

Robert E. McKechnie fonds

Compiled by Erwin Wodarczak (2010)



University of British Columbia Archives



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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Fonds Description

Robert E. McKechnie fonds. – 1888-1890.

3 bound volumes.

Biographical Sketch

Robert Edward McKechnie (1861-1944) was born in Brockville, Ontario. He entered McGill University in 1886, graduated with a medical degree in 1890, and did post-graduate study in Vienna. In 1891 McKechnie moved to British Columbia – first to Nanaimo, where he established his medical practice and served as surgeon for the New Vancouver Coal Company, and, in 1903, to Vancouver, where he remained for the rest of his career. He also held the positions of senior surgeon, member of the Board of Directors, and Life Governor at Vancouver General Hospital. McKechnie was elected to the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia in 1896, serving as its president in 1897, 1906, and 1910; elected the first president of the British Columbia Medical Association in 1899; helped found both the American College of Surgeons and the North Pacific Surgical Society; and was president of the Canadian Medical Association in both 1914 and 1920. McKechnie was also elected to the British Columbia Legislative Assembly for Nanaimo in 1898, and served as Minister without portfolio in the government of Premier Charles Augustus Semlin. McKechnie lectured on medical history at UBC, before being appointed to the first Board of Governors and elected to Senate in 1913. He was reappointed to the Board in 1917, before being elected Chancellor by Convocation the following year. McKechnie remains UBC's longest-serving Chancellor, serving for 26 years. As written by Harry Logan in *Tuum Est*:

To the teaching staff and to generations of students, his familiar greying figure, presiding as Chancellor year after year over Congregation, became almost an institution, a veritable living part of the recurring ceremonial, held in universal esteem and affection.

McKechnie remained active in the medical profession while he was Chancellor, and also wrote several medical journal articles as well as a book about the history of medicine in the Pacific Northwest. He also initiated the British Columbia Place Names project. He received honorary degrees from McGill (1912) and UBC (1925). McKechnie died on May 24, 1944 – less than two weeks after presiding over Spring Congregation – as a result of an infection incurred while performing a routine surgical procedure.

Custodial History

Materials were stored in the former McKechnie family house in Vancouver until that house was acquired by Irene S. Lee, who discovered the notebooks.

Scope and Content

Fonds consists of three bound volumes of handwritten notes from Robert E. McKechnie's McGill University course "Practice of Medicine", dated 1888-1890.

Notes

Acquired by the University Archives in August 2010 from Irene S. Lee.

Related records documenting McKechnie's involvement in the British Columbia Place Names project are in the [Robert E. McKechnie fonds](#) held in UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections.