

**Provenance** Burke-Gaffney Fonds

**Title** Burke-Gaffney Fonds

**Date** 1918-[1979]

**Extent** 3.41m of textual and 77cm of graphic materials (14 boxes)

**Administrative History/Biographical Sketch** Michael Walter Burke-Gaffney was born in Dublin, Ireland, December 17, 1896 to Thomas and Joan (nee O'Donnell) Burke-Gaffney. He studied at Belvedere College and University College, Dublin, graduating from Dublin National University with a Bachelor's of Engineering in 1917. He then worked as an engineer for the War Office in London, England from 1917-1918. After studying theology in Ireland and France, he served in the Air Ministry from 1918-1920. In 1920, Burke-Gaffney came to Canada and in that same year, worked as a bridge engineer in Manitoba and joined the Society of Jesus. He was naturalized in 1925, and was ordained a priest in 1930. Continuing his studies at Georgetown University in Washington, he earned a Master's Degree in 1933, and then a Doctorate of Astronomy in 1935. After finishing his formal education, he became a lecturer of astronomy at Regis College in Toronto, Ontario from 1935 to 1939. Father Burke-Gaffney also taught in Regina and in Winnipeg before becoming a full-time faculty member of the Jesuit-run Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was the Dean of Engineering from 1940-1948, as well as the Dean of Science for four years. He was a professor of Applied Science from 1948-1955, then taught Astronomy until 1965 when he became professor emeritus and special lecturer. In the course of his scientific career, Father Burke-Gaffney wrote numerous journal articles and several books including *Kepler and the Jesuits* (1944), *Daniel Seghers* (1961), and *Celestial Mechanics in the Sixteenth Century*. Between lecturing and writing, Father Burke-Gaffney was a member of many clubs and associations. Privately, Father Burke-Gaffney conducted extensive research on many subjects, and his personal notes can be found in the Saint Mary's University Archives. He was interested in celestial mechanics and used his astronomical and engineering expertise in this area to calculate and track the orbits of artificial satellites such as Sputnik I and II and Echo I. Other topics he was interested in include photographing astronomical phenomena such as eclipses of the sun and moon; investigating UFO's, superstition, demonology, meteors, and comets as well as writing poetry and collecting flowers. The life of this fascinating man came to an end on Sunday, January 14, 1979 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

**Scope and Content** Fonds consists of seven series: Academic (1940-1974), Associations (1944-1974), Astronomy (1940-1979), Awards and Diplomas (1917-1967), Ecclesiastical (1940-1965), Manuscripts (1930-1972), and Research (1940-1979). Photographs from 1918-1973 (predominant 1950-1970) feature persons, astronomical events, landscapes, plants, places, and paintings

**Restrictions** Access is unrestricted.

**Finding Aid Note** Series and sub-series descriptions available; Other personal information about Burke-Gaffney can be found in Burke-Gaffney fonds, Astronomy series under Burke-Gaffney Observatory; A bibliography of published materials, removed from the Astronomy series, Ecclesiastical series, Research series, and general reference materials, is available in the Archives; Photographs have been catalogued on the Photograph Database, available in the Archives. Refer to that database for location numbers

**Location** 1999.17 A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,M,N ; Photograph Collection