

Canada Science and Technology Museum Library and Archives

Finding Aid - Alexander Generating Station Albums (AGS)

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Alexander Generating Station Albums

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Summary information

Repository: Canada Science and Technology Museum Library and Archives

Title: Alexander Generating Station Albums

ID: AGS

Date: 1926-1931 (date of creation)

Physical description: 6 albums (ca. 1800 photographs: b&w)

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

The Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario (HEPCO) was special statutory corporation established by the Act to Provide for the Transmission of Electrical power to Municipalities of 1906. Prior to its creation, hydro-electric power had developed as a series of solo ventures, private or public stations powering towns or businesses, but forming no common network. These often operated as monopolies, providing poor services at high prices. In response to these practices, the Ontario provincial government recognized in 1905 that electricity should be consider as ‘public good’ rather than commodity. The Commission’s role was to supply the electrical needs of the citizens of Ontario municipalities, and later to rural areas, at the lowest possible cost. Over the course of its history, HEPCO connected Ontario municipalities to its delivery system through the upgrading of local distribution lines and extension of transmission lines. To supply its clients, HEPCO bought power from private companies and acquired or built its own stations. In 1939, the Power Control Act gave the Commission the authority to regulate other electricity generators. The network extended past the borders of Ontario as HEPCO bought power from American-owned utilities and from private hydro producers in Quebec. As the Commission developed its capacity for thermal and nuclear-generated power starting in the 1950s, it became more self-sufficient and even became a net exporter of power. HEPCO was officially renamed Ontario Hydro in 1974 when the six-man commission that governed it was changed to a Board of Directors composed of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, President, and a number of directors. Ontario Hydro continued to operate the generation and delivery system until deregulation of electricity market in Canada split the corporation in 1999 into two entities: Ontario Power Generation (OPG) to produce energy, and Hydro One to distribute it on the open market. The deregulation ultimately ended the generation and delivery model established with the creation of HEPCO in 1906.

Custodial history

The donor Lorne Shields acquired this material and donated it to the Canada Science and Technology Museum in 2016.

Scope and content

The collection consists of six photograph albums containing over 1800 black and white photographs and more than 20 panoramas that document the construction of the Alexander Falls hydroelectric dam on the Nipigon River north of present-day Thunder Bay. Alexander Falls and the larger Cameron Falls generating station farther up the Nipigon River provided power for growing industrial activities in the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William. The dam was built between 1926 and 1931. In the first year construction of the railway line, works yards and coffer dam was begun. 1927 and 1928 saw work on the diversion channel, rockfill for the main dam and building of the sluiceway. Construction of the powerhouse took place in 1929-1930, including concrete work under difficult winter conditions where heated concrete forms were required. In 1930 installation of the generators began, with the first one coming on line in October. The third and final generator was switched over in March 1931. When completed Alexander Falls had a capacity of 54,000 hp (approx. 40 MW) and was connected to Port Arthur and Fort William by a 113 km (70 mile) transmission line. The photographs in the first five albums are arranged in chronological order, giving a clear sequential indication of the progress of the work. Photographs from these albums have mostly been annotated with an informative title and date. The photographs in the sixth album seem to show equipment and may have been used as an inventory for insurance purposes.

Notes

Title notes

- **Attributions and conjectures**: Title based on the content of the albums.

Physical condition

Photographs are generally in good condition though the panoramas have sometimes fallen apart. The panoramas are usually several photographs taped together and folded to fit in the album. Some empty spaces in the albums indicate that a photograph may have gone missing as the glue used to adhere them dried up. However, most photographs are still strongly glued and would likely be damaged if an attempt was made to separate them from the pages.

Conditions governing use

Public domain.

Other notes

- **Publication status**: published

Access points

- Hydroelectric power plants -- Ontario (subject)
-

Collection holdings

File: AGS-1 - Alexander Development Book No. I

Title: Alexander Development Book No. I

ID: AGS-1

Date: 1926-01-04 - 1927-04-23 (date of creation)

Physical description: ca. 362 photographs: b&w

Publication status:

published

File: AGS-2 - Alexander Development Book No. II

Title: Alexander Development Book No. II

ID: AGS-2

Date: 1927-04-23 - 1929-08-02 (date of creation)

Physical description: ca. 292 photographs: b&w

Publication status:

published

File: AGS-3 - Alexander Development Book No. 3

Title: Alexander Development Book No. 3

ID: AGS-3

Date: 1929-08-03 - 1930-06-12 (date of creation)

Physical description: ca. 300 photographs: b&w

Publication status:

published

File: AGS-4 - Alexander Power Development Book No. 4Title: Alexander Power Development Book No. 4ID: AGS-4Date: 1930-06-13 - 1930-09-11 (date of creation)Physical description: ca. 361 photographs: b&wPublication status:

published

File: AGS-5 - Alexander Power Development Book No. 5Title: Alexander Power Development Book No. 5ID: AGS-5Date: 1930-09-11 - 1931-07-17 (date of creation)Physical description: ca. 370 photographs: b&wPublication status:

published

File: AGS-6 - [Alexander Power Development Book No. 6]Title: [Alexander Power Development Book No. 6]ID: AGS-6Date: [between 1926 and 1931] (date of creation)Scope and content:

Unlike the other albums that show how the work developed over time, the photographs in this album seem to show equipment and may have been used as an inventory for insurance purposes.

Physical description: ca. 152 photographs: b&wPublication status:

published
