

# University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections

## Finding Aid - John Leslie Charles fonds (Mss 241, Pc 208, Mc 8 (A.03-29, A.05-84))

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Language of description: English

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# John Leslie Charles fonds

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## Summary information

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<b>Repository:</b>	University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections
<b>Title:</b>	John Leslie Charles fonds
<b>ID:</b>	Mss 241, Pc 208, Mc 8 (A.03-29, A.05-84)
<b>Date:</b>	1908-2000 (date of creation)
<b>Physical description:</b>	0.6 m of textual records. 135 photographs. 11 maps.
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### Note

Major John Leslie Charles was a Chief Engineer for Canadian National Railway's (CN) Western Region and consulting engineer for CN. He was born in 1892 in Weybridge, Surrey, England and immigrated to Canada in 1910. His first railway job was on a location survey for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in the Rocky Mountains. He later became responsible for much of the engineering and construction in western Canada, northern Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories. In 1926, he was appointed as a transit man for a survey crew and surveyed the second section of the Hudson Bay Railway (Limestone- Fort Churchill). He collected photographs and slide shows of his work and travel throughout his career. Several of his photographs are included in the Western Canada Pictorial Index held at the University of Winnipeg Archives.

J. L. Charles was a veteran of two wars. He served overseas with the Canadian Railway Troops in the First World War and attained the rank of major. During the Second World War, he recruited the 20th Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers at Winnipeg and commanded that unit on the Pacific Coast. After the war he helped the US Army locate a military rail line between the Canadian Pacific Railway in BC and US Forces in Alaska. He also published studies of the Great Slave Lake Railway, the first railway to enter the Northwest Territories and the most northerly railway connected to the continental system.

Major J.L. Charles was a recipient of many awards and honours. He was awarded the greatest engineering honour in Manitoba, the Gold Medal Award, in 1981 for his sixty years as a member of the Association of Professional Engineers of Manitoba, including a term as president. In 1973 he received the Order of Canada. His autobiography, *Westward Go Young Man*, was published in 1978. Major J.L. Charles is author of many articles published in the *Manitoba Professional Engineer*, *Engineering Journal* and *Canadian Geographical Journal*.

He received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Manitoba in 1973. Major J.L. Charles established the Canada Northlands Development Award in 1970 in memory of his son, John Hamilton Charles, who was killed in action in 1942 during the Second World War. The award is given to third year engineering students at the University of Manitoba. Although he retired at the age of 65 in 1957, Major J.L. Charles was still very active and worked on many engineering projects after his retirement. At the age of 73 he surveyed proposed railways in Zambia-Tanzania, Liberia. He traveled around the world at the age of 89 and kept a pictorial history of his journey as a continuation of his autobiography. Major J.L. Charles passed away on January 10, 1992. He was remembered as resilient and sincere man who was admired for his perseverance in building railway lines that had pushed back the northern frontiers.

## **Custodial history**

The fonds was donated to University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections by Eira "Babs" Friesen (nee Charles) in 2003 and 2005.

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## **Scope and content**

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The fonds consists of Major J.L. Charles' biographical info, correspondence, awards and honorary degrees he received during his lifetime, his articles and reports submitted to CNR, and photographs from his work and trips around the world. The fonds also includes correspondence regarding the Canada Northlands Development Award.

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## **Notes**

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### **Title notes**

### **Restrictions on access**

There are no restrictions on this material.

### **Finding aids**

A finding aid can be generated from this description.

### **Related material**

Digitized Material:

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John Leslie Charles fonds":<http://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca/islandora/object/uofm%3Acharles>

## Accruals

No further accruals to this fonds are expected.

## Other notes

- **Publication status:** published

## Access points

- (documentary form)

## Series descriptions

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
<b>Accession Mss 241, Pc 208, Mc 8 (A.03-29, A.05-84)-A2003-029 (PC 208, MC 8): John Leslie Charles fonds</b>				
<u>Creator:</u> Charles, John L.				
<u>Date:</u> 1908-1989 (date of creation)				
<u>Scope and content:</u>				
<p>The fonds consists of material created throughout the course of Major Charles' career as a surveyor and engineer for the Canadian National Railway. Included are several maps, reports and articles, both published and unpublished, on surveys conducted regarding the feasibility of constructing railways in the Canadian North. The fonds were created from 1908 to 1989, with the prominent dates of creation being 1959 to 1983.</p> <p>Fonds consists of four main series. The first series, Personal, consists of various biographical sketches and newspaper clippings of Major Charles, itineraries of railway inspection tours, two compilations of retirement messages from Charles' co-workers as well as his diploma from Cambridge. A copy of the memoirs of Mr. William Chandler, a friend of Charles' is also included.</p> <p>The second series consists of correspondence. It spans the years 1941-1987. It is a mix of both personal and work-related correspondence. The majority of the correspondence is to Major Charles, but here are some copies of letters from him as well.</p> <p>The third series consists of articles, both published and unpublished, written by Major Charles. Most of the articles were written in the 1960s and were published in journals such as the Canadian Geographical Journal and The Engineering Journal.</p> <p>The fourth series consists of railway reports. The majority of the reports deal with the feasibility of constructing railways in the Canadian North. Three of them deal with the railway in Zambia that Major Charles surveyed. There is also a photographic collection (PC 208) which consists of 30 photographs. A map collection (MC 8) is also part of the fonds. It consists of several maps that were not attached to any of the railway reports.</p>				

Physical description: 60 cm of textual records, 135 photographs and other material

Language of the material:

Arrangement:

This collection is arranged into four series, map and photograph collections:

Restrictions on access:

No restrictions on access.

Conditions governing use:

No restrictions on use.

### File / item list

## Personal

### File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Newspaper Clippings, 1941-1979			1 1
	Otherlevel - Messages from co-workers re: Major Charles' retirement, 1965			1 2
	Otherlevel - Retirement messages continued, 1965			1 3
	Otherlevel - CN Railway Inspection Tour Booklets, 1980-83			1 4
	Otherlevel - Copy of the Memoirs of William a. Chandler, 1967			1 5
	Otherlevel - Misc. diplomas and certificates			1 6
	Otherlevel - Various biographical sketches of Major Charles			1 6

## Correspondence

### File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - General Correspondence, 1941-1968			1 7
	Otherlevel - Correspondence related to a U.S. Army project Major Charles was involved in, 1942-1945			1 8
	Otherlevel - General Correspondence, 1973-1987			1 9
	Otherlevel - Correspondence between Charles and Seymour Hamilton, 1972-1978			1 10

	Otherlevel - Correspondence re: the Canadian engineering Heritage Record (C.E.H.R.), 1974-1976			1 11
<b>Articles (Published and Unpublished)</b>				
<b>File / item list</b>				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Notes on the building of the Canadian Northern Railway, 1931			2 1
	Otherlevel - Canadian Railway Engineers Surmount Challenges at Home and Abroad			2 1
	Otherlevel - Charles, J.L. " Railways March Northward", Canadian Geographical Journal, 62 (1) January, 1961, p.2-21			2 2
	Otherlevel - Charles, J.L. "Foundation for Progress", Keeping Track, 8 (6) July-August, 1965, p.12-14			2 2
	Otherlevel - Charles, J.L. "The Great Slave Railway", Engineering Journal, 48 (5) May, 1965, p.15-19			2 3
	Otherlevel - Charles, J.L. "Zambia rail Situation", Canadian Geographical Journal, 75 (6), December 1967, p.206-17			2 3
	Otherlevel - Charles, J.L. "Zambia-East Africa Railway Location", Engineering Journal, 51 (3), March, 1968, p.21-29			2 4
	Otherlevel - Charles, J.L. "Railway Freight Highballs:, Canadian Geographical Journal, 79 (4) October, 1969			2 4
	Otherlevel - Typed rough draft of "Railway Freight Highballs"			2 4
	Otherlevel - Speech on the terrain of Manitoba, ca. 1960			2 5
	Otherlevel - "Railway Intrude to Amazonia", ca. 1970			2 5
	Otherlevel - Draft of talk to Mid-Western Rail, 1978			2 5
<b>Railway Reports</b>				
<b>File / item list</b>				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Great Slave Lake Report, ca. 1930			2 6
	Otherlevel - Extract from a report entitled "Various Proposed Railway Routes from a Western Outlet to the Pacific from the Peace River District by a Joint Board			2 6

	of Engineers of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways, dated Montreal, February 26, 1925"	
	Otherlevel - Proposed Railway in Northern British Columbia for Minshall and Smith Engineering, Ltd., 1959	2 7
	Otherlevel - Report on the Preliminary Reconnaissance of Feasible Railway Route - Northern, B.C.	2 7
	Otherlevel - Report on the Preliminary Design of a Railway Spur, 1960	2 8
	Otherlevel - Maps 1 and 2 of the Report on the Preliminary Design of a Railway Spur	2 8
	Otherlevel - Maps 3-6 of the Report on the Preliminary Design of a Railway Spur, 1960	2 9
	Otherlevel - Projected Location for Proposed Railway Matone to Ste. Anne-des-Monts, Quebec (with 1 map), 1962	2 10
	Otherlevel - Yukon Iron Ore: Preliminary Study of the Feasibility to Construct and Operate a Railway to Transport Iron Ore from Iron Creek Mine to a Tide-Water, 1963-5	2 11
	Otherlevel - 5 Maps from the Yukon Iron Ore Study, 1965	2 12
	Otherlevel - Granduc Mines Limited, British Columbia: Preliminary Projection for a Railway Location, via Unuk River Valley to Burroughs Bay, Alaska, (includes 3 maps), 1963	2 13
	Otherlevel - Railway to the Arctic Reconnaissance and Right of Way Construction, 1973	2 14
	Otherlevel - Zambia Rail Situation (2 copies), 1967	2 15
	Otherlevel - Proposed Zambia - East Africa Rail Link, British-Canadian Survey, 1967	2 16
	Otherlevel - East African Rail Location, 1967	2 16

**MC 8 (A.03-29), 1960-1970****File / item list**

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Maps			1

**PC 208 (A.03-29)****File / item list**

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
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Otherlevel - Photographs		1		
<b>Accession Mss 241, Pc 208, Mc 8 (A.03-29, A.05-84)-A2005-084: John Leslie Charles</b>				
<u>Creator</u> : Charles, John L.				
<u>Date</u> : 1908 - 2000 (date of creation)				
<u>Scope and content</u> :				
The fonds consists of Major J.L. Charles' biographical info; correspondence; awards and honorary degrees he received during his lifetime; his articles and reports submitted to CNR; and photographs from his work and trips around the world. There is also correspondence regarding the Canada Northlands Development Award, established at the University of Manitoba in 1970.				
<u>Physical description</u> : 60 cm of textual records, 105 photographs and other material				
<u>Language of the material</u> :				
<u>Arrangement</u> :				
This collection is arranged into seven series				
<u>Restrictions on access</u> :				
No restrictions on access				
<u>Finding aids</u> :				
A finding aid can be generated from the fonds-level description.				
<b>File / item list</b>				
<b>Biographical info</b>				
<u>Date</u> : (date of creation)				
<b>File / item list</b>				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Biographical info done by W. Chislett Associates Ltd., Public Relations July, 1975			1 1
	Otherlevel - Newspaper clippings, 1945-1998			1 2
	Otherlevel - Birth, Marriage Certificates, ID's cards, Passports, 1916-1986			1 3
<b>Correspondence 1961- 1992</b>				
<b>File / item list</b>				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container

	Otherlevel - Correspondence - General, 1961-1992	1 4
	Otherlevel - Correspondence with CANAC re: "Go West Young Man Go West", 1975-1978	1 5
	Otherlevel - Correspondence re: "Westward Go Young Man", 1979	1 6

## Awards, Honorary Degrees 1908 - 1992

### File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Order of Canada - Biography, Correspondence, 1973			1 7
	Otherlevel - Order of Canada - Correspondence, 1974-1989			1 8
	Otherlevel - Order of Canada, Government House, Ottawa,	1974		2 - tube container
	Otherlevel - Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree - University of Manitoba, 1973			1 9
	Otherlevel - Canadian Engineers' Gold Medal, 1981			3 1
	Otherlevel - Military service and honors, 1908 - 1943			3 2
	Otherlevel - Millitary service - Correspondence, Newspaper clippings, 1919-1993			3 3
	Otherlevel - Queen's Silver Jubilee, 1975			3 4
	Otherlevel - Doctor of Engineering, Honoris Causa, Technical University of Nova Scotia, 1987			3 5
	Otherlevel - Julian C. Smith Award, Engineering Institute of Canada - newspaper clippings, correspondence, 1968			3 6
	Otherlevel - Canada Northlands Development Award - Agreement between J.L. Charles (donor) and the University of Manitoba, 1970			3 7
	Otherlevel - Station Charles (1983), Merit Award (1976)			3 8
	Otherlevel - Association of Professional Engineers - memberships, 1919 - 1983			4 - Oversize

## Diaries, Journals 1945-1961, 1974

Physical description: (19 journals)

### File / item list

## J.Charles' Articles, Speeches, 1926 - 1992

File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Notes of Talk Given before C.N.R. Luncheon Club, Winnipeg, January 15, 1951			6 1
	Otherlevel - Manitoba Railway History by Jack Countryman, 1973			6 2
	Otherlevel - Hudson Bay Maintenance and Operation transcribed by J.L. Charles, 1934-39			6 3
	Otherlevel - Articles, 1926-1969			6 4
	Otherlevel - Articles, 1954-1968			6 5
	Otherlevel - Articles 1959-1969			6 6
	Otherlevel - Professional Engineers Publications, 1968-1992			6 7

## Canadian Railway Construction: Reports, Correspondence, Articles, Maps

File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Reports, Correspondence, Articles, Maps, 1945-1982			7 - Oversize
	Otherlevel - Report on Preliminary Reconnaissance Survey for the Location of a Proposed Railway Bomi Hills to Mano River, Liberia, Africa, 1959			8 - oversize

## Artifacts

File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel -			9

## PC 208 (A.05-84) 1910-1990's

Physical description: 105 photographs, 1 negative, 4 photo-albums

File / item list				
Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
	Otherlevel - Major John Leslie Charles Photographs			1 1
	Otherlevel - Honorary Doctor of Laws, University of Manitoba, 1973			1 2
	Otherlevel - "Northern Traditions" - Engineering and the Development of Northern Manitoba, 1987			1 3
	Otherlevel - Order of Canada, 1973-77			1 4
	Otherlevel - Council of Professional Engineers, Gold Medal, 1981, 1959-1974			1 5
	Otherlevel - Association of Professional Engineers, 1950-58			1 6

	Otherlevel - Engineering Camp Prairies, 1910-1915	1 7
	Otherlevel - Hudson Bay Railway, Engineering Camps, 1915-1983	1 8
	Otherlevel - Military Service, Honors, 1918 - 1988	1 9
	Otherlevel - Military Post Cards, 1914-1916	1 10
	Otherlevel - Liberia - Postcards, 1959	1 11
	Otherlevel - Old Man Travels Afar: A Selection of Photographs by J.L. Charles to Fulfil the Ending of "Westward Go Young Man" , 1975-76	2 1
	Otherlevel - 1979	2 2
	Otherlevel - 1980	2 3
	Otherlevel - 1982	2 4