

DOROTHEA OLGA McCANTS PAPERS

Mss. 2519, 2535, 2694

Inventory

Compiled by
Camille Boechler

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2024

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SUMMARY

Size	3 linear feet.
Geographic Locations	Avoyelles Parish (La.), Caddo Parish (La.), Natchitoches Parish (La.), Ouachita Parish (La.), Rapides Parish (La.), Finistère (France), Tréguier (France).
Inclusive Dates	1850-1970, undated.
Bulk Dates	1854-1897.
Languages	English, French.
Summary	The Dorothea Olga McCants Papers contain the translated letters of Daughters of the Cross members from 1850 to 1903 and original manuscripts from McCants's <i>They Came to Louisiana: Letters of a Catholic Mission 1854-1882</i> .
Access Restrictions	Negative master reels of microfilm are restricted. Use access copies located at Mss. MF:M.
Reproduction Note	May be reproduced.
Copyright	For those materials not in the public domain, copyright is retained by the descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. Copyright law.
Related Collections	None.
Citation	Dorothea Olga McCants Papers, Mss. 2519, 2535, 2694, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries Special Collections, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack Location(s)	15:25, OS:M, Mss. MF:M

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Olga Ganes McCants was born on November 10, 1901 in Magnolia, Pike County, Mississippi, the daughter of Robert Sidney McCants (1878-1936) and Daisey Purl Coney McCants (1874-1910). McCants was raised in Louisiana, first in New Orleans and later in Shreveport. She graduated from St. Vincent's Academy in Shreveport in 1920 and soon after joined the Daughters of the Cross of St. Vincent de Paul, where she took the name Sister Dorothea. McCants taught in convent-run schools for several years, such as St. Mary's Academy and St. Vincent's Academy in Shreveport, the Presentation Academy in Marksville, and St. Matthew's School in Monroe. After her retirement from teaching, she became interested in the history of the Daughters of the Cross and did extensive research on the congregation, which included the translation of thousands of archived letters and documents in French. She compiled *They Came to Louisiana: Letters of a Catholic Mission 1854-1882* (Louisiana State University Press, 1970), which contains letters written by Mother Mary Hyacinth Le Conniat (1817-1897) and other members of the Daughters of the Cross from their mission in Louisiana to their motherhouse and family members in France. McCants also compiled a sequel to *They Came to Louisiana*, titled *With Valor They Serve* (Claitor's Publishing Division, 1975). McCants died on October 5, 1995, in Shreveport at the age of 93.

Mary Madeleine Le Conniat was born on January 25, 1817, in Brittany, France. She took the name Sister Mary Hyacinth when she joined the Daughters of the Cross at Tréguir in 1840. Le Conniat first came to Louisiana in 1855, where she established the first American convent of the Daughters of the Cross and served as Mother Superior. During her time leading the mission in Louisiana, Le Conniat helped the Daughters of the Cross found schools such as the Presentation Academy in Marksville, St. Joseph's Day School in Isle Brevelle, St. Francis de Sale School in Alexandria, St. Matthew's School in Monroe, and St. Mary's Academy and St. Vincent's Academy in Shreveport. In 1867 the French motherhouse discontinued its support of the Louisiana mission and Le Conniat returned to Brittany, where she helped establish a novitiate and trained nuns for the American convent. In 1869 Le Conniat returned to Louisiana and continued work with the mission without support from the French motherhouse. Le Conniat returned to France for the last time in 1882 to take charge of the American novitiate. Le Conniat died on October 26, 1897, in Brittany at the age of 81.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Dorothea Olga McCants Papers contain translations of letters written from 1850 to 1903 by Mother Mary Hyacinth Le Conniat and other members of the Daughters of the Cross involved in the Louisiana mission. These letters, originally in French, were translated to English by McCants. The papers also contain manuscripts of McCants's *They Came to Louisiana: Letters of a Catholic Mission 1854-1882*, which include a printer's copy and oversized galley proofs of the book, circa 1970.

LIST OF SERIES

Series I. Correspondence, 1850-1903, undated

Series II. *They Came to Louisiana* Book Materials, circa 1970

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I. Correspondence, 1850-1903, undated

This series contains translations of letters written from 1850 to 1903 by Mother Mary Hyacinth Le Connat and other members of the Daughters of the Cross involved in the Louisiana mission (box 1, folders 1-52). These letters, originally in French, were translated to English by McCants. The letters describe the work of the Daughters of the Cross in Avoyelles Parish, Alexandria, Natchitoches, Shreveport, and Monroe, Louisiana. The letters cover many facets of Louisiana's religious, educational, social, and economic history during the late antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction years. The original French language letters are also copied on two reels of microfilm (reels 1-2).

Series II. *They Came to Louisiana* Book Materials, circa 1970

This series contains manuscripts of McCants's book *They Came to Louisiana: Letters of a Catholic Mission 1854-1882*. The manuscripts include a printer's copy (box 1, folders 53-68) and oversized galley proofs (box 2, folders 1 and 2) of the book, both circa 1970. *They Came to Louisiana* is composed of 150 of the translated and edited letters found in Series I. LSU Special Collections houses three copies of *They Came to Louisiana* at BV2300 .D38 M3, as well as one copy of *With Valor They Serve: A Sequel to They Came to Louisiana* at BV2803 .L8 W56.

INDEX TERMS

Catholic Church--France.

Catholic Church--Louisiana.

Catholic Church--Education--Louisiana.

Catholic Church--Missions--Louisiana.

Catholics--Louisiana.

Daughters of the Cross.

Daughters of the Cross--Missions--Louisiana.

Letters (correspondence).

Louisiana--Church history--19th century.

McCants, Dorothea Olga.

Missions--Louisiana.

Nuns--Louisiana.

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
		Series I. Correspondence, 1850-1897, undated	
15:25	1	1	October 1854-August 1855
		2	October 1855
		3	November-December 1855
		4	January-March 1856
		5	April-September 1856
		6	October-December 1856
		7	January-October 1857
		8	November-December 1857
		9	January-March 1858
		10	April-May 1858
		11	June-August 1858
		12	September-December 1858
		13	January-June 1859
		14	July-December 1859
		15	January-July 1860
		16	August-December 1860
		17	January-May 1861
		18	June-November 1861
		19	January-June 1862
		20	August-October 1862
		21	January-December 1863
		22	March 1864-October 1865
		23	March-December 1866
		24	January-April 1867
		25	May-December 1867
		26	January-August 1868
		27	September 1868-November 1869
		28	February-September 1870
		29	January-November 1871
		30	January-December 1872
		31	January-May 1873
		32	July-December 1873
		33	January-December 1874
		34	January-December 1875
		35	January-June 1876
		36	July-December 1876
		37	January-December 1877
		38	January-December 1878
		39	January-December 1879
		40	January-July 1880

Stack

<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
15:25	1	41	August 1880-December 1881
		42	February-December 1882
		43	April 1883-November 1884
		44	January-December 1885
		45	January-December 1886
		46	January-December 1887
		47	January-December 1888
		48	January-December 1889
		49	January-December 1890
		50	January-December 1891
		51	January 1892-November 1893
		52	February 1894-September 1897
Mss.	--	Reels 1-2	Microfilm copies of original French language letters, 1850-1903, undated
MF:M			
		Series II. <i>They Came to Louisiana</i> Book Materials, circa 1970	
15:25	1	53-68	Manuscript pages (printer's copy), circa 1970
OS:M	2	1-2	Manuscript galley proofs (oversized), circa 1970