Finding Aid to the Elsa S. McGinn Papers, 1891-1971

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Finding Aid to the Elsa S. McGinn Papers, 1891-1971

Collection number: BANC MSS 99/318 c

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Collection Summary

Collection Title: Elsa S. McGinn papers
Date (inclusive): 1891-1971
Collection Number: BANC MSS 99/318 c
Creator: McGinn, Elsa Searing
Extent: 2 cartons, 5 oversize boxes, 1 oversize folder 4 linear feet
Repository: The Bancroft Library.
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Abstract: The Elsa S. McGinn papers consist of materials pertaining to her activity as a public figure in San Mateo County, as well as her personal life. The collection is divided into four series: Business Papers, Civic and Municipal Papers, Correspondence, and Personal Papers.

Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

Physical Location: Many of the Bancroft Library collections are stored offsite and advance notice may be required for use. For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library’s online catalog.

Access Information
Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Elsa S. McGinn Papers, BANC MSS 99/318 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Alternative Form of Materials Available
There are no alternate forms of this collection.

Separated Material
Photographs have been transferred to the Pictorial Collections of The Bancroft Library (BANC PIC 1998.069--ALB).
Posters have been transferred to Pictorial Collections of The Bancroft Library.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog
McGinn, Elsa Searing -- Archives
San Mateo (Calif.) -- Politics and government
Clippings
Scrapbooks

The Elsa S. McGinn papers were given to the Bancroft Library by Thomas McGinn Smith on June 30, 1998.

No additions are expected.

Processing Information
Processed by Jack Doran in 2012.

Biography/Organization History
Elsa McGinn was born Elsa Waller Searing on May 4, 1880 in Sherwood, New York. Her father, Edward Whelan Searing, was an attorney who served on the New York State Assembly and her mother, Laura Redden Searing, was an accomplished journalist and poet who wrote under the name Howard Glyndon.

Laura Searing's declining health compelled her to take up and go West with Elsa in 1887. They settled in Santa Cruz, California, where Elsa spent her childhood before leaving to study at Miss Head's Preparatory School for Girls in Berkeley, California. Upon completing her studies in 1898, she moved back to Santa Cruz and briefly took a job as a stenographer before marrying Roderick J. Marston in October 1899. She soon relocated to Dawson City, Yukon where Marston owned a gold mine. The two separated in 1901 (divorced in 1903) and Elsa took a job in Nome, Alaska as a stenographer and typesetter for John L. McGinn, a prominent mining attorney whom she would eventually marry on April 20, 1904.

Elsa returned to California in 1909 to care for her mother, eventually settling in San Mateo in January 1916. Here, she began a tireless public career. Some of the more prominent of her many titles over the next few decades were President of San Francisco Girls Welfare Home (1917-1920), Chairman of the Liberty Loan campaigns and head of the California State Council of Defense during World War I, Commissioner of Public Health and Safety of San Mateo (1920-1922), acting mayor of San Mateo (1920) and President of the San Mateo Women's Club (1924-1928). As a member of the San Mateo County Planning Commission (1931-1952), Elsa helped establish some of the first municipal parks in San Mateo County. She was also the first woman nominated for a seat on the California State Assembly (1926), an election that she lost.

She gave birth to two children—Laura Edith and John W. McGinn—and was remembered by her friends and community as a fearless and tactful, yet compassionate leader. She died on May 13, 1963 at the age of 83.

Scope and Content Note
The Elsa S. McGinn papers consist of materials pertaining to her activity as a public figure in San Mateo County, as well as her personal life. The collection is divided into four series: Business Papers, Civic and Municipal Papers, Correspondence, and Personal Papers.

Business Papers, Series 1, consists of correspondence and titles for several mines in Mexico in which Elsa McGinn owned a share.

Civic and Municipal Papers, Series 2, includes correspondence regarding McGinn's participation in World War I bond drives, women's clubs, various civic and municipal positions in San Mateo and her run for State Assemblyman.

Correspondence, Series 3, consists of personal letters, primarily written by John L. McGinn and Laura E. McGinn, as well as holiday cards from friends of the McGinn family.

Personal Papers, Series 4, has been divided into six subseries: General; John L. McGinn; Laura E. McGinn; Laura C.R. Searing; Writings; and Ephemera. Included are scrapbooks kept by McGinn, mementos from her childhood and materials relating to her marriage to John McGinn. Also included are papers of both John L. McGinn and Laura E. McGinn and copies of two books published by Laura Searing (Howard Lyndon) as well as a variety of ephemera.
Series 1 Business Papers 1923-1933

- **Physical Description:** carton 1, folders 1-4
- **Arrangement**
  - Arranged alphabetically
- **Scope and Content Note**
  - This series consists of correspondence and titles for several mines in Mexico in which Elsa McGinn owned a share.

  - Harrington, Knight and Smith Mexican Gold Mines - Correspondence 1923-1933
  - Harrington, Knight and Smith Mexican Gold Mines - Titles 1923-1928
  - San Mateo Tide Lands Company 1927, 1931

Series 2 Civic and Municipal Papers 1915-1953

- **Physical Description:** carton 1, folders 5-10; oversize boxes 1-4; oversize folder 1
- **Arrangement**
  - Arranged chronologically
- **Scope and Content Note**
  - This series includes correspondence regarding McGinn's participation in World War I bond drives, women's clubs, various civic and municipal positions in San Mateo and her run for State Assemblyman.

  - Woman's Club of San Mateo- Scrapbooks 1915-1929
  - National Woman's Liberty Loan Committee 1918-1919
  - Women's Committee of National and State Defense Scrapbook 1918-1919
  - Correspondence 1918-1936
  - Correspondence 1922-1952
  - Scrapbook of Political Activities and War Work 1919-1925
  - Board of Trustees Scrapbook 1920-1923
  - Board of Trustees and Police Department Scrapbook 1922-1923
  - Election materials 1923, 1926
  - San Mateo Women's Club- newspaper clippings 1924-1931
  - Campaign Scrapbook 1925-1926
  - Assembly Candidacy- placards and ballot 1926
  - Correspondence- Political 1934-1943
  - War Finance Committee- ephemera circa 1945
  - List of Offices Held by Elsa McGinn 1953, undated

Series 3 Correspondence 1891-1959

- **Physical Description:** carton 1, folders 11-21
- **Arrangement**
  - Arranged alphabetically
- **Scope and Content Note**
  - This series consists of personal letters, primarily written by John L. McGinn and Laura E. McGinn, as well as holiday cards from friends of the McGinn family.

  - McGinn, John L. 1904-1953
  - McGinn, John W. 1920
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carton and Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>carton 1, folders 15-17</td>
<td>McGinn, Laura E. 1911-1931</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 18</td>
<td>Searing, Laura R. 1905</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 19</td>
<td>Various 1891-1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carton 1, folders 20</td>
<td>Postcards 1925-1938</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 21</td>
<td>Holiday Cards, Announcements and Invitations circa 1917</td>
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**Subseries 4.1 General 1897-1971**

- **Physical Description:** carton 1, folders 22-33; oversize boxes 4-5
- **Arrangement:** Arranged chronologically.

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<tr>
<th>Carton and Folder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 22</td>
<td>Miss Head's School for Girls- Berkeley, California 1897-1898</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 23</td>
<td>Divorce from R.J. Marston 1903-1904</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 24</td>
<td>McGinn, Elsa and John- Memory Book 1904</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 25</td>
<td>McGinn, Elsa- newspaper clippings 1904-1959</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 26</td>
<td>McGinn, Henry 1920</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 27</td>
<td>Scrapbook 1907-1925</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 28</td>
<td>Silhouettes of family members 1915</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 29</td>
<td>Scrapbook- World War I 1918-1919</td>
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<td>oversize-box 4, volume 10</td>
<td>Scrapbook- Personal 1920-1931</td>
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<tr>
<td>oversize-box 5, volume 11</td>
<td>Scrapbook 1921-1923</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 30</td>
<td>McGinn Estate 1923-1957</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 31</td>
<td>McGinn, Elsa- Memory Book 1935-1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>oversize-box 5, volume 12</td>
<td>Scrapbook 1960-1961</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 32</td>
<td>Vital Records and Membership Cards 1954, 1961, undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 33</td>
<td>McGinn and Smith Families- Newspaper clippings 1923-1971</td>
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**Subseries 4.2 McGinn, John L. 1893-1960**

- **Physical Description:** carton 1, folders 34-40; oversize folder 1
- **Arrangement:** Arranged chronologically.

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<th>Carton and Folder</th>
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<td>oversize-folder 1A</td>
<td>California State Bar- Certificate of Admittance 1893</td>
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<tr>
<td>carton 1, folder 34</td>
<td>Family Correspondence 1902-1948</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 35</td>
<td>Professional Correspondence 1909-1956</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 36</td>
<td>Newspaper Clippings 1928-1955</td>
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<td>carton 1, folder 37</td>
<td>Canceled Will and Last Testament 1930</td>
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carton 1, folder 38  California State Bar Correspondence and Certificates 1931-1955
       John McGinn v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue 1942
       Biographical and Memorial Materials 1959-1960

Subseries 4.3 McGinn, Laura E. 1907-1926
       Physical Description: box 1, folders 1-3
       Arrangement
       Arranged chronologically.

       box 1, folder 1  Memorabilia of Birth and Infancy 1907-1908
       box 1, folder 2  Correspondence 1920-1926
       box 1, folder 3  Newspaper clippings 1922, 1925

Subseries 4.4 Searing, Laura C.R. 1897-1923
       Physical Description: box 1, folders 4-5
       Arrangement
       Arranged chronologically.

       box 1, folder 4  Books of Poems by Laura C.R. Searing (Howard Glyndon 1897, 1907
       box 1, folder 5  Newspaper clippings 1923, undated

Subseries 4.5 Writings 1928-1935
       Physical Description: box 1, folders 6-7
       Arrangement
       Arranged alphabetically.

       box 1, folder 6  Poems and Short Stories 1930, undated
       box 1, folder 7  Speeches and Rememberances 1928, 1935

Subseries 4.6 Ephemera 1903-1960
       Physical Description: box 1, folders 8-12
       Arrangement
       Arranged chronologically.

       box 1, folder 8  Various 1903-1960
       box 1, folder 9  Menus 1908-1924
       box 1, folder 10  World War I 1918-1919
       box 1, folder 11  San Mateo Politics and Women’s Club 1919-1938
       box 1, folder 12  World War II circa 1943