

COLL-013

Godfrey Cowdell Collection

Author of Finding Aid: Crystal Rose

Date of Finding Aid: 2026

Extent: 0.18m

Scope and Content: This collection contains documents, maps, blueprints and photographs of the construction of the canals, dams and hydro-electric works at Deer Lake, Sandy Pond, and Birchy Lakes from 1923 to 1925.

Physical Description: textual material, correspondence, 13 black and white photographs, 67 black and white 6x9" negatives, 1 diagram, 1 map, 3 blueprints

Custodial History:

The collection was donated by Cowdell's son, Richard Cowdell, of Leicestershire, England, in 2026.

Biography or History:

Civil engineer, Godfrey James Longdon Cowdell, was born in 1898 at Stourbridge in the county of Worcestershire. From 1923-1925 Cowdell was hired to work in Newfoundland on the construction of the new dam and paper mill on the West Coast. According to his son, he spent June 1923 to June 1925 on the construction of the 100,000 HP Hydro-Electric Works at Deer Lake for principal contractors, Sir W.G. Armstrong Whitworth, the work being largely sub-contracted, and Sir A. Gibb & Partners, Consultants. During the summers of 1923 and 1924 he was Assistant Engineer working on the construction of the hollow reinforced-concrete "Amberson" main dam, he described as "about 1000 feet long and 80 feet high to crest, with sluice gates and carrying a railway bridge." During the winter of 1923 and spring of 1924 Cowdell worked on the excavation and mass concrete foundations of the power-house, with the draught tubes, and erection of some steel work, and spent two months of the winter "up-country surveying." At the end of summer 1924 (completion of the main dam) he took over the completion of about a 6000 square foot section of the canal, and of an earth dam "from about 30 feet high to crest at about 80 feet high" that was completed in the spring of 1925. From April to June 1925, he designed and erected conveyor structures at the paper mill.

Related: Cowdell's copy of *Ballads of Corner Brook* (1925) is in the Grenfell Library's Special Collection. Richard Cowdell relayed that his father said the author, H.G. Ogden, had been a late Paymaster Lieutenant, Royal Navy on HMS *Implacable*, Northern Patrol in WWI.

Arrangement:

Box #1

- Folder #1 Copy of letter of appointment from Sir W.G. Armstrong Whitworth & Co. Ltd., July 25, 1923
- Folder #2 Photograph of Godfrey Cowdell, 1917
- Folder #3 Booklet *Hydro Electric Power Development in Newfoundland*, reprinted from "Engineering" July 25 1934
- Envelope #4 13 black and white photographs
- Folder #5 Typed note "Racing at Sandy Pond", March 1, 1924
- Folder #6 Humber River Water Power Development Scheme General Plan, September 19, 1922
- Folder #7 Map "Western Part of Newfoundland" showing site of proposed Power House and Paper Mill, n.d.
- Folder #8 Blueprint "Main Dam Junction Brook" drawn by Cowdell, November 24, 1923
- Folder #9 Blueprint "Survey. Traverse Line North Side of Sandy Pond Stream and Sandy Pond. Traverse Line Up Birchy Lakes" plotted and traced by Cowdell, March 12, 1924
- Folder #10 Blueprint "N.P. &P. Progress Plan No 2A. Canal Section & General" September 1, 1923
- Envelope #11 Kodak Negative Album containing 67 black and white 6x9" negatives "Newfoundland and up to June 1925"