R1304 McPherson, George E., Jr.
McPherson family papers, 1930-1986
Sixty-three folders
(4 cubic feet), in part OVERSIZE

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

THIS COLLECTION IS IN OFF-SITE STORAGE. AT LEAST TWO DAYS' ADVANCE NOTICE IS REQUIRED FOR RESEARCH USE.

PROVENANCE

George E. McPherson, Jr. donated the diaries and papers of his mother and sister on 8 May 2009, SHSMO-RA1437. He donated his own papers and a scrapbook on 18 July 2013, SHSMO-RA1590.

BIOGRAPHY

The principals in this collection are Elizabeth Justice McPherson and her children, Constance (“Connie”) and George E., Jr. (known as “Junior” in his mother’s and sister’s papers).

Elizabeth J. McPherson was born 17 May 1892 in Madison, Ohio, the daughter of Joshua and Harriet Justice. She married George E. McPherson, who died in Ohio in 1953. Elizabeth was a homemaker and a dedicated diarist, keeping personal diaries for over forty years. Her diaries detail home life, the accomplishments and activities of her children, and accounts of her travels in the United States and Canada, beginning with a visit to the Chicago World’s Fair in 1933. Her collection consists of her diaries and a few miscellaneous papers spanning the period 1930-1977. In addition to her travels to New England, Nova Scotia, Canada, Florida, Yellowstone, and Arizona, Elizabeth wrote about her daughter Connie’s time in the Peace Corps in the Philippines, and son George’s career as a professor of electrical engineering in Kentucky and Missouri. Parts of her diary were neglected in 1953 due to her husband’s illness and death, an experience that perhaps led her to write about the family’s history in the diary for 1955. She also noted various national events such as space flights, the civil rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King, the Viet Nam War and student unrest.

Elizabeth moved from Ohio to Rolla in May 1973 to join her son and daughter there. She died in Rolla on September 27, 1977 at the age of eighty-five. She is buried in Reber Hills Cemetery in Ashland, Ohio.
Constance E. McPherson was born 29 September 1923 in Carey, Ohio. She earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Education at Ohio State University and taught school, specializing in music education. In 1960 she spent the summer traveling, making visits to Canada, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Monaco, France, Spain, and England. She determined to become a Peace Corps volunteer after hearing coverage of Mrs. John F. Kennedy’s “Good Will Tour” in India. She joined the Peace Corps in 1962 and, after training in San Diego, California, was assigned to an elementary school in Agusan Province on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines.

As did her mother, Connie enjoyed traveling and kept a diary. Along with miscellaneous correspondence to her mother, brother, and aunts, the diaries give a near-daily record of her experience in the Peace Corps. She wrote about her training in San Diego, her roommate and friend, Joyce Schuett, the assignment to Carmen Elementary School in Agusan province, teaching English and science, her visits to Butuan City for mail and packages (including bicycles and a Royal McBee typewriter), and setting up a reading room with books donated by family and various church organizations. She also commented on local customs, food such as boiled bananas, holidays including Bataan Day, and items of worldwide interest as Eleanor Roosevelt’s death (1962), President Kennedy’s assassination (1963), and Jawaharlal Nehru’s death (1964). Generally the entries indicate the importance she attached to her work in the Philippines, a commitment she extended by founding a non-profit organization that provided college educations for the students she taught in the Philippines.

After her term of service in the Peace Corps, Connie returned to Ohio where she taught at schools in Columbus, Hartville, Lebanon, and Wooster. She joined her mother in Rolla in 1973, where she continued to teach music and piano in Dent County and also privately. She was a member of the Peace Corps Association, State and National Music Teachers Association, Delta Kappa Gamma Sorority, Phelps County Historical Society, and the First United Methodist Church of Rolla. She died in Rolla on August 25, 2008.

George E. McPherson, Jr., was born July 16, 1921 in western New York state but spent most of childhood in Poland and Columbus, Ohio. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Ohio State University in 1943, with a specialty in electrical engineering, after which he served as a project engineer for the United States Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C. He returned to Ohio State to earn a Bachelor of Science (Ed) in 1948, and MSEE in 1949. After teaching at the Battelle Memorial Institute in Chicago and at the University of Kentucky, McPherson joined the faculty of the electrical engineering department of the Missouri School of Miners and Metallurgy (later the University of Missouri-Rolla, and now Missouri University of Science and Technology). He became Professor Emeritus in 1985. McPherson authored eighteen technical papers and holds one United States patent. His major work is a textbook with Robert D. Laramore, An Introduction to Electrical Machines and Transformers (New York: Wiley, 1981). He is a member of ISEE (Life Fellow), Sigma Xi, and Missouri Academy of Science. His awards include the Education Award of the St. Louis Section of the International Society of Electrical Engineers (1984); the University of Missouri Thomas Jefferson Award (1989); and the Yes I Can award of the Rolla chapter of the NAACP.
McPherson became Professor Emeritus in 1985, and was inducted to the Small Motor and Motion Hall of Fame by the ISEE in 1999.

His papers include two scrapbooks, 1969-1981, and miscellaneous papers, printed items and ephemera through 1988. Arranged chronologically, his papers include family photographs, correspondence, printed items and newspaper articles significant to his personal life, university career and long residence in Rolla. The papers reflect wide-ranging personal and professional activities, and contain items of biographical interest pertaining to faculty and students at the University of Missouri-Rolla. McPherson remained in contact with many of his former pupils including Charles Gross, his first PhD student, and frequently hosted gatherings of international students. McPherson was well known among the international community for his generosity and interest. Along with professional memberships, McPherson was active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the United Methodist Church in Rolla. In that connection, he was one of the last trustees of the Elkins United Methodist Church, the last African American congregation in Rolla, and a friend of its last pastor, Rev. Henry McDowell.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

These are diaries and personal papers of Elizabeth J. McPherson, her daughter, Constance, and son, George, Jr. They include Elizabeth’s diaries of daily life in Ohio and Rolla, Missouri, 1930-1977; correspondence and diaries by Constance regarding her travels and Peace Corps service in the Philippines, 1960-1964; and George’s scrapbook and personal papers regarding his family, extended circle of friends, community activities, and career at the University of Missouri-Rolla, 1969-1988. A detailed guide to the diaries and papers is available with collection.

SERIES LIST

1: Elizabeth J. McPherson diaries and papers, 1930-1977. folders 1-33
2: Constance McPherson correspondence and papers, 1960-1964. folders 34-39
3: George E. McPherson, Jr., papers, 1979-1988. folders 40-63

FOLDER INVENTORY

Box 1

Folders 1-33: Elizabeth McPherson diaries and papers

F. 01: Scrapbook and miscellaneous papers, ca. 1960s-1970s
    Contains some earlier undated family items.
F. 02: Diary, 1 Jan-26 Mar 1930
F. 03: Diary, 27 May-17 Jun 1932; World’s Fair (Chicago, Ill.), 1933
F. 04: Diary, 1 Jan 1938-22 Dec 1950
F. 05: Memo book, Spring 1948--Winter 1951
F. 07: Diary, 25 Dec 1950-31 Dec 1951 [trip to Florida]
F. 08: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1953 [trip to Arizona]; includes a separate notebook detailing the family’s trip to Texas and the West
F. 09: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1954
F. 10: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1955 [Family history]
F. 11: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1956
F. 12: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1957

Box 2

F. 13: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1958
F. 14: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1959
F. 15: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1960
F. 16: Diary, 1 Jan-30 Dec 1961
F. 17: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1962
F. 18: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1963
F. 19: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1964
F. 20: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1965
F. 21: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1966 [trip to Canada and Yellowstone]
F. 22: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1967
F. 23: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1968
F. 24: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1969 [trip to Nova Scotia and New England]

Box 3

F. 25: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1970
F. 26: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1971
F. 27: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1972
F. 28: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1973
F. 29: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1974
F. 30: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1975
F. 31: Diary, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1976
F. 32: Diary, 1 Jan-6 May 1977
F. 33: Miscellaneous cards and letters removed from diaries, n.d.
F. 33A: Miscellaneous brochures and clippings removed from diaries, n.d.
F. 33B: Miscellaneous papers and receipts, 1976
F. 33C: Miscellaneous cards removed from diaries, 1948-1977
F. 33D: Correspondence removed from diaries, 1951-1977

Box 4

Folders 34-39: Constance E. McPherson correspondence, papers and Peace Corps diaries
F. 35: Travel notebook, 1960
F. 36: Correspondence, 1962
F. 37: Correspondence, 1963
F. 38: Correspondence, 1964
F. 39B: Peace Corps diary, 1963-1964

Folders 40-63: George E. McPherson, Jr., papers and scrapbooks

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