

## FONDS DESCRIPTION (MBMS-2)

### Duncan–Hayes family fonds

1859-1955

52 cm of textual records

1 photograph

The son of a farmer, George Duncan was born at Chester in 1827. In 1861, he purchased a Mahone Bay property (now 6 Edgewater Street) from Casper and Sarah Joudrey, who had inherited the land from the blacksmith John Mader. The following year, Duncan married Lucy Catherine Hayes, who was born at Lunenburg in 1837. Not long after, Duncan built a store and residence on the lot that he had acquired from the Joudreys. (This building still stands and now houses “The Teazer,” a well-known gift shop.) Over the course of the next few years, Duncan emerged as a prominent Mahone Bay merchant. In addition to running a general store, he was involved in the West Indies trade and served, for a time, as the town postmaster. George and Lucy Duncan had three children: Jane Dorothea “Dora” (born in 1865), Edith Helen (born in 1867), and John Henry (born in 1869). Following George’s death in 1871, Lucy Duncan remained active in the town as a business woman, acquiring rental properties and loaning money. Although the family retained possession of the former store property in Mahone Bay, they lived for many years in Blockhouse. Lucy’s brother, John Hayes, a Nova Scotian who had served in the United States Navy during the American Civil War, also lived with the family for several years. After Lucy Duncan’s death in 1915, her son, John, and her daughter Dora, lived on in the family home. John, who worked for many years as a postal clerk, died in 1951. His sister Dora died in 1959. The following year, the George Duncan property, held by the family for nearly one hundred years, was sold by Dora Duncan’s estate to the Merchant family.

Fonds consists of correspondence, diaries, notes, an autograph book, indentures, invoices, financial statements, business records certificates, grey literature, ephemera, memorabilia, and a photograph documenting the activities of both George and Lucy Hayes Duncan, as well as their three children and Lucy’s brother John Hayes. The fonds has been arranged in six series: George Duncan Records, Lucy Catherine (Hayes) Duncan Records, John Hayes Records, Edith Helen Duncan Records, Jane Dorothea “Dora” Duncan Records, and John Henry Duncan Records.

Following Lucy Duncan’s death in 1915, responsibility for the records of both George and Lucy Duncan apparently passed to their son John, as did the surviving records of his uncle John Hayes, who died in 1917. After John Duncan’s death in 1951, these records were held by Dora Duncan, together with her own personal records and those of her sister, Edith. The custody of the family’s records following Dora Duncan’s death in 1959 remains largely undocumented; however, the bulk of the records were apparently donated to the Mahone Bay Museum by Lois (Merchant) Smith in the mid-1990s. Additional records were donated by Charlotte McGill of Kingsburg in 1997. An accrual, comprising previously misidentified day books (1859-71) and a ledger (1870-71), was

added to the fonds in 2021. Another small accrual was found in the Museum's backlog and processed in 2024.

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **George Duncan Records**

1865-1871

21 cm of textual records

George Duncan was born at Chester in 1827. In 1862, he married Lucy Catherine Hayes. The couple had three children. During the ten years prior to his death, Duncan emerged as a prominent Mahone Bay merchant, running a general store, engaging in the West Indies trade, and serving as the town's postmaster. Duncan died of consumption at Mahone Bay in 1871

Series consists of correspondence, legal documents, invoices, receipts, and financial records documenting Duncan's activities as a general merchant, his role as the administrator of the estate of Jane Hayes, and his involvement with two Mahone Bay vessels engaged in the West Indies trade: the brigantine *Argo* (master Joseph Creighton), built by Joseph C. Morgan in 1864, and the schooner *Hector* (master Tilly W. Spearwater), built by Elkanah Zwicker in 1866.

### **Lucy Catherine (Hayes) Duncan Records**

1871-1915

3.5 cm of textual records

Lucy Catherine Hayes was born at Lunenburg in 1837. In 1862, she married George Duncan. The couple lived in Mahone Bay in a property on Edgewater Street that served as both a home and a general store. While George launched a successful business career, Lucy raised the couple's three young children, all born between 1865 and 1869. In 1871, following the death of her husband, Lucy Duncan took charge of the family finances and began to acquire real estate, earning income through property rentals and other sources. She died at Mahone Bay in 1915.

Series consists of correspondence, legal documents, receipts, invoices, statements, and indentures, pertaining primarily to Lucy Duncan's personal finances and her activities as a property owner in Mahone Bay and elsewhere in Lunenburg County. The series also includes some personal correspondence with family and friends as well as documents relating to Lucy Duncan's involvement with the Spearwater family.

### **John Hayes Records**

1895-1915

4.5 cm of textual records

John Hayes was born in Nova Scotia in 1845. In 1864, he joined the US Navy, reporting to the receiving ship USS *Vermont*. He was then assigned to the gunboat USS *Nyack*, which saw service as part of the blockading squadron stationed off the coast of Wilmington, North Carolina, participating in the assault on Fort Fisher in December 1864 and the capture of Fort Anderson in February 1865. After the Civil War, Hayes remained with the vessel, which was ordered to the Pacific coast of Latin America in 1866. Following the end of his naval service in 1868, Hayes eventually returned to Nova Scotia, later living in East Chester in a home that he and his brother, Edward, rented from their sister, Lucy Duncan. Later, he lived with his sister and her family in Blockhouse. Hayes subsequently moved to Prince Edward Island for a time, but returned to Nova Scotia by 1897, moving to Mahone Bay, where he apparently lived until his death in 1917.

Series consists of correspondence, legal documents, receipts, and invoices. Most of the records relate to Hayes's efforts, in the late 1890s, to obtain a Civil War pension. These latter records include correspondence with both the US Bureau of Pensions and several Washington-based lawyers, as well as correspondence and affidavits required to document both his naval service and his medical conditions.

### **Jane Dorothea "Dora" Duncan Records**

1879-1955

3 cm of textual records

1 photograph

Jane Dorothea Duncan (known as "Dora"), the eldest child of George and Lucy (Hayes) Duncan, was born at Mahone Bay in 1865, spending her early years living in the family home and store on Edgewater Street. From about 1881 to 1884, Dora attended the Convent of the Sacred Heart School in Halifax. Returning to Mahone Bay, she lived for many years in Blockhouse with her mother, siblings, and her uncle John Hayes. Following her mother's death in 1915, Dora Duncan apparently lived with her brother John in one of the family's Mahone Bay properties. She died at Mahone Bay in 1959.

Series consists of correspondence, an autograph book, a baptism certificate, memorabilia, ephemera, and a photograph documenting Dora Duncan's time at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Halifax in the 1880s, as well as her later contact with Hayes family members who had left Nova Scotia. The correspondence also includes several letters from a nephew who served with the West Nova Scotia Regiment during the Second World War.

## **Edith Helen Duncan Records**

1870-1887

5 cm of textual records

Edith Helen Duncan, the second child of George and Lucy (Hayes) Duncan, was born at Mahone Bay in 1867, spending her earliest years living in the family home and store on Edgewater Street. Following her father's death in 1871, she eventually lived for many years in Blockhouse with her mother, siblings, and an uncle, John Hayes. There is some evidence that Edith Duncan was sickly as a child; however, little is known of her later life, beyond the fact that she was living in Blockhouse as late as 1891.

Series consists of correspondence, a diary, notes, and sewing patterns, all of which document the teenage years of a young woman from a prosperous Mahone Bay family, including her social life, her educational studies, and her pursuit of the domestic arts. Her diary, which covers part of the 1886-87 period, is written on the blank portion of pages removed from an 1870-72 ledger, probably originating from George Duncan's general store.

## **John Henry Duncan Records**

1892-1949

4 cm of textual records

John Henry Duncan, the third child of George and Lucy (Hayes) Duncan, was born at Mahone Bay in 1869, spending his earliest years living in the family home and store on Edgewater Street. Following his father's death in 1871, he eventually lived for many years in Blockhouse with his mother, sisters, and an uncle, John Hayes. Duncan, who served as the executor of his mother's estate in 1915 and that of his uncle John Hayes in 1917, apparently worked for many years as a postal clerk. He was also likely engaged in the management of the Duncan family's property holdings in the Mahone Bay area. He died at Mahone Bay in 1951.

Series consists of correspondence, legal documents, receipts, invoices, and statements relating primarily to the estates of Lucy Hayes Duncan and John Hayes, John Duncan's purchases in the 1890s from merchants based outside Mahone Bay (particularly Halifax), and miscellaneous construction and property maintenance records.