

**Title Proper:** John Bertram Fonds

**Date(s) of Creation:** 1849 – 1905, 1936

**Physical Extent:** 0.1 m textual records

**Biographical Sketch:**

John Bertram, also known as John Bartram, was born September 13, 1829 in the parish of Eddleston, Peeblesshire, Scotland to Alexander Bartram [Bertram] and Margaret Aimers. John married Elizabeth Bennet on May 7, 1852 in the parish of Stow, County of Edinburgh. Together they had six children; Alexander born February 18, 1853 in Dundas, Ontario; Henry born January 19, 1856 in Dundas; George born December 28, 1858 in the Township of Oxford, Kent County, Ontario; Jessie born March 22, 1861 in Township of Oxford, Kent County; Thomas Aimers born January 16, 1864 in Dundas, Ontario; and James Bennet born on May 22, 1868. Elizabeth Bennet died March 2, 1904 and John Bertram died April 4, 1906. They are both buried in the Bertram family plot in Grove Cemetery in Dundas, Ontario.

John Bertram was born in Peeblesshire and spent his childhood at his family's home there. After finishing his schooling, John moved to Galashiels, in the County of Selkirkshire to work as an apprentice. A month after they were married in 1852, John and Elizabeth Bertram sailed for Canada. They arrived in Montreal in July but the city was devastated by fire so they continued on to Toronto then to Dundas on a suggestion for employment. Elizabeth established a home in Dundas for a short time before the factory in which John worked had to layoff workers. After losing his job, John Bertram moved his family to a hundred acre bush farm in Kent County along with Elizabeth's brother James Bennet. In Kent County, John built a log house for his family and lived there with his family for five years until 1862, when the iron business had picked up again, allowing John to move back to Dundas to work as an engineer. John's work in Dundas prospered and he was able to construct a mansion, called Glenholme, for his family overlooking the Bertram Works. John Bertram lived in Glenholme until his death in 1906.

John Bertram attended the Parochial school at Eddlestone and afterwards took up an apprenticeship at Galashiels, where he learned the trade of a machinist with his uncle, Thomas Aimers. John Bertram was also an avid reader which allowed him to become a leading mechanical engineer despite his only obtaining a lower school education.

It is with his apprenticeship in the machinist shops at Galashiels, John's career as a mechanical engineer was firmly established. This trade seems to have been heavily influenced by his wife's family, who were one of the leading millwright and engineering families in southern Scotland. Following his move from Scotland to Canada, John took a job at the Gartshore Foundry in Dundas. The depression following the Crimean War placed John in a position where he was not able to support his family in Dundas. This prompted his establishment of a bush farm in Kent County, where he worked for five years. When the economy had recovered from the depression, John moved his family back to Dundas and resumed his position at the Gartshore Foundry. During his time at Gartshore Foundry, John met Robert McKechnie, a pattern maker, who wanted to establish his own business. While John continued to work at the foundry Robert and William McDonald established a small pattern and machine shop in 1860. This business continued until 1863 when the partnership was dissolved and John Bertram purchased ownership in the business with Robert McKechnie. They named the new business the Canada Tool Works. The partnership between Robert and John continued until 1866 when Robert retired from the business, leaving John Bertram as the sole owner. John maintained the business as it was until 1886 when his three sons, Henry, Alexander and James, were established as apprentices and he renamed the company John Bertram & Sons. During this period, the shop focused on machine tools for woodwork and the construction of railways and established contracts across Canada and to some extent around the world. The company continued in this fashion until 1901 when it was given a Royal license to operate under the name of The John Bertram & Sons Company (Limited). In 1905, with the assistance of his sons, John Bertram entered his company into a merger with the American firms of Niles, Bement, Pond Company and the Pratt & Whitney Company.

With his company firmly established, John Bertram began to find time to engage in other pursuits. In 1865 and 1866, he was elected to the Committee of Management of the St. Andrew Society. He was also a public school trustee in 1865, 1868, and 1879. John also became president of the Mechanics Institute in 1872 and 1883. John Bertram was also a member of the Dundas town council and was mayor between 1889 and 1890. He was a lifelong Presbyterian and was a trustee of the Knox Church in Dundas. In 1897, he was elected to be the president of the Dundas Public Library and was seen as an active supporter of public education. He also helped to establish the Canadian Manufacturers Association in 1893 and was one of its first members.

### **Custodial History:**

The custodial history of these records is not clear, they appear to have

been acquired by one of his sons, probably Henry Bertram, and then passed into the hands of H. Graham Bertram before being donated to the Dundas Historical Society Museum.

### **Scope and Content Note:**

The fonds consists primarily of John Bertram's personal correspondence with friends and family along with some of his business legal documents. The correspondence covers the time from his arrival in Dundas to the year of his death with correspondents including: Alexander Bertram [his father], Robert McKechnie, R.S.M. [Burchett], George Aimers, Henry Bertram, Alexander Bertram [son], Aimers Bertram, Stephen John Howit and Robert Bertram. The fonds also contains a series of letters sent to Elizabeth Bennet from her father Henry Bennet. There are numerous cards received by John Bertram during his life in Dundas, these relate to greeting, appreciation, mourning, thanks, and postcards. The business and legal documents consist of various mortgages John Bertram entered into and as part of historical documentation of land purchased by John Bertram. There are also copies of the mortgage documents, and building contracts for the construction of his house known as Glenholme in 1872. The few business records in this fonds relate to patents obtained by John Bertram and his assignment of the power of attorney.

The fonds consists of the following types of documents: indentures of bargain & sale, receipts, indenture of assessment of mortgage, statutory mortgages, discharge of mortgages, hand-drawn maps, deed of land, correspondence, estimates, building contracts, patent receipts, annulment of power of attorney, church magazine, petitions, reports, diploma, cancelled cheques, train tickets, tax assessments, greeting card mourning cards, post cards, and thank you cards.

The series in this fonds have been arranged according to the functions and forms of the documents. All of the series were found to be in no discernable order having resulted from the papers being transferred from a number of different owners. As a result of no clear order, all the series have been arranged in chronological order. Some of the series contain records added by John Bertram's family, primarily his son Henry Bertram, the series include: Series 4 - [Miscellaneous Documents](#) 1849 – 1936 and Series 6 - [Miscellaneous Cards](#) 1887 – 1906.

Fonds consists of the following series:

Series 1 - [Mortgage and Legal Records](#) 1859 - 1905

- Series 2 - [Glenholme Records](#) 1872 - 1901
- Series 3 - [Business Records](#) 1898 - 1899
- Series 4 - [Miscellaneous Records](#) 1849 - 1936
- Series 5 - [Correspondence](#) 1855 - 1904
  - Sub - series 1 - [Alexander Bertram \[Father\]](#) 1855 - 1881
  - Sub - series 2 - [Robert McKechnie](#) 1869 - 1875
  - Sub - series 3 - [R.S.M. \[Burchett\]](#) 1871
  - Sub - series 4 - [George Aimers](#) 1877
  - Sub - series 5 - [Henry Bertram](#) 1877
  - Sub - series 6 - [Stephen John Howit](#) 1880 - 1903
  - Sub - series 6 - [Robert Bertram](#) 1883
  - Sub - series 7 - [To Elizabeth Bennet from Henry Bennet](#) 1885 - 1864
  - Sub - series 8 - [Aimers Bertram](#) 1904
  - Sub - series 9 - [Alexander Bertram \[son\]](#) 1904
  - Sub - series 10 - [Miscellaneous](#) 1869 - 1890
- Series 6 - [Miscellaneous Cards](#) 1887 - 1906

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	1	<p><b>Mortgages and legal documents.</b></p> <p>Includes: Janet Bertram Brown inventory; indenture of bargain &amp; sale between John Gartshore and Isaiah Babington; receipt for work done on Thomas Bain's house; indenture of assignment of mortgage between John McKechnie + John Bertram and John Gartshore; assignment of mortgage between Alexander Gartshore and John McKechnie; indenture of assignment of mortgage between John Babington and Alexander Gartshore; statutory mortgage John Bertram et al. to Mrs. M. A. Pirie; indenture of mortgage between John Bertram and Thomas B. Townsend; assignment of mortgage T.B. Townsend to Bank of Hamilton; discharge of mortgage The Bank of Hamilton to John Bertram.</p>	1859-1905
1	2	<p><b>Glenholme Documents.</b></p> <p>Includes: Janet Bertram Brown inventory; hand drawn map of lot; plan of town and park lots at Dundas; land register; deed of land E.B. Parker to Bertram; letter from E.B. Parker; note from bank of Hamilton; letter from E.B. Parker; mortgage E.B. Parker to John Lesslie; letter from Canada Life Assurance Company –confirming the age of John Bertram; note by John Bertram; cancelled cheques; letter from George M. Montgomery; estimates of building costs; building contract between John Bertram and W.M. [Miter]; building contract between John Bertram and George M. Montgomery; building contract between John Bertram and Horatio Palmer and [Thomas] Hickey; deed John Bertram to Elizabeth Bertram.</p>	1872-1901
1	3	<p><b>Business Records.</b></p> <p>Includes: patent receipt; annulment of power of attorney.</p>	1898-1899

1	4	<p><b>Miscellaneous Documents.</b></p> <p>Includes: juvenile missionary magazine of the United Presbyterian Church; petition for John Bertram to run for mayor of Dundas; report from John Bertram while he was at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London; Henry Bertram note about m John Bertram at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition; Canadian Machinery – the Late John Bertram; vellum diploma of acceptance into the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Canada; list of shop staff; cancelled cheques; Edinburgh Tramway ticket; receipt for payment to the Grand Lodge; receipt of payment to the Dundas Gas Co.; receipt from Canadian Gas Lighting Co.; tax assessments; receipt from Royal Distillery; Allen Line Royal Mail Steamers; reminder of meeting of the Dundas Club;.</p>	1849-1936
1	5	<b>Correspondence</b> - Alexander Bertram [John Bertram's father].	1855-1881
1	6	<b>Correspondence</b> - Robert McKechnie.	1869-1875
1	7	<b>Correspondence</b> - John Bertram and Robert McKechnie from R.S. M. [Burchett].	1871
1	8	<b>Correspondence</b> - George Aimers.	1877
1	9	<b>Correspondence</b> - Henry Bertram.	1877
1	10	<b>Correspondence</b> - Stephen John Howit.	1880-1903

1	11	<b>Correspondence</b> - Robert Bertram.	1883
1	12	<b>Correspondence</b> - Elizabeth Bennet from Henry Bennet.	1858-1864
1	13	<b>Correspondence</b> - Aimers Bertram.	1904
1	14	<b>Correspondence</b> - Alexander Bertram [son].	1904
1	15	<p><b>Miscellaneous Correspondence.</b></p> <p>Includes: letter from J.K.; letter from Daniel Gartshore; Letter from Isabel Kirkhope; letter from Rob [Kirkhope]; letter to John Bertram, Mayor of Dundas, from M. Boswell, from the office of the Minister of Customs Canada; letter to Elizabeth Bennett from Alexander Bertram; letter from George Kirkhope.</p>	1869-1890
1	16	<p><b>Miscellaneous Cards</b></p> <p>(Mourning, Appreciation, Greeting, Thank you, Postcards); Janet Bertram Brown inventory; letter thanking children for anniversary present; letter to Graham Bertram thanking him for a birthday gift.</p>	1887-1906