

# Obituary

## DAVID ROY REYNOLDS, 1912–2000



Roy Reynolds in the Archives of Ontario, 13 February 1961. Archives of Ontario, RG 17-43, AO5241.

The late David Roy Reynolds and I were friends, in my case for more than half of my life and in his case for more than a third.

Roy was a man of sterling character who was at the time I first met him (in 1966) head of the Government Records Section and map archivist at Ontario's Department of Public Records and Archives, what later became the Archives of Ontario. Besides being working colleagues, he and I were dining companions over the years and shared other similar interests.

Roy was born and grew up in Penetanguishene where his family (he had a number of brothers) had a large farm. His memories of “Penetang” went back over many years, including his first movie experience (the silent 1919 film version of *Shepherd of the Hills*). In the 1930s, Roy began his working career as a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse just outside of town, not far from his house.

Roy served in the Canadian Army during World War II, and remembered coming back home with his fellow troops “in bond” through New York City – his only visit there. Before coming back, he had spent time in Paris at an international school.

Roy was a great opera lover, and we attended many concerts in Toronto together. He himself was a baritone and studied voice at the Toronto Conservatory of Music. His favourite baritone was the American Metropolitan Opera singer, Leonard Warren, whose many records he collected. Roy’s favourite baritone art songs were Giuseppe Giordani’s “Caro Mio Ben,” and Stefano Donaudi’s “O Del Mio Amato Ben,” of which he could give, if encouraged to do so, no mean rendering!

Roy also had a great interest in baseball, and we shared this as well. His favourite team was the Cleveland Indians, but he also went with his relatives from Leamington to many Tigers games in the town of my birth, Detroit. To an equal degree, Roy was an enthusiast of golf – an enthusiasm we did not have in common. Roy even played the game on one occasion at the celebrated St. Andrew’s course in Scotland.

In the postwar period, Roy attended the University of Toronto where his history mentors included Donald Creighton and Bertie Wilkinson. A fellow student he knew quite well was Derry Novak, a professor of mine at McMaster. Roy then attended teacher’s college after obtaining a master’s degree. He went on to teach at Appleby College, a private boys school in Oakville, where, as he told me, he spared the “taws” of the infamous Tassy.

In May 1954, when Dr. Spragge was the Archivist of Ontario, Roy took up a position as archivist at Ontario’s provincial archives. While at the Archives of Ontario in the early years, Roy assisted in the acquisition of some of its earliest public sector holdings. He made forays to many departmental records vaults, including a visit to the basement of the Ontario parliament buildings where he singed his scalp on some hot overhead pipes! In an interview prepared for a staff newsletter some years ago, Roy also remembered with relish a field trip with MacMillan to Fort Malden to pick up the Western District records: “We had two trucks and were very unpopular as we drove through Essex County. We were like two pirates and might have been lynched.”

Like so many archivists during those days, his formal training was obtained through the course offered by the National (then Public) Archives of Canada at Carleton University. During his career at the Archives of Ontario, Roy was

responsible for a wide array of the archives' holdings. Initially, he had responsibility for education and labour records, as well as the map collection. Later, he was charged with the photo collection as well. By 1964, he had become head of the government records section and, in 1967, took on the job of head of private manuscripts.

In both his formal supervisory position in the manuscript section and informally to the large number of young staff hired in all areas of the Archives of Ontario in this expansionary period, Roy was a wise mentor. He not only initiated them in the rudiments of archival work and gave them a sense of the profession, but he also helped many in the throes of their first real job. His generosity and good sense eased the transition to life in the big city of Toronto. Roy often ran interference between new staff and the old guard. His guidance and help was so unobtrusive and gentle it may have passed unnoticed, but a mark of his influence is seen in the large number of this young staff who worked with Roy who remained in the archival field and made significant contributions across Canada.

After retiring from the Archives of Ontario in 1968, Roy worked on a part-time basis at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) where he prepared a nine-volume guide to the educational holdings of the Archives of Ontario and the holdings of the Toronto Board of Education. This work, in conjunction with the multi-volume work of J. George Hodgins, is *de rigueur* for students in the field of early Ontario education. Following his assignment at OISE from 1968 to 1974, he worked part-time for the Anglican Church until 1982.

Roy was a regular visitor to the Archives of Ontario for many years after his retirement from that institution. He became a familiar and welcome presence and continued to make friends among new staff members. Roy was a wonderful listener, was tolerant of almost all foibles, and his companionship and friendship, by those who knew him well, will be sadly missed.

**William H. Cooper**  
Archives of Ontario (retired)