



## **CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES**

**Inventory of the  
Allan Robb Fleming fonds**

**Inventory #F0529**

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**Fonds/Collection Number:** F0529

**Title:** Allan Robb Fleming fonds

**Dates:** 1853-1995, predominant 1953-1978

**Extent:** 5.5 metres of textual records and other material

**Biographical Sketch/  
Administrative History:** Allan Robb Fleming was born in Toronto on 7 May 1929 to immigrant Scottish parents, Isabella Osborne Fleming and Allan Stevenson Fleming. His mother was a nurse and teacher; his father a switchman and later a clerk for Canadian National Railways. He studied commercial art at the Western Technical School until 1945, and was hired as an illustrator immediately on graduation into the mail order catalogue illustration department of T. Eaton Company. During this time he met Nancy Barbara Chisholm, whom he was married in 1951. After leaving Eaton's in 1947, Fleming worked as a layout artist with the Art Associates Studio and later as the art director of the advertising firm Aiken McCracken. He joined another advertising firm, Art and Design Service, in 1951, and worked with clients such as Ford, Helena Rubinstein, and Kaiser-Frazer until April 1953. Fleming started his own freelance practice at this time, beginning a relationship with Steve Barootes that included the design of print material and signage for Barootes' restaurant, The Fifth Avenue. He also attended a series of Typography Workshops at Cooper & Beatty Typesetters run by Carl Dair. This instruction formalised Fleming's fascination with the letterform, and he resolved to travel to Europe and England to study with master typographers and book designers. Allan and Nancy Fleming left for England in April 1953, where Allan worked as an art director for the advertising firm John Tait and Partners. He studied in London at the St Bride Printing Library, the British Library incunabula collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum National Art Library, as well as frequenting the most important typographers and type historians of the day. He was mentored by Beatrice Warde of the Monotype Corporation, Oliver Simon, Stanley Morison and others, and began to collect what would become a comprehensive reference library of books about typography, design, and book design. In London, Allan and Nancy met their lifelong friends, the poet Richard Outram and his wife to be, the artist Barbara Howard. On their return from London to Toronto in 1955, Fleming began working informally with Cooper & Beatty as a freelance designer and became head of the Typography Department of the Ontario College of Art, where until 1961 his teaching influenced a significant number of well-known graphic and editorial designers who emerged in the 1970s. In 1957 he was appointed Creative Director of Cooper & Beatty and his design and art direction work there during the following six years, informed by the study and mentoring he had followed in London, was of such a high calibre and so prolific that it was awarded numerous awards from professional associations such as the Toronto, Montreal and New York Art Directors' Clubs, Type Director's Club of New York, American Institute of Graphic Arts, the Aspen and Silvermine Design Conferences, and the Advertising Typographers' Association of New York. Fleming was well known in the United States as a Canadian graphic designer, and respected as a peer. During his time at Cooper & Beatty, he also organised a series of landmark exhibitions of international typographic designers. From 1963 to 1968 Fleming was Creative Director of the influential MacLaren Advertising firm while maintaining a busy freelance practice. Fleming's most significant contributions were to national identity and to the visual culture of Canada in the formative period of the 1960s. His logo design for Canadian National Railway was commissioned in 1959 and launched in 1960; it is still used today. Other logo designs for government and for important Canadian institutions in this formative period for the country are: Trent University (1964), Ontario Hydro (1965), National Design Council of the Department of Industry (1965), Toronto Symphony Orchestra (1965), Hudson's Bay Company (1969), ETVO (now TVOntario, 1970), Gray Coach Lines (1971) and others. Later, in 1973-74, while working with Burton Kramer Associates, he was involved in developing the project that led to rebranding the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He worked on a number of important centennial projects during the mid 1960s, notably the award-winning book *Canada: A Year of the Land* for the National Film Board Still Photography Division. He was a jury member for the award of the design of Canada's centennial coinage, and worked

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closely with the competition's winner, Alex Colville, to create typographic elements for the commemorative coins. He designed the logo for Ontario's centennial project, the Ontario Science Centre, and a number of its early publications. He participated in the international design conference that took place at Expo '67, and was awarded the Centennial Medal by the government of Canada. In 1965, he was also awarded the Medal of the Royal Canadian Academy for "his distinguished contribution to the art of typographic design." Fleming also designed the first annual report for the Canada Council for the Arts in 1960, the street and shop signage for Upper Canada Village in 1961, lettering and silverware for Ron Thom's Massey College in 1963, a redesign of "Maclean's" magazine in 1963, electoral publications for the Liberal Party in 1965, the medal struck to commemorate the new Toronto City Hall in 1965 as well as its Hall of Memory and, for the Hudson's Bay Company anniversary celebrations in 1970, he produced a film directed by Christopher Chapman. In 1968 Fleming was commissioned by Postmaster General Eric Kierans to strike and lead a working committee on the design of Canada's postage stamps; he appointed, among others, artist Christopher Pratt and curator and arts administrator David Silcox. His "Report to the Canada Post Office on their philatelic product" became the new style guide for a renaissance in Canadian postage design that still forms the basis of stamp design in Canada. Fleming went on to art direct and design numerous stamps until his untimely demise from heart disease on 31 December 1977. He was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal just a few months before his death.

- Scope and Content:** Accession consists of correspondence, brochures, clippings from newspapers and magazines, curriculum vitae, reports, original artwork, photographs (black and white prints and colour transparencies), financial records, speeches, exhibit catalogues, typographical research files, audio recordings, appointment diaries, awards, and design objects created or accumulated by Allan Fleming during his career as a graphic designer, teacher, and administrator. Topics of these records include: previous generations of his family in Scotland; his secondary school education; his years in England working with English typographers; his marriage to Nancy Chisholm; their relationship with Richard Outram and Barbara Howard; work at Cooper & Beatty Ltd., MacLaren Advertising, University of Toronto Press and other firms; the work of typographers such as Eric Gill and Carl Dair; Fleming's work for a wide variety of corporate clients (including Ontario Hydro, Trent University, the Hudson's Bay Company, Gray Coach, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian National Railway, Massey College, and the City of Toronto); television scripts; book and stamp design; his involvement in design juries; exhibitions of his work; book collecting; his declining health after a heart attack in 1971; and his death in 1978.
- Custodial History:** The records that comprise Accession 2008-002 were initially deposited at the Massey College Library of the University of Toronto in October 1994, and were transferred to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections in December 2007 by Martha and Peter Fleming. The records in Accession 2008-031 were transferred from the home of Nancy Fleming after her death on 24 February 2008.
- Restrictions on Access and Use:** No restrictions on access.
- Finding Aid:** File lists are available.
- URL of Finding Aid:** <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/fonds/ON00370-f0000529.htm>
- Accruals:** The fonds comprises the following accessions: 2008-002, 2008-031. Further accruals are expected.
- Related Records:** Records pertaining to the life and work of Allan Fleming can be found in the Nancy Barbara Fleming fonds, F0539.
- Associated Material:** The design work of Allan Fleming can also be found in the records of Cooper & Beatty held by the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto,

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MS. Coll. 297.

**Immediate source of acquisition:** Fonds was donated by the children of Allan Fleming: Martha, Peter, and Susannah Fleming.

**Provenance Access Points:** Fleming, Allan Robb

Date of creation: 2008/12/17

Date of last revision: 2009/10/15