

# McKenna, Charles F., Collection

Charles F. McKenna Collection

1861-1913, 1996-1998, n.d.



## Title Statement

McKenna, Charles F., Collection Charles F. McKenna Collection, 1861-1913, 1996-1998, n.d. Ms.2009.031

**Author:** Kira A. Dietz, Archivist

## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)  
560 Drillfield Drive  
Newman Library, Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
Business Number: 540-231-6308  
specref@vt.edu  
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



2009 (CC0 1.0)

## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-04-16 07:02:12 -0400.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

**Descriptive Rules:** Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

Ms.2009.031

### Unit Date

1861-1913, 1996-1998, n.d.

### Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

### Abstract

The collection contains diaries, papers, and published materials related to Charles F. McKenna's service in the 155<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, during the Civil War.

### Creator

McKenna, Charles F., 1844-1922

### Extent

0.3 Cubic Feet 1 box, 2 artifacts

### Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

## Administrative Information

## Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open to research.

## Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

The copyright status of this collection is unknown. Copyright restrictions may apply. Contact Special Collections and University Archives for assistance in determining the use of these materials. Reproduction or digitization of materials for personal or research use can be requested using our reproduction/digitization form: <http://bit.ly/squareproduction>. Reproduction or digitization of materials for publication or exhibit use can be requested using our publication/exhibition form: <http://bit.ly/scuapublication>. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives ([specref@vt.edu](mailto:specref@vt.edu) or 540-231-6308) if you need assistance with forms or to submit a completed form.

## Source of Acquisition

The Charles F. McKenna Collection was donated to Special Collections in 2009.

## Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Charles F. McKenna Collection commenced and was completed in March 2009.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Charles F. McKenna Collection, Ms2009-031, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

# Biographical Note

Charles F. McKenna was born in Pittsburgh, PA, on October 1, 1844 to James and Anna McKenna. He and his twin brother were the youngest of six children, born shortly before their father's death in 1846. McKenna attended schools in Pittsburgh until, at age 14, he apprenticed to a lithographer, due to his interest in sketching. He would continue to sketch throughout his life, even providing illustrations for a published history of the 155<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers he edited.

McKenna attempted to enlist in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, in August of 1861, but was forced to postpone, owing to his mother's disapproval and her subsequent poor health. In July 1862, at the age of 16, he joined Company E, 155<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. Less than a month after enlisting, McKenna's regiment was on the front lines at Antietam. Over the next three years, he would participate in some of the most pivotal battles of the Civil War: Gettysburg, Chancellorsville, Mine Run, Fredericksburg, and Appomattox. During the long winter encampments, he continued his education with Sergeant George P. Fulton who, following the war, would serve as principal of the Highland Public Schools in Pittsburgh. McKenna served nearly three full years, obtaining leave only once, in January 1865. After his discharge in June 1865, he returned home to Pittsburgh.

In 1869, following several years work in a Pittsburgh law firm, Charles McKenna was admitted to the Allegheny County bar. He was an early member of the Allegheny County Bar Association, as well as a charter member of the Pennsylvania State Bar Association. On October 1, 1872, he married Miss Virginia White. The couple never had any children.

While serving as a Pennsylvania Supreme Court judge in 1904, he was offered the Judgeship of the United States District Court of Porto Rico [sic]. McKenna initially declined the offer, but soon changed his mind. He established the first Elks lodge in Porto Rico [sic] while living in San Juan. He returned to Pittsburgh in late 1906, unable to adapt to the climate. In addition to practicing law again, this time with his nephews, McKenna began to work extensively with Civil War organizations.

First appointed to the Gettysburg Battlefield Commission, he went to to serve as its president for many years. He wrote articles for the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society on topics in local history and the Civil War. In 1910, he edited and illustrated a detailed history of the 155<sup>th</sup> Regiment, titled *Under the Maltese Cross, from Antietam to Appomattox, the Loyal Uprising in Western Pennsylvania, 1861-1865; Campaigns 155th Pennsylvania Volunteers Regiment, Narrated by the Rank and File*. He also created an index of Pennsylvania soldiers who participated in the Battle of Gettysburg for the Pennsylvania Historical Society. At the Battle of Gettysburg 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion in 1913, he and other survivors received commemorative Congressional Medals of Honor for service.

In 1911, then-Pennsylvania Governor John K. Tener appointed McKenna to the newly established County Court of Allegheny County. In 1921, he was elected to complete a second ten-year term. His service was cut short by his death on December 3, 1922.

Fleming, George Thornton. *History of Pittsburgh and Environs, from Prehistoric Days to the Beginning on the American Revolution*. 4 vols. New York: The American Historical Society, 1922.

Eastman, Frank M. *Courts and Lawyers of Pennsylvania: A History*. 3 vols. New York: The American Historical Society, 1922.

"Charles Francis McKenna." United States District Court of Puerto Rico.  
[http://www.prd.uscourts.gov/CourtWeb/bios\\_judge\\_McKenna.aspx](http://www.prd.uscourts.gov/CourtWeb/bios_judge_McKenna.aspx).

## Scope and Content

The Charles F. McKenna Collection contains diaries, personal papers, and published materials relating to McKenna's Civil War service. The materials date from 1861 to 1998 (bulk 1861-1913). The collection is divided into three series: Personal Papers, Published Materials, and Artifacts.

The Personal Papers include McKenna's original diaries (1862-1865); bound photocopies of the diaries; transcriptions on CD-rom; McKenna's discharge papers; photographs of two generals; and a letter regarding the publication of *Under the Maltese Cross, from Antietam to Appomattox, the Loyal Uprising in Western Pennsylvania, 1861-1865; Campaigns 155th Pennsylvania Volunteers Regiment, Narrated by the Rank and File*. The Published Materials include two articles featuring McKenna's letters; a map of McKenna's travels; an issue of *Civil War News*; and Civil War sheet music. Artifacts include a Tower rifle and bayonet and a Solingen cavalry saber.

Elements within the diaries suggest they may not have been recorded at the time of the war, but instead, written down at a later date. The loss of chronology and the absence of entries for large periods of time in 1864 hint at this. Several notes in the text also imply additions at another date. After the entry for June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the following appears: "[N.B. Here my notes ceased, as well as my dates and for the remainder of June and July I will be obliged to record the dates as well as facts from memory][C.F. McKenna. Aug. 1863]." In a lengthy entry for November 30<sup>th</sup>, an asterisk note reads, "Have since learned that it was Genl. Warren made this report to Genl. Meade." At the very least, it appears additions were made to the diaries over time.

Additional materials in this collection include two published titles which are cataloged and located in the Rare Book Collection.

## Separated Material

## Related Archival Material

For information on the 155

- Smith, Robin, and William Younghusband. *American Civil War Zouaves*. Elite series, No. 62. London: Osprey, 1996.
- United States. *Under the Maltese Cross, Antietam to Appomattox, The Loyal Uprising in Western Pennsylvania, 1861-1865; Campaigns 155th Pennsylvania Regiment*. Pittsburg, Pa: 155th Regimental Association, 1910.

E527.5 155th .P466 1910 Spec Civil War

## Keywords

Civil War

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Diaries

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Regimental Histories -- Pennsylvania Infantry -- 155th McKenna, Charles F., 1844-1922

## Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the Charles F. McKenna Collection by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged in the following series:

Series I: Personal Papers, 1862-1913, n.d.

The Personal Papers largely surround the diaries and McKenna's service in the 155<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. McKenna's regiment was present at many noteworthy Civil War battles and the diaries mention several, including Gettysburg and Appomattox. The diaries contain details of McKenna's daily life as a soldier and his self-proclaimed "adventures," news from home, stories about the people he met, the loss of friends, and the treatment of soldiers in different parts of the mid-Atlantic region. He also comments frequently on changes in leadership of his regiment and the reception of various generals and officers in camp. Both diaries contain sketches by McKenna of people and places he encountered. While he does mention being near or taking part in some significant battles, details of the battles themselves are limited.

The final pages of the first diary present a record of the dead, wounded, discharged, transferred, sick, deserters, and promoted in the regiment. The final pages of the second diary focus on McKenna's money spent on clothing, money received from home, and other financial information. Some of the second diary loses its linear chronology, and there are only a few entries for the entire year of 1864.

The photographs are of Major General John Buford and Brigadier General David McMurtree Gregg. The letter comes from Brigadier General David McMurtree Gregg, upon the receipt of a gift copy of McKenna's regimental history. This series is arranged chronologically.

Series II: Published and Printed Materials, 1869-1998

The Published Materials include two articles from *Soldier Life*, Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1996, featuring McKenna's letters; a 1962 map with McKenna's Civil War travels marked in pen; a 1998 issue of *Civil War News*; and a collection of bound sheet music from before 1870. One article talks about boxing for recreation in camp and other talks about the relationship between soldiers, sutlers, and paymasters. The collection of music has a number of names inscribed on the inside cover and initial pages. This series is arranged chronologically.

Series III: Artifacts, n.d.

This series includes a Tower rifle and bayonet, as well as a Solinger cavalry saber.

## Description of Subordinate Components

### Series I: Personal Papers

**Unit Date** 1862-1913, n.d.

#### Charles F. McKenna diaries

**Unit Date** September 3, 1862 - September 3, 1863, September 2, 1863 - June 5, 1865

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

#### Spiral bound photocopy of first diary

**Unit Date** 1862-1863

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

#### Spiral bound photocopy of second diary

**Unit Date** 1863-1865

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

#### CD-rom copies of diaries in Microsoft Word (.doc) and Rich Text Format (.rtf)

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

#### McKenna's discharge papers

**Unit Date** June 2, 1865

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Photographs of Major General John Buford, 1863, and Brigadier General David McMurtrie Gregg, n.d.**

**Unit Date** 1863, n.d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Letter from General David McMurtrie Gregg regarding receipt of a copy of Under the Maltese Cross, from Antietam to Appomattox**

**Unit Date** May 24, 1913

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

**Series II: Published and Printed Materials**

**Unit Date** 1869-1998

**Bound Civil War sheet music**

**Unit Date** [1869?]

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

**Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia map with McKenna's Civil War travels marked in pen**

**Unit Date** 1962

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 9 (folder)

**Two excerpts from: Soldier Life. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books (Features McKenna's letters)**

**Unit Date** 1996

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 10 (folder)

**Civil War News**

**Unit Date** February-March 1998

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 11 (folder)