

Title: MacArthur Family Papers

Call Number: Mss-1521

Inclusive Dates: 1843 – ongoing

Bulk: 4.1 cu. ft. total

Location: CV, Sh. 350-353, 362 (3.1 cu. ft.)
WHS, Sh. A101 (1.0 cu. ft.)
MV, F22 (2 items)

Abstract: The MacArthur's were one of Milwaukee's most influential families in the mid- to late-nineteenth century and certainly one of the country's most controversial in the twentieth century. Arthur MacArthur, Sr., was the first to arrive in the United States. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1817. The family emigrated to the U.S. in 1828 and settled in Massachusetts. Arthur studied law in New York City and was admitted to the bar in 1842. Two years later, he married Aurelia Belcher and set up a law practice in Springfield, Massachusetts. On June 2, 1845, their first child, Arthur, Jr. was born. Arthur, Sr., and his family moved to Milwaukee in 1849, where he established a new law office. He quickly became a prominent figure in Milwaukee's social and political life. A leader in the Democratic Party, he was elected City Attorney in 1851 and Lieutenant Governor in 1855. He eventually joined the Republican Party and served two terms as judge of the 2nd Wisconsin Circuit Court. In 1870, President U.S. Grant appointed MacArthur Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, a position he fulfilled until his retirement in 1888. He died in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1896.

His eldest son, Arthur, Jr., chose a military career. At the age of seventeen, he volunteered for service in the Civil War. He enlisted with the rank of First Lieutenant in the 24th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry and was soon named regimental adjutant. He was promoted to Major for his bravery at the battle of Missionary Ridge in November 1863 and also received the Congressional Medal of Honor. By war's end, Arthur had been brevetted a full Colonel, and he decided to make the military his lifelong calling. He was stationed at several posts across the country over the next thirty years. In 1875, he met Mary Pinckney Hardy in New Orleans, and the two were soon married. During the Spanish-American War, Arthur rose to the rank of Major-General while commanding U.S. troops in the Philippines. After the war, he was appointed Military Governor in the Philippines, but he was relieved of his post in July 1901 after repeated clashes with Governor-General William Howard Taft. MacArthur returned to the U.S. and served at a number of posts. He retired in June 1909, and he and his wife settled in Milwaukee. He died on September 5, 1912, while speaking at the 50th reunion of his old Civil War regiment.

Douglas MacArthur, Arthur and Mary's third son, was born on July 26, 1880, while the couple was stationed at Little Rock, Arkansas. Douglas followed in his father's foot steps and embarked upon a military career. He lived in Milwaukee for a short time while preparing for the entrance exam to West Point. He graduated first in his class from the Academy in 1903. He served with distinction during World War I and soon thereafter assumed command of the Academy at West Point. He was appointed Chief of Staff in 1930 and gained a measure of notoriety for his role in suppressing the "Bonus Army" of 1932. During World War II, he served

as Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces in the Far East, and, afterward, he led the occupation force in Japan. MacArthur also led U.N. troops during the initial stages of the Korean War, but he was relieved of his command in 1951 after a celebrated run-in with President Truman. MacArthur returned to the U.S. and retired from active duty. He passed away in 1964.

Scope and Content: The records are largely made up of newspaper and magazine clippings but also include some correspondence, brochures, booklets, certificates, and photographs. In addition, there are several articles and books dealing with the MacArthurs, primarily General Douglas MacArthur.

Administrative Info: The collection was donated in the 1970s by Annabelle MacArthur. The collection was processed by Kevin Abing in 1999. This finding aid was retyped in July 2009 by Amanda Wynne.

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