

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

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 6

Finding Aid for

Mark W. Brown Papers, 1908 - 1965



Image Credit: Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Gregory Adam Scott, April 2010

Reviewed and Updated by Brigette C. Kamsler, January 2014 with financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

Summary Information

Creator: Rev. Dr. Mark W. Brown, 1887 - 1934

Title: Mark W. Brown Papers

Inclusive dates: 1908 - 1965

Bulk dates: 1932 - 1942

Abstract: Mark W. Brown was professor of New Testament and Theology at Peking Theological Seminary; the collection consists of research notes and papers on Brown's collection of bronze Nestorian Crosses from the northwest of China, understood to have later been housed at Drew University; includes general research and bibliographic information on Nestorian Christians in China.

Size: 1 box, 0.50 linear feet

Storage: Onsite storage

Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027

Email: burkearchives@libraries.cul.columbia.edu

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** These records were part of the independent Missionary Research Library prior to 1962, but the exact date of their accession is undocumented. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library 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@libraries.cul.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 6: Mark W. Brown Papers, box # and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography¹

Mark W. Brown was born in North Clarendon, Pennsylvania on September 4, 1887. His undergraduate study was completed at Mount Union College, and in 1911 he was married to Ocie L. Rentsch. For the next three years, he served as a pastor in the Northeast Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and in 1914 received his D.D. from Drew Theological Seminary. In that same year he was assigned to China as a missionary.

Brown was professor of New Testament and Theology at Peking Theological Seminary 北京匯文神學院 in Beijing.² In 1930 he was awarded a Ph.D. from Drew University, and by 1933 he was serving as the secretary of the North China Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1934 he died suddenly in Beijing after a brief illness, survived by his widow and his sister Mabel H. Brown, who had also been a missionary.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The bulk of the collection is connected to Brown's interest in and work on his collection of bronze Nestorian crosses collected from the northwest of China. His article on the subject was published as "The Romance of Nestorian Crosses" in the February, 1933 issue of the *Chinese Recorder*. The material here represents background research, correspondence with other scholars and missionaries, and draft notes on the subject. Folders 1-2 contain a series of black and white photographs of Brown's collection of crosses, six of which were reproduced as plates to accompany his published article.

¹ Much of this is based on Brown's obituary in the *New York Times*, April 14, 1934, p. 15.

² Peking Theological Seminary was founded in 1906 as North China Union Theological College, and united with Peking University in 1911.

Note that Bishop William C. White of the Canadian Anglican Church argued that these were actually not Nestorian crosses, but rather protective amulets connected to Tang- and Song-Dynasty indigenous religion.³

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 photocopied on to acid-free paper as needed. Photographs were lightly brushed clean and placed in Mylar envelopes.

In 2014, the collection and finding aid were updated as part of the Henry Luce Foundation grant.

Contents list

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1-2	Photographs: Brown Collection of Nestorian Crosses, [193?]
1	3	Pamphlets, Articles, Correspondence, 1908 - 1936
1	4	Notes, Address Cards, [191?] - [193?]
1	5-8	Correspondence, Clippings re: Nestorian Crosses, 1932 - 1942
1	9	"Romance of Nestorian Crosses," 3 Copies, 1933
1	10	Notes, Bibliography on Nestorians, [193?] - [1934?]
1	11	Correspondence re: Collection of Nestorian Crosses, 1960 - 1965

³ See his letters published in *The Chinese Recorder*, Vol. 61 (April, 1930): 251-252; Vol. 61 (June 1930): 391-392.