

**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,  
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

**Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 12**

**Finding Aid for**

**Women's Board of Missions Records, 1862 – 1927**

Finding Aid prepared by: Brigette C. Kamsler, February 2012  
With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

**Summary Information**

**Creator:** Women's Board of Missions  
**Title:** Women's Board of Missions Records  
**Inclusive Dates:** 1862 – 1927  
**Bulk Dates:** 1871 – 1927  
**Abstract:** Congregationalist organization from Boston associated with American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Focus on the benefit of women and children throughout the world, to disseminate missionary intelligence, and committed to supporting single women missionaries. Collection also contains programs for the Brookfield Association and the Norwich and New London Society of the Auxiliary Foreign Missionary Society. Papers, minute books, programs and pamphlets documenting various branches of the WBM on the East Coast are available.  
**Size:** 6 boxes, 2.75 linear feet  
**Storage:** Onsite storage  
**Repository:** The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Email: [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance:** Originally part of the independent Missionary Research Library, these records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library archives with the closure of the MRL.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu), or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access Restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, MRL 12: Women's Board of Missions Records, series #, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### History

In January 1868, Congregationalist women in Boston organized the interdenominational New England Women's Foreign Missionary Society. By the following September, the constitution was altered to limit their relationship to collaboration with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The name of the organization then changed to the Women's Board of Missions and was incorporated March 1869.

The focus of the WBM was "to co-operate with the American Board in its... labor for the benefit of women and children in heathen lands, to disseminate missionary intelligence and increase a missionary spirit among Christian women at home and to train children to interest and participation in the work." The Women's Board of Missions was also committed to supporting single women missionaries.

Members believed that the United States was too vast for one organization to cover the nation; therefore the Women's Board of Missions of the Interior was formed in the Chicago area in 1868 and the west coast formed the Women's Board of Missions of the Pacific in 1873.

By 1887, the Women's Board of Missions supported ninety-eight female missionaries, forty-eight bible women, twenty-seven boarding schools and 239 village day schools. Women from various missionary societies created the World's Missionary Committee of Christian Women in 1888 with Abbie B. Child of the WBM elected Chair.

The Women's Board of Missions continued independently until 1936 when it merged as one with the ABCFM.

Sources:

Beaver, R. Pierce. *American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980.

Hill, Patricia R. *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985.

"Women's Board of Missions." *The New-York Times*. 13 January 1887.

**Collection Scope and Content Note**

The collection is organized in four series:

- **Series 1: Correspondence, 1871 – 1893 (1 box, 0.50 lin. ft.)**

This series contains one individual letter and three books of correspondence from members of the New Haven Branch of the Women's Board of Missions. The third volume notes the inclusion of "copies of important missionary and business letters, from the corresponding secretary of the New Haven Branch of the Women's Board of Missions." The recording secretary for the three volumes was Hannah D. Hume. The records detail information on missionaries in the field as well as events in the branch in the United States. Hume refers to the organization in a variety of ways including the Women's Missionary Society of New Haven and the Ladies' Missionary Society.

- **Series 2: Minutes, 1872 – 1927 (3 boxes, 1.50 lin. ft.)**

Within this series are detailed minutes in book form from the New Haven Branch and the New York State Branch of the Women's Board of Missions. The handwritten records detail the proceedings of the Executive, Public and Annual meetings. The records show who was in attendance at the meetings; which issues were voted on; what papers were read and presentations made and other descriptive items showing the daily workings of the Branch.

- **Series 3: Programs and Events, 1898 – 1926 (1 box, 0.50 lin. ft.)**

This series contains records of the branch officers' conference papers, programs and reports from individual branch meetings, and historical sketches of some branches. The programs are detailed and include lists of missionaries and their location throughout the world. The papers also touch on issues the Board dealt with such as having a separate foreign missionary society, union organizations, and missionary qualifications in regards to education and special training by way of preparation.

Interspersed through the programs are presentations from the Children's Societies of the various branches. These meetings involved prayer and song as well as information from various missionary locations throughout the world.

The list of branch meetings is extensive and is limited to the east coast. The branches are a mix of states, counties, cities and towns. The branches are:

Andover and Woburn Branch	New York State Branch
Barnstable Branch	Norfolk and Pilgrim Branch
Brooklyn District, New York State Branch	North Middlesex Branch
Eastern Connecticut Branch	Old Colony Branch
Eastern Maine Branch	Philadelphia Branch
Essex South Branch	Rhode Island Branch
Hampshire County Branch	Springfield Branch
Hartford Branch	Suffolk Branch
Middlesex Branch	Vermont Branch
New Hampshire Branch	Western Maine Branch
New Haven Branch	Worcester County Branch

- **Series 4: Auxiliary Foreign Missionary Society, 1862 – 1879 (1 box, 0.25 lin. ft.)**

Within this series are programs from the Norwich and New London Society and the Brookfield Association of the Auxiliary Foreign Missionary Society. Within each program contains notes of both the men's organization as well as the women's organization.

### Processing

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Acidic items were separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed. Any items in an advanced state of deterioration were placed in Mylar envelopes.

The Missionary Research Library originally called the collection "Women's Board of Missions, New Haven Branch."

### Further Sources

The main records of the ABCFM are held by the Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts and the following link is to the Finding Aid of that collection: <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou01467>

Microfilms of various sections of the Houghton Library collection, most commonly of the earliest pre-1919 correspondence, can be found in many academic libraries.

The Missionary Research Library at the Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary also offers a collection of ABCFM records. Please contact the archives if you would like to see these records at [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu).

The Congregational Library of the Congregational Christian Historical Society, located in Boston Massachusetts, has a number of archival collections available for research. A list of finding aids available online can be accessed on their website:

<http://www.congregationallibrary.org/resources/efg-index>.

## Contents list

### Series 1: Correspondence, 1871 – 1893

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	1	Mary Brown to Dr. Bush, November 30, 1871
1	1	2	New Haven Branch, May 1871 – March 1877
1	1	3	New Haven Branch, April 1877 – August 1882
1	1	4	New Haven Branch, August 1882 – February 1893

### Series 2: Minutes, 1872 – 1927

2	2	1	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, January 1876 – November 1880
2	2	2	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, November 1880 – May 1884
2	2	3	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, June 1884 – May 1889
2	2	4	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, May 1889 – May 1892
2	2	5	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, May 1892 – May 1893 New Haven Branch Public Meeting, April 1892 – May 1894
2	2	6	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, May 1893 – September 1896
2	2	7	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, October 1896 – February 1899
2	3	1	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, March 1899 – May 1902
2	3	2	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, May 1902 – May 1905
2	3	3	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, May 1905 – May 1908
2	3	4	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, May 1908 – February 1911
2	3	5	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, March 1911 – November 1913
2	3	6	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, November 1913 – January 1916
2	3	7	New Haven Branch Executive Meeting, February 1916 – May 1918
2	3	8	New Haven Branch Annual Meeting, Middlesex County Auxiliary of New Haven Branch, September 1875 – October 1927
2	4	1	New Haven Branch Public Meeting, November 1872 – December 1883
2	4	2	New Haven Branch Public Meeting, January 1884 – March 1892
2	4	3	New Haven Branch Public Meeting, April 1893 – May 1909
2	4	4	New York State Branch Executive Committee, May 1897 – November 1902
2	4	5	New York State Branch Executive Committee, December 1902 – February 1907
2	4	6	New York State Branch Executive Committee, March 1907 – May 1911

### Series 3: Programs and Events, 1898 – 1926

3	5	1	Branch Officers Conference Papers, 1916 – 1926
3	5	2 – 21	Programs and Reports of Branch Meetings, 1883 – 1926
3	5	22	Historical Sketches of Branches, 1898 – 1922

**Series 4: Auxiliary Foreign Missionary Society, 1862 – 1879**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
4	6	1	Program, Norwich and New London Society, 1862
4	6	2 – 3	Programs, Brookfield Association, 1865 – 1879