

S. J. McKee Archives



Rev. Dr. Samuel James McKee

<http://archives.brandonu.ca/en/permalink/descriptions4296>

Part Of: RG 1 Brandon College fonds

Description Level: Sub-series

Accession Number: 1-1997

Other Numbers: MG 1 1.1

GMD: textual records

Date Range: 1882-1937?

Physical Description: 27.5 cm

Samuel James McKee was born near Wellesley, Ontario on July 17, 1849. By 1872, he had graduated from Toronto University. That same year he accepted a position at the Canadian Literary Institute in Woodstock, Ontario. Although he accepted this post with reservation, McKee soon found himself converted to the Baptist faith and was a true believer. In 1881, his doctor advised him to move West because of his poor health. He and his wife Laura moved to Rapid City, Manitoba and established a farm there. His brother-in-law, Rev. Davis was busy establishing the Rapid City Academy during this time, and when Davis had the chance to move to Moose Jaw, he prevailed upon McKee to take over the Academy. Under McKee's guidance the Academy flourished. By 1890, he decided that he could reach more people if he relocated the school Brandon, Manitoba, which was located on the C.P.R. line. The S.J. McKee Academy did quite well in Brandon, although it had trouble finding a permanent home. By 1899, the school was located in the Stewart Block on Ninth Street and Rosser Avenue. McKee's wife taught music, and there were always potential ministry students in his classes.

In 1899, the Baptists finally decided that they wanted a College in Manitoba that would help prepare students for potential ministry service. It was decided to locate the school in Brandon, as McKee, a staunch Baptist, already had a flourishing Academy there. The Baptists and McKee amalgamated and Brandon College was created. When the school opened in October 1899, McKee was on the Board of Directors as well as teaching Classics, Mental Science and French. He also acted as the unofficial Vice-principal of the school. McKee taught several different subjects during the next few years, and in 1910 accepted the newly created post of Registrar. He retained this position for the next decade. As well, McKee acted as the Bursar in 1911-1913, 1914-1915, and 1919-1920. He retired in 1920 and moved to Vancouver. McKee was given the title Professor Emeritus in Philosophy. He was made an honorary member of the Board of Directors in 1925.

McKee and his wife had five daughters and three sons. Three daughters that died soon after the move from Rapid City due to a typhoid epidemic. His son, George Eugene, graduated from Brandon College in 1902. A son, John Harris McKee, became the Bursar of Brandon College in 1915 after obtaining his B.A. in 1914. Another son, William Carey McKee, graduated from Brandon College in 1914, and received his M.A. in 1915. He was studying Law in Calgary when he enlisted with the Army. Carey McKee was killed in action on August 26, 1918. A fourth son, Robert Allan also attended Brandon College. He enlisted when Carey did, but he was declared medically unfit for service in Winnipeg in 1917. He eventually returned to Brandon, but was sick for a very long time. He died on February 13, 1919, from a growth on his brain that had weakened him greatly. McKee's daughter Mildred also attended Brandon College. After her husband was killed in action in November of 1918, she returned home to her parents. Eventually she obtained a degree in Household Science. There is another daughter mentioned, Lydia. McKee also states in a tax return form that he has a permanently epileptic child in a home. It is not known if this child was Lydia or not. S.J. McKee died in September 1937 at the age of 88.

Custodial History:

To commemorate the move of the McKee Academy to Brandon, Manitoba in 1890, Brandon University renamed the Brandon University Archives the S.J. McKee Archives in the fall of 1990. At that time, the McKee family was represented by S.J. McKee's grandson William, who donated the S.J. McKee papers to the Archives. Up until 1990, the records had been in his custody, having passed from S.J. at the time of his death to William's father.

Scope and Content:

S.J. McKee's files are very unique. He has records detailing many aspects from Rapid City Academy and the desire for educating the West. He has a lengthy document entitled "The Beginning of our Educational Work in the West" in his records. It details the creation of Prairie College, its demise, and the building of the Rapid City Academy. There is a lot of correspondence, not just to and from S.J. McKee, but to and from his children as well. There are Land Titles papers, Mortgages, Last Will and Testaments, and various other legal documents dealing with the McKee family. There is a ninety page paper that his son, Carey, wrote in 1915 entitled "Immigrants and Their Assimilation." There are several files dealing with Carey McKee, and also with the death of Midred's husband, Robert Alexander Cunningham. The Minute Book of the Brandon College Literary Society from 1903-1905 is located in the McKee files. McKee also kept various newsclippings and certain issues of "The Western Baptist," "The Northwest Baptist" and "The Sunday School Times." As well, there are some used account and receipt books.

His records are extremely interesting in that McKee was really one of the founding fathers of Brandon College. The documentation that still exists with regard to Rapid City Academy is quite astounding, down to the legal agreement he and G.B. Davis made with Duncan L. McLaren regarding using some of his land to build the school on. His recollections on the beginnings of education in the west are clear and concise. As well, the sense of family and devotion to God are evident in almost all of the letters between family members.

Name Access:	S.J. McKee Carey McKee Rapid City Academy Prairie College Brandon College The Western Baptist The Northwest Baptist The Sunday School Times
Subject Access:	literary society
Finding Aid:	File level inventory available
Storage Location:	1997 accessions