

Cochron Family Papers, 1899-1946

Collection Summary

Creators: S. George Cochron and Rebecca Evalyn Cochran Simmelink

Title: Cochron Family Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1899-1946

Summary/Abstract: Papers, clippings, photographs, and other items relating to S. George Cochron and his niece Rebecca Cochran Simmelink of Nashville, Tennessee. (George and Rebecca spelled their last names differently.)

Physical Description/Extent: .25 cu. ft.

Series: I. S. George Cochron

II. Rebecca Cochran Simmelink

Accession Number: Acc. 2011.017; Acc. RT-373

Stack Location: Closed stacks workroom range 3 section 1

Repository: Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library, 615 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37219

Chronology

- 1875, July 10 Samuel George Cochron born in Smithland, Kentucky, the sixth of nine children born to John Thomas Cochran and Nancy Rebecca Moxley.
- 1877 The family moved to Crittenden County, Kentucky, where John Cochran operated two hotels; the Crittenden Springs Hotel and the Crittenden House.
- 1880s The family moved to Enfield, Illinois, where John operated another hotel. George attended Enfield schools, trained as a watchmaker in Fairbury, Ill., and served an apprenticeship in Kansas.
- 1880, July 29 Amanda Conley, George's first wife, was born in Alabama.
- 1889, Oct. 21 Valeria Bell Wheeler, George's second wife, was born in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, the oldest child of Ulysses Grant Wheeler and Lillian Parr.
- 1898, June 18 George enlisted in Company C, 9th Regiment of the Illinois Infantry Volunteers. He served in Cuba during the Spanish-American War and was discharged on May 20, 1899.
- 1905-1913 George moved to Nashville and worked as an apprentice at B.H. Stief Jewelry Company, and also worked in Memphis. During this time, he married Amanda Conley.
- 1913, Dec. 25 After a lengthy illness, Amanda Conley Cochron died in Nashville. Amanda's nursing school classmate, Valeria Wheeler, had been caring for Amanda during her illness.
- 1914, Aug. 20 George's niece Rebecca was born in Kentucky, the daughter of his brother John Watts Cochran.
- 1915 George returned to Nashville and worked for Aaron Bergeda, a jeweler who had a shop at 610 Church Street.
- 1917, Feb. 15 George married Valeria Wheeler.

- 1923 George established a watch making and repair business, located at 50-52 The Arcade. He also established a highly accredited watchmaking school, which he ran from the location in the Arcade.
- ca. 1925 George's nephew Edwin Farris Cochran came to Nashville for health reasons and stayed with George and Valeria while recuperating. George legally adopted Edwin, and changed the spelling of the boy's last name to "Cochron." After Edwin graduated from Hume Fogg Technical High School, George sent him to the Elgin Watchmaking School in Elgin, Illinois. In the 1940s, Edwin returned to Nashville and worked for George, later taking over the business in the Arcade.
- 1930 Edwin's sister Rebecca Evalyn Cochran moved to Nashville to live with George and Valeria. George sent her to George Peabody College for Teachers and Vanderbilt University, where she graduated in 1935.
- 1944 Rebecca married Harvey Simmelink, an Army veteran of the Second World War. For the first year of their marriage, the couple lived with George and Valeria.
- 1950, Feb. 11 Samuel George Cochron died at Mid-State Baptist Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. He was buried in Marion, Kentucky.
- 1973, Jan. 27 Valeria Wheeler Cochron died and was buried next to George in Marion, Kentucky.
- 1988, Oct. Rebecca Evalyn Cochran Simmelink died in Pueblo, Colorado.

Biographical/Historical Sketch

Born in Kentucky in 1875, and growing up in Illinois, Samuel George Cochron settled in Nashville, Tennessee after serving in the Spanish American War. He had worked as an apprentice watchmaker in Kansas, Illinois, and Tennessee, and moved to Nashville around 1905, when he became an apprentice at B.F. Stief Jewelry Company. Within a few years, he married Amanda Conley; she died in 1913. On February 15, 1917, George married Valeria Wheeler, and around 1923 they legally adopted George's nephew, Edwin Farris Cochran, son of John Watts Cochran; George had the spelling of the boy's name changed to Cochron. In 1915 George worked for Aaron Bergeda as a watch repairman in Bergeda's shop on Church Street, and eventually took over the business in 1923, also establishing a watchmaking school. Founder of the Tennessee Watchmakers and Jewelers Association, George actively campaigned for watchmakers to be licensed professionals. He was also very active in the regional chapter of the Horological Institute of America. He was also active in Nashville civic and community affairs as a member of the Nashville City Salesmen's Club, a charter member of Trinity Presbyterian Church, the William C. Smith Camp of United Spanish War Veterans, the Al Menah Shrine Temple, and a life member of the Cumberland Lodge, F. & A.M., Scottish Rite Mason. He died on February 11, 1950, and was buried in Kentucky. Valeria died on January 27, 1973, and laid to rest next to her husband.

Rebecca Evalyn Cochran was born on August 20, 1914 in Kentucky, the daughter of George Cochron's brother, John Watts Cochran. Edwin Farris Cochran was her brother. She moved to Nashville in 1930 to live with her uncle and aunt. George sent her to Peabody College, where she graduated in 1935. After graduation, Rebecca continued to live with George and Valeria, working at General Electric and later as George's driver.

Rebecca married Harvey Simmelink in 1944, and the couple lived with the Cochrons for the first year of their marriage. During World War II, Rebecca was active in the Davidson County chapter of the American Red Cross. She was also friends with Nashville photographer Frank Gunter and his first wife, Frances. Rebecca died in Pueblo, Colorado in October 1988.

Scope and Contents of the Collection

Biographies, military records, obituaries, clippings, photographs, educational records, and other papers, dating from 1899 to 1946, documenting the lives of S. George Cochron, a Nashville watchmaker, and his niece, Rebecca Evalyn Cochran Simmelink.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

Organization: Two series: Series I: S. George Cochron; Series II: Rebecca Cochran Simmelink

Arrangement: Within each series, by subject.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access: In library use only. Available by appointment.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction: Copyright undetermined. The Special Collections Division does not own intellectual property rights to these materials.

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Cochran family
Cochran, Edwin Farris
Cochron, S. George, (Samuel George), 1875-1950
Cochron, Valeria Wheeler, 1889-1973
Gunter, Frances Sparks "Pete"
Simmelink, Rebecca Evalyn Cochran, 1914-1988

Corporate Names/Organizations:

American Red Cross. Nashville Area Chapter.
Arcade (Shopping center : Nashville, Tenn.)
Cochron & Sexton Fine Watch Repairing (Nashville, Tenn.)
Cochron's School of Watchmaking (Nashville, Tenn.)
George Peabody College for Teachers
Pappy Good's Cafe (Nashville, Tenn.)
Scottish Rite (Masonic order) -- Tennessee -- Nashville
Tennessee Watchmakers and Jewelers Association
United Spanish War Veterans. Colonel William C. Smith Camp No. 20 (Nashville, Tenn.)
United States. Army. Illinois Infantry Regiment, 9th (1898-1899)

Subjects:

Beaches—Recreational use—Mississippi—Biloxi—Photographs
Business enterprises—Tennessee—Nashville
Businessmen—Tennessee—Nashville
Clock and watch makers—Tennessee--Nashville
Clock and watch making—Tennessee--Nashville
Fraternal organizations--Tennessee--Nashville
Military pensions—United States—Spanish-American War, 1898
Small business—Tennessee—Nashville
Spanish-American War, 1898 – Veterans
Stores, Retail—Tennessee—Nashville –Photographs
Veterans—Tennessee—Biography
Women college students—Tennessee—Nashville
World War, 1939-1945—War work—Women—Tennessee—Nashville

Places:

Biloxi (Miss.)--Photographs
Illinois – Biography
Nashville (Tenn.)--Biography
Nashville (Tenn.)--History --20th century--Sources
Nashville (Tenn.)—Photographs
Tennessee--Biography

Genre/Document Types:

Black-and-white photographs
Certificates
Clippings (information artifacts)
Letters (correspondence)
Manuscripts (document genre)
Military records
Obituaries
Photographs

Occupational Terms:

Businessmen
Clock and watch makers
College students

Added Authors:

Gunter, Frank, photographer
Simmelink, Rebecca Evalyn Cochran, 1914-1988

Administrative Information

Copyright: This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

Preferred Citation: Cochran Family Papers, Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library.

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Majority of materials donated to the Special Collections Division by Cynthia S. Becker, Rebecca Cochran Simmelink's daughter, in March 2011. Seven photographs were donated by Becker to the Special Collections Division in May 2000.

Ownership and Custodial History: In possession of Cynthia S. Becker until donated to the Nashville Public Library. Previously in the custody of her great-uncle, S. George Cochran.

Processing Information: Processed and arranged by Jennifer Quier, Education and Outreach Librarian, in March 2014. Seven photographs, previously housed in the Nashville Historic Photographs Collection (identified as P-4145 to P-4151 and Acc. RT-373) were removed from N.H.P.C., with permission from Photographs Curator Beth Odle, and incorporated into the Cochran Family Papers at time of cataloging in October 2014 by Linda Barnickel.

Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: S. George Cochran

Folder 1: Biographical Materials

1. Typewritten biography of Samuel George Cochran and Rebecca Evalyn Cochran Simmelink.
2. Pedigree chart, starting with Samuel George Cochran and tracing 4 generations of ancestors.
3. Biography and short genealogy of Valeria Bell Wheeler.

Folder 2: Military Discharge and Letters of Reference

1. Reference letter for Private George Cochran, signed by W. S. Scott, Major & Assistant Adjutant General, March 31, 1899.
2. Official Discharge, dated May 20, 1899.
3. Reference letter for Private George Cochran, signed by Jas. M. Moody, Major & Chief Commiss(?), March 29, 1899.
4. Reference letter for George Cochran, signed by George E. Meredith, 1st Lieutenant and Adjutant, 9th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, May 10, 1899.
5. Clipping, United Spanish War Veterans.
6. Envelope with notation "Army Discharge and References." Return address is Cochran's School of Watchmaking, 50 and 52 Arcade, Nashville.

Folder 3: Pension Documents

1. Letter from F.S. Dickson, Chief of Staff, The Adjutant General, Military and Naval Department, Springfield, Illinois, June 14, 1920. As a member of the Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Cochron received a sum of \$124, part of which was held in trust.
2. Postcard from the Bureau of Pensions, Department of the Interior, notifying Cochron that his claim for a pension has been received and numbered 1660,503, February 1930.
3. Transmittal of Certificate No. 1660,503, entitling Cochron to a pension of \$30 a month, commencing February 6, 1930.
4. Pension Certificate No. 1660,503, issued to Cochron, May 10, 1930.
5. Letter to Cochron from the Bureau of Pensions regarding a medical examination, March 14, 1930.
6. Notice from the Bureau of Pensions, stating that "the inclosed check pays your pension to May 4, 1930 and regular payments" will be made every month.
7. Notice from the Bureau of Pensions, advising Cochron that he is entitled to receive a pension of \$35 a month, commencing June 25, 1930.
8. Notice of Continuance of Payments from the Veterans Administration, stating that Cochron would receive \$15 monthly, "on account of being 55 years of age and 50% disabled," August 8, 1933.

Folder 4: Obituaries

1. Obituary clipping for A. H. Rogers, dated February 19, 1963.
2. Clipping, "S.G. Cochron's Rites Will Be Held Monday," *Nashville Banner*.
3. Obituary, "S.G. Cochron, 74, Dies in Hospital," *Nashville Banner*.
4. Obituary clipping, L.D. Travis. No date.
5. Resolutions of Respect in memory of S. George Cochron, from the Col. Wm. C. Smith Camp, No. 20, United Spanish War Veterans, dated February 11, 1950.
6. Letter to Mrs. George S. Cochron from attorney J.E. Travis, dated March 8, 1950.
7. Memorial written by Travis, titled "George S. Cochron, By a Friend."
8. Obituary of Cochron, *The H.I.A. Journal*, March 1950, p. 23.

Folder 5: Miscellaneous

1. "Veteran Watchmaker Tells How He Does It!," *The Southern Jeweler*, June 1943.
 2. Large envelope addressed to S. George Cochron, 50 Arcade, Nashville.
- Oversize Drawer K-4 Folder 19:*
Scottish Rite Mason document, S. George Cochron attainment of 32nd degree, 1915.

Folder 6: Photographs

1. Cabinet card photograph of men at work. S. George Cochron in foreground, apprentice at B.F. Stief's jewelers, 1913.

Folder 7: Photographs

1. Cabinet card photograph of two men standing in clock shop, curtain behind them, desk at right. Older man is S. George Cochron.

Folder 8: Photographs

1. Cabinet card photograph of two men inside of clock shop. Older man seated behind display case is S. George Cochron.

Folder 9: Photographs

1. Display for "Cochron & Sexton Fine Watch Repairing, 50 Arcade (Upstairs)". Features a chart in middle of case (see next image).
2. Chart (photograph) of "American Watch Factories." Same chart is used in center of display case pictured in previous photo.
3. Elaborate display, "Time Keeping Throughout the Ages," with smaller banner advertising S. George Cochron Watch-Clock Service. Stamped on back: "S. George Cochron Watch and Clock Repairing, 50 Arcade".

Folder 10: Photographs

1. *FRAGILE!!*
Six black and white photographs of S. George Cochron in profile, at work at his table. Photos are glued on to black scrapbook paper. Inked notation at bottom indicates he had been a watchmaker for 52 years.

Folder 11: Photographs

1. Black and white photograph of interior of watchmaking shop, taken by Wiles-Hood Photographers. S. George Cochron is 2nd from left, his nephew (and later adopted son) Edwin Cochran is 4th from left.
2. Edwin Cochran in shop, c. 1940s.
3. Display case of watches, Cochron & Sexton Fine Watch Repairing.
4. European Watchmaking display, Cochron & Sexton Fine Watch Repairing.
5. Eli Terry postcard.
6. Patent clock invented by Eli Terry, with notation "This was the personal clock of Mr. Samuel Terry. Now owned by his great-grand-daughter, Miss. Josephine Terry."
7. S. George Cochron at his workbench.
8. Portrait of Cochron with notation "Made 1901 S. Geo. Cochron 26 years old" on back.
9. Portrait of Cochron, made when he was President of the Tennessee Watchmakers and Jewelers Association, taken by W.G. Thuss. 2 copies.
10. Cochron on the front porch of his home, 2110 15th Avenue S, dated 1918.
11. Cochron in front of his home, dated 1918.
12. Cochron and unidentified man.

Series II: Rebecca Cochran Simmelink

Folder 12: Education

1. Admission transcript George Peabody College for Teachers, dated September 11, 1930.
2. George Peabody College for Teachers Acceptance letter and envelope, dated September 12, 1930.
3. Commencement booklet with class rosters, 1935.
4. Commencement Program, June 12, 1935.
5. "Program for Commencement Week," *The Vanderbilt Hustler*, 1935.
6. Certificate of Completion in Stenography, Watkins Institute, June 1936.
7. Letter from Mrs. Miriam Roach, detailing reunion of Beta Tau Phi Sorority, May 3, 1982.

Folder 13: American Red Cross Service

1. War Ration Book, issued to Rebecca E. Cochran.
2. Letter of recognition and pin for hours of knitting, dated June 1946.
3. Certificate of 85 hours served in the Surgical Dressing Corps.
4. Certificate of Recognition for "meritorious personal service performed in behalf of the nation, her armed forces, and suffering humanity in the Second World War," July 1946.

Folder 14: Photographs

1. Interior of Chemistry Lab, Vanderbilt University, Rebecca Cochran in foreground, 1934.
2. Frances "Pete" Sparks Gunter and Rebecca Cochran, house interior, c. 1930s.
3. Group of five women, house interior. Rebecca Cochran is in center. Taken by Frank Gunter, dated December 12, 1938.
4. Group photo, men and women, house interior. Rebecca Cochran is bottom right. Taken by Frank Gunter, dated December 12, 1938.
5. Rebecca Cochran and Frances "Pete" Sparks Gunter at pinball machine in Pappy Good's Cafe on 3rd Avenue.
6. Group photo, women in bathing suits on grass, legs outstretched. From left to right: Irene Cochran, Rebecca Cochran, "Pete" Gunter, unidentified woman, unidentified woman.
7. News clipping photo, *Nashville Banner*, "Nashvillians Seen on Biloxi Beach," August 12, 1941. Photo by Frank Gunter. Left to right: Rebecca Cochran, Marie Dillingham, Frances Gunter, Chloe Dunn, Helon Davis, and Jean Allen Young.
8. Group photo of women at beach in Biloxi, August 1941.
9. Group photo of women standing at ornate iron gates, Natchez, Mississippi. From left to right: Jane Allen Young, Marie Dillingham, Rebecca Cochran, Frances Gunter, Helen Davis, Chloe Dunn. Taken by Frank Gunter.
10. Portrait of Lillian Wheeler, Valeria Wheeler's sister, on Lillian's graduation from nursing school.
11. Archie Hunter, Lillian's husband, in Merchant Marine uniform.