



Dalhousie University Archives

Finding Aid - Kenneth Leslie fonds (MS-2-232)

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Kenneth Leslie fonds

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Summary information

Repository:	Dalhousie University Archives
Title:	Kenneth Leslie fonds
Reference code:	MS-2-232
Date:	1930-1974 (date of creation)
Language:	English
Physical description:	34 cm of textual records
Note [generalNote]:	Preferred citation: [Identification of item], Kenneth Leslie fonds, MS-2-232, Box [box number], Folder [folder number], Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Journalist and poet Kenneth Leslie was born in 1892 to successful businessman Robert Jamieson and Bertha (Starratt) Leslie in Pictou, Nova Scotia. He was raised and educated in Halifax where he attended the Arnold School (a one room private school), and Alexandra School. At age fourteen he entered Dalhousie University and received a BA in 1912; he then attended the Colgate Theological Seminary for one year; completed a Master of Arts at the University of Nebraska (1914); and continued graduate studies in philosophy and mysticism at Harvard. Throughout this time, Leslie developed an appreciation of poetry, socialism, and mysticism which would dominate his later life.

Upon returning to Halifax, Leslie married Elizabeth Moir, daughter of wealthy Halifax businessman James Moir; they had four children: Kathleen, Gloria, Rosaleen, and Kenneth Alexander (later changed to Alexander Moir). With James Moir's support, Leslie experimented with a number of unsuccessful business ventures including farming and investment. Leslie also became a member of a Halifax literary group while in Nova Scotia called the Song Fishermen. Other members of the group included Charles G.D. Roberts, Charles Bruce, Andrew Merkel, and Robert Norwood.

Leslie later moved to New York City where he experimented with preaching, broadcasting, composing music, and acting. He continued to write poetry and was published in *The Song Fishermens' Song Sheet* as well as *Literary Digest* and *Scribner's Magazine*. In 1934 he published his first book of poetry, *Windward Rock*, by which time his first marriage had ended. Between 1936 and 1938 Leslie published three books of poetry including *By Stubborn Stars and Other Poems* which won the Governor General's Award in 1938. He also began a career as a left-wing journalist in 1938 when he founded the religious and politically minded magazine *Protestant Digest* (later called *The Protestant*) with second wife Marjorie Finlay Hewitt. Three Nova Scotians, Ralph (Kelly) Morton, Sandord Archibald, and Gerald Richardson, helped Leslie establish the popular monthly magazine. In 1943 Leslie established the Textbook Commission to eliminate anti-Semitic statements in American textbooks and in 1944 published

an anti-fascist comic book called *The Challenger*. As publisher and editor of *The Protestant*, Leslie corresponded with many of the prominent American political and social figures of the time and was a popular public speaker.

The later part of the 1940's proved difficult for Leslie. His reputation as anti-Catholic and pro-communist began to grow, there were staff problems at *The Protestant*, and his marriage to Marjorie ended. In 1949, Leslie and his third wife Cathy returned to Halifax when Leslie and *The Protestant* drew criticism from Senator McCarthy for un-American activity.

Leslie's third marriage dissolved shortly after his return to Nova Scotia. He continued to publish *The Protestant* and successor periodicals from Nova Scotia on a smaller scale until 1972 when his health declined. He also worked sporadically as a taxi driver and teacher while continuing to write and publish poetry. In the early 1960's he married his fourth wife, Nora Steenerson. Kenneth Leslie died in Halifax in 1974.

Custodial history

Material donated by Kenneth Leslie's wife, Nora, in 1975.

Scope and content

This fonds consists of correspondence; newspaper clippings; manuscripts; sermons; published books of poetry and *The Protestant*; and other miscellaneous papers.

Notes

Title notes

Restrictions on access

There are no access restrictions on these materials. All materials are open for research.

Conditions governing use

Materials do not circulate and must be used in the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room. Materials may be under copyright. Contact departmental staff for guidance on reproduction.

Related material

The Andrew Merkel Fonds, MS-2-326, contains copies of *The Song Fishermens' Song Sheet*.

Accruals

Furhter accruals are not expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
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Access points

- Textual record (documentary form)
 - Authors, Canadian--20th century (subject)
 - Human rights workers (subject)
 - Manuscripts (subject)
 - Personal archives (subject)
 - Poetry (subject)
 - Protestantism (subject)
 - Halifax (N.S.) (place)
 - New York (N.Y.) (place)
-

Bibliography

Devanney, Burris. "Kenneth Leslie: A Biographical Introduction." *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews*. 5 (1975). 22 June 2006. <<http://www.canadianpoetry.ca/cpjr/vol05/devanney1.htm>>.

Latham, David. "Leslie, Kenneth." *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Story, Norah. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Collection holdings
