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Union Theological Seminary, New York

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 12

Finding Aid for

## Foreign Missions Conference of North America (FMCNA) Records, 1894 – 1968



Credit to MRL 12: Foreign Missions Conference of North America Records, series 2,  
The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

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September 2012; December 2014

With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

### Summary Information

Creator: Foreign Missions Conference of North America  
Title: Foreign Missions Conference of North America Records  
Inclusive dates: 1894 – 1968  
Bulk dates: 1929 – 1950  
Abstract: The Foreign Missions Conference of North America (FMCNA) Records comprise materials documenting inception and institutional proceedings. Established to create dialogue between missions-based action committees confronting contemporary crises of war, famine, and poverty. Collection contains materials such as correspondence, records, pamphlets, and photographs.  
Size: 79 boxes, 35.75 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: Foreign Missions Conference of North America Records, series #, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### History

The Foreign Missions Conference of North America (FMCNA) was a voluntary cooperative association comprised of participating foreign mission boards from the United States and Canada from 1893 – 1952. FMCNA provided the boards with a medium for consultation and cooperation in planning, united action, and administration of joint projects. FMCNA also collaborated with other interdenominational organizations in the United States, and joined with twenty-five similar groups from other countries to form the International Missionary Council.

FMCNA began in 1893 when the first conference of foreign missionary boards from the United States and Canada met in New York. The group continued to meet annually, and in 1911 they adopted a formal constitution and the name FMCNA. The Conference held annual meetings to confer on issues, determine policies, detect overlap, initiate projects, and further the overall advancement of foreign missions. In 1917, the “Committee of Reference and Counsel” was incorporated to officially govern the FMCNA. After this point all of the activities of FMCNA were carried out through committees and subcommittees of the Committee of Reference and Counsel, organized around specific geographic areas and topics such as education, medicine, literacy, and research.

In 1932, a special “Committee on Structure and Function of the FMCNA” was formed to ratify the constitution and restructure the organization to make it a continuing body of elected representatives. In 1940, FMCNA, along with the Federal Council of Churches and six other interdenominational agencies, formed a special “Committee on the Closer Relationships of General Interdenominational Agencies” to discuss the possibility of merging into a single corporate entity, originally known as the North American Council of the Churches of Christ. In 1944 it was determined that Canada would not participate in the merger, and in 1950 the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States (NCC) was formed.

By 1952, FMCNA had fully merged into NCC and it became the Division of Foreign Missions (DFM) of the NCC. The preamble to the by-laws of the Division of Foreign Missions state that FMCNA began in 1893, and that the DFM from 1950 was...”dedicated to the spread of the Christian evangel throughout the whole world.”

Sources:

From the collection itself and the following:

Committee on the Closer Relationships of General Interdenominational Agencies,  
*Report of Committee on the Closer Relationships of General Interdenominational Agencies*, November 1, 1942.

Foreign Missions Conference of North America, *Foreign Missions Conference of North America: Being the Report of the Conference of Foreign Missions Boards in Canada and the United States*, Issues 18, 25, 35, 29, 40, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, New York: Foreign Missions Library, 1911-1952.

Michael, T.J., “Trends toward Union of Protestant Churches,” *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 1945, 136, <http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1945/April/trends-toward-union-of-protestant-churches> (Accessed 29 August 2012).

**Collection Scope and Content Note**

The records of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America serve to document the movement and institutional proceedings of FMCNA. The collection is divided into three series. All of the series contain similar materials such as correspondence, minutes, reports, and news bulletins.

- **Series 1: Administrative Documents, 1919 – 1953 (6 boxes, 3.00 linear feet)**

This series contains correspondence, minutes, reports, news bulletins, and other general documents relating to administrative proceedings of the FMCNA. Arrangement of the material is in two subseries: correspondence and general.

- **Subseries 1A: Correspondence, 1929 – 1950 (2 boxes, 1.00 linear foot)**

The correspondence subseries contains items from representatives of FMCNA, including active individual members such as Charles Fahs and John Mickle, as well as bulk information that FMCNA sent out to members.

- **Subseries 1B: General, 1919 – 1953 (4 boxes, 2.00 linear feet)**

The second subseries contains material relating to the overall organization. Various conferences are included, as are committees related to the sustainability of the organization. The Administrative Documents series shows the institutional proceedings, financial and budgetary history, and official correspondence relating to the organization on the whole.

- **Series 2: Committees, 1894 – 1968 (61 boxes, 27.25 linear feet)**

This series contains correspondence, minutes, reports, news bulletins, and other documents relating to the specific committees of the FMCNA. Arrangement of the material is in three subseries: Committee on Reference and Council, Area Committees,

and Remaining Committees. Certain materials relate to the greater FMCNA organization, but are ordered and housed within the specific committee originating the related material. Arrangement of the material is by alphabetical order, according to the committee name, then chronological order.

○ **Subseries 2A: Committee on Reference and Counsel, 1894 – 1951 (4 boxes, 2.00 linear feet)**

The Committee on Reference and Counsel was incorporated in 1917 to govern and carry out all activities of the FMCNA, maintaining communication at the headquarters, coordinating annual meetings, and serving as a liaison between various committees.

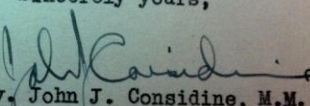
○ **Subseries 2B: Area Committees, 1910 – 1968 (53 boxes, 23.75 linear feet)**

This series is divided geographically, in alphabetical order. The Area Committees work in specific contexts, addressing war, famine, natural disasters, orphan relief and other relief work specific to each region. Housed in this subsection are reports, correspondence, news bulletins, and other regionally-related materials.

The Committee on East Asia and the China Committee which make up a large section in this subseries were once combined into a larger committee, but sectioned off as it became apparent that the geographic areas they addressed were simply too large and had socio-political nuances that required separate considerations. Some of the materials in these committees are related. Two specific events of note in the Committee on East Asia are Guerrilla Relief in Japanese-occupied China and the Gripsholm Exchange and Repatriation Voyages during World War II (WWII). The Guerrilla Relief materials include typed copies of journals and letters from 1939 written by HW Hubbard, George Shepherd, and other eye witnesses. The Gripsholm, a ship servicing the Swedish-American cruise line, was used between 1942 to 1946 for repatriation during WWII. The FMCNA Committee on East Asia section contains documents listing repatriates, voyages, and other logistical information, including correspondence.

Father Keller tells me that you desire a list of our missionaries returning on the Gripsholm. I am happy to enclose it for you.

You will understand when we say that we wish the minimum of publicity for this group of repatriates. The attention given the first group left the unfortunate impression on the public that all our missions in the Orient had been closed for the duration. This is certainly unfair to the priests and Sisters in China who are carrying on so magnificently despite all the difficulties.

Sincerely yours,  
  
 Rev. John J. Considine, M.M.  
 Vicar General

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Making thirty-three trips to exchange women, children, diplomats, prisoners of war, and other nationals between Japan/Germany and the United States/Canada, the ship carried over 27,000 repatriates.

After correspondence with the State Department and consultation with the representative of the Ship Arrival Section of the American Red Cross, many of those interested in welcoming and rendering service to large groups of repatriates returning to the United States on the M.S. Gripsholm about December 2 have become convinced that it would be desirable for some of these unofficial agencies to be permitted to have desks on the pier just outside the gate.

A preliminary survey shows that the following groups are interested in this: Maryknoll Fathers, China Society, Committee for the Relief of Americans in the Philippines, Foreign Missions Conference, Chase National Bank, National City Bank, Socony Vacuum, and the Red Cross.

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Other areas represented in this subseries include Africa, the Far East, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, the Near East, the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

○ **Subseries 2C: Remaining Committees, 1926 – 1955 (15 boxes, 6.75 linear feet)**

The committees in this section are mostly topical in orientation and may span work in various geographic areas. One committee of note is the Committee on Research, Records and Statistics which includes information on the development and management of the Missionary Research Library. The committees in this section are individually listed in alphabetical order.

● **Series 3: Photographs, 1923 – 1933 (1 box, 0.25 linear feet)**

This series contains photographs of FMCNA activity in China. Arrangement of the material is chronological. The photographs are of various FMCNA members and committees in China. Many of the photos are labeled and dated.

### Processing

Processing was completed following the “More Product Less Process” method. Collection was pulled from a large amount of unprocessed material; therefore, order was imposed. Select items had metal clips and staples removed. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Photographs were placed in Mylar sleeves.

### Related Sources

The Burke Library Archives contains many collections which relate to those found in the FMCNA records, such as MRL12: International Missionary Council Records, WAB: National Council of Churches Records, MRL1: Emory Ross Papers and specifically the Africa Committee.

For more information on these collections, please visit the Burke Library Archives website at <http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/burke/archives.html> or contact archives staff by phone, fax or email [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu), as far in advance as possible.

### **Further Sources**

The Foreign Missions Conference of North America was involved with and related to many organizations throughout America and the world. Further collections of note include:

The Library of Congress and the Presbyterian Historical Society are the permanent holders of the records of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, which were donated in 1974. Records of offices, divisions, departments, commissions, committees, and other agencies of the National Council of Churches and of the organizations which consolidated to form the council include the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Foreign Missions Conference of North America, Home Missions Council of North America, Inter-Council Field Committee of the Conference of Interdenominational Executives, International Council of Religious Education, Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, National Protestant Council on Higher Education, Planning Committee for the National Council of Churches, and United Stewardship Council of the United States and Canada.

Specifically, the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, PA holds 11 boxes of FMCNA Records from 1887-1951. The finding aid to Record Group 27, Call Number NCC RG27 can be accessed online at

[http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/fa.cfm?record\\_id=NCC27](http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/fa.cfm?record_id=NCC27).

Other collections related to the National Council of Churches of Christ can be found at

[http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/ncc\\_list.cfm](http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/ncc_list.cfm).

Yale University Divinity School Library in New Haven, CT holds 13 boxes of FMCNA Records from 1913-1950. The finding aid to Record HR1203 can be accessed online at

<http://www.library.yale.edu/div/fa/HR1203.pdf>

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