

**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC  
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, MURFREESBORO, TN**

**JOHN A. McCLUNG HARTFORD MUSIC COMPANY COLLECTION**

**04-008**

**Creator:**

Gibson, T. J. (Thelma Jean) McClung  
McClung, John A

**Type of Material:**

Song Books, Photographs, Manuscripts

**Physical Description:**

37 Books  
26 Photographs  
2 pieces of sheet music  
.1 linear feet of manuscript materials  
2 sound recordings (on deposit)

**Dates:**

1920 – 2004

**Abstract (Descriptive Summary):**

**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**

Compiled and donated by Thelma Jean McClung Gibson, daughter of John McClung, to the Center for Popular Music in October 2004.

**Subject/Index Terms:**

**Agency History/Biographical Sketch:**

John Alexander McClung was born January 1, 1891 in Talihina, Oklahoma. He served in France during WWI. During the war, he composed poems and put them to music. He was honorably discharged from service and shortly thereafter moved to Hartford, Arkansas. There he attended the Hartford Music Institute, owned by E. M. Bartlett. John became an instructor and sang with various Hartford Quartets. He later became co-owner of the company and traveled the United States teaching singing schools. He was also a member of the Hartford Quartet that toured the country singing at various radio stations. Throughout all of these years, John McClung continued to write songs. John married Minnie Cunningham in 1928 and they had six children (one of these was Thelma Jean). The McClungs ran the Hartford Music Company, which published gospel song books, as well as the Hartford Music Institute singing schools, or Normals. For years they boarded students of these schools in their home. John McClung remained the owner and President of the Hartford Music Company and composed over 300 songs until his death on July 23, 1942.

**Scope and Content:**

This collection constitutes aspects of the history of a small gospel publishing company and singing school in Arkansas through one of its owners, John A. McClung. Gospel song books in the collection were published by fifteen different publishers including the Harford Music Company, Stamps-Baxter Music Company, Ruebush-Kieffer Company, Singer Music Company, Hall & McCreary Company, Morris-Henson Company, Presbyterian Book Store, Fort Smith Song Book Company, Methodist Publishing House, and the J. W. Burke Company.

The majority of the papers are photocopies given by T. J. Gibson, the daughter of John A. McClung. Mrs. Gibson retains the originals. Papers consist of photocopies of newspaper articles, serials, and various excerpts pertaining to the Hartford Music Company and the Hartford Music Institute singing school. Photocopies of J. A. McClung's marriage and death certificates are included. Examples of some of the items published by the Hartford Music Company are "Four Comic Readings," and the March-April 1942 *The Herald of Song*. Original items include a certificate from the Hartford Musical Institute to Miss Nora Steele June 28, 1929 and an issue of *The Hartford Herald* from Thursday, December 19, 1929 containing a song written by J. A. McClung and advertisement for the Hartford Music Company.

Email correspondence from T. J. Gibson includes a biography of her father, John Alexander McClung, information about songs contained on the transcription discs, and an account of hearing the discs with her father's voice for the first time. Published articles of Mrs. Gibson's donation and deposit to the Center are also included.

Photographs are copies of originals still in the possession of T. J. Gibson. The majority are photographs of the Hartford Music Institute from the early 1920s through 1940. There are also photos of J. A. McClung and his wife Minnie, and the Hartford Quartet. A complete listing of photographs follows. A original large photograph of the Hartford Musical Institute taken in Arkansas shows participants in the singing school circa 1930.

### **Collection Contents (Folder/Box List):**

#### **MANUSCRIPTS:**

<b>Box #1</b>	<b>Folder #</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	1	Papers
	2	Photographs
	3	Sheet music
	4	Correspondence
	5	Publicity
	6	Certificate (Hartford Musical Institute) June 28, 1929.

[LPC 2004, updated 6/2007.]

#### **Photographs (all copies) Listed in order**

J. A. McClung

Minnie G. Cunningham and J. A. McClung shortly after marriage May 5, 1929.

Clyde Garner, Al Halp, J.A. McClung, Austin Arnold, Doy Ott

T.J. McClung outside The Hartford Music Co.

Hartford Music Institute Instructors: Hartford, Arkansas

William Ramsey, J. H. Ruebush, E. M. Bartlett, J. A. McClung, L. D. Huffstutler, Robert Vaughan, C. L. Murphree, G. L. Lindsey.

Hartford Music Institute, n.d.

Hartford Music Institute, First Baptist Church, Hartford, Arkansas, early 1920s.

Hartford Music Institute, n.d.

Minnie G. Cunningham and J. A. McClung, 1930s.

Hartford Musical Institute, Fort Smith, Arkansas, 1934.

Hartford Musical Institute Instructors, n.d.

Hartford Musical Institute Instructors, Thomas Benton, Mrs. J. S. Adams, Fern Waits, L. H. Bone, J. A. McClung, W. O. Cooper, R. V. Vaughan, Doy Ott, Austin Arnold, L. D. Huffstutler, R. V. Condrey.

Hartford Quartet: Oris Baldwin, Ancil Baker, Jack Hendry, Al Mabray, Charles Jeffers, Convention Hall Hartford & Harmony Boy Concert, June 24, 1949; and Hartford Quartet: Oris Baldwin, Troy Lumpkin, Ancil Baker, Charles Jeffers, The Concert at Sandsprings High School, March 7, 1949; and Hartford Quartet: Jack Marshall, Troy Lumpkin, Jack Hendry, Ancil Baker, Charles Jeffers, Singing Convention, November 13, 1948.

Hartford School, Hot Springs, Arkansas, June, 1941.

Hartford Singing School, Hartford, Arkansas, 1939.

Minnie McClung's sister, Nancy Cunningham, setting type at the Hartford Music Company, Hartford, Arkansas.

Jake Hess and the Imperials

The Statesmen Quartet

The Hartford Institute, n.d.

Hartford Singing School, Hartford, Arkansas, n.d.

Charlie Waller with J. A. McClung's piano at the SGMA Museum

James Blackwood, Brumley Singing, August 2001.

The Statesmen Quartet, Brumley Singing, August 2001.

### **Arrangement:**

### **Location:**

The gospel song books and sheet music have been separated, cataloged in the Center's InMagic database and housed in their respective areas of the stacks. All other manuscript items (including photograph photocopies) are located in one box filed by accession number in the Manuscript area of the mezzanine stacks. The photographs are cross-referenced in the Iconographic files, searchable in the Iconographic database. The original large (19 x 9 ¼ inch) Hartford Musical Institute photograph is located in the Oversize Photographs box in the oversize section of the stacks. The original Hartford Herald newspaper is housed in the extra-large metal cabinet in the Manuscript drawer by accession number.

### **Related Materials:**

The Center for Popular Music holds other Hartford Music Company publications in the Rare Books category of its Special Collections, searchable in the InMagic database. Two instantaneous discs are on deposit from Mrs. Gibson and located in the manuscript holding area

on the mezzanine, filed by accession number. A printed log of songs and artists is included with the printed finding aid.

**MARC:**

**EAD:**