

Ryan Brothers, Trinity fonds. - 1892 - 1947. - 3 m textual records

Administrative history

The Ryans of Bonavista created a mercantile empire on the northeast coast of Newfoundland in the second half of the nineteenth century which was comparable in scale with many of the Water Street merchant houses of St. John's.

Michael Ryan came to Bonavista from Ireland about 1830. He married Mary Ellen Fleming and had nine children, including James (b.1842) , Daniel (b.1851) and Edmund (b.1863). James Ryan founded the fishery supply and general trade business at Bonavista in 1857. During the next three decades James, along with brothers Daniel, Edmund, Nicholas, and to lesser degrees Patrick, Michael J. and John, expanded the business into three separate firms with branch operations and barter shops in many communities throughout Bonavista and Trinity Bays and along the coast of Labrador.

James, Daniel and Edmund Ryan started a firm, known as Ryan Brothers, at Trinity in 1906, taking over the old Garland premises formerly occupied by Grieve and Bremner and Robert S. Bremner. The firm was managed by Edmund Ryan. The firm supplied Trinity Bay and Conception Bay schooners involved in the Labrador trade. The firm also operated its own Labrador schooners out of Trinity and supplied fishermen engaged in the local shore fishery. James was the owner of Ryan Brothers, though public perception was that Edmund was the proprietor. When the firm was incorporated in 1936, Mrs. Katherine Ryan (James' widow) held fifty percent of the shares, compared to roughly 16 percent each for Edmund, Walter N. White and Fred Ottenheimer (Daniel's son-in-law). James' sons, Herbert and James, acquired their mother's fifty percent share of the business after she died in 1945. By the time of Edmund's death in 1949, the firm had all but exited the salt fish trade. Ryan Brothers at Trinity continued primarily as a retail business under the management of Walter N. White, a long time employee and nephew of the Ryan brothers until its closure in 1952.

Source: Administrative History taken from the Guide to the Mercantile Records held at the Maritime History Archive, MUN

Custodial history

The majority of the records were salvaged from the Ryan premises by Walter G. C. White in the 1960s and held at the Trinity Museum and at the house of S. Rupert Morris.

Scope and content

The fonds consists mainly of the financial records for the firm of Ryan Brothers of Trinity from the time the firm was established in 1906 to the end of the 1940s. Records include ledgers, which give individual accounts; day books, which record daily purchases and prices; store books, which provide details of the Ryan wholesale trade; inventory books; fish collections relating to the Labrador trade at Hawke Harbour; a statement of the firm's liabilities and assets, 1948; code book, and logbooks of schooners. For much of the period of the firm's operation at Trinity, business was carried out through the barter or truck system. The exchange of goods for services, fish or produce is recorded in the ledgers. Also included are three volumes from an earlier period: debt ledger for 1892 - 1893, share man's wages, 1904 - 1905, diary 1905. It is possible that these volumes originated with James

Ryan & Company, King's Cove or Bonavista.

The fonds are arranged in five series: Series 1: Financial records, 1906 - 1947; Series 2: Correspondence, 1921 - 1948; Series 3: Labrador trade, 1908 - 1909; Series 4: Predecessor records, 1892 - 1905; Series 5: Logbooks of Schooners 1906 - 1922.

Notes

Supplied title based on provenance.

Material transferred to the archives by Walter G. C. White, founding member and corresponding secretary of the Trinity Historical Society.

Garland Bailey, of Old Bonaventure donated 6 volumes, including 3 ledgers, a petty ledger, a cash book and day book in 1999.

Alma Ottenheimer in October 2000 donated the following: code book; receipt book bearing the name "Guide"; Official log book of schooner "Virginia" - 1906; Schooner "Richard Greaves" account book - 1907; Log book of schooner "Virginia" - 1907; Log book of schooner "Virginia" - 1908; Log book of schooner "Virginia" - 1910; Log book of schooner "R.J. Owens" - 1916; Log book of schooner "R.J. Owens" - 1917; Log book of the British schooner "Elizabeth Pritchard" - 1917; Schooner "Margurete Ryan" guide book - 1917; Agreement and account of crew "Margurete Ryan" - 1921; Official log book of Schooner "Margurete Ryan" - 1922;

Curtis Coles of Gander in April 2001 donated a diary, 1905 and an account book, 1908.

Series 1: Financial records. - 1906 - 1947. - 2.95 m

The series consists of all the bound volumes containing the financial records of Ryan Brothers Trinity. The series are quite complete and include, ledgers, 1906 -1947, (14 volumes); petty ledgers, 1908 - 1943 (6 volumes); day books, 1907 -1943 (19 volumes); journals, 1910 - 1936 (3 volumes); duty book, 1908 - 1911; store cash books, 1909 - 1940 (4 volumes); stock books, 1914 – 1917 (2 volumes); accounting books, 1909 - 1917 (2 volumes); landing book, 1911 - 1916; inventory book, 1912 - 1919; labour book, 1918 - 1928; charter book, 1907 - 1920; ordering book, 1940; cash books, 1908 - 1945 (5 volumes); invoices and a code book.

The volumes are arranged in sub-series according to form and function.

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|------------|------|----------------------------|
| Sub-series | 1.01 | Ledgers and Ledger Indexes |
| | 1.02 | Petty Ledgers |
| | 1.03 | Day Books |
| | 1.04 | Journals |
| | 1.05 | Duty Books |
| | 1.06 | Store Cash Books |
| | 1.07 | Stock Books |
| | 1.08 | Accounting Books |
| | 1.09 | Landing Book |
| | 1.10 | Inventory Book |
| | 1.11 | Labour Book |

- 1.12 Charter Book
- 1.13 Order Book
- 1.14 Cash Book
- 1.15 Invoices
- 1.16 Code Book

Location: Shelved in chronological order according to form and function.

1.01 Ledgers and Ledger Indexes. - 1906 - 1947. - 67 cm (14 volumes)

Sub-series consists predominately of ledgers which records summaries of accounts with customers, and an overview of the scale of the firms' operation. An alphabetical list of names exist for some of the ledgers while others have a separate index.

- 1.01.001 Ledger, 1906
- 1.01.002 Ledger, 1907
- 1.01.003 Ledger, 1909
- 1.01.004 Ledger, 1910
- 1.01.005 Ledger Index, 1910
- 1.01.006 Ledger, 1911
- 1.01.007 Ledger, 1913
- 1.01.008 Hawke's Harbour Ledger, 1915
- 1.01.009 Ledger, 1929
- 1.01.010 Batteau Ledger, 1931
- 1.01.011 Ledger, 1935
- 1.01.012 Ledger, 1937
- 1.01.013 Ledger, 1944
- 1.01.014 Ledger, 1947

1.02 Petty Ledgers. - 1908 - 1943. - 16 cm (6 volumes)

Contains an individual account of persons who did business with Ryan Brothers. Similar to the ledger.

- 1.02.001 Petty Ledger, 1907
- 1.02.002 Batteau Petty Ledger, 1908
- 1.02.003 Petty Ledger, 1915 - 1917
- 1.02.004 Petty Ledger, 1922 - 1923
- 1.02.005 Petty Ledger, 1937 - 1938
- 1.02.006 Petty Ledger, 1941 - 1943

1.03 Day Books. - 1907 - 1943. - 44 cm (19 volumes)

A record of sales at the store, providing name, what was purchased and the cost.

- 1.03.001 Day book, 1907 - 1908
- 1.03.002 Day book, 1909
- 1.03.003 Day book, 1911 - 1912
- 1.03.004 Day book, 1913 - 1915
- 1.03.005 Day book, 1913 - 1915
- 1.03.006 Day book, 1917 - 1919
- 1.03.007 Day book, 1918 - 1919
- 1.03.008 Day book, 1920
- 1.03.009 Day book, 1924 - 1925
- 1.03.010 Day book, 1925
- 1.03.011 Day book, 1928
- 1.03.012 Day book, 1932
- 1.03.013 Day book, 1932 - 1933
- 1.03.014 Day book, 1932 - 1934
- 1.03.015 Day book, 1935
- 1.03.016 Day book, 1936 - 1937
- 1.03.017 Day book, 1939 - 1940
- 1.03.018 Day book, 1942 - 1943
- 1.03.019 Day book (no dates provided)

1.04 Journals. - 1910, 1914, 1936. - 14 cm (3 volumes)

The journal contains the general accounts of individuals who were customers at the business. The entries are posted from the day books and cross-referenced to the ledgers.

- 1.04.001 Journal, 1910
- 1.04.002 Journal, 1914
- 1.04.003 Journal, 1936

1.05 Duty Book. - 1908 - 1911. - 1 cm

A list of supplies that were purchased at the store for various vessels.

1.06 Store/Cash Book. - 1909 - 1912, 1930 - 1940. - 12 cm (4 volumes)

Details of the daily wholesale trade, profits are brought forward each day.

- 1.06.001 Store/Cash book, 1909 - 1911
- 1.06.002 Store/Cash book, 1912

1.06.003 Store/Cash book, 1930 - 1931
1.06.004 Store/Cash book, 1939 - 1940

1.07 Stock Books. - 1914 - 1917. - 2 cm (2 volumes)

Listing of small wares such as pins, buttons, wooden pipes, perfumes, purses, jewellery....., as well as larger items such as furniture, tools and utensils, window glass, paints and varnishes.

1.07.001 Stock Book, 1914 - 1917, Vol. 2
1.07.002 Stock Book, 1914 - 1917, Vol. 4

1.08 Accounting Books. - 1909 - 1917. - 3 cm (2 volumes)

1.08.001 Accounting book, 1909 - 1910
1.08.002 Business and schooner accounts, 1910 - 1917

1.09 Landing book. - 1911 - 1916. - 3 cm

Contains records of what was landed at the premises by each vessel.

1.10 Inventory book. - 1912 - 1919. - 5.5 cm

A listing of the inventory that remained at the Trinity business at the end of each year.

1.11 Labour book. - 1918 - 1929. - 3 cm

A record of the number of days that employees worked and the amount of money that they were paid.

1.12 Charter book. - 1907 - 1920. - 3 cm

This book was originally a produce book for Grieve and Bremner, 1893 - 1894 which was re-used by Ryan Brothers for a charter book. The charter party papers have been glued into the book. The charter party is a contract made between a business firm and a captain to take a shipment to a certain destination.

1.13 Order book. - 1940. - 2.5 cm

Details any order that is placed with another business as well as the costs.

1.14 Cash book. - 1908 - 1945. - 12 cm (5 volumes)

A record of cash collected during each business day and the shopkeeper that collected/counted the money.

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|----------|------------------------|
| 1.14.001 | Cash book, 1908 - 1915 |
| 1.14.002 | Cash book, 1912 - 1915 |
| 1.14.003 | Cash book, 1929 - 1931 |
| 1.14.004 | Cash book, 1942 - 1944 |
| 1.14.005 | Cash book, 1943 - 1945 |

1.15 Invoices. - 1913 - 1940. - 20 cm (3 volumes)

The invoices have been glued into the books which were previously ledgers that belonged to Grieve and Bremner..

| | |
|----------|-----------------------|
| 1.15.001 | Invoices, 1913 |
| 1.15.002 | Invoices, 1915 - 1923 |
| 1.15.003 | Invoices, 1923 - 1940 |

1.16 Code Book.

A code book that was used by employees of Ryan Brothers when sending letters or telegraphs so if they were read by another person they would not be able to interpret it. This copy belonged to Mr. William (Bill) Sullivan who worked at the office in Trinity.

Series 2: Correspondence. - 1921 - 1948. - 0.5 cm

Some pieces of unrelated correspondence, a statement of funds to the Colonial Cordage Co. and a copy of the Statement of Liabilities and Assets for Ryan Brothers, Trinity, Dec 31, 1948.

Location: Mercantile Records Box 8.

Series 3: Labrador trade. - 1908 - 1909. - 2 cm

Two fish collections books for Labrador. One entitled, Codfish collected by schooner from Hawke Harbour dealers, 1908; the second: Labrador receipt book, 1909. The books contain the name of the independent supplier - "skipper" and the amount of fish collected.

Location: Mercantile Records Box 8.

Series 4: Predecessor records. - 1892 - 1905. - 5 cm

Three volumes that probably originated with either James Ryan & Company, King's Cove or James Ryan, Bonavista. A Debt Ledger, 1892 - 1893 lists debts owing to the end of the year. Shareman's Wages, 1904 - 1905 lists shares paid per individual vessel involved in the Labrador fishery, bookkeeper John White. Both include individuals from Bonavista Bay. A diary that gives an account of business and weather for the months of June - August, 1905.

- 4.01.001 Debt Ledger, 1892 - 1893
- 4.01.002 Shareman's Wages, 1904 - 1905
- 4.01.003 Diary, 1905

Location: Shelved in chronological order.

Series 5: Logbooks of Schooners. - 1906 - 1922. -11 cm

This series consists of logbooks of various schooners belonging to Ryan Brothers which give an account of the master, nature of voyage, list of crew, dates of arrival and departure at each port of call and a detailed account of each day at sea. The official logbooks also contain information and guidance for ship masters. The series also contains an account book belonging to the schooner "Richard Greaves", 1907.

- 5.01.001 Receipt book bearing the name "Guide"

This book contains no entries but would have been used to record the amount of codfish that was received from each fishermen.

- 5.01.002 Official logbook of schooner "Virginia", 1906
- 5.01.003 Account book of schooner "Richard Greaves", 1907
- 5.01.004 Statement of General Average of "Richard Greaves", 1907
- 5.01.005 Index of the crew on the schooner "Orleans Adventure", 1907
- 5.01.006 Log book of schooner "Virginia", 1907
- 5.01.007 Log book of schooner "Virginia", 1908
- 5.01.008 Log book of schooner "Virginia", 1910
- 5.01.009 Log book of schooner "RJ Owens", 1916
- 5.01.010 Log book of schooner "RJ Owens", 1917
- 5.01.011 Log book of British schooner "Elizabeth Pritchard", 1917
- 5.01.012 Guide book of schooner "Margurete Ryan", 1917
- 5.01.013 Crew agreement of schooner "Margurete Ryan", 1921
- 5.01.014 Official logbook of schooner "Margurete Ryan", 1922

Location: Mercantile Records Box 9 and shelf.