

Alice McMechen, Collector, Papers of Artist Alvena V. Seckar A&M 4428

Alice McMechen, Collector, Papers of Artist Alvena V. Seckar
1945-1957, 1973-2008, undated



Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

A&M 4428

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Unit ID

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Unit Date

1945-1957, 1973-2008, undated

Language

English .

Abstract

Papers of artist and author Alvena V. Seckar, collected by her friend Alice McMechen. Collection includes newspaper and magazine articles; material regarding work-in-progress "Jewels of Memory"; invitations to Seckar's birthday parties, correspondence, photographs, artworks, and copies of two of Seckar's books.

Creator

Seckar, Alvena, 1916-2012

Creator

McMechen, Alice

Extent

.3 Linear Feet 4 in. (document case)

Physical Location

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Repository

West Virginia and Regional History Center

Administrative Information

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Preferred Citation

[Description and date of item], [Box/folder number], Alice McMechen, Collector, Papers of Artist Alvena V. Seckar, A&M 4428, West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries, Morgantown, West Virginia.

Biographical / Historical

Alvena Seckar was born in McMechen, West Virginia to first-generation immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia in 1915. Her father was a coal miner and the family moved frequently around the coal fields of West Virginia and Pennsylvania during her childhood. Seckar's artistic talents were recognized while she was in school and she was able to attend college, first studying at the University of Pennsylvania. She then transferred to the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She earned her Bachelor's Degree there in 1939 and her Master's Degree in the History of Fine Arts in 1949. Seckar's artwork drew inspiration from her coal field childhood, depicting working class people and landscapes with sympathy but without any attempt to "prettify" her subjects. She was also inspired by her travels in post-World War II Europe, where she visited the Eastern Europe of her parent's heritage. Seckar considered herself a politically conscious artist and took part in the Civil Rights Movement, anti-nuclear movement, and other causes. Seckar came to her second career as a writer almost by accident. She was initially interested in illustrating children's books, but after receiving several rejections, decided to write a book of her own. Like her artwork, her books drew from her childhood experiences living in the coal fields. "Zuska of the Burning Hills" and "Mischko" tell stories of children from Eastern European immigrant families living in coal towns, while "Trapped in the Old Mine" is a science-fiction story for young readers. Seckar continued to write, paint, and exhibit her artwork throughout her life. Even when, later in life, she developed multiple sclerosis, which crippled her right hand, Seckar continued to paint and write, even teaching herself to paint with her left hand. Seckar had been working on a novel regarding the lives of her grandmother, mother, and herself -- tentatively titled "Jewels of Memory" -- which was not published before her death. Seckar passed away on 7 March 2012 in her long-time home of Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.

Content Description

Papers of artist and author Alvena V. Seckar, collected by her friend Alice McMechen. Collection includes newspaper and magazine articles regarding Seckar's later years after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and taught herself how to paint with her (non-dominant) left hand. In addition, there is material regarding "Jewels of Memory", a work-in-progress by Seckar about her mother's life, and regarding Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, which re-issued Seckar's earlier works and would have published "Jewels". There are also illustrated invitations to Seckar's birthday parties, correspondence, photographs, artworks, and copies of two of Seckar's books.

Related Materials

556, 903, 2002, 4204, 4428

Keywords

Women authors, American -- West Virginia -- 20th century

Authors -- Letters and papers

Art and artists

Women's history -- 1929-1950

Women's history -- 1951-present

Women's history -- Emigration and immigration

Slovak Americans

American literature -- Slovak American authors

Description of Subordinate Components

Correspondence from Seckar to Alice McMechen

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150551

Unit Date 1973, 2008, undated

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 1 (Folder)

2 photographs of Seckar in traditional Slovakian costume

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150552

Unit Date ca. 2000

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 2 (Folder)

Illustrated invitations to Seckar's birthday parties and other events

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150553

Unit Date 1996, 2000, 2002, undated

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 3 (Folder)

Newspaper and magazine articles regarding Seckar

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150554

Unit Date 1957, 1979-2000

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 4 (Folder)

Copy of a letter from McMechen to Robert Meeropol, son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, regarding Seckar

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150555

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 5 (Folder)

Article written by Seckar regarding Julius Rosenberg

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150556

Unit Date 1996

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 5 (Folder)

Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers advertisements regarding Seckar's books and Slovak books

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150557

Unit Date ca. 1997

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 6 (Folder)

Computer printout of "Jewels of Memory," Seckar's biography of her mother

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150558

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 7 (Folder)

Copy of "Zuska of the Burning Hills" with dust-jacket

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150559

Unit Date 1952

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 8 (Folder)

Copy of "Misko"

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150560

Unit Date 1956

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 9 (Folder)

5 small pieces of artwork by Seckar

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150561

Unit Date 1945, 1970, undated

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 10 (Folder)

4 photographs of paintings by Seckar

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150562

Unit Date 2003, undated

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 10 (Folder)

Pencil sketch "Jane Street, Greenwich Village" by Seckar

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150563

Unit Date ca. 1950

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 11 (Folder)

Lithograph version of Winifred Lubell's woodcut "Harriet Tubman"

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID [Previous Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/150564

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 12 (Folder)