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The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ **John Hughes Letters, 1921-1926** ◀

MSS-113

Size: 1/2 in.

Provenance: The John Hughes letters were donated by the grandson of David Hughes, David McFall, in October, 1995.

Access: open

Collection Summary: Collection consists of twenty-nine letters written from Toledo to his brother, David Hughes, in Canada. The letters combine family concerns with comments on the political, social, and economic scene in Toledo during the early and middle 1920's.

Subjects: [Business and Commerce](#), [Social Life & Customs](#)

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John Hughes
Letters, 1921-1926

Introduction

This small collection consists of twenty-nine letters written between 1921-1926 by John Hughes from Toledo to his brother, David, living in Toronto. A middle class businessman with limited formal education, Hughes describes life as he saw it in Toledo, the United States, and the international scene.

There are no restrictions on the use of or access to these letters.

Biographical Sketch

John Hughes (1847-1931), the son of Job and Elizabeth (Thorpe), was born and grew up in Sharon, Ontario, a farming community near Toronto. The Hughes family had emigrated from Pennsylvania in the early 1800's. Job and Elizabeth Hughes were members of the Children of Peace, a local religious off-shoot of the Society of Friends (Quakers).

Hughes studied telegraphy for a short time in 1866 at the Eastman School of Business in Poughkeepsie, NY. After trying various jobs in Canada, he decided to move to the United States. In 1872, he located in Toledo as a bookkeeper for a lumber company. Later he went into business for himself, known as "John Hughes, dealer in lumber, lath and shingles." He bought car lots of lumber and shipped them to dealers in the eastern states. He was moderately successful, but was continually seeking new ventures. For example, in 1888 he was involved with the Toledo Loan Company, on their finance committee.

Hughes married Mary Jane Greene in 1875. She died in 1921. They had one daughter, Mary Florance. The family lived in four different locations in Toledo: 1901-1911, 1487 Oakwood; 1911-1924, 2212 Whitney Ave.; 1924, 1011 W. Bancroft; 1924-his death (?), 2709 Cherry St. His business address in 1906 was the H. L. Metzger & Co., located in the Spitzer Building of downtown Toledo.

John Hughes' brother, David (1849-1945), to whom the letters were sent, was also born and reared in Sharon, Ont. He married Jerusha Doan and had one daughter, Eva, who married Arthur McFall. Like his brother, he studied at Eastman School of Business in 1866. He worked at various trades in Sharon, moved to Bolton, Ont., near Toronto, where he kept a general store for about ten years. He then moved to Toronto where he had a wholesale wool business, "D.W. Hughes, Importer and Dealer in Foreign and Domestic Wool."

John Hughes
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Scope and Content

The John Hughes letters consist of 29 letters written from Toledo by John Hughes to his brother, David Hughes, in Canada. They were written from 1921-1926. The letters combine family concerns with comments on the political, social, and economic scene. Hughes often discusses Toledo businesses, such as Libbey-Owens Ford, which he observed from its infancy in the city. He describes the growth of Toledo with commentary on its future. He also discusses his own lumber business, the lumber business in general, the potential of the St. Lawrence Seaway, and the development of the Ford Company, including the impact of the automobile on society. Political matters center around the “problems” in Europe, particularly Communist countries. Also frequently referred to are local and national leaders in politics and business, labor, unions, wages, roads, traffic problems, Prohibition, and comparisons between Canada and the United States. Hughes also describes and comments on contemporary technological advances.

In terms of family matters, there is considerable documentation of health problems, particularly influenza and chicken pox.

The letters would be useful to students of Toledo and to researchers of middle class life and philosophy during that time period.

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Item Description</u>
1	1	Letters [1-29]