

A 127

**Benjamin Cowan Fond**

Originals and Photocopies, 166 cm, 1926-1999

**Scope and Content:**

A collection of documents covering the life of Benjamin Cowan. Many documents are technical and engineering-related and pertain to his education and some of the companies he invested in. Others cover his personal life and family history.

**A 127/1/1:** Family History, 1cm, 1988-1989

The recollections of the surviving children of Jacob Cowan (1876-1941) and both his first and second wife, Hannah Levenstein and Rose Levenstein, covering both what they knew of their families and their own lives. Includes a loose summary sheet.

**A 127/2/1-7:** Awards, 7.5cm, one tape cassette, one oversized folder, 1932-1992

An honorary degree from Lakehead University, a number of forms and correspondence between B. Cowan and Lakehead, a scholarship in his name from the University of Toronto and a congratulations for 40 years as an alumni, recognition from the American Society of Engineers, Association of Consulting Engineers of Canada, Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario, and Jewish Medical Hospital (Montreal). Includes two pins, correspondence, and a number of certificates. One folder is oversized due to large certificates. Also a speech given to the Canadian Teacher's College in 1981. Contains a recording, brochure, and cassette recording

**A 127/3/1-18:** Employment, 15.5 cm, 1935-1940, 1946-1996

Documents covering B. Cowan's time working in forestry during the 1930s and related topics, as well as a few hand-drawn maps. Ben Cowan's notes discussing events of various meetings and a number of small booklets containing a range of notes on day-to-day events involved in Cowan's business efforts. Journals cover dates as follows: 1946-1947, 1947-1948, 1948-1951, 1951-1953, 1952-1959, 1954-1957, 1959-1962, 1963-1964, 1965-1969, 1969-1973, 1974-1980, 1981-1986, 1986-1990, 1987, 1990-1996.

**A 127/4/1-11:** Schooling, 30cm, and oversized folder for degrees, 1926-1933

Various documents covering B. Cowan's time at school, mostly dominated by University notes, but also report cards, certificates, theses and other relevant documents. The theses are in A 127/4/1, while A 127/4/2 covers research and experiments into flow and friction (which is related to one of the theses). The nine booklets cover notes on various subjects and are placed in alphabetical order where possible.

**A 127/5/1-2:** Miscellaneous Personal material, 3 cm, 1937-1994

Various documents, ranging from technical drawing and hand-drawn maps to correspondence and poetry, as well as a notebook on the engineering aspects of the pulp and paper industry (late 1930s).

**A 127/6/1-14:** Angel Investing, 16.5 cm, and a VHS cassette, 1967-1998

Covers B. Cowan's investment into a number of companies as listed below:

6/1-3: Quantum Technology – chlorine free paper milling and related technologies (soon eclipsed by cleaner tech) (1983-1998, 3cm and a VHS cassette), B. Cowan served on board of directors of this company.

6/4-5: Ergoform Inc.: Star Trek Chair (1989-1992, 4cm) – commissioned some designs for CKE, see 127/7.

6/6-7: Fleming systems - Project Management Information Systems (1983-1997, 5cm)

6/8: Armont Industrial Washer (1986-1991, 1cm)

6/9: Alpine Motor Inn (1985, < 1cm) –it is unclear if B. Cowan actually invested in this company.

6/10: Tyre Disposal System (1990, <1cm) –it is unclear if B. Cowan and Marek Kmicikiewicz invested or not.

6/11: Bovinex Farms (1967-1976, <1cm) a Quebec firm that dissolved in 1990.

6/12: Siedl Dry Kiln (1979-1986, <1cm) for treatment of low quality wood to improve usefulness

6/13: E. Williams/652052 Eastern and Northern Ontario, investment company (1986-1998, 2cm)

6/14: Correspondence related to investing. Letters to or from Sam Shaffer or Fred D. Iannazzi. (1984-1985, <1cm)

**A 127/7/1-4:** CK Engineering (CKE), 10 cm, 1986-1998

Partnership with Marek Kmicikiewicz. Mostly concentrating on M. Kmicikiewicz's automotive design plan, but also contains work on an ergonomic chair design for Ergoform. 7/1 contains information about work with Ergoform, while other folders focus on the car design. Also includes patent information.

**A 127/8/1-71:** Gold Mining and Milling, 56.5 cm, and an oversized folder, 1960s-1990s

Documents pertaining to Ben Cowan's mining efforts. In most cases Cowan financed while his brothers, nephews, or associates engaged in actual prospecting.

Northern Concentrate (Nor Con): A range of documents covering the construction of their gold mill, taxes involved, the Crooked Green Creek gold mine, other land claims they held, and small miners they had contracts with for milling. Also contains correspondence and newspaper clippings. Strongly tied to M & B Exploration, some Nor Con documents may be found in M & B Exploration folders (Crooked Green Creek is split between the two). 11-18 represent a number of contracts made with local miners. 19-24 cover Nor Con's Crooked Green Creek records. 27-45 cover annual financial reports from 1979-1998. (excluding 1995). (1979-1998, 35cm, 1-44)

M & B Exploration: A company closely tied to Nor Con, some relevant documents may also be found in Nor Con's folders. M & B was B. Cowan's partnership with Michael F. Cowan. A 127/8/46 is an oversized folder containing prospecting maps. 56-65 cover the financial statements of 1989-1999. (1972-1999, 13cm, 45-64)

CCS Mine Finders: B. Cowan, Sol Cowan, and Louis Shaheen's company. Includes a newspaper clipping, schedules, claim ownership documents, and company ownership information (1982-1984, <1cm, 65)

SC Exploration: B. Cowan and Louis Shaheen's partnership. (1984-1989, <1cm, 66)

Algoma Development: B. Cowan's first mining effort, which eventually ended in the creation of Nor Con. Some documents related to final dissolution can be found among the Nor Con documents discussing foundation of Nor Con. (1964-1979, 3.5cm, 67-68)

Louis Shaheen: Various documents, mostly written by Louis Shaheen (a business associate of Ben Cowan). Worked on Nor Con's various projects as well as CCS and SC prospecting companies. (1980-1989, 4cm, 69-70)

Société de placements dans l'entreprise: One document, no revenues or expenses. (Possibly not mining related, but was found amongst mining and prospecting records.) (1997-1998, >1cm, 71)

**A 127/9/1-22:** Second World War. 7cm, 1 oversized folder, and 14 booklets 1940-1945

1) Ben Cowan's officer's commission and two certificates for being mentioned in despatches for distinguished service. (Oversized)

2-3) Cowan's numerous designs of inventions sent to the Ministry of War. None were accepted, though similar designs were used soon after in some cases. Most designs were from before he enlisted. These designs include things such as sights for bombers and vehicle track modifications. (2cm)

4) Ben Cowan's efforts to enlist in the military. Having held a position in what was considered an essential war industry and being of a small build, B. Cowan had difficulty enlisting. (<1cm)

5-6) Ben Cowan's war memoir. Written many years later. (4cm)

7-21) War Diaries, notebooks, and discharge wallet. Diaries are first and placed in order of first entry (overlap is common and in at least one case the booklet seems to only have a few unique days).

22) Miscellaneous documents. Some very difficult to read. Some in German. (1cm)

**A 127/10/1-6:** Professorships, 16cm, 1946-1951, 1974, 1991-1995

Ben Cowan served as an instructor for the Abitibi Paper Mills engineer training program in 1947 along with his brother Eli. Late in the 1970s, B. Cowan began a second teaching position. Includes a bachelor's thesis from one of his students (Adam Cunningham).

### **Biography:**

Born in Fort William during May of 1911, Ben Cowan was the eldest son of Jacob Cowan's second marriage, and sixth of nine children between both marriages. The Cowans were early members of Thunder Bay's Jewish Community, their father an immigrant from Odessa and their mother's sisters from England. He attended school in Port Arthur before going to the University of Toronto, gaining a BSc in 1932 and a MSc in 1933. He worked in the pulp and paper industry from 1927-1942. From 1942 until just after the end of the war he served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Medium Artillery Regiment as a Lieutenant. Following the war Benjamin Cowan and Eli Cowan founded the E & B Cowan, an engineering consulting firm for the pulp and paper industry. The firm grew to an international scope and was the source of many innovative improvements to pulp processing. After a long career in engineering, Ben Cowan died in Thunder Bay, 25 February 2000.

### **Associated Material:**

\_\_ Artifacts

\_\_ Photographs

\_\_ Land use guides for a number of Northern Ontario Municipalities

See also: B 50 - E & B Cowan fonds

Box 1, 2, & 3 accurate enough (box 1 had a thing or two that might not have been mentioned). Box 4 contents include what box 5 claims to hold and vice versa.

Box 2 Notes:

Academic Records envelope empty

University report cards in handwritten and typed

Upper and Middle School the same month? (June 1928) – how different were schools then?

Brown notebooks in poor condition

Slide rules and whatnot = artifacts

Thesis – probably going to be popular

-fluid flow notes & thesis (33) (fluid physics is tricky)

-aircraft stability (31)

Box 5 Notes:

Some mid 90s

Tax info, northern concentrators

Correspondence, maps (geological ones and plain)

Looks like someone's thesis on Archean (early Precambrian) volcanism

(it's all hard rock geo)

Claim transfers to Northern Concentrators->Sol Cowan's forms, & Michael Cowan

Stamp thing – artifact1

Aerial photography with stratigraphic overlay & some form of false colour data representation

Municipal land use regulations

Box 4 Notes:

Fairly well described by Box 5 itemisation

Plaques

I'm not engineer, but some of the blueprints in the Ergoform Chair bit don't seem to be for chairs (w/ automotive shop logos and things)

Lots of duplicates in some of these

Financial statements

En Route Magazine –one small advert

VHS

Minutes

Photographs (large frames)

Correspondence

Something he did not invest in – not for this collection?

President of CKE –very involved

Fleming Systems – PMIS – lots of accounting info, communications (some internal)

^also brochures, booklets, and things for investors

Alpine Motor Inn –not sure if he actually invested

Lost 230k on cattle-info about the bankruptcy of Bovinex Farms

Some letters to and from Fred D. Iannazzi (unfortunate last name) –investment broker (or something like that)

Armstrong washers –did not see anything addressed to Cowan personally

Box 1:

Certificates – BSc, MSc, Engineering Association Certificates

Photos

Newspaper (magazine?) article

Several CVs, not sure if different enough (some are en français)

Poetry & philosophical ideas (also a quote from Aldous Huxley)

Pin/button for loyal service from Lavalin

Correspondence

Part of an article about St. Joe Paper Co.

University Club Montreal brochure(did not see Cowan's name)

Quick notes on a few things (incl. balancing the Tower of Pisa)

Empty envelope from US senate (maybe?) & a map

Autobiographies from the Cowan siblings

Maps

Photo album (pages on verge of falling out)

History of white pines and a publication about Maragog –maybe not to keep?

Designs and calculations & work journals

Pins/Buttons for 50 & 25 years with engineering societies

^related letters, certificates, and order forms

Recognition of donations to Montreal Jewish Hospital

Tape recording of a speech, and script + event brochure

E&B Cowan board meetings

Lakehead University Alumni Certificates & Booklet + hat cover or scarf or something & honorary degree

+cassette tape about it

Toronto Cowan Scholarship

Box 3:

Technical design diagram.

News clippings about northern concentrate – milled other peoples gold

^also some clippings on gold mines (mostly)

Geological reports+ maps

Notes and correspondence from Louis Shaheen (some letters are to Cowan, not sure if the rest is to be kept)

-information on Pipher Township/Crooked Creek –maps

-a business card

Photos

Take One cards on a photocopy of an article found elsewhere

Claim maps

Some correspondence

Shaheen notes on how mill worked, some correspondence

Account publications and assorted documents by other companies

Government documents –lots, not sure if any are relevant

Norcon letters - do not see Cowan anywhere

Some folders with info about/by others (doesn't seem relevant)

Info on Noranda – not sure if relevant

Empress – more in depth than Noranda, has a letter to Cowan, maybe just keep the letter?

Watson lake – prospecting notes, seems less that necessary to collection

Mine finder prospecting

Newspaper clippings, government forms, and other documents about a Cowan owned property

Michael Cowan and Ed Williams mining info, list of claims owned by M. Cowan

Geology reports for Ben Cowan lands

Various assays

Diamond drilling histories for 'Cowan Properties'

Artifact of some sort

Northern Concentrate financial information (taxes, leases, etc.)

Northern concentrate milling agreements with other miners

Possibly employee information, not totally sure

Invoices

People who interacted with Williams –their finances

More northern concentrate finances, work agreements, and the like

Some press clippings

Audit/review of parklane mines and technology accounts and legality

WWII:

Box 1:

Several photograph, letter to thank for enlisting

Medals = artifacts –also a metal thing, possibly for spacing medals +instructions on displaying medals

Plaques and letters for being mentioned in 2 dispatches

Pins in a large plastic case (with mysterious orange powder...)

Discharge wallet with information on service period

CD of photo album & physical album

Some letters

Handwritten notes from time in army +map of Britain and central Europe –some drawings (technical?)

->variable condition

War memoirs written later (labelled as diaries)

Correspondence concern enlistment -> underweight and wanted for industry not front

^list attached seems to be missing some letters present and refer to some letters not present

Invention ideas for war effort and ministry response – all were rejected

Various publications for soldier's consumption

Documents in German, ex/ surrender passes, a German instruction pamphlet on grenade launcher, and other documents, some newspapers included are in English  
Post war behaviour regulations

Box 2: A suitcase. Was locked. Empty except for keys (how did they get in there?) and a list of items. Hopefully items listed are not missing.

Box 3: Artifacts (uniform and things)

'Box' 4:

Maps – Italy (a few types, mostly 1:50k scale). Larger 1:100k and smaller 1:50K maps of the Netherlands as well.

1:200k maps, Italy (most, perhaps all, of Italy covered)