

# BRINGING MONTESSORI TO AMERICA

S. S. McClure, Maria Montessori, and the Campaign to Publicize Montessori Education

GERALD L. GUTEK & PATRICIA A. GUTEK

# BRINGING MONTESSORI TO AMERICA

# BRINGING MONTESSORI TO AMERICA

S. S. McClure, Maria Montessori, and the Campaign to Publicize Montessori Education

GERALD L. GUTEK AND PATRICIA A. GUTEK

The University of Alabama Press Tuscaloosa

#### The University of Alabama Press Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487–0380 uapress.ua.edu

Copyright © 2016 by the University of Alabama Press All rights reserved.

Inquiries about reproducing material from this work should be addressed to the University of Alabama Press.

Typeface: Garamond

Manufactured in the United States of America Cover photograph: Maria Montessori and S. S. McClure; courtesy of Bain Collection, Library of Congress Cover design: Michele Myatt Quinn

 $\infty$ 

The paper on which this book is printed meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Gutek, Gerald Lee, author. | Gutek, Patricia, 1941 – author.

Title: Bringing Montessori to America : S.S. Mcclure, Maria Montessori, and the campaign to publicize Montessori education / Gerald L. Gutek and Patricia A. Gutek.

Description: Tuscaloosa : The University of Alabama Press, [2016] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015031838 | ISBN 9780817318970 (cloth : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780817389314 (e book)

Subjects: LCSH: Montessori method of education—United States. | McClure, S. S. (Samuel Sidney), 1857–1949 | Montessori, Maria, 1870–1952.

Classification: LCC LB1029.M75 G88 2016 | DDC 371.39/2—dc23 LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2015031838

#### Contents

## List of Illustrations vii Preface ix

- 2. Maria Montessori: "An Educational Wonder-Worker" 2
  - 3. The Montessori Method 41
- 4. Creating a Favorable Climate of Opinion for the Montessori Method in the United States 57
  - 5. McClure's Magazine Publicizes Montessori 77
  - 6. McClure and the Montessori Educational Association 109
  - 7. Montessori's American Lecture Tour, December 1913 121
    - 8. The Montessori-McClure Breakup 150
  - 9. Montessori Education in the United States Post-McClure 186
    - 10. McClure and Montessori: The Later Years 212

Notes 223 Bibliography 251 Index 257

## Illustrations

#### **FIGURES**

- I. S. S. McClure, from *The Booklovers Magazine*, January 1903.
- Maria Montessori at her desk, from Dorothy Canfield Fisher's A Montessori
   Mother, published by Henry Holt and Company in 1912. 28
- 3. "Montessori children at dinner," from Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method: Scientific Pedagogy, as Applied to Child Education in "The Children's Houses."* 41
- 4. S. S. McClure and Maria Montessori during her American lecture tour, December 1913 (Harris and Ewing, photographer, Library of Congress). 121
  - 5. Above: "Training the sense of touch." Below: "Learning to read and write by touch." Both from Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method: Scientific Pedagogy, as Applied to Child Education in "The Children's Houses."* 146
- 6. Above: "Children touching letters." Below: "Making words with cardboard script." Both from Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method: Scientific Pedagogy, as Applied to Child Education in "The Children's Houses."* 147
- 7. Postcard advertising S. S. McClure's lecture series on the Montessori Method. 1914 (Special Collections and Archives, Knox College Library, Galesburg, Illinois). 187

#### **TABLES**

- 1. Maria Montessori's December 1913 Lecture Tour Report of Net Receipts (Montessori's, Keedick's and McClure's Shares of Net Receipts in Dollars) 166
  - 2. Maria Montessori's December 1913 American Lecture Tour Receipts and Expenses 167

## Preface

This book tells the story of the meeting of two remarkable individuals, Maria Montessori and Samuel Sidney (S. S.) McClure, in the second decade of the twentieth century. Maria Montessori (1870–1952) is acclaimed internationally as one of history's great pioneering educators. Montessori schools operate worldwide in countries as culturally diverse as the United States, the United Kingdom, India, the Netherlands, Spain, and her native Italy, all nations in which she taught and lectured. Montessori's biographers agree that she was a unique individual, a remarkable woman, a physician, and an educator who used her medical and scientific training, her life experience, and her insights to construct a highly innovative philosophy and method of education. Her method challenged the conventional educational wisdom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not only did she have to challenge the rote and routines in schools, she had to overcome the late Victorian era's gender-based restrictions that defined women as wives, mothers, caregivers, and in some cases primary school teachers and nurses. Her biographers, especially Rita Kramer and Phyllis Povell, tell the life story of a determined woman who successfully surmounted the barriers that limited the freedom of women to chart new careers.

While the life story that Montessori's biographers tell is true, might there be something more to the woman whose students refered to her as *La Dottoressa* (the doctor)—the physician turned educator? The five years from 1910 to 1915 when she was connected with S. S. McClure, her American publicist, reveal a multidimensional woman who, while truly a great educator, was a complex personality, determined at all costs to control what she had created.

Montessori's relationship with S. S. McClure (1857–1949) provides a fascinating account of an initially promising, then tortured, relationship between two very strong but totally different personalities. While Montessori's biographers have stood in awe of their subject, history has not been as generous to McClure.