

# McMicken family papers, 1828-1921

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	McMicken family
<b>Title</b>	McMicken family papers
<b>Dates</b>	1828-1921 (inclusive) 1828 1921
<b>Quantity</b>	1.83 cubic feet
<b>Collection Number</b>	0040 (Accession No. 0040-001)
<b>Summary</b>	Correspondence, financial records, legal documents, diaries, photographs and sketches related to Pioneer family
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections</a> Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 <a href="mailto:speccoll@uw.edu">speccoll@uw.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Open to all users.
<b>Additional Reference Guides</b>	<a href="#">View inventory/container list for this accession</a>
<b>Languages</b>	English

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## Biographical Note

Pioneer family

Includes following families, each related through successive generations by marriage: Reverend Jared F. Ostrander (d. 1874) family of Wisconsin; Asa Wells, (d.1854) family of upstate New York; Gilmore Hays (1810-1880) family of Washington Territory; John Goldsbury Parker (1829-1909) family of Washington Territory; William McMicken (1827-1899) family of Minnesota and Washington Territory. William McMicken was married to Rowena Ostrander McMicken.

## Content Description

Correspondence mainly relative to the family of William McMicken, lawyer, officer of the 10th Minnesota Volunteers in the Civil War, and surveyor-general of Washington Territory. Material also includes financial records, correspondence, legal documents, diaries, photographs, sketches and letters relative to the western campaigns of the Civil War, the Sioux Indian War of 1862-65, and the Gilmore Hayes and John Goldsbury Parker families of Washington Territory; 1828-1921. Herbert McMicken and Helen Parker's 1878 wedding links together the five families represented in this collection: the McMickens, the Parkers, the Ostranders, the Wells, and the Hays. Herbert was related to the Wells and the Ostranders through his mother, Rowena. Helen was related to the Hays through her mother, Jerusha Jane.

**Gilmore Hays** was born January 8, 1810 in Kentucky to an “extremely high hat” Scotch-Irish family that had emigrated to the American colonies early in the eighteenth century. He studied law with his mother’s cousin, and after passing the bar practiced in Missouri. Here he married Naomi Know Montgomery, a descendent of U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, and through her inheritance assumed ownership of “old Montgomery plantation.” He remained in Missouri until serving in the Mexican-American War. After the war, he visited California and decided to move his family west, lured in part by the opportunity to raise his sons in a non-slave state (he had recently freed his own slaves). After a short time in California, he returned to Missouri with the intention of organizing a wagon-train company bound for Oregon territory. The 1852 trip proved disastrous. He lost his wife and three sons to cholera while passing through Idaho. After arriving at The Dalles, Oregon, he invested almost his entire \$12,000 savings in a herd of cattle which did not survive the severe winter. Financially ruined, he joined the remainder of his family in Tumwater, near Olympia. He quickly became involved in civic affairs and was elected to the newly-organized territory’s first Legislature. When the Indian War broke out in 1855, Gilmore was the first man from Thurston County to volunteer for service, becoming captain of Company B. He remained in Washington until lured in 1861 to Owyhee County, Idaho by the territory’s gold rush. Idaho remained his home until the last few weeks of his life, when he returned to Olympia to stay with his daughter, Jerusha Jane Parker. He died in 1880.

Jerusha Jane had married **John G. Parker** in her father’s log cabin in 1854. John had arrived in Olympia the prior year. After a brief foray into merchandising, he constructed the trading schooner Emily F. Parker (named, apparently, after his sister). He subsequently would serve as master, pilot or purser of the steamers Traveler, Alida, Isabel, North Pacific, Messenger, and Daisy. He sold his steamboat interests in 1887 and lived out a quiet retirement until his death in 1908. Jane and John had five children, the eldest being Helen, born in 1856.

**William McMicken** was born in Youngstown, New York in 1827 and learned engineering from his father. In 1847 he purchased an interest in a Wisconsin firm that manufactured farm machinery. He moved to Minnesota seven years later, breaking up 500 acres of prairie for cultivation. When the Civil War erupted, he joined the Army, and was commissioned first lieutenant in Company B of the Tenth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. His first military duty was not against the Confederacy, however, but against the Sioux Indians in Missouri. After his Company helped suppress the Sioux uprising in 1862, it was subsequently assigned to the Department of Tennessee, the Sixteenth Army Corps. He remained in military service until 1865, achieving the rank of captain. When he returned to Minnesota, he was appointed assessor of internal revenue of the state’s First Congressional district. He served for six years, but poor health occasioned by his military service forced his retirement. Following the advice of his doctor, he moved to the more temperate climate of the Puget Sound region in 1871. After working for the Northern Pacific railroad, President Grant appointed him surveyor general for Washington territory, a job he retained under the subsequent administrations of Hayes and Arthur. During his long term, he surveyed and subdivided the territory’s Indian reservations and also surveyed the San Juan Islands. He retired from the post in 1886 to serve for two years as Territorial Treasurer. President McKinley re-appointed him Surveyor General in 1887, and he would continue to hold the post until his death. A distinguished Mason who occupied the highest offices in Washington, his 1899 funeral was accorded high Masonic honors.

**Maurice McMicken** was William and Rowena’s eldest son. He left Olympia in 1877 to study law, first at the University of California and later at the Portland office of the former Senator Cyrus A. Dolph. He returned to the Puget Sound region in 1881, taking a job as a law clerk for the Seattle firm Struve & Haines. After passing the bar the following year, he joined the renamed Struve, Haines & McMicken as a partner. He quickly earned a high reputation as a business lawyer, and became associated with many of Seattle’s principal business institutions. Among his more prominent clients were several of the large mill companies on the Puget Sound. A passionate yachting enthusiast, Maurice was a charter

member of the Seattle Yacht Club and spent summers living on his 92-foot boat, The Lotus. He retired from active practice in 1936 and died four years later.

**Helen Parker McMicken** found life as a wife and mother arduous. "What mortal woman," she inquired to the diary she had begun two years after her marriage, "can mend and make for four children, hear lessons, oversee the whole house and provide for the table, receive calls and ever expect to get through? And besides, it cannot be selfish to want to read an hour every day and write a little for practice's sake." In addition to the hard work, she had to deal with privation. The family had continual difficulty scraping up enough money to survive, often being able to afford nothing to eat other than oatmeal porridge. As a last-ditch contingency, Helen decided that the contents of the children's bean bags could provide a dinner, but fortunately she never had to resort to this eventuality. The money problems forced the McMickens to change houses several times, both in their native Olympia and in Seattle. Despite the difficult times, Helen did persevere. "It's astonishing how poor one can be," she confided to her diary, "and yet be merry over it. I suppose that's because we're honest." Helen contributed to the family's meager income by selling her artwork to tourists, and for calendars, score cards, and dinner menus. Eventually, Herbert secured a job in the surveyor general's office, and with this job the times got easier, although the family never did enjoy complete financial security. Helen died in 1942.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Purchased from Shorey's Bookstore, 6/15/1959.

### Related Materials

See also the in Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

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## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Dakota Indians--Wars, 1862-1865  
Frontier and pioneer life--Washington (State)  
Shipping--Washington (State)--Puget Sound

### Corporate Names :

United States. Army. Minnesota Infantry Regiment, 10th (1862-1865)

### Family Names :

McMicken family--Archives

### Geographical Names :

New York (State)--History--19th century  
Olympia (Wash.)--Pictorial works

McMicken family papers, 1828-1921

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv29174>

Oneida County (N.Y.)  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Personal Narratives  
Washington (State)--History--To 1889  
Wisconsin--History--19th century

**Other Creators :**

**Personal Names :**

Denny, Arthur Armstrong, 1822-1899  
(creator)  
Hays, Gilmore  
(creator)  
McMicken, Helen Parker  
(creator)  
McMicken, Rowena Ostrander  
(creator)  
McMicken, William, 1827-1899  
(creator)  
Ostrander, Jared F  
(creator)  
Parker, John Goldsbury  
(creator)  
Stevens, Isaac Ingalls, 1818-1862  
(creator)  
Tibbals, Maude McMicken  
(creator)  
Tilton, James  
(creator)  
Weld, Cornelia Elizabeth  
(creator)

## Names and Subjects

**Subject Terms :**

Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)

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