

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

Union Theological Seminary Archives 1

Finding Aid for

Mary Ely Lyman Papers, 1916 – 1996



Credit to: UTS1: Mary Ely Lyman Papers, 1916-1996, Series 1, box 1, folder 8,
The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Alexis Waller 2009

Updated and reorganized by Brigette C. Kamsler, January 2015 with financial support from the
Henry Luce Foundation

Summary Information

Creator: Mary Ely Lyman, 1887-1975

Title: Mary Ely Lyman Papers, 1916-1996

Inclusive dates: 1916-1996

Bulk dates: 1920-1969

Abstract: Jesup Professor of English Bible and Dean of Women Students at UTS, first woman to hold full professorship and endowed chair and first woman dean at UTS, author, wife of UTS professor Eugene W. Lyman. Correspondence, lectures, news clippings, UTS publicity releases, UTS alumna records, and photographs.

Size: 2 boxes, 0.50 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:** These papers constitute a constructed collection formed from Lyman's faculty file from UTS President's Office Archives and Lyman's UTS Alumni Office records file.
- 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. One folder containing Lyman's correspondence with student Rebecca Lyman has been marked **FERPA Restricted**. The archival records of living alumni are covered by FERPA and privacy legislation and are closed to research. Records, where 75 or more years have passed since student attendance at UTS, can be released for consultation, according to the Burke Library archives policy, upon request to the archivist at burkearchives@library.columbia.edu.
- Preferred Citation:** UTS1: Mary Ely Lyman Papers, 1916-1996, Series #, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

Known affectionately by family and students as Merrily, Mary Redington Ely Lyman was born in St. Johnsbury, VT on November 24, 1887 and died in Claremont, CA on January 9, 1975.

Lyman received her B.A. from Mt. Holyoke College in 1911 and graduated with a B.D. from Union Theological Seminary in 1919. She was also was the first woman to receive the Traveling Fellowship for the highest academic honors in the graduating class that year. This award sent her to Cambridge, England for one year. The work which she did there was applied toward the Ph.D. in New Testament, which she received from the University of Chicago in 1924.

She had two separate appointments at Union. She became the first of two women (with Sophia Lyon Fahs) to teach on the faculty and be counted among their number (1927). In 1937, Mt. Holyoke College awarded Lyman an honorary Litt.D. She 'retired' from her position on Union faculty in the 1940s when her husband and professor of the philosophy of religion, Eugene William Lyman, retired. She then became dean of Sweet Briar College for Women in Virginia, until her appointment to Union in 1950 as Jesup Professor of English Bible. Dr. Lyman was the first woman to hold a full professorship and an endowed chair at Union. She also held the inaugural deanship for women students until her resignation from both positions in 1955. She remained in close contact with Union until her death in 1975.

Lyman was a meticulous exegete whose focus was interpretation of biblical texts in their contexts and the relevance of biblical texts for contemporary lives and communities. An ordained Congregational minister (1949), she also wrote many articles in support of the Social Gospel movement and women's inclusion in church leadership.

Her published works include:

Paul the Conqueror. New York, The Womans Press, 1919.

Knowledge of God in Johannine Thought. New York, Macmillan, 1925.

The Fourth Gospel and The Life of Today. New York, Macmillan, 1931.

Jesus. Hazen Books on Religion Series. New York, Association Press, 1941.

Collection Scope and Content Note

This small collection consists of correspondence written during Lyman's years as a student at UTS, Cambridge and the University of Chicago, personal correspondence, correspondence and lectures from her teaching career at UTS, as well as correspondence written on her behalf pertaining to proposed faculty appointments at Vassar, Mt. Holyoke College, Smith College, and Sweet Briar.

- **Series 1: UTS Alumna File, 1916 - 1996 (1 box, 0.25 lin. ft.)**

This series contains Lyman's UTS alumna records, including correspondence, news clippings, photographs and other materials documenting her early coursework at Union, her graduate studies at Cambridge and University of Chicago, as well as her teaching career at UTS.

- **Series 2: President's Office Faculty Files, 1919 - 1975(1 box, 0.25 lin. ft.)**

This series consists primarily of correspondence between Lyman and UTS Presidents Henry Sloane Coffin, Henry Pitney Van Dusen and John Bennett, papers regarding her UTS faculty appointment and ordination. Personal correspondence with her husband and letters written during her world travels are also to be found here.

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 acid-free paper and/or separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed.

In 2015, the collection was updated as part of the Henry Luce Foundation grant. At this time, the collection was split into two boxes.

Related Sources

The Robert E. Seaver Papers at The Burke Library Archives also contain correspondence written between 1956-1965 from Lyman to Seaver, UTS Professor of Speech and Drama (See UTS1: Robert E. Seaver Papers, 1918-2009. Series 7A, Box 2, f 1-2; Box 4, f6). The Burke Library also offers collections related to Coffin, Van Dusen, Bennett, and other material to her chair appointments at UTS. For more information, please see the [Burke Library Archives website](#).

Contents list

Series 1: UTS Alumna File, 1916-1996

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	1	UTS Student and Alumna Records, 1916-1975
1	1	2	Correspondence, Fellowships and Teaching Positions, 1919-1939
1	1	3	Correspondence, 1920-1969
1	1	4	UTS Publicity Releases and Biographical Sketches, 1940-1975
1	1	5-7	News Clippings, 1940-1975
1	1	8	Four Photographs, B and W - M E Lyman, Husband, House
1	1	9	UTS Inaugural Address and Lectures, 1950-1959
1	1	10	UTS Publicity Office Correspondence, 1950-1960
1	1	11	[FERPA] Correspondence re UTS Student, 1954
1	1	12	Magazine Articles by MEL, 1955; 1959
1	1	13	Notable American Women Correspondence, 1978, 1996
1	1	14	Eugene W. Lyman Memorial Services' Pamphlet, 1948

Series 2: President's Office Faculty Files, 1919-1975

2	2	1	Correspondence-Teaching at Vassar, 1919-1920
2	2	2	Correspondence with Eugene W. Lyman, 1926
2	2	3	Correspondence - Adoption, 1926-1927
2	2	4	Correspondence Teaching Assignments and Petitions, 1927-1930
2	2	5	Correspondence- Mount Holyoke Presidency, 1935-1936
2	2	6	Correspondence, 1948-1949
2	2	7	Correspondence, 1950-1951
2	2	8	Correspondence, 1952-1955
2	2	9	Correspondence-Travels, 1955-1956
2	2	10	Correspondence, 1956-1967
2	2	11	Jesus Announcement-WHN Broadcast Agreement, 1938
2	2	12	Sweet Briar College Conference, 1948
2	2	13	UTS Faculty Appointment, 1949-1950
2	2	14	Inauguration, 1950
2	2	15	Bible as Resource-Monday Morning Lectures, 1952
2	2	16	Memorial by Paul Hoon
2	2	17	Biographical Information