

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

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 2

Finding Aid for

American Constantinople Relief Committee Records, 1912 – 1914



Credit to MRL 2: American Constantinople Relief Committee Records, box 1, folder 10,
The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Brigette C. Kamsler, October 2011
With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

Summary Information

Creator: American Constantinople Relief Committee
Title: American Constantinople Relief Committee Records
Inclusive dates: 1912 – 1914
Abstract: American Constantinople Relief Committee formed in 1912 to raise money for war refugees in Turkey and surrounding area. Quickly raised and sent thousands of dollars in aid to American Red Cross in Constantinople. Committee disbanded in 1914 after questions of integrity were raised against secretary's fundraising practices.
Size: 1 box, 0.25 linear feet
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: 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, 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, MRL2: American Constantinople Relief Committee Records, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

History

The Committee for the Relief of the Wounded and Starving in Constantinople and the Balkan States held their inaugural meeting November 13, 1912. Reverend William I. Haven, secretary of the American Bible Society, gathered individuals from missionary and educational institutions interested in raising money for the people of Turkey in the aftermath of the Balkan War and the continuing effects of the Armenian Genocide.

Honorable Oscar S. Strauss, former ambassador to Turkey, was chosen chairman with Reverend Henry Otis Dwight as vice-chairman. Over \$20,000 was raised in two months from private individuals, which was then distributed by the American Red Cross Committee in Constantinople via Branch Treasurer, William Peet. The Relief Committee elected as secretary William Willard Howard in February 1913, who called upon churches in the United States for donations. Reportedly over 75,000 letters were sent, which raised an additional \$22,000 approximately.

A complaint was raised against the American Constantinople Relief Committee in 1913 by the Post Office Inspector because of Howard; it was revealed he was being investigated as a fraudulent promoter. The Relief Committee, which also objected to Howard's fee of one-fourth the total funds raised, ceased collecting money for refugees until further information could be found. During that time Howard traveled to Albania in October 1913 to see the conditions for himself. The Relief Committee ceased existence by 1914 and fundraising efforts were taken over by other missionary societies, such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Collection Scope and Content Note

Correspondence shows the frequent sums of money being sent in small increments for relief work and acknowledgment of donations. Other details describe the experience of those in places such as Albania, Thrace, Bulgaria and Turkey who were subject to severe disease; overcrowded hospitals from civilians and soldiers; official numbers of refugees; and the number of buildings destroyed. Telegrams asking for aid; information on other missionaries in the area; and information about Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, United States Ambassador in Constantinople are also included. A letter dated January 5, 1914 to Peet from medical missionary Clarence D. Ussher in Van, Turkey-in-Asia comments that the authorities who wish to hide the facts will not appreciate the truth published.

Other correspondence deals with people looking for information on the legitimacy of the Relief Committee and William W. Howard, who wrote many letters asking organizations for donations to the Committee. Howard's letters discuss his own findings when traveling across Albania.

The bulk of correspondence is typed or handwritten copies, with some originals. Files also include copies of other letters and reports sent to missionaries in the field.

Processing

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.

Further additions could be made as the unprocessed Burke collections are completed.

Contents list

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	Correspondence of W. W. Peet, Aug. 1913 – Jan. 1914
1	2	Correspondence of W. W. Peet, Jan. 1914 – June 1914
1	3	Correspondence of William W. Howard, May 1913 – April 1914
1	4	Correspondence of Oscar S. Strauss, 1913
1	5	Correspondence of Oscar S. Strauss, 1914
1	6	General Correspondence, 1912 – 1913
1	7	General Correspondence, 1914
1	8	Minutes and Reports, 1912 – 1914
1	9	News Article Clippings, 1913
1	10	Photographs [26 items]
1	11	Publicity, 1913 – 1914