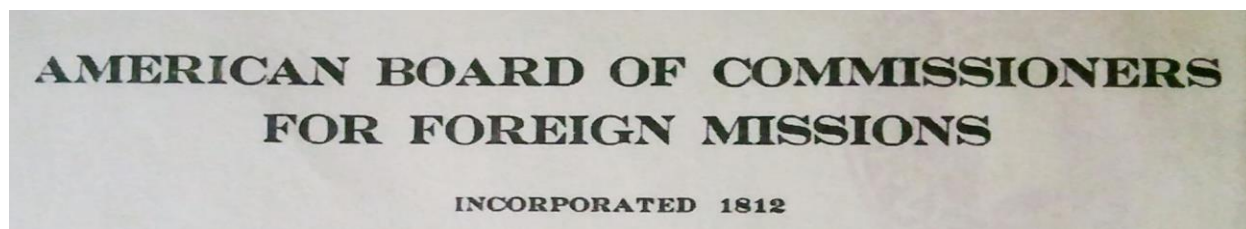


**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 12

Finding Aid for

**American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Records,
1878 – 1958**



Stationary Heading, 1932; Credit to MRL 12: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, series 1, box 1, folder 3, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

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

Summary Information

Creator: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
Title: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Records, 1878-1958
Dates: 1878-1958
Abstract: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, organized in 1810, was first successful North American agency dedicated to foreign missions. ABCFM existed until 1961 when it merged with Board of International Missions to form United Church Board for World Ministries. Collection concerns missions in South Africa in Rhodesia and Zulu; missions in Asia including Turkey, India, Japan, China; missions in Philippine Islands; and ABCFM organization in general.
Size: 7 boxes, 3.25 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, MRL 12: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Records, series #, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

History

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was organized in 1810 by students of Williams College in Massachusetts as the first successful North American agency dedicated to foreign missions. It would grow to be the largest American foreign mission board in the nineteenth century. ABCFM is recognized as a leader in regards to theology, theory, and policies of foreign missions by those in America.

Legally incorporated in 1812, ABCFM sponsored 157 ordained missionaries by 1850. It was Congregationalist in nature but accepted missionaries from a variety of denominational backgrounds. The American missionaries were first sent to Africa in 1834 to work with the Zulu but had earlier supported the first missionaries to the Eastern Mediterranean in 1819. (see Pliny Fisk Papers
http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/libraries/burke/fa/mrl/ldpd_8422927.pdf)

In 1961, ABCFM merged with the Board of International Missions to form United Church Board for World Ministries. In 2000, the UCBWM became the Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ.

References:

- “American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions 200th Anniversary.” United Church of Christ Global Ministries. <http://globalministries.org/resources/mission-study/abcfm-200.html> [accessed September 8, 2011].
- Keto, C. Tsheloane. “Race Relations, Land and the Changing Missionary Role in South Africa: A Case Study of the American Zulu Mission, 1850-1910.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1977), pp. 600-627
- Kling, David W. “The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory*

and Policy, edited by Wilbert R. Shenk, 11-38. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The materials in this collection relate to the operations of the ABCFM throughout the world. The papers are arranged chronologically and alphabetically when appropriate. The collection is organized in three series:

- **Series 1: Board Records, 1921-1937 (1 box, 0.25 lin. ft.)**

This series contains Board Records of the Prudential Committee, which was the Executive Committee of the ABCFM; bulletins and correspondence related to ABCFM missions throughout the world.

The bulletins were sent to members of the ABCFM discussing their major objective with foreign missions; what the American board was asking of its constituency; goals and other financial figures for 1932. The correspondence entails further financial matters; the list of materials relating to ABCFM held by the Missionary Research Library and their geographic locales; and which newspapers will run articles on ABCFM matters. The Department of Missionary Education includes notes on missionary materials; books and their authors. The Prudential Committee records include reports on staff vacancies; administrative year information, and reports on the speaker's bureau.

- **Series 2: Africa, 1885-1958 (5 boxes, 2.50 lin. ft.)**

This series contains reports, meeting minutes, and other materials produced by the ABCFM in Africa, including detailed reports and minutes from multiple stations. The reports relate to the operations of the missions, including school reports; committee reports; reports of medical work and diseases treated; treasurer's reports; and reports for the study of language. Also included is information from different schools including the Mount Salinda School and the Chikore School, which detail names of students and what work they performed in class such as brick making and wood sawing. The minutes are from various African branches of ABCFM including the Rhodesian Mission Branch in South Africa, the Northern Branch and the East Central Africa Mission both in Mount Salinda, as well as the Zulu Missions. Annual meetings, special meetings, financial information and committees' minutes are contained in this series. One folder contains faculty committee minutes.

This series also consists of correspondence dealing with items such as furloughing and reappointment of missionaries; information on changes in board members and actions taken by committees. Files are typed and appear to be copies kept by the secretaries, including Earnest W. Riggs and John S. Marsh; some have annotations and original signatures. Items are written to others in Africa; as well as ABCFM Secretary in Boston, Massachusetts.

- **Series 3: Asia and Philippine Islands, 1878-1950 (1 box, 0.50 lin. ft.)**

This series contains correspondence and reports concerning ABCFM missions in Asia, including China; Eastern and Central Turkey; European Turkey at the Samokov Station in Bulgaria; Japan; and India; and missions in the Philippine Islands. All discuss in detail their experiences with the local population, the current living situations, and other missions in the area. The missionaries speak of when Communists took control in China in 1949-1950. The missionaries in Japan include details about the country's recovery from World War II and the Japanese feeling towards Americans. Those in the Philippines include details from the medical missionaries involving the types of diseases and people receiving medical treatment. The missionaries in Turkey detail the massacres which took place in the late nineteenth century. The earliest report written by missionary James F. Clarke in 1878 in Turkey states,

Our Heavenly Father has kindly & safely kept us all during the past years changes from the war, which has desolated so large a portion of our mission field. For months hostile armies were within 2-3 days of our homes. Refugee Turks filled ^{this place} while crowds of others passed through or near it - towards Constantinople. The reckless, lawless Circassians, in their ravages, spared no race or creed & caused even the Turks to dread them.

Clarke continues later that “our report would hardly be complete without further allusion to political changes” and discusses the Russian army occupation, including the interaction with Turks, Bulgarians and the missionary groups themselves. The European Turkey Mission reports include those from the Collegiate and Theological Institute in Bulgaria, and the Girls Boarding School.

Much of the material is either mimeographed or carbon copy. The reports from the European Turkey Mission are handwritten mission or school copies and include annotations and corrections.

Processing

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Minute books were wrapped in acid-free tissue and tied with acid-free cotton tying tape. Further additions are possible as the unprocessed collections are completed.

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.

See [MRL3: American Madura Mission](#), South India for notes on the Madura Mission's history since its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1909, prepared by John J. Banninga, American Board missionary in Madura, 1901-1942 as well as [MRL3: American Marathi Mission](#) for a typescript copy of information on the general background of the Marathi Mission from 1913 – 1962; and reports on the Ahmednagar, Bombay, Poona, Rahuri, Satara, Sholapur, Vadala, and Wai Stations, compiled by Louise Gliem Fisher, 1962.

Contents list**Series 1: Board Records, 1921 – 1937**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	1	Bulletins, 1932
1	1	2	Correspondence, 1933-1934
1	1	3	Department of Missionary Education Papers, 1921- 1931
1	1	4	Prudential Committee, 1933-1937

Series 2: Africa, 1885-1958

2	2	1	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Constitution, Bylaws and Rules, 1922
2	2	2	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Minutes Book with Secretarial Correspondence, 1885-1909
2	2	3	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Minutes Book with Secretarial Correspondence Index, 1885-1909
2	2	4	Southern Africa, Minutes Index, 1892-1916
2	2	5-7	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Minutes, 1892-1906
2	3	1-7	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Minutes Book, 1906-1929
2	4	1	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Minutes, 1930-1934
2	4	2	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Minutes, Faculty Committee of Mt. Salinda Institute, 1930-1947
2	4	3-5	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Minutes, 1935-1958
2	4	6-9	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Reports, 1894-1913
2	4	10	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Reports, Chikore School, 1907-1909
2	5	1-3	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Reports, 1908-1927
2	5	4	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Chikore Station Report, 1921-1943
2	5	5-8	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Reports, 1928-1942
2	6	1-3	Southern Africa, Rhodesia Branch Reports, 1943 – 1949
2	6	4	Southern Africa, Adams Station and Durban Station, Report Letters, 1949
2	6	5	Southern Africa, Zulu Missions, General Education Policy
2	6	6-7	Southern Africa, Zulu Missions Minutes, 1893-1907
2	6	8-9	Southern Africa, Secretarial Correspondence, 1923-1950
2	6	10	West Africa, Lobita Bay Station, Report Letters, 1949

Series 3: Asia and Philippine Islands, 1878 – 1950

3	7	1	China, Secretarial Correspondence, 1937
3	7	2	China, Report Letters from Missionaries, 1949-1950
3	7	3	China, Foochow Mission, Fukien: Shao-Wu Station Report Letters, 1906-1950
3	7	4	China, Foochow Mission, Fukien: Ing-Hok Station Report Letters, 1907-1914

Series 3: Asia and Philippine Islands, 1878-1950 (Cont'd)

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
3	7	5	China, North China Mission: Pang Chuang Station Report Letters, 1906-1914
3	7	6	Eastern Turkey Mission: Harpoot Station Report Letters, 1906-1914
3	7	7-8	European Turkey Mission: Samakov Station, Bulgaria Annual Reports, 1878-1888
3	7	9	European Turkey Mission: Samakov Station, Bulgaria Girls Boarding School Annual Reports, 1882 – 1898
3	7	10-13	European Turkey Mission: Samakov Station, Bulgaria Collegiate and Theological Institute Annual Reports, 1880 – 1914
3	7	14	Central Turkey Mission: Adana and Aintab Stations Report Letters, 1909-1910
3	7	15	India, Madura Mission: Battalagundu and Aruppukottai Stations Report Letters, 1907-1914
3	7	16	India, Marathi Mission: Soholapur Station Report Letters, 1907-1914
3	7	17	Japan: Doshiba University, Kyoto, and Kobe College, Nishinomiya Report Letters, 1949
3	7	18	Japan Mission: Sapporo Station and Sendai Station Report Letters, 1907-1908
3	7	19	Philippine Islands Report Letters, 1911-1913