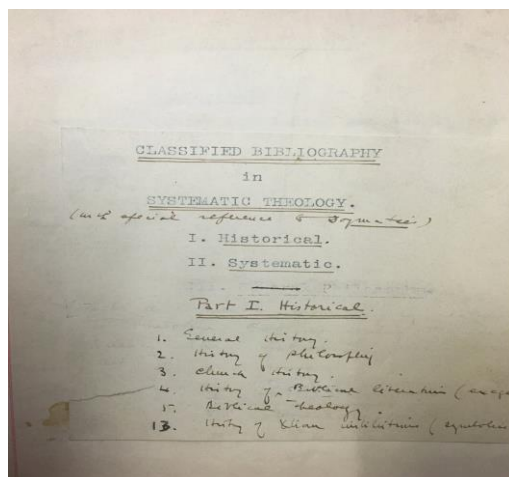


The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary,  
Columbia University in the City of New York

Union Theological Seminary Archives 1

Finding Aid for

**Charles Ripley Gillett, 1874-1939**



Cover sheet, Classified Bibliography in Systematic Theology. Photo credit: UTS1: Charles Ripley Gillett Papers, 1855-1948, Series 1, box 6, folder 5, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Rebecca Nieto, June 2016

With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation

### Summary Information

Creator: Charles Ripley Gillett, 1855-1948  
Title: Charles Ripley Gillett Papers, 1898-1926  
Inclusive dates: 1874-1939  
Bulk dates: 1923-1938  
Abstract: UTS alumnus 1877-1880, Union librarian, Dean of Students, Secretary of the Faculty, instructor and librarian emeritus at Union between 1908 and 1948. Textual materials including writings, manuscripts, research files, correspondence, a notebook and scrapbook.  
Size: 8 boxes, 3.75 linear feet  
Storage: Onsite storage  
Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Email: [burkespecial@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkespecial@library.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance:** The provenance of this collection is unknown. It was part of a large group of unprocessed material that was organized in 2016 during an archival processing project funded by the Henry Luce Foundation and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to [burkespecial@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkespecial@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, may be fragile and necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, Charles Ripley Gillett Papers, series #, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### Biography

Charles Ripley Gillett was born in New York City on November 29, 1855, the son of Presbyterian pastor, librarian and Union alum Ezra Hall Gillett. He attended the University of the City of New York (now New York University) from 1874 to 1876, where he studied civil engineering. In 1877 he went on to attend Union Theological Seminary, where he served as a library assistant and received his diploma in 1880. He was named a Union fellow in 1880-1881, and upon completion of his scholarship was granted funds to study in Germany for two years as part of a Union-affiliated fellowship at the University of Berlin from 1881 to 1883.

Gillett's nearly half-century career at Union began in 1883 with his post as Librarian at the seminary, succeeding Charles Augustus Briggs in this post. Gillett would be Union's librarian until 1908, and Librarian Emeritus from 1929-1948. Gillett was ordained with the New York Presbytery in 1886, where he kept record of roll and minutes from general assemblies into the 1890s. Gillett wore a number of administrative hats during his career at Union, serving as Secretary of the Faculty from 1898 to 1929, Registrar from 1898 to 1900 and again from 1908 to 1924, Dean of Students from 1913 to 1929, and Alumni Secretary from 1913 to 1948. As librarian, Gillett was involved with the acquisition of funds for the McAlpin Collection, the Gillett Collection of British history and theology (begun by E.H. Gillett in 1868), oversaw the transfer of the library's 60,000 volumes to Union's newly-expanded campus on Park Avenue, and guided the development of the library's collection of books and pamphlets as Union transitioned to an interdenominational seminary at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to his extensive writings within his role as Union librarian, Gillett performed ample secretarial and transcription duties with the New York Presbytery and seemed to hold a particular interest in heretical discourses of the day, namely the heresy trial of Charles Briggs and the retirement of Reverend J.D.M. Buckner from his Methodist ministry. Reflecting on the political zeitgeist within Protestant communities at the turn of the century, Gillett would say of the seminary: "Irrespective of storm and tumult without, and unwounded by the shafts leveled at it,

Union is a place of studious calm, where there is that union with God and man wherein is strength.”

Gillett received his Doctorate of Divinity from the University of the City of New York in 1898, and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Beloit College in 1899. Gillett resided in New York City throughout his life excepting summers at a home in Norfolk, Connecticut and winters in Pelham Manor, New York. Following a celebrated career at Union, Charles Ripley Gillett died in Norfolk on September 3, 1948.

### **Collection Scope and Content Note**

The Charles Ripley Gillett Papers consist of writings produced during his roles as librarian and occasional instructor at Union and in his secretarial capacity with the New York Presbytery. Also included here are two boxes of correspondence pertaining to his academic and personal affiliations, as well as Gillett’s investments in heretical trials of the day. This collection comprises entirely of textual materials, most loose but including one notebook and one intact scrapbook. This collection is arranged into two series, “Academic Writing and Notes” and “Correspondence”:

- **Series 1: Academic Writing and Notes, 1889-1939 (6 boxes, 3 lin. ft.)**

This series contains unbound manuscripts of Gillett’s writings in his various capacities at Union. These materials specifically include drafts of Gillett’s exhaustive “Detailed History of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York”, a fully-indexed institutional history published in 1937, with accompanying research materials gathered from Union’s archives, the director’s office, alumni association files, and committee meeting minutes. Also included are writings reflecting Gillett’s bibliographic work and classroom lectures such as an annotated transcription of one of Gillett’s lectures on propaedeutics (an introductory theology course), a handwritten bibliographic classification of systematic theology, a report on the library’s McAlpin Collection, minute- and roll-taking transcripts of the General Assembly of the New York Presbytery from 1889, and minutes from the Briggs trial in 1892.

- **Series 2: Correspondence, 1874-1923 (2 boxes, 0.75 lin. ft.)**

Finally, this series includes correspondence, one file arranged in reverse chronological order and consisting primarily of Union-related business as well as a small amount of personal correspondence, receipts, and letters regarding Gillett’s memberships with the Columbia Country Club and National Lawn Tennis Association. This series also consists of correspondence clippings kept together by Gillett relating to the trial of Reverend J.D.M. Buckner, a Nebraska pastor who was forced to retire from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1922-1923. The clippings, memoranda, and correspondence regarding the case is addressed to Gillett from Emory Buckner, Reverend Buckner’s son and partner in the New York law firm Root, Clark, Buckner and Howland. The series culminates with a 3” scrapbook presented as a dedicatory gift to Gillett in 1932 upon his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Union, and consists of clippings, correspondence and notes to Gillett from colleagues and fellow classmates ranging from 1874 to 1922.

### **Processing**

Paper 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. Published materials held in acidic binders were removed and foldered in their original order wherever possible, excepting the 1932 scrapbook, which is housed as it was compiled in situ.

### **Further Sources**

Charles Ripley Gillett's years at Union are addressed in *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York* by Robert T. Handy, which draws at times from Gillett's own history of the seminary, and which is available as part of the Burke's circulating collections through CLIO, Columbia University Libraries' online catalog.

Also of interest will be the *Union Theological Seminary Alumni Directory, 1836-1958*, which details the dates Gillett held various posts and fellowships detailed in the front matter of this finding aid.

"Incidents in the Librarianship of Charles Ripley Gillett" by Thomas P. Slavens, published in *The Journal of Library History (1966-1972)*, vol. 4, no. 4, will be helpful for researchers interested in a more detailed history of Gillett's activities with Union's library during his tenure.

## Contents list

### Series 1: Academic Writing and Notes, 1889-1939

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
			<b>UTS History</b>
1	1	1-4	First Draft – Detailed History of Union Theological Seminary, 1936
1	1	5-6	Original Index – Detailed History of UTS, 1936
1	1	7	Final Draft, 1937
1	2	1-3	Final Draft, 1937
1	2	4-7	Final Draft – Second Copy, 1937
1	3	1-4	Final Draft – Second Copy, 1937
1	3	5-6	Additional Final Manuscript, 1937
1	4	1-6	Additional Final Manuscript, 1937
1	4	7	Detailed History, 1938
1	5	1	Detailed History, 1938
1	5	2-4	Short History of Union Theological Seminary, 1939
1	5	5-6	Research – Extracts from Source Materials, [193?]
1	6	1-3	Research – Extracts from Source Materials, [193?]
			<b>Teaching and Library Science Materials</b>
1	6	4	Manuscript – Lecture Transcript on Propadeutics, [189?]
1	6	5-6	Classified Bibliography in Systematic Theology, [190?-1955]
1	6	7	Report on the McAlpin Collection in the Library, [1924?]
			<b>New York Presbytery Notes</b>
1	6	8	Notebook – NY Presbytery General Assembly Minutes, 1889
1	6	9	Notebook – Charles A. Briggs Trial: Roll and Notes, Nov 9, 1892

### Series 2: Correspondence, 1874-1923

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
			<b>General</b>
2	1	1	General, 1920-1902
			<b>Buckner Case Correspondence and Clippings</b>
2	1	2	Case-related Memoranda and Articles, 1922-1923
2	1	3-6	Letters and Clippings from Emory Buckner, 1922-1923
			<b>40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Correspondence and Notes</b>
2	2	1	Scrapbook – 40 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute Letters, 1874-1922