

# Ada Gladys Killins Fonds, 1934-1995, n.d. (non-inclusive)

## RG 859

- Creator:** Ada Gladys Killins and Edward “Ted” Charles Howard Phelps
- Extent:** 7 cm. of textual material, 76 b&w photos, 13 col. photos, 45 col. slides, 1 col. postcard and 9 watercolour paintings
- Abstract:** The textual material of the Ada Gladys Killins fonds primarily includes correspondence and notes.
- Materials:** Photographs, original watercolour paintings and slides
- Repository:** Brock University Archives
- Processed by:** Anne Adams
- Finding Aid:** Anne Adams
- Last Updated:** May 30, 2024
- Terms of Use:** The Ada Gladys Killins fonds is open for research
- Use Restrictions:** Current copyright applies. In some instances, researchers must obtain the written permission of the holder(s) of copyright and the Brock University Archives before publishing quotations from materials in the collection. Most papers may be copied in accordance with the Library’s usual procedure unless otherwise specified
- Citation:** RG 859, Ada Gladys Killins fonds, 1934-1973, n.d. (non-inclusive), Brock University Archives
- Acquisition Info.:** Files were collected by Edward “Ted” Charles Howard Phelps and donated by Gordon Russell in 2023.

### Administrative History

#### Ada Gladys Killins

Ada Gladys Killings was born in December of 1901 in Caistor Township. She was the first child of Robert John Killins (1869-1942) and Rachel Amelia Swick (1871-1939). The family spent some time in Alberta as homesteaders. They returned to Ontario and engaged in farming until Robert John took a job in the Shredded Wheat Factory in Niagara Falls. Gladys

was the artistic member of the family. She attended Normal school and became an art teacher at the newly opened Memorial School in Niagara Falls, Ontario in 1924 where she remained until 1947. Gladys was not particularly fond of children nor did she associate on a regular basis with her colleagues. When she left teaching, she moved to Glen Cross near Orangeville. Killins studied art with Franz Johnston in the 1930s and she also took summer classes with Carl Schaefer in Geneva Park between 1935 and 1938. Her work was presented at the Eleventh Annual Exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painters of Water Colour at the Art Gallery of Toronto in 1938. Despite the fact that she didn't have a steady income, she didn't advertise her work nor have a gallery promote her. Two of her more notable works included *Town Hall* which was hung in the Niagara Falls City Hall. This painting was also shown at the Canadian exhibition at the New York World's Fair in 1939. *Factory Closed*, which was a social statement was also shown that year. Her paintings were shown at almost every show sponsored by the CSPWC (Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour) up until 1959. Fifteen of her paintings were shown at "Four Canadian Painters" at the Art Gallery of Ontario in November of 1942. In 1948 she had an exhibition at the Niagara Falls Public Library. In 1950 her work was included in "Contemporary Canadian Arts". There was an exhibition of thirty pictures at the Gallery of Fine Arts in Owen Sound in 1954. This was to be her last major show during her lifetime.

### **Robert Ivan Killins**

Ada Gladys' siblings included Robert Ivan Killins (1907-1963) and Harold Cyril Killins (1909-2002). Robert Ivan Killins was hailed as the intellectual member of the family. He attended Queen's University in Kingston. He held racist and anti-Catholic views and had a violent temper. Robert was ordained as a United Church minister. He married Florence Irene Fraser (1920-1963) and they had a daughter, Pearl Irene Killins (1944-1963). From 1932-1946, he held posts in White River, Ontario; Cartier, Ontario; Depot Harbour, Ontario and Clanwilliam Manitoba. In 1945, Robert is listed as living in Clanwilliam, but "not in pastoral work". Robert was never happy with his parishes. He would complain and ask for money when there was none available. When his requests weren't met, he would ignore his duties and move on. He met Florence Fraser in 1938 when she was seventeen and he was thirty-one. They waited until Florence was eighteen before they married. Florence got pregnant in 1943 although Robert was opposed to having children. By this point, Florence had left him several times but he always brought her back. After his term in Clanwilliam, Robert built a shack in Rushkin, B.C. He had been very controlling in his relationship with Florence and sought to isolate her. This shack burned down and it was at this time that Florence and baby Pearl left. Gladys tried to help Florence by buying a shack near Parry Sound to be able to visit. She also gave some of her paintings to Florence. Florence was twenty-six when she landed at Colborne, Ontario. It is here that she met fifty-three-year-old lawyer Austin Davis Hall. Florence sought a divorce from Robert, but he wouldn't grant her one. Austin Davis, or A.D. as he was called and Florence had three children together. Margaret was born in 1950, Brian was born in 1952 and Patsy was born in 1956. After a few months of Florence living with A.D., Robert arrived at their door saying that he had no intention of losing touch with his child. There was an agreement reached about Robert

seeing Pearl but Robert caused problems by moving as close to them as he could and taking liberties like walking into their house uninvited. The family moved often to avoid Robert's stalking behavior, but Robert always found them. In 1956, A.D. Hall suffered a heart attack and his ill health seemed to give Robert more power within the family. The couple had moved into an old farmhouse near Castleton where A.D. had begun building a new house. At this time, Robert's presence was so obtrusive that Florence and A.D. lived in two rooms of the courthouse for three years. Robert couldn't build a shack near the courthouse so this arrangement worked well. A.D. died in 1962. Robert maintained such a presence in Florence's life, that the three younger children weren't aware that he was not their father. They called Robert "Dad" just as Pearl did and they called their real father "Joey". After A.D.'s death, Florence found a new partner in retired miner, Tom Major and she became pregnant with his child. Major began making plans for the family to move to northern Ontario.

### **Harold Cyril Killins**

By 1927, the Killins family had moved to a farm in Fonthill. Harold Killins was running the farm at the age of 18 and he was also a bee keeper. His mother never considered him as her favourite. He lived in the shadow of Robert and Gladys. His positive personality was the opposite of his siblings'. In 1931, he worked at the Vineland Experimental Station. Harold received his B.S.A. in 1936. His mother Rachel didn't see farm work as something that should be studied at university so this was not an event to be celebrated. He married the love of his life, Ethel Fry in 1940. After running the Killins family farm, Harold and his family relocated to Brantford. Harold's career was in animal health and nutrition. In 1960, Harold was transferred to British Columbia and to Calgary in 1962.

### **The Castleton Massacre**

It was obvious to Pearl and Florence that Robert's erratic behavior and penchant for violence were getting worse. Florence tried to get Pearl to stay with her grandparents in Vancouver, but Pearl rebelled against this. Pearl traveled to Toronto where she met up with her boyfriend, Fred Campbell. They eloped, and it wasn't long before she was pregnant. Robert offered the young couple a house so that he could watch them. On May 2, 1963, Robert Killins went on a rampage and shot and killed Gladys and her dog Taffy, his daughter Pearl (19) who was eight months pregnant, his wife Florence who was pregnant and Florence's youngest daughter Patsy (6). He was armed with two revolvers and a shotgun loaded with deer pellets. At the time, Robert's health was rapid decline. His heart was weak and he had been using strychnine to treat himself. He was a diabetic and gangrene had set into his leg. Doctors had suggested amputation, but he had refused treatment. Three men tried to intervene. Frederick Campbell, Pearl's husband was shot in the throat while trying to protect Pearl. Thomas Major who lived with Florence was shot in the neck and jaw, but managed to bludgeon Robert in the head. A neighbour and schoolteacher, Peter Miller also fought with Robert and was shot in his arms and hands. All three men survived. Florence's son Brian (10) had a shotgun blast travel over his head, singeing his hair. Margaret was treated for shock after coming face to face with Robert while hiding under a

bed. Robert had \$3,000 in a money belt and despite his head wound, he fled the scene and drove away. He only made it about 10 kilometers west of Castleton. His driving was erratic and his shotgun was pointing out of the car window. Police forced him into a ditch. Robert fell into a coma and was under guard at Coburg General Hospital. He died the following day.

The two surviving children, Margaret and Brian were sent to live with Gladys and Robert's brother Harold and his family in Calgary. Harold and his family offered a secure, loving environment for the children. Brian and Margaret went on to have successful careers and fulfilling family lives.

- Sources:**
- Clifford, Edward (1963, May 4). Amok with Guns, Former Minister Slays 4, Wounds 5. *Globe and Mail*, p.5
  - Cook, Sharon Anne and Lorna R. McLean & Kate O'Rourke editors. (2001). *Framing Our Past*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press
  - Cook, Sharon Anne and Margaret Carson (2022). *The Castleton Massacre*. Toronto, Ontario: Dundurn Press
  - Wounded Man Tells Story of Shooting Deaths of Four (1963, May 6). *Ottawa Journal* p.20

**Scope and Content:** The bulk of the materials consist of correspondence, notes, photographs, slides and original watercolours. The original order has been maintained. Some of the series are divided into sub-series based on subject matter or record format.

**Organization:**

The records are arranged into 4 series.

**Series I – Correspondence, 1947-1973 (non-inclusive)**

Sub-series A. Correspondence to Cora Bartlett, 1947-1963 (non-inclusive)

Sub-series B. General Correspondence, 1948-1973 (non-inclusive)

**Series II – Notes from Edward “Ted” Charles Howard Phelps, 1950-1968 (non-inclusive)**

**Series III – Photographic Material, 1934-1955, n.d. (non-inclusive) – Files created in 1967**

Sub-series A. Photographs, 1934-1955, n.d. (non-inclusive) – Photo file created in 1967

Sub-series B. Slides, 1939-1953, n.d. (non-inclusive), n.d. – Slide file created in 1967

#### **Series IV – Original Watercolours, 1944-1955 (non-inclusive)**

##### **Inventory:**

**Series I: Sub-series A. Correspondence to Cora Bartlett of Lundy's Lane, Niagara Falls, Ontario – Ada Gladys Killins is referred to as A.G.K. in most of these files. The reasons for this are that some people referred to her as Ada while others called her Gladys. She did not like the name Gladys, and she pointed this out in one of her letters. She signed her letters as A.G.K. Not all letters are described. Some contain relevant information while others do not. There is a mix of original letters, photocopied letters, greeting cards and some letters which are transcribed in a typewritten form. Therefore, there is duplication of the letters and some are incomplete. Incomplete letters are noted. A.G.K. sometimes addresses Cora by her first name, and sometimes as Miss Bartlett. Cora's sister is Floretta, 1947-1963, n.d. (non-inclusive)**

1.1 A.G.K began this letter to Cora Bartlett with a description and sketch of her surroundings. She thanked Cora for letting her stay at her apartment in Niagara Falls and referred to the fact that Cora did not visit in July or August. This was fortunate because of the steady work, heat, no water and no living quarters. She noted that Florence was in a rush to get back to British Columbia and Bob revolted and just drove around all day. A.G.K. still had a great deal of work to do on her house but she was happy for a roof that didn't leak, floors that didn't let rats in and doors that locked. Enid had visited for eight days and did a number of useful jobs. A.G.K. complained about sleeplessness and gave her regards to Floretta. She says that she will always remember Cora's kindness to her during those last unhappy weeks in Niagara Falls and she refers to Cora's apartment as an open house for shattered friends, Oct. 17, 1947

A.G.K. wrote to Cora about a new store, dance hall, restaurant and tea room where she was showing and alternating some of her paintings. She mentioned her brother Harold who moved to Brampton to work for a big flour company. She also that she couldn't get the lumber company to come out and cut some lumber for her. She said they would do it "if Bob were standing over them". Her observation was "aren't men pigs!" She noted that Cora was a student of hers years ago. Pages 2-4 are missing from this letter, May 2, 1949

In a short note A.G.K. states that she wouldn't be having any visitors from home this year and she says that "she won't be down. The trip to L.S. [?] was dreadful", Oct 5, 1949

A.G.K. says that Cora should not have told Mrs. Betler that she was well and happy when in fact she was not well nor happy and conditions did not merit visitors. She says that "poor Enid" was having a terrible time and "looked ghastly". A.G.K. states that Enid will be going to New York about Christmastime where she would try to find work and study

at night at the Art Students League. A.G.K. says that she is the only person that she knows intimately who is serious about painting. There were about seven good days for A.G.K. in the fall and this was when Enid visited and they spent that time in the quarry. A.G.K. says that it seems that this is “really goodbye” and she feels the loss keenly, Nov. 7, 1949

A.G.K. complains about her health and her “inert body”. She joined a women’s institute as a convener of citizenship and education, but was planning on leaving when the weather improved. She was going to send some small pictures to Cora. She says that Enid cannot afford to eat in Toronto and her parents weren’t planning on helping her in any way. Enid had not painted for a year as she was too worn out from doing “hack work”, Nov. 29, 1949

- 1.2 A.G.K. tells Cora to tell people like Mrs. Morden nothing of her affairs as these are none of her business. Whatever somebody had said about Enid was not correct. Enid had gone to New York. She was only in Niagara Falls overnight to pack the things at Rosbergs. She stayed at the King Edward Hotel. A.G.K. was having trouble with her eyes. The doctor hold her that her eyes were weak because her constitution was weak. She goes on to say that she had three out of four paintings rejected and the one that was hung was put in a dark corridor behind a door. She says “don’t bother about me until I brighten up”, Apr. 10, 1950

A.G.K. thanked Miss Bartlett for inviting her to visit, but said that she was not going away. She wrote that the baby [Margaret] was born on November 29<sup>th</sup>. She notes that B [Bob] went and carried the baby and left her [Florence] to walk downstairs alone. He took her to the cold summer cottage where the fire had gone out, then he went to get Pearl. They [Pearl and Bob] were practicing for a concert, but she was an hour late. A stranger was at the door and Florence asked him if he would start a fire. A.G.K. says she wanted Pearl and the baby to stay at hers, but Bob wouldn’t hear of it. Florence’s brother was coming from Toronto to take her and the children to Castleton to the grandmother’s place. A.G.K. mentioned that Miss McKeown might visit with Nellie Laundry. A.G.K. didn’t want casual friends from Niagara Falls to visit because it would destroy her privacy and she didn’t want witnesses to her hardship reporting to people in Niagara Falls. A.G.K. doesn’t want electricity in her cabin, but Bob was planning on having electricity when he got “on the Hockley”. A.G.K. sketched out a plan of her cabin. Enid left two black and white “beauties” [works of art] in the cabin. A.G.K. offered them to Miss Bartlett. She said that she only had fifty per cent of her own work rejected in the current year, and the year before, it was seventy-five per cent, Dec. 19, 1950 [A.D. Hall was the biological father of Margaret]

Again, A.G.K. was invited to visit Cora, but she didn’t feel like going anywhere. If she felt that she was up to it, she’d go to a big city to libraries, art galleries and second-hand book shops. She explained that she had to build her cabin in the winter in order to have it for the spring. Bob had also done work by laying the sills and placing 2x4s. Bob went

down to C (Castleton) to drag Pearl back for school. A.G.K. says that Florence hasn't kept her word "as usual". She says that none of her family keep their word, Jan. 2, 1951

A.G.K. wrote to thank Miss Bartlett for clippings. She went on to describe her tastes in literature. She didn't like Elizabethan coarseness but preferred Victorian gentility. She read Shaw and Chesterton and received the Globe and Mail daily. She continued to work on her cabin, Mar. 28, 1951

A.G.K. invited Miss Bartlett to stop in overnight at the cabin after a trip that she was taking, Jul. 26, 1951

A.G.K. says that Enid is taking night classes in Domestic Architecture and has a job with a drafting company instead of the awful insurance company that she was previously with. She says that she saw no one from Niagara Falls in 1951. She thanks Cora for sending her *Forum*, Jan. 15, 1952

A.G.K. welcomed Miss Bartlett back from her trip and then went into great detail about her fireplace. She said that Bob built about eight places on Bracken's Hill, two miles above where she was located. Bob also bought a stretch of river lot property along the 8<sup>th</sup> line which was the main street of Hockley. He also sold lots at "Grand Opera" prices to "Toronto suckers". He was working on their house down there and was hoping to move in before winter as Pearl attended school at Hockley Village. She noted that Mrs. Newbold moved back again from Laurel. Mrs. Newbold moved in about 300 yards up the road. She mentioned a number of people with whom she has had contact and she noted that she always resented being called Gladys. She heard on the radio that 3 feminine names caused real psychological damage for the bearers and one of those names was Gladys. Bob did not help A.G.K. with her fireplace but Enid helped with it because Bob didn't think that fireplaces were 100% utilitarian. A.G.K. says "besides they have just had another brat." Oct. 5, 1952

The farmers organized a council to discriminate against the cottagers in the matter of taxes. A.G.K. said that her taxes were four times what they were when she arrived in Glen Cross, Nov. 30, 1952

Much of this letter from A.G.K. to Cora centres around Ada Mabel Killins, teacher of children with disabilities, Mabel Durham and Aunt Jessie, Mar. 8, 1953

This letter to Cora from A.G.K. centres on Grace who A.G.K. has known since high school (Stamford High School in Niagara Falls). A.G.K. has just found out that Grace's condition was critical. It seems that Grace was a teacher, but was too fragile for that position. A.G.K. might have the opportunity of renting out the main cottage for four or five months and if that was to happen, she wouldn't be able to have visitors, May 2, 1953

Cora Bartlett invited A.G.K. to visit but A.G.K. says that she is going to try and sell her place from February 1954 on. She complained that she couldn't get any summer people, there weren't enough fish and there wasn't enough clean water in the district for a swim. She also complained that she couldn't sell anything there. She was thinking that she

might find something on No. 10 Highway near Owen Sound. Bob and A.G.K. went all around Georgian Bay and up to Tobermory. Bob bought some land on the bay at Dyer's Bay. Bob's children [not all technically Bob's] had a high school girl at Hockley who was teaching them, but if they moved to the Georgian Bay area they could go to a decent school. Bob remained up in that area and Florence was going up to help him. A.G.K. said that her house at Hockley was on the Barry [Barrie?] tract. If she sold it, she could make more money by helping Bob with siding, shingles and wallboard in the winter months. She also speculated putting money in land more suitable for sub-dividing than she could ever make from tourists. She noted that her water colours had to be in Toronto for the annual show by November 28<sup>th</sup>, Oct. 26, 1953

- 1.3 A.G.K. tells Miss Bartlett that she has not had drinking water for four years. All of her brother's places did have drinking water. There was to be no more building done in Mono as a "lunatic" council made a limitation of four foundations. A.G.K. said that Bob had property at Barrie which was a triangle (7 acres) of red pine, oak and birch. She noted that they went up there for five weeks in November and December. They had one place which was about the same size as her place. She says that she is having an exhibition at the Owen Sound Art Gallery beginning on January 21<sup>st</sup>. She did poorly in Toronto, Jan. 2, 1954

A.G.K. tells Cora that she can't come down at all. "I shouldn't have come in that day and made such a silly statement. Being back in the old surroundings made me forget conditions as they are now." [no further reference as to what this comment is about] Bob had been helping A.G.K. to dig a well. He used two ladders, one hung above the other. A rope between the two ladders broke. Bob went down to the bottom. He could have been killed, but was just shaken up. Around December 21<sup>st</sup> Bob arrived and had Pearl with him. According to A.G.K. "she had no business coming." "She is just like Florence always wanting to be ripping around in a car." She had just arrived by plane from Vancouver. A.G.K. notes that Pearl showed no ambition for anything except mathematics. Two of the places that Bob had built were burned in the winter. In both cases, the people whose places were burned were living in Toronto for the winter. A.G.K. is somewhat despondent about her painting. Two years prior, she had sent two things to the O.S. A. (Ontario Society of Artists) and they were rejected as she says that most things are with them. At this point A.G.K. is optimistic that she will get summer tourists because there is water in the taps. The taps would only work in the non-freezing weather, Jan. 7, 1954

A.G.K. apologizes for not writing but she has been getting the Glen Cross place in shape for selling. A.G.K. was sorry that there was so much sickness in Cora's family. A.G.K. was up in Barrie for two five-day periods in February. She described Barrie as being "as barren as the prairies". She notes that Harold has a summer cottage on Lake Erie at Port Dover and two or three lots. She states that Bob was beginning to think about going to New Zealand, Mar. 9, 1954



A.G.K. invites Cora to Glen Cross for Thanksgiving week-end. She thinks that Bob and one or two of the children might be there. Cora would have to sleep in the summer cottage, Sept. 29, 1954

A.G.K. writes that a hurricane took all the trees at the river's edge. The bridge about five miles up the Hockley was swept away leaving a four-mile detour to Orangeville, Saturday after Thanksgiving, 1954

A.G.K. gives her condolences on Cora's sister's death [not Floretta]. She speaks of Bob's three or four lots on Dyer Bay where he is hoping to put up a cabin. She and Bob traveled around the Owen Sound area and went to Sauble Beach, Dec. 10, 1954

- 1.4 A.G.K. tells Cora that she doesn't want to read any more Jane Austin because she is not in that mood. Something about concentration camps in Siberia where women dug wells would be more appropriate. She had also been reading Oscar Wilde. A.G.K. says that she is unhappy and "twice as mad". This is because Bob has written and said that he would arrive with Pearl as he would like to take her to the Orangeville dentist. A.G.K. doesn't like the fact that Bob will "muck up the front room with immigrant quilts". A.G.K. thinks she will walk out and sleep in her clothes in the cabin. She imagines that Pearl will be looking forward to an argument but A.G.K. will maintain her silence. Bob takes great pleasure in defying A.G.K. in front of Pearl and he thinks that A.G.K. should move to the Bruce Peninsula year-round. A.G.K. doesn't think that there is any landscape up there, but Bob "doesn't give a damn." Harold was selling his Avalon Park place. A.G.K. inquired about a farm house that Cora might have for sale, Feb. 5, 1955

Bob and A.G.K. spent an hour or so with Vi on their way back from Pennsylvania and the Virginias where they visited relatives. A.G.K. says she is very weak because she and Bob were motoring 12 hours a day. She wanted to see West Virginia and really wanted to see how hillbillies lived, but they didn't see any. She says that she is trying to glean anything from her unhappy childhood, n.d.

- 1.5 In 1956, A.G.K. moved to Dunchurch in the Parry Sound area. A.G.K. says that Florence had rushed to Vancouver with Pearl. This is where Florence's brother lived. They tried to get Pearl a job as a laboratory technician but there were no good job openings. Pearl said she wouldn't live there anyway. In the fall, Pearl walked out of school and the doctor said that she should be put in a different environment from her father. His attitude depressed her. They went on to where Florence's parents lived. Florence succeeded in getting Pearl into the Meteorology Department of the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force). The doctor told her that she should strike out on her own as Bob wouldn't be expected to live very long. Florence said that it wouldn't be diabetes that would kill him, but his heart was very bad. A.G.K. says that he does many things to make it worse and he spent 11 years working up to "a magnificent case of diabetes." A.G.K. is pleased that Pearl has been able to escape the emotional bad effects of the home environment. For six weeks, Bob had been looking after the three younger children [not biologically his] Margaret 11, Brian 9 and Patsy 6. She noted that Harold had moved to Calgary. His son David was the

same age as Pearl and he was in the RCAF. at Camp Borden. Wesley and his wife lived in Fonthill. Harold and his wife also had a daughter Sharon, Feb. 9, 1962

By the 1960s, letters are addressed to Cora in Smithville, Ontario. Pearl failed her physical examination for the RCAF because of a weak heart. A.G.K. was sure that this weakness began in April when they dragged her away from A.G.K.'s apartment to an isolated farmhouse where the water froze in the room that they slept in. She had whooping cough at the time. A.G.K. speaks of her dog who was a "quiet, good little thing.", Feb. 19, 1962

A.G.K. says that a village printer bought her new cottage and ten acres for his married daughter. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, Bob and Brian (age 10) went to the valley where A.G.K. occupied a small cottage. Bob and Brian went home after a few days. [This letter was sent from Glen Cross] Sept. 25, 1962

A.G.K. was possibly going to stop in and visit Cora but she was feeling worn out and Bob arrived and expected A.G.K. to go to Niagara Falls, Smithville and Glen Cross. Mrs. Newbold (A.G.K.'s old friend) is mentioned because she sold her place at the 7<sup>th</sup> Line and moved to a lovely apartment. A.G.K. notes that Bob would be dead if not for his insulin. He would go to bed very early and rise at 5:30 to 6:00 when he would raise the roof with noise. She said that Bob did the work of two men, worked all day then jumped into bed. She said that Bob turned everything into an ordeal, Nov. 7, 1962

There were problems with the cottage that was bought by the printer. The floor buckled and A.G.K. had to take \$250 off the mortgage. A.G.K. was hoping to move out of Dunchurch by the spring and leave it in the hands of a Parry Sound agent, Dec. 21, 1962

- 1.6 A.G.K. complains about her lawyer and surveyor. When all the transactions were completed A.G.K. could start to advertise her cottage and the acre it stood on. There were all kinds of problems with the cottage including floors that flooded and needed to be covered with newspapers and oil cloth, Feb. 12, 1963

A.G.K. says that when she gets back to Hockley, she and Cora can do a little "coming and going". Bob has asked her to come down and do a month's worth of interior wall painting on one of his places. She says that there is a slim chance that they could go there on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of May to see if her cottage is still there. She says there is also a slimmer chance that they might get to Smithville or Niagara Falls for a couple of hours each, Apr. 28, 1963

Cora wonders if A.G.K. has left for Glen Cross yet. She has been waiting for a catalogue that A.G.K. promised to send but hasn't yet received it. Cora hopes that Bob will be able to bring her for a visit and she says that she will put A.G.K. and Bob up. This letter was dated March 31, 1963 but was marked as return to sender – deceased. It was not opened until Apr. 8, 1965

**Series I: Sub-Series B. Correspondence – General, 1948- 1973 (non-inclusive)**

1.7 Enid Alexander of Toronto wrote to Cora Bartlett stating that A.G.K. was in excellent health and spirits. She had been out walking and doing a bit of work despite the weather being a bit cold. Enid said that A.G.K. had previously looked tired and gaunt but Enid also said that A.G.K. seemed more refreshed and had perhaps put on a little weight, April 6, 1948 [A.G.K. had been hospitalized in 1948 for an unknown problem]

A.G.K. wrote to “friends” about Enid who visited “of her own accord” Enid was an artist and in A.G.K.’s words “alternated between ecstatic and hopeless states”. A.G.K. described Enid as “the most unique case” that she had ever come across, May 1, 1948

This letter is to A.G.K. from Carl Schaefer of Toronto – He admits that he has very little work to show. What he has is mostly pre-war and most of his energy was spent on war assignments. He says that he would like to put on a show in Niagara Falls sometime. He said that he resigned from Central Technical School and started to work at the Ontario College of Art, Jan. 2, 1949

Short note to Cora: “Thank you for your kindness – signed the three sisters and Jack” ‘ Jul. 29, 1955

To Mary from A.G.K. She writes about a week that Mrs. Newbold spent in the Valley last summer. She says she would like to move back to the Valley but prices have risen a lot. She says that it is five years since Mary [Phelps] visited. She says that she has no money due to the length of time it took to sell one place. She asks after “little” Margaret and Ted. She talks about the eleven years that Bob has had diabetes and says that he would be dead without his insulin. She said that he ate enormous amounts of candy, Apr. 4, 1961

To Mrs. Theal from A.G.K. – Mrs. Theal may have sent a letter regarding the death of Mabel Killins and A.G.K. says that she was unable to see her when she was alive, so she’d hardly be able to see her when she was dead. A.G.K. says that her mother was always fond of her (Mrs. Theal). She says her mother had is hard for the last few years of her life when they moved to Fonthill. They moved there because Harold wanted a fruit farm. Apparently, Mrs. Theal had written about a girl called Gladys Caughell who A.G.K. thinks she remembers as a fair pleasant child. A.G.K. says that it is difficult to remember because when they are young they are not as individualistic – later, the world makes them mean. A.G.K. says “I hope I wasn’t mean to her. I was naturally nervous and irritable”, Feb. 18, 1963

Much of the 1964 correspondence deals with A.G.K.’s paintings and the settling of her estate, 1964

This letter is to Mr. Schaefer but is incomplete so no signature is included. It is from Smithville, so possibly from Cora Bartlett. The writer says that they may have left the wrong impression and goes on to say “what happened was not the result of enmity between her and her brother. They were very fond of each other. It would not have happened if he had not gone berserk,” Aug. 30, 1964

1.8 Constance M. Newbold wrote to Cora Bartlett and said that Miss Killins and Bob called at her apartment the afternoon of the tragedy. Bob had been to Dunchurch to drive Gladys to Castleton. She was to be there for about three weeks to paint some cottages that Bob had built. Gladys was going to move into her old cottage when the Dunchurch property was sold, Mar. 10, 1965

Enid Alexander wrote a very lengthy letter to Cora Bartlett lamenting the fact that she left Canada. She was deeply shaken and heartbroken about what happened to Gladys. She was upset about her own seeming indifference and neglectfulness in not writing for so long. She says that she would never forgive herself. She expressed compassion for the two young survivors. She wrote about A.G.K.'s acute mind and vivid sense of reality. She felt that she should do something and suggests that she would take pictures of A.G.K.'s artwork. She was in Washington, D.C. at the time but leaves her number for Cora, Apr. 22, 1965

Constance Newbold wrote to Cora Bartlett and says she would like to have a copy of Enid's letter. She says that Gladys was very hurt and shed many tears. Mrs. Newbold can understand Enid's feelings of guilt. Mrs. Newbold refers to the visit from Bob and Gladys only a few hours before the tragedy, May 6, 1965

In another lengthy letter to Cora Bartlett, Enid says that she received a "wonderful kind generous and human letter" from Harold Killins which made her feel "almost human" herself. She also discusses her camera equipment in anticipation of taking photos, May 21, 1965

Mrs. Phelps received a letter from Enid with a proposition to photograph A.G. K's work in order to assemble a good basic record and collection of the work. Enid believed that A.G.K.'s work was not as well-known as it should have been. Enid says that she only learned of Gladys' fate this spring. Gladys' death caused her great shock, anguish and grief, Jul. 20, 1965

Mary Phelps of Sarnia wrote to Cora Bartlett regarding A.G.K.'s paintings. She says that she bought all the pictures that were left in the house. She mentions Enid and says that Enid will be there to give them a push regarding having an exhibition, Aug. 10, 1965

Cora Bartlett comments to Edward "Ted" Phelps about the "brief?" letters that Enid sends. Many of the 1965 letters are from Enid, 1965

To Cora Bartlett from Wallace Donaldson offering information on how Enid should take the photographs, Sept. 16, 1965

To Cora from Mary and Charlie Phelps – Enid spent a night at their place taking photos, Dec., 1965

In a letter to Edward "Ted" Phelps, Cora says that Gertrude McKeown would be the best-informed person regarding Gladys' works, Jul. 21, 1966

- 1.9 To Cora Bartlett from Edward “Ted” Phelps regarding paintings for a show in Beamsville, 1967. Included is an invitation to the exhibition put on by the South Shore Art Association, Jan. 30, 1967
- To Mary from Cora Bartlett regarding the artist [John Cecil?] Corfe who was an admirer of A.G.K.’s work, Feb. 11, 1967
- To Enid Alexander from Edward “Ted” Phelps who was preparing an exhibition catalogue and wished to pool his information with Enid, Oct. 17, 1967
- To Edward “Ted” Phelps from Enid Alexander who is more than willing to help by providing her black and white slides and also compiling lists of people who own the paintings, Nov. 16, 1967
- To Mother and Dad from Edward “Ted” Phelps regarding Enid who wanted fast prints from her coloured slides. She tried to sort and name the pictures and gave up in despair. On a Brock University note Phelps is hoping to become Assistant Librarian because John Burtniak was to return to Library School to finish his MLS degree, Nov. 29, 1967
- To Mary Phelps from Nellie Laundry – A Christmas card and a request to buy one of the paintings, Dec., 1967
- To Edward “Ted” Phelps from Helen M. Lothian regarding the Killins paintings. The puppets paintings were based on puppets made by the younger children at Memorial School. They were made of paper folded in an accordion style. The puppets in the painting owned by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Rosberg were made by Gladys herself. She made a puppet and gave it away (Helen Lothian believed she gave it to Enid). She found that she missed the puppet and made herself another one. The puppets had Asian names. Mrs. Lothian was surprised to find two more Hungar’s barns in the show in addition to the one owned by Miss Albrant. Gladys was going to name the piece Hunkey’s Barn and that would give the feeling of a new Canadian struggling to make a living. Nicholas Hornyansky was to be a judge and the Shakespearean Hungar would give the idea of both Hungarian and hunger. Gladys was delighted with the suggestion, Mar. 6, 1968
- To Edward “Ted” Phelps from Sylvia Nanson – Mrs. Nanson had information about the picture of Gladys that was used in the program. She said that it was taken about 1940 and might have been a study by Violet Keene, a Toronto photographer. An exhibition of Gladys’ work at the Niagara Falls Public Library had been arranged by Miss Michele Wilson who left the city about 1949 to work in New York. Michele was the niece of John Pierce Laugs, a Niagara Falls, N.Y. artist. Mrs. Nanson also offered names of friends and acquaintances of Gladys, Mar. 13, 1968
- To Mrs. Phelps from Norman R. Ball asking for information on paintings which he bought and he also requests a receipt, Feb. 26, 1973

**Series II – Notes and Documents compiled by Edward “Ted” Charles Howard Phelps regarding Ada Gladys Killins. Phelps was related to the Killins family. His grandmother,**

**Sarah Jane Killins (1871-1939) was the sister of Gladys' father Robert. Phelps received his M.A. at Western University and his B.L.S. at McGill University. From 1967-1969 he was employed as a librarian at Brock University, 1950-1967 (non-inclusive)**

- 1.10 Notes on the life of A. G. Killins. This file was compiled by Edward "Ted" Phelps and contains A.G.K.'s work history, important happenings, list of finished paintings and exhibitions. Also included are personal observations by Phelps. He states that A.G.K. met Enid in Toronto. Enid was an artist who made a living from commercial art. When Enid left, she owed Gladys money. When she heard of Gladys' death she was struck with a guilty conscience and wanted to do something for the surviving children. He also made notes about some of the paintings. *Indian Summer Corn* was bought by Grace Johnston and Gladys was pleased about that transaction. Regarding *A Bridge on the Twenty*, Floretta said that Gladys painted the bridge from Floretta's den window. Phelps thought that the *Township Hall* should probably be put at the Historical Society on Lundy's Lane. Phelps notes that Gladys and her parents are buried in Union Cemetery, Smithville. He listed her painting and their prices. There is a listing from the 1950 program for the Exhibition of Contemporary Canadian Arts at the Art Gallery of Toronto and a listing of A.G. Killins' paintings from 1954 and a list from 1963, 1950-1967 (non-inclusive)
- 1.11 This list of paintings by name and any alternate names was compiled by Phelps. Paintings exhibited at the Art Gallery between 1938 (excluding 1939) and 1956 are listed. Included is a 1954 listing of A.G.K.'s paintings from February 1, 1954. Pictures for sale are listed. Early work is listed as not for sale. Unsigned works are listed, 1967
- 1.12 Owners of Painting and Friends of A.G.K. This is another list compiled by Phelps. Included are names of people who were invited to the 1967 show, owners of paintings along with their addresses and lists of people supplied by Enid Alexander, 1967
- 1.13 *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Work of the Late Ada Gladys Killins, Member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour* prepared for the Gladys Killins Memorial Show held at Oak Hall, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada and sponsored by the Niagara District Art Association from November 26 – December 3, 1967. The document was prepared by Edward "Ted" Phelps. Included are clippings and a list of paintings which were previously shown in exhibitions as well as known distribution of paintings, 1967
- 1.14 Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour includes an acceptance card for one painting and a list of paintings accepted for the annual exhibition of 1956. Cat-tails was listed for Ada G. Killins and was listed at forty dollars. The show was held from March 23 to April 22, 1956
- 1.15 Clippings include an article about a 1948 art show of watercolour paintings by Killins. A clipping from the Orangeville Banner of February 18, 1954 describes the Gallery of Fine Arts exhibit of Killins in Owen Sound. A death and funeral notice for Robert and Gladys is enclosed. A watercolour was presented at the memorial exhibition in 1967. The painting of the Stamford Township Hall was given to the City of Niagara Falls to be hung

in the City Hall. Also included are clippings on the 1967 memorial show, 1948-1967 (non-inclusive)

- 1.16 Gladys Killins Memorial Show was planned by Edward “Ted” Phelps. Included here are his notes and correspondence detailing the organization of the show and pursuit of information regarding Killins’ paintings. He was trying to put together a complete list of her work. The show was held at Oak Hall in Niagara Falls on Sunday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1967. Notes on the closing of the show are included, 1966-1968
- 1.17 Miscellaneous Items including: a *Who’s Who in Ontario* Art entry from 1950, labels from artwork from exhibitions, a National Gallery of Canada information form, and a contract between Mary Phelps and Enid Alexander regarding the photographing of paintings, 1950-1967 (non-inclusive)
- 1.18 Correspondence and notes regarding the sale and donation of Killins’ Art. Also included are appraisals done by S.R. Thielson Fine Arts Inc. A list of water colour paintings given to Harold Killins is also in this file. Charlie Phelps was accused of doing something unethical by overcharging for paintings. This letter was sent by Harold in 1995. Charlie responds by saying that Harold does not appreciate the quality of Gladys’ work and he gives Harold twelve paintings. Rough notes on the pricing and distribution of paintings are included, 1986-1995 (non-inclusive)

### **Series III – Photographs and Slides taken from Ada Gladys Killins’ Art, 1967**

- 1.19 Black and white photographs taken by Enid Alexander. All photos are 5 x 3 ½”. Some of the photos have titles and/or dates. Some titles are not listed, 76 b&w photos, Photos of paintings with dates are listed as 1934-1955, n.d. (non-inclusive), Photographic file was taken in 1967. Coloured photos are 6 x 4”. They are not titled but numbered on the back [probably by Enid]

<i>Willow Pond</i>	1946	Barbara Escott
<i>Cabin in Woods</i>	n.d.	Phelps Collection
<i>Cambridge Church</i>	1941	N.B.
<i>Sketch of Willow Pond</i>	1946	Mrs. Fraser (cousin of Wes Killins)
<i>The Yellow Tree</i>		Jack Nott
Untitled	1938	Sylvia Nanson
<i>Dark Barn and Tree</i>	1941?	
<i>Stump #2?</i>		

<i>Georgian Bay</i>	1934	Ada Bond
Untitled		bought by Howard & Ethel Killins from Mary Phelps
<i>Autumn Scene</i>	1952	Bought by Ada Bond from Mary Phelps
<i>Georgian Bay</i> early- (probably Franz Johnston era)		Ada Bond
Untitled		Sold to Sharon Killins Cook in 1976
<i>Bright Passage through the Rocks</i>	1950	Enid Alexander
<i>Dam #1</i> (with tree on left) ? Broken Dam	1948	sold at N.F. art show – similar to one owned by Mary Phelps
<i>Stamford Township Hall</i>	1939	Presented to new City Hall (see clipping)
<i>Hockley Hills with Red Barn</i>	prob. 1949	Given to Niagara Falls Art Association for a raffle to help them pay for A.G.K. exhibition
<i>Crane</i>	early	Phelps Collection sold to Maureen Ball
<i>Green Hills with Pine Tree</i>	1950	Given to Henry & G. Howard as gift
<i>The Apple Tree</i>		
<i>Manitoba Hills</i>	1944	Niagara Falls Public Library
<i>Quarry with Trees in Background?</i>		
<i>Hills with Emerald Lake</i>		
<i>Barn with Rusty Roof</i>	1942	Helen Lothian
<i>Manitoba Stacks</i>	1944	Harold Rosberg
<i>Cat Tails or Milkweed?</i>	1955	
<i>Marionettes</i>	1942	Harold Rosberg
<i>Hockley Valley</i>	1949	Cora Bartlett



<i>Quarry (rocks &amp; rusty cable)</i>	1950	
<i>Poplars at Smithville</i>	early 39 or 40?	Cora Bartlett
<i>Floretta's Street</i>	early	Cora Bartlett
<i>Fonthill</i>	1939? (approx.)	Cora Bartlett
<i>Indian Summer Corn</i>	1939	Cora Bartlett
<i>Still Life</i>	1937 (approx.)	done in Carl Schaeffer's class in Toronto
<i>Cat Tails or Milkweed?</i>	1955	
<i>Still Life – Sword Plant with Gourds</i>	early	
<i>Church at Rama? (one of two)</i>	1940 or earlier	Given to Mary & Charlie Phelps
<i>Tree Roots by Stream</i>		
<i>Autumn Tree</i>		Phelps Collection
<i>House District of Parry Sound</i>	early	Phelps Collection
<i>Home in Grapery</i>	1939	
<i>Stream through Woods with Fence</i>		
<i>Northern Church (mining area?)</i>	early	
<i>Grade V Hallowe'en Puppets</i>	1942	Phelps Collection
<i>Bridge</i>		
<i>Stream with Fence #2</i>		
<i>Stump #1 (with reflection)</i>		
<i>Cabin Dwellers (tourist camp)</i>		
<i>Yellow Trees against Hill</i>		

*Spring Trees Hockley Valley*

*Georgian Bay? Penetanguishene area? Parry Sound? early 1940s*

*Dam #2 (without tree on left)* 1948 Phelps Collection

*Grapery* early

*The Red Tree* 1952 Phelps Collection

*Green Hills (barn middle ground, bare trees foreground)*

*Grapery Rows with Tall Tree* 1939

*Still Life with Jug* 1940?

*Hills Hockley* likely 1950s

*Tree by Fence*

*White Tree in Autumn* 1949 Phelps Collection

*Cabin with Snow*

*Trees, Roots, Snow* 1949 Phelps Collection

*Red House (on hill) Bridge in Foreground* 1948

*Red House (on hill) no Bridge* 1948

*Landscape with Rocks in Foreground* 1953

*Hill with Dark Trees* Phelps Collection

*Muskeg, Parry Sound* 1942 given to Paul and Margaret Phelps

*Power House* early

*The Apple Tree (pink)* given to Jim & Sharon Phelps

*Factory Closed* 1939

*Hungar's Barns* 1945 Phelps Collection

*Aspiration*

early

Thirteen coloured photos of paintings including *Cat Tails*

- 1.20 Coloured 2”x 2” slides of A.G.K.’s paintings which were taken by Enid Alexander. Slides are identified by title and/or date wherever possible, 45 coloured slides. Many of the paintings did not have titles or dates. Identified paintings include: *Factory Closed*; *Dam at Hockley Valley* (1948); *Cabin with Snow* (1948); *Hallowe’en* (1943); *Stamford Township Hall*; *Hungar’s Barn* (1945); *Quarry at Hockley Valley* (1950); *Muskeg*, Parry Sound (1942); *Grapery* (1939); *Still Life*, Toronto (1940); *House in the Grapery*; *Aspiration*, Niagara Falls; *Beech Woods*; *Manitoba Hills*; *Fonthill*; *Poplars*, Smithville; *Willow Pond*; *Puppets*; *The Rocks* and *Floretta’s Street*. Slides of original paintings with dates are listed as 1939-1953, n.d. (non-inclusive), Slide file was created in 1967

#### **Series IV Watercolour Paintings, 1944-1955, n.d. (non-inclusive)**

- O.1 Original Watercolour Paintings by Ada Gladys Killins – Since most of the paintings aren’t titled, they are described briefly by subject

Pamphlet with examples of paintings and titles wherever possible

14”x 21” picture of a barn and piece of machinery

14”x 19 ½ “ Bridge at Smithville, Ontario over Twenty Creek 1944

19”x 15” one of a series of sword plant with gourds – early work

20 ½” x 14 ½” Piece of farm equipment with building in background

18” x 13 ¾” Cabin with Snow 1948

15” x 11 ½” Hilltop 1954

25 ½ x 18 ¼ rolling hills landscape and 25 ½ x 18 ¼ rolling hills landscape (double sided)

19” x 15” Landscape

#### **Related Material**

Cook, Sharon Anne and Lorna R. McLean & Kate O’Rourke editors. (2001). *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women’s History in the Twentieth Century*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press. Call no. HQ 1453 F72 2001 (9<sup>th</sup> floor)

Cook, Sharon Anne and Margaret Carson (2022). *The Castleton Massacre*. Toronto. Dundurn Press.

Phelps, Edward Charles Howard, 1939- (1967), *A brief sketch of the life and work of the late Ada Gladys Killins, member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour.*  
Niagara District Art Association: St. Catharines, Ontario. ; Call no. ND 1843 K55 P48