

Finding Aid - Piers Island "Sons of Freedom" Doukhobor Imprisonment collection (MsC 147)

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Language of description: English

Rules for Archival Description

Piers Island "Sons of Freedom" Doukhobor Imprisonment collection

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Summary information

Repository:

Title: Piers Island "Sons of Freedom" Doukhobor Imprisonment collection

ID: MsC 147

Date: 1932-1934 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1.5 cm of textual records
30 photographs

Language: English

Dates of creation,
revision and
deletion:

Custodial history

The records were saved from destruction in the basement of a North Vancouver home once occupied by H. W. Cooper and were then purchased by Simon Fraser University Library, Special Collections and Rare Books.

Scope and content

The collection offers insight into the imprisonment of the "Sons of Freedom" between 1932 and 1934 at Piers Island Penitentiary. The "Sons of Freedom" Doukhobors began as a small, radical movement to reinvigorate the faith, restore traditional Doukhobor values, and protest the sale of land, education, citizenship and registration of vital statistics. They would achieve infamy through civil disobedience, nude marches, and burnings. In 1932, over 600 Sons of Freedom protestors were convicted of public nudity. As B.C. Penitentiary was unable to handle such a rise in inmate population, a satellite prison under the authority of B.C. Penitentiary was constructed on Piers Island to house these prisoners. The records document how the prison was set up and run and the problems that the federal prison system encountered regarding both staff and prisoners. The correspondence and telegrams shed light on the internal discussions of senior officials concerning the management of the prison and its prisoners.

Fonds consists of correspondence, memoranda, telegrams, and other textual records pertaining to the Piers Island Penitentiary created or accumulated by H. W. Cooper during his career as the warden of B.C. Penitentiaries. The fonds also contains photographs which were all taken at Piers Island. The textual records predominantly consist of letters to and from H. W. Cooper regarding the penitentiary, staff, and prisoners. The records have been

arranged into the following two series: Correspondence and other documents (1932-1934); and Photographs ([between 1932 and 1934]).

Notes

Title notes

- Source of title proper: Title based on contents of the collection.

Immediate source of acquisition

The collection was purchased by Simon Fraser University Library, Special Collections and Rare Books in 2012.

Restrictions on access

No restrictions have been placed on access.

Finding aids

File and item level descriptions are available.

Related material

Additional records pertaining to Piers Island Penitentiary and H. W. Cooper may be found in the Doukhobor collection (MsC 52) held in this institution.

Accruals

Further accruals are not expected.

Other notes

- Publication status: published
- Level of detail: Full
- Status description: Published
- Institution identifier: Simon Fraser University Special Collections and Rare Books

Access points

- Textual record (documentary form)
- Photographic material (documentary form)
- Cultural groups (subject)
- Politics (subject)

Series descriptions

Series 1: Correspondence and other documents

Date: May 1932 - July 1934 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series documents the imprisonment of Sons of Freedom convicts at Piers Island Penitentiary between 1932 and 1934, from its initial stage in search for an island to set up the prison to determining the conditions for release of the prisoners. The records, the majority of which consist of correspondence between senior officials, shed light on the construction and management of the prison, as well as the problems that the federal prison system encountered regarding both personnel and prisoners.

Series consists of textual records including correspondence, telegrams, and memoranda, most of which were written to or by H. W. Cooper. The remainder of the records were created by other authorities, prisoners, and relatives of prisoners. Series also contains a warrant written by J. Cartmel and a chronology written in shorthand by H. W. Cooper. Also included in the series is an empty manila envelope. The records in this series have been arranged into the following three files: 1932; 1933; and 1934.

Physical description: 1.5 cm of textual records

Language of the material:

English

Access points:

- Textual record (documentary form)
- Cultural groups (subject)
- Politics (subject)
- Religions (subject)

Arrangement:

Arrangement has been provided by the archivist.
Series is arranged chronologically.

Finding aids:

File and item level descriptions are available.

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
1	File - [1932]	May 1932 – Oct. 1932		MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1

1	Item - Warrant of commitment upon a conviction adjudging imprisonment in the first instance [from J. Cartmel to all constables and other peace officers of the county of Kootenay and H. C. Cooper re - imprisonment of Mike Woiken]	19 May 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
2	Item - [H. W. Cooper manuscript chronology written in shorthand regarding a search for an island to set up prison]	[Jun. 1932]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
3	Item - [Memo by T. W. Fuller Chief Architect in Sidney] re - temporary penitentiary, B.C. [drawings of dormitories for officers and matrons]	27 Jun. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
4	Item - Property of B.C Penitentiary, Pay / list Doukhobor Penitentiary Piers Island [empty manila envelope]	30 Jun. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
5	Item - [Telegram from H. C. Fatt, Acting Superintendent in Ottawa to H. W. Cooper re - space between compounds and distance between buildings]	4 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
6	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to J. P. Wardrop in Sidney re - construction of buildings to be completed by Doukhobor prisoners]	13 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
7	Item - [Telegram from H. W. Cooper to Acting Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa re - sewage and electric lighting system at Piers Island Penitentiary]	19 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
8	Item - [Telegram from F. W. Ross in Victoria to T. W. Fuller, Chief Architect in Ottawa re - lack of sewage and electric lighting system at Piers Island Penitentiary]	19 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
9	Item - [Letter from H. C. Fatt, Acting Superintendent in Ottawa to H. W. Cooper] re - temporary penitentiary - Piers Island	20 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
10	Item - [Letter and copy of telegram sent the previous night from H. C. Fatt, Acting Superintendent to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island [reprimand for asking Mr. Ross to withdraw from Piers Island Penitentiary]	21 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
11	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Acting Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - temporary penitentiary - Piers Island	21 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1

12	Item - [Letter from H. C. Fatt, Acting Superintendent in Ottawa to H. W. Cooper and copy of memorandum from Minister of Justice to the Acting Superintendent of Penitentiaries sent the previous day] re - Doukhobor prisoners	27 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
13	Item - British Columbia Penitentiary [letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island	28 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
14	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Acting Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - temporary penitentiary, Piers Island [number of guards and identification of Doukhobor prisoners]	29 Jul. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
15	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Acting Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - temporary penitentiary, Piers Island	4 Aug. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
16	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - temporary penitentiary, Piers Island	6 Aug. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
17	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - temporary penitentiary, Piers Island [transfer of first group male Doukhobors; interpreter; proclamation; water and sewage]	9 Aug. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
18	Item - [Copy of telegram re - Coleman Ready Lite Lanterns]	10 Aug. [1932]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
19	Item - Piers Island division, special report [from L. Goss Active Deputy Warden to H. W. Cooper re - refusal of twenty-three prisoners to work]	7 Sep. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
20	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island division, "Sons of Freedom" inmates.	22 Sep. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
21	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island staff	5 Oct. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
22	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - blankets and bedsteads, Piers Island	12 Oct. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
23	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island, water and fire protection	13 Oct. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1

24	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island, water	13 Oct. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
25	Item - Translation of letter [letter from inmate no. 219 Anton J. Strelaeff to his wife Tania P. Strelaeff]	13 Oct. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
26	Item - Department of Public Works, Canada, District Engineer's Office [letter from W. A. Gourlay, Senior Assistant Engineer to H. W. Cooper re - hose lines]	17 Oct. 1932	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 1
2	File - [1933]	Feb. 1933- Dec. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
1	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - fire protection, Piers Island, sea-water tank	17 Feb. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
2	Item - [Telegram from Canadian Fairbanks Morse Company to the Purchasing Agent in Department of Justice in Ottawa re - tank]	11 Mar. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
3	Item - British Columbia Penitentiary [letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, eligible list 31-533, Charles Edward Straker, no. 12	25 Mar. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
4	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, conduct of convicts	3 Apr. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
5	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island penitentiary, conduct of convicts	3 Apr. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
6	Item - [Secret letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, eligible list for guards	5 Apr. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
7	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, eligible list 31,533, prison guard 39 c-70.1, Charles Henry Gould	5 Apr. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
8	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, conduct of convicts	11 Apr. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
9	Item - [Letter from H. C. Fatt, Inspector to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, eligible list 31,533, prison guard 39 c-70.1 Charles Henry Gould	12 Apr. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2

10	Item - Memo [F. B. Emery, Accountant] re - construction costs, Piers Island Penitentiary	8 Jun. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
11	Item - Piers Island construction approximate cost of improvements	9 Jun. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
12	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - 793, Slorah [regarding an enquiry from Seattle concerning this convict]	1 Aug. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
13	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, temporary ticket-of-leave licenses for convicts while ill	11 Sep. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
14	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - annual report, British Columbia Penitentiary, 1932-33	16 Sep. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
15	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, temporary ticket-of-leave licenses for convicts while ill	28 Sep. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
16	Item - Memorandum [H. W. Cooper re - Doukhobors, two matrons at Duncan Hospital]	28 Sep. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
17	Item - [Copy of letter addressed to convict Alex Sherstobetoff from his sister Molly Osachoff re - convict's children]	17 Oct. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
18	Item - [Letter from W. H. Craig, Inspector to H. W. Cooper] re - transfer of convicts, Piers Island to New Westminster	2 Nov. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
19	Item - Memorandum [H. W. Cooper] re - absence from Piers Island Penitentiary of Acting Deputy Warden, while in charge of the penitentiary	8 Nov. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
20	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, absence from prison, Acting Deputy Warden	8 Nov. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
21	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, PF-470, Molly Shlahoff [requesting a full report regarding her potential release]	2 Dec. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
22	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to Major I. A. Poirier] re - Temporary Deputy Wardenship, Piers Island Penitentiary	4 Dec. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2

23	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island Penitentiary Temporary Deputy Wardenship, Piers Island Penitentiary Major I. A. Poirier	4 Dec. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
24	Item - [Letter from W. H. Craig, Inspector to H. W. Cooper] re- 4166, Wilhelmson [convict's transfer to the Royal Columbian Hospital]	5 Dec. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
25	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, female convict Shlahoff, Molly, #PF-470, male convict Shlahoff, Alex, #P-209	12 Dec. 1933	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 2
3	File - [1934]	Jan. 1934 - Jul. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
1	Item - [Letter from H. W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary [release of Doukhobor convicts]	11 Jan. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
2	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, conditional release of Doukhobor convicts	13 Jan. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
3	Item - [Letter from G. Sloan to Hugh Guthrie Minister of Justice] re - Doukhobors [policy towards Sons of Freedom]	2 Feb. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
4	Item - [Letter from D. M. Ormond to H. W. Cooper] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, Doukhobors	22 Feb. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
5	Item - [Letter from H.W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, Doukhobors [release suggestions]	28 Feb. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
6	Item - [Confidential letter from H.W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary, release of convicts.	23 Mar. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
7	Item - [Confidential letter from H.W. Cooper to Colonel J. H. McMullin, Commissioner of B.C. Provincial Police in Victoria re - release of prisoners]	23 Mar. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
8	Item - [From H.W. Cooper to Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Piers Island Penitentiary [sequence of events from the arrival of Sons of Freedom at penitentiary]	[Aug. 1932 - May 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3

9	Item - [Confidential letter from H.W. Cooper to Major General D. M. Ormond, Superintendent of Penitentiaries in Ottawa] re - Deputy Warden Douglass, R.S. [explaining his outstanding performance]	11 Jul. 1934	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 3
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Series 2: Photographs

Date: [between 1932 and 1934] (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series displays photographs taken on Piers Island showing the officers, guards, and matrons; male and female prisoners visiting through a fence that separates men's and women's compounds; female prisoners working; penitentiary buildings; penitentiary perimeter; vessel used for transferring prisoners; and a patrol boat. As there are no dates recorded for these photographs, it is not possible to determine the exact dates they were taken; however, based on the subject matter, it is assumed that dates of creation are between 1932 and 1934.

Physical description: 30 photographs : b&w prints and negative ; 12.5 x 17.5 cm or smaller

Access points:

- Photographic material (documentary form)
- Cultural groups (subject)
- Politics (subject)
- Religions (subject)

Arrangement:

Arrangement has been provided by the archivist.

Photographs in this series have been assigned item numbers MsC 147.1 to .29.

Finding aids:

Item level descriptions are available.

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
1	Item - [Thirty officers and guards and seven matrons in front of building at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]		MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
2	Item - [Thirty officers and guards and seven matrons in front of building at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]		MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
3	Item - [Twenty-six male staff and five matrons in front of gate at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]		MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4

4	Item - [Twenty-six male staff and five matrons in front of gate at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
5	Item - [Canadian Pacific Railway "Princess Mary" at Piers Island wharf with people on board]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
6	Item - ["Narsapur" patrol boat near Piers Island with one male visible standing on left side of boat]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
7	Item - [Dock at Piers Island]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
8	Item - [Gate to Piers Island compound showing fence]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
9	Item - [Gate and fence with two men at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
10	Item - [Fence and yard looking towards Piers Island wharf]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
11	Item - [Buildings in Piers Island compound with tree stumps in foreground]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
12	Item - [Queue of prisoners entering a building in Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
13	Item - [Yard and fence at Piers Island Penitentiary with one male visible on the right]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
14	Item - [Building and orchard with Piers Island compound fence visible on the right]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
15	Item - [Fence and buildings at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 4
16	Item - [Trees, fence, and buildings at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
17	Item - [Four buildings and fence at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
18	Item - [Building, fence, and cleared perimeter at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
19	Item - [Piers Island Penitentiary buildings, one male facing photographer, one male in background]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
20	Item - ["Narsapur" patrol boat at Piers Island]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
21	Item - ["Narsapur" patrol boat near pier at Piers Island]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5

22	Item - ["Narsapur" patrol boat close-up with guard on deck at Piers Island]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
23	Item - ["Narsapur" patrol boat off-shore in river with Piers Island buildings in background]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
24	Item - [Group of eight Doukhobor prisoners gathered around a "Piers Island Penitentiary" life preserver]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
25	Item - [Warden H.W. Cooper standing next to matron, three Doukhobor female prisoners, and one male in suit standing on pier at Piers Island]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
26	Item - [Double-exposed photograph of group of Doukhobor female prisoners and one matron at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
27	Item - [Group of approximately fifty male and female prisoners visiting through fence including two guards visible at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
28	Item - [Male and female prisoners visiting through fence, with one guard visible on each side of fence at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
29	Item - [Group of fifteen female prisoners filling mattresses and pillows with straw, one matron, one male carrying a mattress in background at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5
30	Item - [Large group of female prisoners with two matrons at Piers Island Penitentiary]	[between 1932 and 1934]	MsC 147 - Box 1 folder 5