creator or metadata, was found separated from empty envelope from Mrs. M.E. Madsen. It is presumed that the poem belonged in the envelope due to corresponding size and typography.

Location: **File 011** **Box 1**

SERIES 4. FILE 012

Title: **Bibliography from David McFadden**

Date range: **June 28, 1977**

Physical extent: **1 p.**

Scope and content:

File consists of a bibliography, sent June 28, 1977, by David McFadden

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 012 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 013

Title: Letters from Marshall McLuhan

Date range: 1964 - 1968

Physical extent: 1 folder

Scope and content:

File consists of four letters from Marshall McLuhan, from 1964 to 1968. Correspondence includes an undated handwritten letter with an attached offprint translation of James Joyce's article, "Daniel Defoe", published in "Buffalo Studies" v1. no.1 (December 1964); an 11 page typescript by McLuhan and annotated by Watson titled "Noah's Archetypes"; a letter of introduction from McLuhan to the University of Toronto Library; and a handwritten letter from Marshall McLuhan dated August 31.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 013 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 014

Title: Letter from John Sutherland, Northern Review Press

Date range: April 19, 1954

Physical extent: 3 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a letter, dated April 19, 1954 on Northern Review Press letterhead, from John Sutherland of the Northern Review Press (Montreal, Quebec), rejecting Watson's submitted poem "Water's Paradox". The original submitted copy of the poem is attached.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 014 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 015

Title: Notes from Rob Sanders

Date range: June 12, 1991

Physical extent: 2 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of two notes from Rob Sanders of the Department of English at the University of Alberta; the first note is handwritten and on University of Alberta letterhead, and the second note is handwritten on University of Alberta letterhead and dated June 12, 1991.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 015 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 016

Title: Note from Keith Swift

Date range: ca. 1971

Physical extent: 1 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a handwritten note from Keith Swift regarding a review he produced regarding Mordecai Richler's novel "St. Urbain's Horseman".

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 016 Box 1

SERIES 4. FILE 017

Title: Miscellaneous notes and correspondence

Date range: ca.1953 - 1988

Physical extent: 1 p.

Scope and content:

File consists of a note and correspondence from two unidentified correspondents.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 017

Box 1

SERIES 6. REFERENCE MATERIAL

Date range: 1959-1979

Physical Extent: 8 cm of textual records

Scope and Content:

Series consists of reference material compiled and retained by Wilfred Watson. Specifically, the series contains theses composed for and submitted to the University of Alberta's Department of English and presumably sent to Wilfred Watson for his perusal.

Notes:

A more comprehensive collection of Wilfred Watson's reference material is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit: <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson6.html>

Title based on series system of Wilfred Watson fonds at the University of Alberta.

Location: Files 001 - 002

Box 1 and 2

SERIES 6. FILE 001

Title: Rhyme in Modern Poetry

Date range: 1959

Physical extent: 3 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

File consists of David Clandfield's University of Alberta, Department of English, Master of Arts thesis "Rhyme in Modern Poetry", dated September 5, 1959.

Notes:

Location: File 001

Box 1

SERIES 6. FILE 002

Title: "The Female Principle" in the Fiction of Wyndham Lewis

Date range: 1979

Physical extent: 5 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

File consists of Paula Grace Anderson's Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Alberta's Department of English entitled "'The Female Principle' in the Fiction of Wyndham Lewis" and dated Fall, 1979.

Notes:

Location: File 002 Box 2

SERIES 7. PERSONAL PAPERS

Date range: ca. 1941-1998

Physical Extent: 2 cm of textual material

Scope and Content:

Series consists of items in the collection that are uniquely personal to Wilfred Watson, which includes ephemera, loose notes, poetry fragments, word play, jottings and citations made by Wilfred Watson on scraps of paper, cigarette packages and used envelopes.

Notes:

A more comprehensive collection of Wilfred Watson's personal papers is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit: <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson7.html>

Title based on series system of Wilfred Watson fonds at the University of Alberta.

Location: Files 001 Box 2

SERIES 7. FILE 001

Title: Ephemera, loose notes and other material

Date range: ca. 1941-1998

Physical extent: 2 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

File consists of ephemera, loose notes, poetry fragments, word play, jottings and scraps of citations made by Wilfred Watson on scraps of paper, cigarette packages and used envelopes.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: File 001 Box 2

SERIES 8. AUDIO-VISUAL RECORDS

Date range: ca. 1956-1980

Physical Extent: 3 audiotapes : 1.5 mm reel.

Scope and Content:

Series consists of audio-visual material collected by Wilfred Watson and includes three 1.5 mm audiotape reels, and are presumably sound recordings of Watson's theatrical productions or his public readings.

Notes:

A more comprehensive collection of Wilfred Watson's audio-visual records is held within the University of Alberta. For a listing and description of Watson material held by the U of A, please visit: <http://archives.library.ualberta.ca/FindingAids/WilfredWatson/WWatson8.html>

Title based on contents of series

Location: Files 001 Box 2

SERIES 8. FILE 001

Title: **Audio-visual material**

Date range: ca. 1956-1980

Physical extent: **3 audiotapes : 1.5 mm reel**

Scope and content:

File consists of three 1.5 mm audiotape reels—presumably sound recordings of Wilfred Watson's theatrical productions or his public readings.

Notes:

Title based on content of file.

Location: **File 001**

Box 2