

The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives

Finding Aid

Records of The Rev. Robert McDowall

50 Wynford Drive.
Toronto, Ontario
M3C 1J7

Telephone: (416) 441-1111
1-800-619-7301

Fax: 416-441-2825

Web: <http://www.presbyterian.ca>

Catalogued by: Bob Anger, December 1998

Notes on using the Finding Aid

First consult the fonds description (fonds being an archival term used to denote the whole of the records created by a specific individual or family and held within an archives). The fonds description includes a biographical sketch of the individual or family that created the records, a scope and content note which briefly describes the records within the fonds (this generally starts with "Fonds consists of..."), and several notes at the bottom, which provide information on access restrictions and copyright restrictions.

Some finding aids also provide series descriptions on subsequent pages which further describe the records within the fonds.

After reading these descriptions consult the file list and notify an archivist of the individual files you wish to view.

Fonds Description

Robert McDowall fonds. – 1806-1839. - 7 cm of textual records.

Robert McDowall (1768-1841) was a minister of the Reformed Protestant Dutch and Presbyterian churches. He was born on July 25th, 1768 in Ballston Spa, New York, the son of John McDowall, an officer in the British army, and a Miss Graham. He married Miss Hannah Washburn in December 1800. Robert McDowall was licensed to preach by the Classis of Albany, the local organisation of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, and was sent to Upper Canada as a missionary. After travelling and preaching along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario, he returned to the United States to complete formal theological training. He attended Williamstown College, Williamstown, Mass., and Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., and was ordained in 1797. In 1798, he returned to the north shore of the St. Lawrence River, preaching in Brockville, before moving further west to settle at what is now Sandhurst, in Fredericksburgh Township. He opened his first church on July 6th, 1798, and continued to travel the area as an itinerant minister. In 1818, he joined the Presbytery of the Canadas, which in 1819 was re-organized into a three-presbytery synod, and was elected its first moderator. This Synod was dissolved into two independent presbyteries for Upper and Lower Canada in 1825, both of which joined the Church of Scotland Synod in 1832. He passed away on August 3rd, 1841 (historical sketch primarily taken from the DCB, Vol. VII, p. 557-558, by John Moir).

Fonds consists of several writings and letters of Robert McDowall, including a brief essay on the Early History of Presbyterian Work in Upper Canada addressed to The Rev. Henry Gordon, January 18th, 1839 (a type-written transcript of this essay is also available). The letters and writings consist of several letters of pleas to publish the banns of marriage for various individuals in the Fredericksburgh area (several of these papers also list various additional marriages performed by McDowall); several untitled and undated sermons or essays by Robert McDowall; and a few miscellaneous notes and unidentifiable writings. The fonds also includes a copy of a collection of sermons by Robert McDowall printed by Webster and Skinner of Albany, N.Y. in 1806 and titled "Discourses on the sovereign and universal agency of God, in nature and grace". Additional materials within the fonds include: two published transcriptions of the marriage and baptismal register (1800-1841) of Robert McDowall, compiled by Loral and Mildred Wanamaker (the original register can be found at Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario); a photocopy of an essay on the life of Robert McDowall, written by Stuart Woods of Beamsville, Ont. in 1947; and photocopies of several letters written or received by McDowall. The photocopied letters also appear to have been made by Stuart Woods and include a letter from E. Fitch, President of Williams College, Williamstown written on March 2, 1795 certifying that Robert McDowall was a student at the college; a letter written by Robert McDowall on March 31st, 1837 to a Mr. Fanshaw in Fredericksburgh Township concerning his late son, the John R. McDowall; a Marriage Banns Certificate, February 2, 1811; a letter by Andrew Bell to William Crook of Grimsby, Ontario, concerning Robert McDowall, written Sept. 18th, 1829; and a letter by E. Washburn certifying Robert McDowall's application for leave to marry (c. 1800).

Title based on contents of the fonds.

Accession Number: 1973-5015; 1993-5011

Location of the original letters photocopied by Stuart Woods, ca. 1947, is unknown.

No restrictions on access.

Some material in this fonds is protected by copyright until January 1st, 2004 (please ask the archivist on staff for clarification). A single copy of items in the fonds may be made for purposes of research and private study. Authorization must be obtained from the copyright holder if protected material is to be used for any other purpose. Protected material cannot be published without permission from the copyright holder.

A finding aid with file lists is available.

File List

1973-5015-1-1	1839	Statement of R. McDowall concerning early history of Presbyterian work in Upper Canada, 18 January, 1839 (original)
1973-5015-1-2	1973	Statement of R. McDowall concerning early history of Presbyterian work in Upper Canada, 18 January, 1839 (type-written transcript, made 1973)
1973-5015-1-3	1806	“Discourses on the sovereign and universal agency of God in nature and grace” by Robert McDowall, printed by Webster and Skinner, Albany, N.Y., 1806
1973-5015-1-4	1821-1834	Letters of pleas to publish the banns of marriage for various individuals in the Fredericksburgh area of Upper Canada (6 items), 1821-1834
1973-5015-1-5	[182-?]	Untitled and undated sermons or essays written by R. McDowall (6 items)
1973-5015-1-6	1819-1831	Miscellaneous notes and writings of Robert McDowall (5 items)
1973-5015-1-7	[ca. 1947]	Essay – “Life of Robert McDowall”, by Stuart Woods of Beamsville, Ont. and various photocopies of several letters written and/or received by Robert McDowall, or concerning McDowall (photocopies made ca. 1947)
1993-5011-1-1	1980	Publications – “Presbyterian Register of Rev. Robert James McDowall (1800-1841)”, and “Early Church Records of Rev. John Langhorn and Rev. Robert McDowall”, both compiled and transcribed by Loral and Mildred Wanamaker.