

William Montgomery McGovern (1897-1964) Papers, 1919-1967

Series 11/3/22/3

Boxes 1-5

BIOGRAPHY

William Montgomery McGovern was born in New York City on September 28, 1897. Much of his early life was spent in the Orient; he was graduated with the degree of *soro*, or doctor of divinity, from the Buddhist monastery of Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan, in 1917. After subsequent studies at the Sorbonne and the University of Berlin, he received his D.Phil. from Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1922.

From 1919 to 1927, McGovern held appointments as lecturer and/or examiner in Oriental Studies at the University of London. His service there was interrupted by two extended expeditions, one to Tibet in 1922-23, the second through the upper Amazon basin and Peru in 1925-26. On the former trip, after being refused entry into the country via normal channels, he disguised himself as a Tibetan coolie and succeeded in entering the capital city of Lhasa, one of the first Westerners to do so. This adventure was recounted in McGovern's most popular work, *To Lhasa in Disguise*. In 1927 McGovern returned to the United State as Assistant Curator of the Anthropology Department at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. In 1929 he was appointed Associate Professor of Political Science at Northwestern; he was promoted to full professor in 1936 and held that position until his death in 1964, developing a reputation as an exceptionally entertaining classroom lecturer.

McGovern's service at Northwestern was interrupted by a stint as Far East correspondent for the Chicago Times in 1937-38; by a visiting appointment as lecturer in government at Harvard University in 1940-41; and by service in the United States Naval Reserve from 1941 through 1945. Beginning in 1952, he lectured periodically on military intelligence and strategy in the Naval, Air, and Army War Colleges. He was also in demand as a popular lecturer, and published numerous articles and nine scholarly books in addition to his travel narratives, *To Lhasa in Disguise* and *Jungle Paths and Inca Ruins*.

McGovern was married in 1927 to his second cousin Margaret Montgomery; the couple had two daughters and one son. McGovern died in Evanston of a heart ailment on December 12, 1964, at the age of 67.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDS

The William Montgomery McGovern Papers fill five boxes and span the period 1919-1967. They are arranged in five major categories: biographical materials; professional correspondence; manuscripts and notes; class materials; and personal records.

The biographical materials fill nearly half a box and consist largely of clippings on McGovern's lectures, and obituary notices. Also in this section are two folders of McGovern family correspondence and one folder of biographical information on McGovern's mother, Janet B. Montgomery McGovern.

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The professional correspondence fills about two boxes and covers the periods 1919-41, 1944-50, and 1958-64. The correspondence dating between 1919 and 1941 is largely rather shallow, consisting mainly of "fan" letters and letters concerning lecture arrangements. A major exception is a memorandum from McGovern to University President Franklyn Bliss Snyder, proposing the establishment of a Latin American Studies program at Northwestern. The later correspondence is more general in nature. A substantial portion of it is to and from Kenneth Colegrove, chair of the Political Science department from 1940 through 1947; the remainder mostly concerns speaking engagements and recommendations for students. The manuscripts and notes fill about one and one-half boxes and consist mainly of handwritten and typed manuscripts of shorter articles, reviews, and monographs. Only one of McGovern's books, *Early Empires of Central Asia*, is represented in this section, and the manuscript of this book is incomplete.

The class materials occupy about half a box and consist chiefly of student papers; they also include a number of examinations and occasional reading lists. The personal records fill roughly half a box and are mostly of a financial nature, including contracts, insurance policies, and royalty statements.

Provenance: The bulk of this collection was received from an unknown source prior to June 1, 1974; a small addition was transferred to the Archives by Ted Gurr, chair of the Department of Political Science, on March 29, 1979 (Accession #79-48).

Separations: All photographs have been removed to the Archives photograph collection, under McGovern, William M. and Juvinal, Andrew. A copy of the film "To Lhasa in Disguise" (2 reels, 16 mm.) and 30 glass negative slides of Tibet have been removed to the artifacts cabinet; fifteen maps have been transferred to the Northwestern University Library map collection.

Restrictions: None.

Processors: Katherine Giese, ca. 1975; Elisabeth Wittman, May 1979; James G. Carson, August 16, 1985.

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CONTAINER LIST

BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS

Box 1	Folder 1	Biographical File	n.d.
	Folder 2	Biographical File	n.d.
	Folder 3	Biographical File	n.d.
	Folder 4	Biographical File	n.d.
	Folder 5	Biographical File for Mrs. Janet B. Montgomery McGovern, mother of William M. Mc Govern	n.d.
	Folder 6	McGovern Family Correspondence	n.d.
	Folder 7	McGovern, Mrs. Janet B. Montgomery Correspondence	n.d.

PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

	Folder 8	McGovern Correspondence	1919
	Folder 9	McGovern Correspondence	1920
	Folder 10	McGovern Correspondence	1921
	Folder 11	McGovern Correspondence	1922
	Folder 12	McGovern Correspondence	1923
	Folder 13	McGovern Correspondence	1924
	Folder 14	McGovern Correspondence	1925
	Folder 15	McGovern Correspondence	1926
	Folder 16	McGovern Correspondence	1927
	Folder 17	McGovern Correspondence	1928
Box 2	Folder 1	McGovern Correspondence	1929
	Folder 2	McGovern Correspondence	1930
	Folder 3	McGovern Correspondence	1931
	Folder 4	McGovern Correspondence	1932
	Folder 5	McGovern Correspondence	1936
	Folder 6	McGovern Correspondence	1937
	Folder 7	McGovern Correspondence	1938
	Folder 8	McGovern Correspondence	1939
	Folder 9	McGovern Correspondence	1940
	Folder 10	McGovern Correspondence	1941

MANUSCRIPTS AND NOTES

Box 3	Folder 1	“A Study in Buddhist Logic” Handwritten and typewritten copies-both incomplete	n.d.
	Folder 2	South American Ethnology: Handwritten Manuscript	n.d.

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Folder 3	“The Ethnology of the Gran Chaco Region of South America” Outlines, notes and tables; handwritten	n.d.
Folder 4	“The Ethnology of the Gran Chaco Region of South America”: Handwritten Manuscript	n.d.
Folder 5	“The Ethnology of the Gran Chaco Region of South America” Typewritten manuscript with tables-incomplete	ca. 1928
Folder 6	“On the Principle of Morality” Handwritten/typewritten copies	n.d.
Folder 7	“Empires of Central Asia” Incomplete ms	n.d.
Folder 8	“Empires of Central Asia” Incomplete ms	n.d.
Folder 9	“Empires of Central Asia: The Turanians” Handwritten ms	n.d.
Folder 10	Unidentified Manuscripts	n.d.
Folder 11	Miscellaneous Notes: Japanese	n.d.
Folder 12	Miscellaneous Notes: The Amazon and South America The Geographical Journal, Vol. 72, No. 2, 1928	n.d.
Box 4 Folder 1	Shorter Written Works Articles, reviews, essays, lectures, speeches	n.d.

CLASS MATERIALS

Folder 2	Class Materials (1)	n.d.
Folder 3	Class Materials (2)	n.d.

PERSONAL RECORDS

Box 5 Folder 1	Contracts and Insurance Policies	
	Lecture Arrangements	n.d.
Folder 2	Financial Records	n.d.
Folder 3	Royalty Statements and Notes	
	Publicity notices	n.d.
Folder 4	Juvinall/Nesmith Trip to the Middle East	1929

ADDITIONS

Folder 5	Assignment Notebook	1959-61
Folder 6	Proposed Latin-American Studies Program/Pan-American Institute	1941
Folder 7	General Correspondence	1944-50
Folder 8	General Correspondence	1958-59
Folder 9	General Correspondence	1960-64

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ADDITION, 1922-1938

Box 5 (1 folder)

Description of the Addition:

This addition contains copies of correspondence between James Willert and various repositories concerning Montgomery's work in England: copies of correspondence of Montgomery, 1922-26, concerning his work in England: and an audiocassette, "The Roving Professor," June 1938 radio talk.

Provenance: Given to the University Archives by James Willert, as Accession #86-101, on June 23, 1986.

Restrictions: None.

Separations: Photograph of Robert Hamilton Dundas to photo file, June 24, 1986; audio recording "The Roving Professor," June, 1938 radio talk, to audiocassettes file (AC 169).

Processor: Patricia Cloud, June 24, 1986.

Container List:

Box 5 Folder 10 James Willert research materials

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ADDITION, 1928

Box 6 (1 volume)

Description of the Addition

This addition is comprised of one volume, *An Unfrequented Journey* (London: The Scholartis Press, 1928), by John Easton. This volume contains considerable text devoted to McGovern's stay in Tibet.

Provenance: This addition was donated to the University Archives on June 8, 1987, by James Willert.

Restrictions: None.

Separations: None.

Processor: Patricia Cloud, June 23, 1987.