

MACBEAN PAPERS

CHARLES MACBEAN PAPERS

- Provenance:** The Charles MacBean Papers are a gift to Reed College from Charles MacBean.
- Ownership:** Reed College owns the Charles MacBean Papers.
- Access:** Please consult the Special Collections Librarian at Reed College.
- Size:** The collection consists of 2 manuscript boxes, or 1 linear foot.
- Processed by:** Mark Kuestner
- Date:** April 2003; July 2004

Biography

Charles Edward MacBean, one of nine children, was born in Scotland in 1899 to Charles Hammerquist and Maggie MacBean. His family emigrated to Vashon Island, Washington, in 1912.

MacBean, who changed his last name after a disagreement with his father, was educated on Vashon Island at Columbia Elementary School and Vashon High School. After graduation, he joined the Canadian military during World War One and served overseas.

When he returned, MacBean attended Reed College, graduating in 1932 with a major in Greek Literature. At the peak of the depression, he was unable to find work as a teacher. Instead, he worked as a saw filer and remained in construction and logging all his life.

In 1958, he began an English dactylic hexameter translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, a work that earned him considerable respect at Reed. MacBean made the following comment on previous Homeric translations: "The pedants had stolen Homer from the people for whom it had been written." He also translated German poetry and researched Scottish lore. For a time he worked as a reader for Vashon schools, reading English compositions for grading.

MacBean wrote several plays, one of which was staged in the 1960's at the old Vashon Island Club, now Ober Park, entitled "I Love a Plumber." For most of his life, he lived on the island in Cedarhurst Canyon in a cabin he built. But in 1976, over a disagreement

with his country's politics, he decided to move to Canada to live with his son, Arthur Frederick MacBean, rather than remain to celebrate the bicentennial.

Charles Edward MacBean died on June 28, 1984, in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Scope and Content

The Charles MacBean Papers consist of typescript manuscripts of various poems and plays, as well as correspondence with publishers and Reed College personnel. Included are typescript manuscripts of his English dactylic hexameter translations of the ancient Greek dactylic hexameter books of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, along with the translator's comments and cover letters. There are also some autobiographical materials, newspaper clippings, etc.

Box Index

BOX 1

- 1:1 Correspondence and biographical information
- 1:2 Poetry, prose, and plays (typescripts with some illustrations): "Safe Wood-Cutting"; a translation of Goethe's "Hermann and Dorothea"; "Rubaiyat of Hopeless Harry"; "When They Ring the Golden Bells"; "Hush the Battle-Cry"; "Sad Sawdust"; Wobbly Revival"; and "Old Wine in New Bottles" (a light opera)
- 1:3 "Iliad" translation typescripts of various books of Homer's *Iliad*, with commentary
- 1:4 "Odyssey" translation typescript including a preface to the translation with a brief explanation of his thoughts on verse translations.

BOX 2

- 2:1 "Iliad," books I through IX (translation typescripts) along with cover letters to Carleton Whitehead from Charles MacBean and critiques and commentary by Reed Professor F. Peachy and Reed alumna Mary E. Barnard
- 2:2 "Iliad," books X-XX (translation typescripts) along with cover letters to Carleton Whitehead from Charles MacBean