BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

James Gordon Steese was born on January 21, 1882 in Mount Holly Springs, Pennsylvania, the son of James and Anna Zug Steese. Educated in the public schools of his hometown, Steese graduated from the Dickinson College Preparatory School in 1899; he then enrolled in the College as a member of the Class of 1903. However, Steese ultimately graduated with the Class of 1902. As a student he was a member of the Glee Club, Dramatic Club, Orchestra, and Phi Kappa Sigma Fraternity. He was joined at Dickinson by all three of his brothers: John Zug (Class of 1904 and also Phi Kappa Sigma), Charles M. (ex-Class of 1907), and George M. Steese (ex-Class of 1913).

After graduating from Dickinson, Steese attended the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York. Graduating from there in 1907, he earned a commission in the Army Corps of Engineers. In this capacity, Steese worked on the Panama Canal Project and the Isthmian Railroad before serving throughout the continental U.S. on various engineering projects, beginning in 1912. In 1919 he served as assistant chief of engineers and chief of a General Staff Section on a trip to Europe. His service there in the aftermath of World War I earned him several decorations.

Returning to the United States, Steese became the president of the Alaska Road Commission. Serving until 1927, he spent his summers in Alaska working on public works projects and his winters touring the United States raising government awareness for the importance of those public works. A section of highway from Fairbanks to Circle, Alaska was named the Steese Highway in his honor. A colonel in the Regular Army, Steese was also commissioned a brigadier general in the Alaska National Guard.

In 1927 Steese left his public service position because of an injury and retired from the military as well. From 1928 until the outbreak of World War II, he was involved in several business ventures, performing various executive roles. During WWII, Steese returned to public
service, providing assistance to the defense of the Panama Canal as executive assistant to the engineer of maintenance, and later as assistant to the Governor. In 1948 he permanently retired from government service.

Throughout his life, Steese traveled the globe extensively and served as an official delegate of the United States at several international functions. James Gordon Steese died on January 11, 1958 from injuries sustained in a car accident while on a trip through Africa. He had never married.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The James Gordon Steese papers are organized into 12 document boxes, one oversized box, 17 photograph folders, and various artifacts. The collection was donated by James G. Steese, and by his siblings Charles and Sophie after his death. The collection has been arranged into eleven series: Personal Correspondence, Diaries and Journals, Business Papers, Military Papers, Passports, Publications, Maps, Miscellaneous, Albums, Photographs, and Artifacts.

The first series, Personal Correspondence, is comprised of the private correspondence of James Gordon Steese with various organizations and friends; any letters pertaining to business affairs have been removed to the Business Papers series. The letters in this series are organized alphabetically by the last name of the correspondent.

The second series, Diaries and Journals, is comprised of Steese’s private journals, and those he prepared and intended to publish, dating from 1911 until 1958. Of interest is a diary prepared as a manuscript for publication on his travels following World War I. The materials in this series have been arranged chronologically.

Business Papers, the third series, is arranged alphabetically by company name, and then chronologically. Most of the materials, which include correspondence, reports, and official documents, pertain to Steese’s involvement as president of the Slate Creek Placers Mining Company in the late 1930s. The venture with Slate Creek Placers was not profitable, and the collection outlines the downturn of the company and the eventual liquidation of all holdings for the company. Also included in this series are papers relating to the oil-drilling expeditions to the Bocananchital Estate in Mexico.

Military Papers, the fourth series, includes commissions, citations, orders, and promotion documents for Steese and two family members, Francis F. Steese and John Zug Steese. These items have been arranged alphabetically by individual and then chronologically. This series contains several oversized items, which have been designated as OC 2002.4 and are housed separately in oversized folders.

The fifth series, Passports, includes Steese’s United States passports, official delegate passports, and foreign passports from his time in the U.S. Army through 1954. The passports have been arranged chronologically.

Publications, the sixth series, includes publications authored mainly by Steese, as well as a few documents either about him or of importance to his life. Included in the series are newspaper clippings, pamphlets, magazine articles, reports, and two books written by Steese. The materials in this series are arranged alphabetically by author (with unknown authors listed first), and then chronologically. One item has been designated as oversized.

Maps, the seventh series, includes several maps of Alaska, survey maps of various regions, and three maps of WWI that were intended to be part of Steese’s publication on his travels during the end of the war. The maps in this series have been arranged alphabetically by
their subject and then chronologically. Several of the maps are among the oversized materials.

The materials in the Miscellaneous series have been placed in alphabetical order by the name of the individual to which they pertain, and then chronologically thereafter. The majority of these items, which include certificates of achievement, diplomas, and assorted ephemera, pertain to James Gordon Steese. Several of the items have been designated as oversized.

Albums consists of one postcard album, one scrapbook, and several photograph albums of Steese’s travels throughout his life. The subject matter for many of the books includes the Alaskan infrastructure, the construction of the Panama Canal, and the aftermath of WWI. Many of the photographs in the albums covering postwar Europe have been stamped as official U.S. documents. One album documenting West Point and several army bases in California contains photographs taken by R. Schroder. Initials in the front of each album would indicate that some of them were compiled by Steese’s brothers George and Charles during their military careers. Family members have been identified throughout the albums. The materials in this series have been arranged alphabetically by subject matter and then chronologically; albums that consist of several different subjects have been designated as miscellaneous.

Photographs, designated as PC 2002.4, have been separated from the collection of papers and are housed in folders within the Dickinson College photo collection; five oversized photographs have been housed within OC 2002.4 Box 1. The images in this series include several portraits of James Gordon Steese throughout his life, as well as those of his brothers John Zug and Charles and his sister Sophia. These items have been arranged alphabetically by individual and then chronologically.

The final series, Artifacts, has been designated as AC 2002.4. The items in this series, most of which are housed separately within one artifact box, consist of medals awarded to Charles M. and John Zug Steese for their military service, and three ceremonial swords. Two of the swords are Model 1902 U.S. Army Officer Swords belonging to James Gordon and Charles M. Steese; the third is a Fraternal Knights Templar Sword belonging to their father James A. Steese. All three swords are framed in a shadow box. The medals and ribbons belonging to Charles M. Steese, including a Purple Heart, Croix Noir Medal, and various ribbons, are housed within a small artifact box. An Allied Service Medal awarded posthumously to John Zug Steese is attached to a certificate honoring the award, and therefore is housed within the oversized materials. The artifacts are arranged alphabetically by individual.

**COLLECTION INVENTORY**

**BOX 1 - MC 2002.4**

**PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE**

**Folder 01)**
- With the Army Corps of Engineers - Mar. 17, 1926
- With Newton Baker - Mar. 23, 1920
- With Venancio Bernett - 1929-1930
- With Charles Bunnell - 1938-1939

**Folder 02)**
- With W. W. Campbell - 1934
- With Lt. Chapuisat - Sep. 22, 1931
- With Cyril Clemens - June 19, 1939
- With Charles F. Curry - Jan. 28, 1924
- With S. Ennes - Jan. 10, 1917
PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE (cont.)

Folder 03) With Eugenio Gonzalez, Jr. - 1928
With C. R. Gray - Sep. 13, 1916
With Harrison Hall - Apr. 27, 1923
With C. W. Hamilton - Sep. 29, 1947
With J. H. Heckathorn - Nov. 9, 1951

Folder 04) With Edgar Jadwin - June 8, 1926
With Douglas MacAurthur - Oct. 20, 1930
With Douglas McKay - May 25, 1955
With R. E. Reed - Jan. 18, 1930
With Theodore Roosevelt - Feb. 14, 1917
With la Société des Pétroles Shell de l’Ouest Africain Français - Mar. 7, 1931
With A. Sujkowski - Aug. 23, 1934
With Hubert Work - 1924

DIARIES AND JOURNALS

Folder 05) Notes on travels and service - 1882-1956
Folder 06) Diary of travel through South America - 1909-1911
Folder 07) Journal of travel through Europe - 1919
Folder 08) Journal of first six years with Alaska Road Commission - 1920-1926
Folder 09) Journal of travel and expenses - 1925-1957
Folder 10) Journal of service with Alaska Road Commission and Gulf Oil Corporation - 1927-1931
Folder 11) Colombian Diary - 1927-1929
Folder 12) Diary - 1931-1935
Diary - 1936-1940

BUSINESS PAPERS

Department of the Interior - Alaskan Engineering Commission
Folder 03) Circulars - 1923
Remarks made by Steese upon completion of Alaskan Railroad - 1923

Hydrotechnic Corporation
Folder 04) Correspondence re: irrigation of Egypt - 1951-1952

International Highway Association
Folder 05) Stock certificate and letter - 1929

Isthmian Canal Commission
Folder 06) Design of Locks, Dams, and Regulating Works - undated
BOX 2 - MC 2002.4 (cont.)

BUSINESS PAPERS (cont.)

North American Car Corporation
Folder 07) Analysis of oil concessions in Mexico - 1942
Folder 08) Concession contract of H. K. V. Tompkins - 1946
Folder 09) Bocananchital Expense Estimate - c1947
Folder 10) Correspondence re: contract with Cia. Terrenos Bocananchital - 1947
Folder 11) Reports - 1947-1948
Folder 12) Correspondence re: contract with Cia. Terrenos Bocananchital - 1948
Royalty agreement with H. K. V. Tompkins - Apr. 13, 1948

Panama Canal Executive Department
Folder 13) Transcript of Gaceta Oficial with Sinclair Contract - July 5, 1947

Slate Creek Mining Company (also known as Slate Creek Placers, Inc.)
Folder 14) Agreement with Steese - 1936
Folder 15) Reports - 1936-1937
Folder 16) Reports - 1938
Folder 17) Correspondence - 1938-1940

BOX 3 - MC 2002.4

BUSINESS PAPERS (cont.)

Slate Creek Mining Company (also known as Slate Creek Placers, Inc.) (cont.)
Folder 01) Minute book - 1938-1940
Folder 02) Reports - 1939
Folder 03) Agreements and indentures with James M. Elder - 1939-1940
Folder 04) Liquidation report - 1940
Certificate of dissolution of corporation - 1941

South American Gulf Oil Company
Folder 05) Report - 1929

Western Maryland Railway Company
Folder 06) Report - 1916

MILITARY PAPERS
Steese, Francis F.
Folder 07) Official record of military service - 1903
Folder 08) Commissions, appointments, and orders - 1902-1927
Folder 09) Agenda for Galveston Expedition - 1913
Folder 10) Citations and military awards - 1919-1945
Folder 11) Expense charges of U.S.S. Mojave - 1922

Steese, John Zug
Folder 12) Commission and Certificate of honorable service - 1918

PASSPORTS
Folder 13) 1919-1922
Folder 14) 1925-1930
Folder 15) 1926-1933
BOX 3 - MC 2002.4 (cont.)

PASSPORTS (cont.)
  Folder 16) 1931-1940
  Folder 17) 1940-1949
  Folder 18) 1949-1954

PUBLICATIONS
  Anonymous
  Folder 19) Congressional Record - 1914-1958
              Town & Country Review - Feb. 1935
  Averill, Walter A.
  Folder 21) “Road Building in Remote Alaska,” Pacific Builder and Engineer
             - Dec. 4, 1926
  Goethals, George Washington
  Folder 22) “The Building of the Panama Canal,” Scribner’s Magazine –
             Feb.-Jun. 1915

BOX 4 - MC 2002.4

PUBLICATIONS (cont.)
  Steese, James Gordon
  Folder 01) Solid Conics (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy
             Press, 1905)
  Folder 02) The Howitzer (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy
             Press, 1906)
  Folder 03) Mechanics (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy
             Press, 1906)
  Folder 04) “Corps of Engineers and the Isthmian Canal,” Professional Memoirs
             - July-Aug. 1912
             Printed correspondence, The Geographical Journal - Feb. 1913
             “Alaska: Resources, Transportation,” The American Review of
             Reviews - Jan. 1914
             Literature and map reviews, Bulletin of the American Geographical
             Society - Sep. 1914
  Folder 05) Design and Detail of a Country Highway Bridge (West Point, NY:
             United States Military Academy Press, 1915)
             “Coasting from Sky to Sea,” Bulletin of the Pan American Union
             - Jan. and Mar. 1915 (English and Spanish)
  Folder 06) Design and Detail of a Plate Girder Bridge (West Point, NY:
             United States Military Academy Press, 1916)
             Literature and map reviews, Geographical Review - Feb. 1916
  Folder 07) “Are the Honor Men the Best Men?” Journal of the Military
             Service Institution - Jan.-Feb. 1917
             Letters to the Editor, Army and Navy Journal - Jan.-Apr., 1917
BOX 4 - MC 2002.4 (cont.)

PUBLICATIONS (cont.)
Steese, James Gordon (cont.)
Folder 08)  “Procurement of Personnel in War,” National Service - May 1919
Folder 09)  “Construction and Maintenance of Military and Post Roads,”
    Annual Report of the Alaska Road Commission - 1921

Folder 09)  “Road Building in Alaska,” Proceedings of the Eighteenth
    Annual Convention of the American Road Builders’
    Association - Feb. 1921
    “Road Work at Fairbanks,” The Pathfinder of Alaska - May 1921
Folder 10)  “Roads and Trails in Alaska,” Good Roads - Mar. 1, 1922
    “Alaska in 1922,” World Traveler - May 1922
Folder 11)  “Road Construction under the Alaska Commission,” The Highway
    Magazine - Jan. 1923
    “Across Alaska by Automobile.” American Motorist - Mar. 1923
    “Alaska Road Commission,” The Michigan Technic - Mar. 1923
    “Alaska Railroad,” Department of the Interior - June 5-8, 1923
    “Alaska Government Railroad - A National Railroad,” Fairbanks
    Daily News-Miner - July 1, 1923
    “Highway Development by the Alaska Road Commission.”
    Engineering News-Record - Sep. 27, 1923
    “Alaska Railroad,” The Michigan Technic - Nov. 1923
Folder 12)  “Public Works in Alaska.” The Military Engineer - Jan.-Feb. 1924
    “Building Roads to Develop Alaska,” The Highway Magazine -
    Dec. 1924
    “Alaska, Maritime Province of the United States,” Permanent
    International Commission of Navigation Congress - Jan. 1928
    “Prospecting for Oil in South America,” The Military Engineer -
    Jan-Feb. 1930

BOX 5 - MC 2002.4

PUBLICATIONS (cont.)
Steese, James Gordon (cont.)
Folder 01)  “Around the World in Five Weeks,” The Dickinson Alumnus -
    May 1934
    “Four Thousand Miles Across Africa,” The Dickinson Alumnus -
    Sep. 1935
    “Rivers and Harbor Improvements in Alaska,” Bulletin of the Permanent
    International Association of Navigation Congresses - Jan. 1936
    “Seeing Italy Officially,” Dickinson Alumnus - Feb. 1936
    “Trans-Australian Railway,” The Dickinson Alumnus - Feb. 1936
BOX 5 - MC 2002.4 (cont.)

PUBLICATIONS (cont.)
Steese, James Gordon (cont.)
“400 Papers Are Presented at Five Sessions in Paris,” The Oil Weekly - July 15, 1937
“Transportation in Undeveloped Regions,” Comptes Rendus Du Congrès International De Geographie - 1938
“Panama Canal in WWII,” The Military Engineer - Jan. 1948

Folder 03) Newspaper clippings - 1913-1923
Folder 04) Newspaper clippings - c1935-1947
Folder 05) Newspaper clippings - 1949-1954

MAPS
Folder 06) Alaska - 1922-1934
Folder 07) Alaska - 1922-1923
Folder 08) Alaska, Proposed International Highway and Airway - 1928
Folder 09) Columbia - undated

MISCELLANEOUS
Steese, James Gordon
Folder 10) Certificates of academic achievement - 1897-1957
Folder 11) Miscellaneous payment vouchers for dues, expenses, etc. - 1902-1931
Folder 12) U. S. Military Academy Furlough Books - 1906
Folder 13) Railway passes - 1907-1947
Folder 14) Copyright registration for The Howitzer - Feb. 23, 1907
Folder 15) Certificates of membership in professional organizations - 1909-1949
Folder 16) Farewell card made for Steese by four women - Mar. 1910
Folder 17) Certificates of membership in social organizations - 1918-1952
Folder 18) Membership and business cards - 1918-1953
Folder 20) Papers regarding Steese and Dickinson College - 1925-1958
Folder 21) Minutes of l’Ordre de l’Ahal Saxaoul - Dec. 14, 1925
Folder 22) Resolution of the Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska - Oct. 15, 1928
Folder 23) Manuscript, “Bathrooms I have Hated” by Steese - c1935

Steese, John Zug
Folder 24) Certificate from Normal Literary Society - 1899
Tributes in memory of J. Z. Steese - 1919-1930
BOX 6 - MC 2002.4

ALBUMS
Alaska
Folder 01) Roads and bridges - 1920-1922
Folder 02) Mining stations; railroads and stations; Pres. Harding visit - 1921-1923
Folder 03) Road building and bridges - 1921-1923

BOX 7 - MC 2002.4

ALBUMS (cont.)
Panama
Folder 01) Panama; Washington, DC; Colorado; Mt. Holly, PA; Syracuse, NY; Peru - c1910
Folder 02) Panama; Peru; Mt. Holly, PA - c1910
Folder 03) Ft. Mason, CA; West Point; Panama Railroad - c1910

BOX 8 - MC 2002.4

ALBUMS (cont.)
World War I
Folder 01) Yellowstone Park; Niagara Falls; Waterloo Battlefield; France; Belgium; Germany; Great Britain; Italy - 1910-1928
Folder 02) Panama Canal; warships; artillery shells; Charles M. Steese at target practice - 1911-1924
Folder 03) Encampment; U.S. Army Air Corps; military parade; Co. E Engineers; Boullionville, France - 1917-1918
(possibly compiled by George M. Steese)

BOX 9 - MC 2002.4

ALBUMS (cont.)
World War I (cont.)
Folder 01) Meuse-Argonne; St. Mihiel; U-Boats; Rome; Marne; Venice - 1919
miscellaneous
Folder 02) Alligator hunt; Ft. Mason, CA; Panama; Dickinson College; Co. E, Engineers in TX - 1897-1913
Folder 03) West Point; Fort Mason, Point Loma, and San Diego, CA - 1905-1908 (Schroder photographs)

BOX 10 - MC 2002.4

ALBUMS (cont.)
Miscellaneous (cont.)
Folder 01) Family and friends - c1906-1910
Folder 02) West Point photograph album - 1906
BOX 11 - MC 2002.4

ALBUMS (cont.)
  Miscellaneous (cont.)
  Folder 01) Souvenir postcards from across the United States - 1906-1914
  Folder 02) Lima, Peru tourist album - 1911

BOX 12 - MC 2002.4

ALBUMS (cont.)
  Miscellaneous (cont.)
  Folder 01) Mt. Holly, PA; Alaska; Tunisia; Arabia; West Point - c1920
  Folder 02) Scrapbook - 1923-1944

BOX 1 - OC 2002.4

MILITARY PAPERS
  Folder 01) Steese, James Gordon
    Diploma from United States Military Academy - 1907
    Commission for rank of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lieutenant - 1907
    Commission for rank of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lieutenant - 1908
    Commission for rank of 1\textsuperscript{st} Lieutenant - 1910
    Diploma from U.S. Army Engineer School - 1910
    Commission for rank of Captain, Army Corps of Engineers - 1914
    Commission for rank of Lt. Colonel, Army Corps of Engineers - 1917
    Commission for rank of Major, Army Corps of Engineers - 1917
    Commission for rank of Lt. Colonel, Army Corps of Engineers - 1918
    Certificate of gold medal for bravery from Montenegro - 1920
    Certificate for service from Greece - 1920
    Certificate for Distinguished Service Medal - 1926
    Commission for rank of Colonel, Regular Army - 1930
    Diploma from United States Military Academy - 1937
    Certificate for Distinguished Service Medal - 1957
    Certificate for Legion of Merit - 1957

  Steese, John Zug
    Allied Service Certificate and Medal - 1919

PUBLICATIONS
  Steese, James Gordon
  Folder 02) “Fifth Congress of the International Surveyors,” Estates Gazette - 1934
MAPS
Folder 03) Alaska - 1929
Arctic Circle - 1930
Plot plan for Bocananchital Estate (2) - 1922
Columbia Survey Map - undated
Ecuador - undated
Steese Highway Plan and Blueprints - 1928
WWI Europe (itinerary of J. G. Steese) - c1918
WWI Italian Front (itinerary of J. G. Steese) - c1918
WWI Western Front (itinerary of J. G. Steese) - c1918

MISCELLANEOUS
Folder 04) Steese, James Andrew
Chautauqua Literary Society Circle certificate - 1887
Campaign Poster - 1910
Certificate of election to PA House of Representatives - 1911

Steese, James Gordon
Diploma from Mt. Holly Public Schools - 1897
Diploma from Dickinson Preparatory School - 1899
Diploma from Dickinson College - 1902
Diploma from Dickinson College - 1906
Diploma from International Correspondence School - 1912
Certificate of membership in American Society of Civil Engineers - 1913
Certificate for Silver Medal in Panama-Pacific International Exposition - 1915

Folder 05) Proclamation of Thanksgiving Day by Thomas Riggs - 1920
Certificate of membership in American Society of Civil Engineers - 1921
Certificate from the French Ministry of Public Instruction - 1921
Poster for lecture, “Harding Tour of Alaska” - 1924
Certificate of membership in l’Ordre de l’Ahal Saxaoul d’el Oued - 1925
Certificate denoting status as delegate to International Congress of Navigation - 1926
Certificate of merit from the Republic of Colombia - 1930
Certificate denoting status as delegate to International Association of Navigation Congresses - 1931
Diploma for honorary degree from Alaska Agricultural College - 1932
Certificate denoting status as delegate to International Congress of Surveyors - 1934
Certificate denoting status as delegate to International Geographic Congress - 1934
Certificate denoting status as delegate to International Congress of Navigation - 1934
Certificate denoting status as delegate to World Petroleum Congress - 1937
Certificate denoting status as delegate to International Geographical Congress - 1938
BOX 1 - OC 2002.4 (cont.)

PHOTOGRAPHS
Folder 06) Steese, Charles M. - undated
Steese, James Gordon - c1915
Steese, James Gordon - c1930
Steese, James Gordon - 1958
Steese, Sophia M. - 1936

PHOTOGRAPHS - PC 2002.4

PHOTOGRAPHS
Folder 01) Alaska Department of Engineering and Public Works chart - c1925
Folder 02) Alaska Railroad maps - 1921
Folder 03) Fort Sill, Oklahoma topographical map - 1914
Folder 04) Gorgas, George - undated
Folder 05) Steese, James Gordon - 1907
Folder 06) Steese, James Gordon - c1920
Folder 07) Steese, James Gordon, with Pres. & Mrs. Warren Harding - 1923
Folder 08) Steese, James Gordon in Africa and Arabia - 1925
Folder 09) Steese, James Gordon - c1930
Folder 10) Steese, James Gordon, with Fred Pierce Corson - c1940
Folder 11) Steese, James Gordon, with staff at the Panama Canal - 1944-1946
Folder 12) Steese, James Gordon - 1958
Folder 13) Steese, John Zug - c1904-1919
Folder 14) Steese, Sophie M. - 1936
Folder 15) Steese Family - c1934
Folder 16) U. S. Military Academy Department of Civil and Military Engineering schematics for bridges - 1916
Folder 17) Unknown French officer - undated

BOX 1 - AC 2002.4

ARTIFACTS
Item 01) Charles M. Steese - Purple Heart Medal
Item 02) Charles M. Steese - Army Staff Accommodation
Item 03) Charles M. Steese - Croix Noir
Item 04) Charles M. Steese - Military Ribbon Bars
Item 05) Charles M. Steese - Loose Military Ribbons
Item 06) John Zug Steese - WWI Allied Service Medal
(attached to certificate in OC 2002.4 Folder 01)
OVERSIZED - AC 2002.4

ARTIFACTS
Item 07) James A. Steese, James G. Steese, Charles M. Steese - Ceremonial swords, framed

This collection register was prepared by Gregory A. Sheridan, February 2002.
This collection register was edited by Michele M. Tourney, October 2003.