

## Anderson Department Store fonds

### Elgin County Archives

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# ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Treasures from Ontario's Archives



*In-store cooking school, 1949. Anderson Department Store fonds, C5 S6 B1 F14 Item 21*

## Anderson Department Store fonds

### Elgin County Archives

The Anderson Department Store fonds consists of records created, collected and maintained by Andersons Limited (1920-1988) and its predecessors Northway and Anderson (1896-1906) and The Anderson Company Limited (1906-1920) in the course of conducting business as a retail department store in St. Thomas, Ontario, 1896-

1988. The company's ledger books, financial and personnel records, correspondence, photographs and objects will be of particular interest to researchers seeking information on the local history of St. Thomas, and the development of retail department stores in Ontario. They will also be of interest to those investigating changes in retail fashion, advertising and marketing during the last century, or local social history through the commercial development and activities of businesses. Further information and images can be found at <[www.elgin.ca/](http://www.elgin.ca/)>

### The Elgin County Archives

450 Sunset Drive, St. Thomas, Ontario  
(519) 631-1460

<<http://www.elgin.ca/>>

The Archives is the official repository of records of the County of Elgin since its incorporation in 1852 as well as those of its current and former constituent municipalities. The Archives also houses a number of private collections documenting the County's history and its citizens.

Robert Marshall Anderson (1860-1940) began his career in business as a teenager, working in his uncle's dry goods store in the nearby town of Lindsay. Later, he worked as a salesman in the Dundas & Flavelle dry goods store in the same town. In 1890, he invested as a junior partner with John Northway in a new dry goods store in Tillsonburg, which Anderson managed. On

*Below: Anderson's Ltd. store exterior, 1906 (Anderson's Department Store fonds, C5 Sb6 B4 F1), and in 1950 (right) Scott Studio collection, B#100 N#97246*

21 April 1896, Northway and Anderson opened a new store in nearby St. Thomas with R.M. Anderson as manager. During the next few years the partners expanded their business, opening stores in Chatham, Simcoe and Ingersoll. Many of the original staff that joined



pying the first and second floors in the new building while sharing the street level with the Stephen B. Pocock Shoe Store. A small business college occupied the

The following year, Anderson incorporated his business as Andersons Limited. By 1929 the store again needed to expand, and an excavation of the basement of the building provided additional space for a new housewares department. More growth in 1939 allowed for additional street frontage and a cold storage warehouse for fur coats. In 1932 the store entered a new era when Donald Hume Anderson (1910-2004) joined his father as a member of the board of directors and manager; he became president when R.M. Anderson died in 1940.

the store in 1896 remained as employees for more than thirty years.

To provide much needed space for the growing business, the second and third floors of the St. Thomas store (a former dry goods store, later destroyed by fire in 1966) were extended to the rear of the building in 1900. Despite these changes, the store soon outgrew its original premises and in 1902 the partners purchased the outstanding stock and premises of dry goods merchants Lindsay Brothers, occu-

third floor, but it would vacate the space by 1903, allowing Northway and Anderson to establish a tailoring and dress-making department.

In 1906 R.M. Anderson purchased Northway's majority shares and reorganized the business as The Anderson Company Limited, with himself as president. Two years later, he purchased the Pocock shoe store and converted the space into an expanded men's department and administrative offices. The third floor was expanded in 1919 while customer service, convenience and accessibility were improved with the installation of washrooms for store customers and St. Thomas' first elevator.

To boost public morale in St. Thomas and rally support for soldiers of the Elgin Regiment during World War II, D.H. Anderson brought in several traveling displays such as the Royal Dolls, Titania's Palace, and others for the Red Cross Society and the Cadet Corps. In 1949 he oversaw the installation of new lighting and sprinkler systems. Under the Anderson family's stewardship



*Northway & Anderson calendar, 1905. Anderson Department Store fonds, C5 Sb4 B1 F6.*

the store became a landmark institution in the local business community, widely recognized as a leader in retail sales, labour relations and customer service. Robert Marshall Anderson was one of the first businessmen in Ontario to implement a forty-hour work-week and, beginning in 1921, he also offered his employees sick benefits. By 1946, D.H. Anderson had established an extremely generous employee pension plan. The Anderson Department Store was the first commercial establishment in St. Thomas to install restrooms and drinking fountains for its customers, an elevator, free delivery of purchases, ladies'

tailoring, and customer parking facilities.

In 1967 a third generation of the Anderson family joined the business when Robert Morley Anderson became a member of the board of directors. The Anderson Department Store continued as a full-service retail operation selling housewares, fine china, clothing and furs until the doors were closed for the last time on 8 October 1988, ending 92 years of service to the citizens of St. Thomas and the surrounding area.



*Fortieth anniversary window display, 1936. Anderson Department Store fonds, C5 Sb6 B1 F16 Item 8*

## *A Century of Service: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire in Grey County*

By Lisa Wodhams

### *Grey County Archives*

Grey Roots: Your Heritage and Visitor Centre  
102599 Grey Road 18, R. R. #4,  
Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 5N6  
(519) 376-3960 ext 111 or  
Toll Free (866) 473-9766  
<[www.greyroots.com](http://www.greyroots.com)>

The archival holdings at Grey Roots are an extensive assemblage of municipal and private collections covering the history of Grey County.

The outbreak of the Boer War triggered the concept of an "organization of women, under the British flag, who would promote patriotism through service." A Canadian

institution, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) was founded as an organization dedicated to education, patriotism, and charity. The I.O.D.E. Collections at the Grey County Archives house the stories of three local Chapters of the organization: The Earl Grey, The Captain Wm. F. Owen, and The Annie Jaffray Eaton.

The Earl Grey I.O.D.E. chose their name in honour of the then Governor General of Canada, Sir Albert Henry George Grey. The collection boasts a thoroughly documented history of the Chapter,

including minute books dating back to the night of the it's inauguration on 18 May 1905. The minute books allow a researcher to navigate the group's actions through nearly a century of historical events, including both World Wars. One entry, dated just after WWI was declared, states: "A long depression from business was indulged in, when the war with its attendant horrors was talked over." (2 October 1914). The succeeding entries demonstrate the organization's dismay, but also their resolve to move forward and assist the war effort.

An extensive scrapbook