

Robert E. McKechnie fonds

Compiled by Erwin Wodarczak (2010, 2015), and Maggie Hunter (2015)

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Fonds Description

Robert E. McKechnie fonds. – 1879-1944.

12 cm of textual records and other materials.

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 (1921) 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

Bound volumes and certificates were stored in the former McKechnie family house in Vancouver until that house was acquired by in-laws of Irene S. Lee, who discovered the

notebooks and donated them to the University Archives. The remainder were originally a gift from Miss Alice L. Wright, niece of Dr. Robert Edward McKechnie, in 1978. They were kept in the Charles Woodward Memorial Room until they were transferred to Rare Books and Special Collections in 2013 – they were then transferred to the Archives in 2015.

Scope and Content

Fonds consists of both personal and professional material. The personal material includes notes, poems, receipts, membership cards, newspaper clippings, certificates, and photographs, along with three bound volumes of handwritten notes from McKechnie's McGill University course "Practice of Medicine", dated 1888-1890. The professional material includes event programmes, speeches, certificates, newspaper clippings, and notes – most of these pertain to his involvement with McGill University and practice in Nanaimo.

Notes

Includes: 4 cm of graphic material, 1 badge, and 3 bound volumes.

Bound volumes and certificates acquired by the University Archives in August 2010 from Irene S. Lee. The remainder were transferred from Rare Books and Special Collections in July 2015.

Fonds has not been kept in original order. Files and other items besides the bound volumes are arranged chronologically and then by subject. This was done while the materials were held at Woodward Library and has not been changed.

File List

BOX 1

- 1-1 Poem, dated January 1879; to May Goff; on the occasion of the departure from Prince Edward Island of the McKechnie family. (1 p.) 1879
- 1-2 Notebook, 1879, containing an account of a trip by R.E.McKechnie from P.E.I. to St. Boniface, Man., bringing the horses (and later oxen) to the new family home. Some notes on expenditures are included as some recipes. (45 p.) [1879?]
- 1-3 Homestead entry receipt , dated 11/5/82, Dominion Lands Office, Turtle Mountain Agency, for SE 1/4 of Section 18, Township 1, Range 29 W. Taxes on above property for 1884. (2 p.) 1882-84
- 1-4 McGill University, Faculty of Medicine, Annual Dinner, Nov. 28, 1889: invitation, menu & programme, telegram signed R. Rowan, badge of R. E. McKechnie, Chairman and ms. notes for R.E.McK.'s after-dinner remarks. (7 p., 1 discrete item) 1889
- 1-5 McGill University: cards & two notes from the Montreal General Hospital certifying R.E.McK.'s service in various departments, 1886-1890; notice of his election as a resident medical officer, M.G.H., April 1890; affidavit sworn by R.E.McK. in Montreal, May, 1890, to make him eligible to receive the degree M.D.C.M. from McGill University. (15 p. + envelope) 1886-90
- 1-6 McGill University: receipts for fees paid: sessions 1888-89, 1889-90; course cards showing registrations, 1886-1889. (28 p.) 1886-1889
- 1-7 McGill University: two "day-books", 1886-1891, mainly records of expenditures and receipts of money. Include some lists of examination results showing R.E.McK.'s standing in his class. 1886-1891
- 1-8 McGill University: examination papers & results (various subjects) 1886-1890. (28 p. + 1 envelope) 1886-1890
- 1-9 McGill University, Faculty of Medicine, "Certificate of Attendance" sessions 1887-88, 1888-89, 1889-90, signed by the professors in each subject. (3 p. + envelope) 1887-1888

- 1-10 Autographed letter signed from Dr. Roddick, Apr. 7, [1892] accompanying a letter of recommendation which Roddick wrote, dated Apr. 6, 1892, with stamped envelope. (2 p. + envelope) 1892
- 1-11 "Letter register" covering letters written by R.E.McK. between May, 1902 and July, 1903. 1902-1903
- 1-12 Notebook recording observations made at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, 1904.
- 1-13 [Winnipeg] Free Press Extra: list of wounded, Battle of Batoche, 2nd Northwest Rebellion, 1885. (1 p.) 1885
- 1-14 Autographed letter signed from R.E.McK.'s father [William], Feb. 10, 1891 from Winnipeg, giving advice on possible choices of career. (5 p. original; 5 p. photocopied) 1891
- 1-15 Miscellaneous items, many of them autographed letters signed related to R.E.McK.'s move from Montreal to Vancouver Island. Included are membership cards, railway passes, etc. (39 p.) [n.d.]
- 1-16 Two certificates: upon attaining the 14th degree in the Ancient Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, April 3, 1902; attesting to R.E.McK.'s status as a Mason, 4th Nov, 5903 (Masonic year). [1903] (2 p.) 1902-03
- 1-17 Four autographed letters signed from various officials in the C.P.R., 1883-86; 1 autographed letter signed of recommendation, Sept. 24, 1886, from the Assistant Storekeeper, C.P.R. (5 p.) 1883-1886
- 1-18 Notes on various surgical procedures: 5 1., undated. [Vancouver, B.C.] (5 p.) [n.d.]
- 1-19 Miner's certificates, British Columbia, 1898-1900; mining receipt, 1899. (5 p.) 1898-1900
- 1-20 Notes: Microorganisms, Mar. 28, 1894; respiration [n.d.]; nervous system (incomplete) [n.d.] (8 p.) [1894?]
- 1-21 Clippings and other materials on the McKechnie "clan". (8 p.) 1916

- 1-22 Two reprints: Address in medicine, Canadian Medical Association, Vancouver, 1904; Sympathectomy for tic douleureux, from CMJ, v.28, 1933. (10 p.) 1904-33
- 1-23 Newspaper clippings, and some from other sources. (ca. 130 p.) [1902-1948]
- 1-24 Typescripts of four addresses: Osler lecture, 1931; Reminiscences of forty years' practice; Some thoughts on education, Oct. 24, 1932; Influence of environment, 1934. (40 p.) 1931-34
- 1-25 Congregation addresses, U.B.C., 1932-1941. (incomplete) (101 p.) 1932-41
- 1-26 Address on the occasion of the conferring of a degree (LLD) on Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada, Mar. 17/39. (Typescript) (9 p.) 1939
- 1-27 Photographs and snapshots - mainly family. 27 photographs : b&w; 30.5 x 22.5 cm or smaller + 2 newspaper clippings [1890-1935]
- 1-28 Volume 20, number 9, June 1944 Bulletin of the Vancouver Medical Assoc. The Bulletin of the Vancouver Medical Association with photocopied page from *Our School of Nursing 1899 to 1949* History of Vancouver General Hospital School of Nursing. Contains obituary notice of R.E.McK. (265 p.) 1944-1949

BOX 2

- 2-1 "Practice of Medicine", notes vol. I 1888-90
- 2-2 "Practice of Medicine", notes vol. II 1888-90
- 2-3 "Practice of Medicine", notes vol. III 1889-90

OVER-SIZE BOX 5

Membership certificate – Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine [Shriners] 18 December 1908

Honorary Degree – McGill University 1921

Membership certificate – North Pacific Surgical Association 1 October 1922