

MJ-237

Zess Family fonds. – [textual record, graphic material]. – [186-?]-1979. – 7.00 cm textual records. – 16 b&w photographs.

Boxes H-135, V-323

Biographical history

Alexander Grant Zess was born in Wellington County, Province of Canada on May 3, 1853. Alexander married Christina Dalgarno in London, Ontario on December 1875. Christina Webster Dalgarno was born on December 13, 1857 in Arthur, Province of Canada.

They moved to Detroit and had their first son Robert Theodore on November 25, 1876. Their second son Alexander Grant was born on February 13, 1879 in Arthur, Ontario. The family returned to Detroit where Alexander Grant Zess worked as a teamster, and then as a labourer, teamster, and a merchant of beer and ice after their third son, John Andrew, was born on August 9, 1881. The couple had a daughter, Florence May, on May 21, 1884, and sons Elgin Gordon on June 25, 1886, and Bruce Irvin on August 20, 1889. After having their last Detroit born child, the family returned to Canada for good.

The Zess family moved west to the Moose Jaw area in 1890 to join Christina's brother Andrew Dalgarno who had begun farming in the area after working for the CPR. The family first lived with Andrew Dalgarno, afterwards renting the Dalgarno farm, and eventually farming on land northeast of Moose Jaw.

It was around this time that Alexander Grant Zess spent approximately \$5000 to develop and patent a cultivator for farming. The first 100 units were delivered in the Summer of 1898 and were mostly sold out. After some improvements, Zess sold the rights to his patent to Henry Kern and William Crosgrove in 1899.

The family then moved into Moose Jaw, living at 110 Fairford Street East. They again moved to 822 - 5 Avenue N.W., the house where Alexander Grant Zess would live out the rest of his days, some time later. Alexander Grant Zess first appears in the Henderson's Directories in 1906 as having a meat market at 31 Main Street. He was to become a successful and well-known cattle and horse buyer, and also became involved in sheep ranching south of Assiniboia.

The couple had their last three children, William Garfield on January 24, 1893, Christopher Calder on August 22, 1895, and Wilfred Webster on September 19, 1899.

Alexander Grant Zess died at his home in Moose Jaw on May 30, 1937, the couple having celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary less than two years prior. Christina Zess died in Cranbrook, British Columbia on November 30, 1943.

Scope and content

This fonds contains the bible of the Zess family. Within the bible are pages of birth, marriage, and death records as well as photographs of select family members.

Conservation note

This fonds was wrapped in mylar and boxed in 2017. Interleaving sheets were also added to photograph pages in 2017.

Note of immediate source of acquisition

This material was donated to the archives as accession 65.2017 by Shirley Tort in 1998.

Accruals

No further accruals expected.

Finding aids

See file list.

File List

Box H-137

001 – Zess Family Bible – 1875-1979. – 7.00 cm of textual records. – 15 b&w photographs.

Box V-323

002 – Zess Family Bible Photograph and Negatives– [186-?]-[193-?]. – 1 b&w photograph, 7 negatives.

003 – Ruby Dalgarno Letter– [187-?]. – 2 p. of textual records.