

Finding Aid to the George J. Mehok Papers

Mehok, George J., 1912-1994

George J. Mehok Papers, 1922-1994

.8 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 213

Mss 1596.3

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

Links: Finding aid to the [George J. Mehok Photograph Collection](#)
Finding aid to the [George J. Mehok Research Notes on Fargo Catholicism](#)

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Rev. William Mehok, 1997 (Acc. 2485)

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Citation: [Identification of item]. George J. Mehok Papers, MS 213, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Father George John Mehok Jr. was born on April 16, 1912 in Dresden, North Dakota to Teresa and George Mehok. His parents were born in Czechoslovakia and immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. Father Mehok was the oldest of three sons, all of whom went into the ministry. His brothers, William and Charles, became members of the Jesuit order.

Father Mehok attended school in Dresden and Langdon North Dakota and graduated from high school in 1931 from Nazareth Hall in St. Paul, Minnesota. After graduation, he attended St. Paul Seminary from 1931 to 1937 and later pursued an advanced degree in history at Notre Dame and Columbia University in New York.

On May 22, 1937, Father Mehok was ordained at St. Mary's Cathedral, Fargo, N.D., by Aloisius Cardinal Muench. The next day he offered his first mass in his hometown of Dresden, N.D. Following ordination, Father Mehok served at the St. Anthony of Padua, Fargo congregation from 1937 to 1938 and St. Mary's Cathedral from 1938 to 1941. While serving the two Fargo congregations, he also taught courses at the Sacred Heart Academy (now known as Shanley High School). From 1941 to 1948 he served as pastor for St. Agatha's Church in Hope, N.D., and Sacred Heart, the mission church in Aneta, N.D. Father Mehok ended his career at St. John's in Wahpeton, N.D. where he served for 39 years (1948-1987). In addition to his pastoral appointments, Reverend Mehok was Assistant Editor for *The Catholic Action News* from 1938 to 1951. After his retirement in 1987, he moved to Fargo, N.D. George Mehok died on May 28, 1994, in Fargo.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **George Mehok Papers** consist primarily of letters written to Father Mehok from 1931 to 1993. The collection has been organized into two series: Letters and Subject Files.

The [Letters Series](#) (1931-1994) is arranged chronologically and contains nearly 600 letters written to Father Mehok from a variety of people. In the early files, there are several letters written from his parents, Teresa and George Sr., which are probably written in Czechoslovakian. Father Mehok also corresponded regularly with his two brothers, William and Charles, beginning in the mid-1930s, and ending in the 1980s. William's letters from the 1960s are of particular interest because he writes of his experiences in Rome, Italy where he lived for a number of years.

The early letters in the collection, from 1931 to approximately the mid-1940s, provide interesting information on life in the seminary and the insights and challenges of a priest's first assignment. It is clear that the letter-writers were close friends of George Mehok, and they share interesting reflections on what life in the ministry meant to them. Some of the letters are thoughtful and reflective, while others are distinctly humorous in tone. Some of the writers poke "gentle fun" at themselves and at the priesthood in general. The content of the letters is diverse and covers both the professional and personal, often within the same piece. Three of the most prolific correspondents are Leo Howley, Stanley Powers, and Larry Byrne.

The collection also contains letters written to Father Mehok from servicemen stationed both stateside and overseas during World War II. For the most part, the letter-writers are responding to letters sent to them from Father Mehok (which are not available), giving general information about their living conditions, and expressing their desire to come home. It seems as if they were constantly aware of the censor's knife, and they sometimes refer to the necessity for vagueness in their letters. While the series contains letters

from many different men, Jerome Huschka writes with the most frequency. The file also contains miscellaneous letters and cards from friends, family, fellow clergy, and parishioners.

The [Subject Files Series](#) includes letters and documents related to Father Mehok's personal life and career. Some of the files have information related to his parishes in Aneta, N.D., Hope, N.D., and Wahpeton, N.D. The file also has a few documents dealing with Father Mehok's first solemn mass, ordination, and parish appointments. There are also some miscellaneous financial, legal, and membership papers, such as driver's licenses, property tax forms, and membership cards. This series also includes information on Father Mehok's trips to Asia and Europe. News articles on both his personal and professional life are included in the newspaper clippings file. There are also two documents in the series which bear no signature or title, but it seems likely that they were authored by Father Mehok. One is a reflection on offering Mass for the first time "facing the people" (three leaves), the other document is a history of the Catholic Church in North Dakota (11 leaves).

Six broadsides (placed in Mss 1596.3) include posters of Mehok's trip to Mt. Everest, the Marie Mehok sale, posters from Hope, N. D., and a poster of a Mehok Golf tournament signed by the participants. Also included in the collection are two files documenting the Mehok's genealogy. The audio tape is apparently George Mehok interviewing a relative, Gladys, about their genealogy. Side "B" of the tape is a recorded informal conversation with members of the family. The tape was made on November 28, 1986. The Subject files also document Mehok's passion for golf.

SEPARATION RECORD

Photographs (Institute Photo 2067)

- 61 photographic prints and 5 photography albums. The pictures are of George Mehok, his family, friends, colleagues, and places where he lived.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

1/1 Finding aid, and Biographical material

Letters Series

1/2	1931-1936
1/3	1937
1/4	1938
1/5	1939
1/6	1940
1/7	1941
1/8	1942
1/9	1943
1/10	1944
1/11	1945

1/12	1946
1/13	1947
1/14	1948
1/15	1949
1/16	1950-1951
2/1	1952
2/2	1953
2/3	1954-1959
2/4	1960s
2/5	1970s
2/6	1980s
2/7	1990s
2/8	Undated

Subject Files Series

2/9	Audio Cassette, November 28, 1986
2/10	Aneta, N.D., Sacred Heart Church, Financial Statements 1941-1945, 1947
2/11	Dresden, N.D., 1970-1971
2/12	Education, 1922-1941
2/13	Fiftieth Anniversary and Retirement, 1986-1987
2/14	Financial and Legal Papers, 1937-1952
2/15	First Solemn Mass, Ordination, and Parish Appointments, 1937-1948
2/16	Genealogy
2/17	Golf Memberships and Score Cards, 1942-1988
2/18	Golf Tournament, Aug. 25, 1964
2/19	History of the Catholic Church in North Dakota, n.d.
2/20	Hope, N.D., 1943-1947
2/21	Mehok Center Dedication, 1984
2/22	Memberships/Organizations, 1927-1993
2/23	Newspaper Clippings, 1937-1987
2/24	Office of Price Administration, 1946
Mss 1596.3	Posters
2/25	Reflections on Mass "facing the people," n.d.
2/26	Travel-Asia, 1977
2/27	Travel-Europe, 1979
2/28	Travel-Miscellaneous
2/29	Twenty Fifth Anniversary Cards, 1962
2/30	Wahpeton, N.D., St. John's Church, 1979-1984