

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

William Adams Brown Ecumenical Archives Group

Finding Aid for

Reginald Humphrey Helfferich Papers, 1832 – 1981



Photograph of R.H. Helfferich at Pichincha Mountain in Quito, Ecuador.
Credit to: Reginald Humphrey Helfferich Papers, WAB, series 3, box 10, folder 7,
The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Melissa Lemons, August 2007

Reviewed and Updated by Kristen Leigh Southworth, December 2013 with financial support
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Summary Information

Creator: Reginald Humphrey Helfferich, 1905 – 1981
Title: Reginald Humphrey Helfferich Papers
Inclusive dates: 1832 – 1981
Bulk dates: 1930 – 1972
Abstract: Evangelical and Reformed Church pastor and Church World Service of NCC member. Includes correspondence, sermons, talks, news clippings, slides, photographs, postcards, filmstrips, audographs, German prayer books, liturgical literature, and other historical family documents, genealogy of five generations of Helfferich pastors of the Reformed Church
Size: 11 manuscript boxes and 1 OS box, 7.25 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:** The papers are part of the William Adams Brown Ecumenical Library Collection, which was founded in 1945 by the Union Theological Seminary Board of Directors.
- 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. Please note that certain materials are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, William Adams Brown Ecumenical Archives: Reginald Humphrey Helfferich Papers, series #, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

Reginald Humphrey Helfferich was the fifth generation in a family of clergymen who had led the parish of Christ Evangelical and Reformed Church in Bath, Pennsylvania for 182 years. The first generation, Rev. Johann Heinrich Helfferich, was sent to the United States as a missionary by the synods of North and South Holland in 1791.

Reginald and his twin brother were born on June 15, 1905 to William Ursinus Helfferich and Nora Schuler Helfferich. Reginald attended Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut for three years before transferring to Ursinus College, the school his grandfather helped start, and from there he received his B.A. in 1929. In 1932 he received his Bachelor of Divinity from the Theological Seminary of the University of Chicago. That same year he married Virginia Merritt, daughter of the first woman in the Connecticut State Senate, Alice Patterson Merritt. He took his first job as the pastor at the Reformed Church in Butler, but when his father died two years later in 1934, he moved to Bath to take over the family parish.

In 1946, Reginald led a failed campaign in the parish to raise money for European war relief. This forced him to reconsider his own prejudices against foreign aid. Confused by all the stereotypes, his wife finally suggested, "Why don't you go overseas and find out?" And so he began his first tour abroad as a volunteer field worker, assisting with the European church's refugee resettlement efforts after World War II. For this, he would later be awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit by Germany in 1961.

World service ministry became the focus of Reginald's work and life, and over the next 35 years he traveled to 161 countries, working in 41 of them to provide aid. He served as General Secretary of the Division of World Service for the Evangelical and Reformed Church, which later merged into the United Church Board for World Ministries, from 1946 until his retirement in 1971. He also helped to create the Church World Service (CWS) of the National Council of Churches (NCC), for which he served as special representative from 1949 to 1972.

Reginald served on the policy boards of 27 organizations, including several that he helped to found: Heifer Project, for which he was Treasurer until 1973; Meals for Millions Foundation, for which he served as Vice President until 1975; CROP; International Voluntary Service; Interchurch Medical Assistance; the Tibetan Foundation; CODEL; PACT; Technoserve; and the Interchurch Aid Committee, which later became the Commission on Interchurch Aid, Refugee, and World Service of the World Council of Churches.

Committed to service and action, Reginald was known for moving forward impatiently on projects, despite the hesitations of his committees and superiors. Once with a mischievous smile he admitted, "I'm the stinker of the whole organization." His primary goal was to "help people help themselves" with the aid of tools, seeds, poultry, animals, and training.

After retiring in 1971 he served the Connecticut Conference as minister of missions until poor health forced him to retire again. He died on June 28, 1981. He was survived by his second wife, Ruth Ernest Helfferich (married in 1963), his son, Merritt Helfferich, his two daughters, Alice Orsini and Deborah Scranton, and eight grandchildren.

Sources:

The collection contains extensive biographical information, including detailed lists of Reginald's involvement with various world service organizations and the exact dates and locations of each of his world travel visits. See Series 1, Box 2, Folder 11, and Series 1, Box 4, Folder 3.

Collection Scope and Content Note

This collection contains a wide range of materials spanning one and a half centuries.

Oversize material was pulled from multiple series, which has been noted throughout the collection. Contained within the oversized box are promotional posters for the Church World Service, news articles and economic reports from Africa, and two items of special interest: the 1832 birth and christening certificate of Amanda Hellana Fogel, Helfferich's paternal grandmother, and the 1887 confirmation certificate of William Augustus Helfferich, his paternal grandfather.

The collection has been organized into three series:

- **Series 1: Personal Materials, 1832-1981 (4 boxes, 1.75 linear ft.)**

This series is divided into two groups. The first section contains Reginald Helfferich's personal correspondence, including a collection of love letters from his first wife in 1930, his diaries from 1942-1946, stamped passports from 1946-1959, as well as travel documents, war rations, and newspaper clippings. This group also contains materials related to Reginald Helfferich's memorial service in 1981, including extensive biographical material compiled and written during the time of his death.

The second section in this series represents a collection of historical materials from the Helfferich family. Some special items include: correspondence, marriage certificate, and

other documents from Reginald's paternal grandparents, William A. Helfferich and Amanda H. Fogel; seven German prayer books dated from 1835 to 1912; Virginia Merrit's baby book; and expense records from 1916 to 1921 that presumably belonged to Reginald's father, William U. Helfferich. Also in this section are correspondence related to the Helfferich family genealogy, as well as notes, drafts, and final copies of Reginald's published work entitled, "In the Footsteps of the Fathers: A Short History of Five Generations of Helfferich ministers in the Service of the Reformed Church in the New World," which was prepared in 1939 for the two-hundredth anniversary of Christ Evangelical and Reformed Church of Bath, Pennsylvania.

- **Series 2: Professional Materials, 1887-1974 (3 boxes, 1.25 linear ft.)**

Folder 1 of Box 5 contains materials related to a variety of professional settings, including: information about Heifer Project International, photographs of the reconstruction work of Bangladesh Ecumenical Relief and Rehabilitation Service, a small copy of the 1895 constitution of Helfferich's church in Bath, Pennsylvania, and a 1887 copy of *The New England Primer* that also includes *The Assemblies of Divines* and *Mr. Cotton's Catechism*.

The remainder of Helfferich's professional papers have been organized into two groups. The first group contains materials related to Helfferich's ministerial work as pastor of Christ Evangelical and Reformed Church of Bath, Pennsylvania, including handwritten notes and drafts of talks and sermons, correspondence related to the estate of Harold J. Horn, planning documents and articles about the church's bicentennial celebration, and correspondence, receipts, and other documents related to the church's administration.

The second group contains materials related to Helfferich's work with Church World Service (CWS), particularly his work with the United Clothing Appeal and his travels to Africa. This includes a collection of newsletters and other promotional materials, as well as correspondence, travel reports, notes, and articles from Africa. Also in this section are the travel receipts, correspondence, and other documents related to Helfferich's 1974 trip to Haiti, including information about the Bellevue Sewing Project and other non-profit organizations.

- **Series 3: Audio/Visual Materials, 1947-1968 (3 boxes, 1.25 linear ft.)**

This series contains audio and visual memorabilia from both Helfferich's personal and professional life, primarily Kodachrome diapositive slides, photographs, and postcards from Helfferich's travels in Europe, Africa, India, South America, and beyond. The slides and photographs have been kept in their original groupings. Additionally, this series contains several Gray Audograph recordings and blank discs, a printing plate diagram for an unidentified schoolroom, and three filmstrips, one of which is entitled "Ease Their Burden," a 1966 film about ministries in New Zealand.

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 separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed. Any items in an advanced state of deterioration were placed in Mylar envelopes.

Further Sources

The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University also houses records for the following organizations:

Church World Service (1925-1969)

http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/locations/burke/fa/wab/ldpd_4492691.pdf

National Council of Churches (1948-1973)

http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/locations/burke/fa/wab/ldpd_8631339.pdf

World Council of Churches (1893-1975)

http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/locations/burke/fa/wab/ldpd_4492716.pdf

Contents list

Series 1: Personal Materials, 1832-1981

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
General			
1	1	1-2	Correspondence, 1891-1970
1	1	3-4	Correspondence from Helfferich's wife, 1930
1	1	5	Diaries, 1942-1943
1	1	6-7	Diaries, 1945-1946
1	2	1	Travel Documents and War Rations, 1942-1959
1	2	2	Passports, 1946-1950
1	2	3	Passports, 1954-1959
1	2	4	Pamphlets, <i>The Evangel</i> , [19??]
1	2	5-8	Pamphlets, <i>The Month at Goodspeeds</i> , 1940-1944
1	2	9	Articles and News Clippings, 1915-1967
1	2	10	News Clippings Originals [FRAGILE], 1915-1967
1	2	11	R.H. Helfferich's Memorial Service, 1981
Genealogy/Family History			
1	3	1	Historical Family Documents, 1832-1891 [OS]
1	3	2	Historical Family Correspondence, 1888-1889
1	3	3-4	"Erklärung der Offenbarung Johannis" [Explanation of the Revelation to John], 1889
1	3	5	German Prayer Books, 1835-1912
1	3	6	Virginia Merritt's Baby Book, 1906-1915
1	3	7	William U. Helfferich's "Parables of Petro the Penman," 1932-1933
1	3	8	Expense Record Books, 1916-1917
1	3	9	Expense Record Books, 1918-1919
1	4	1	Expense Record Books, 1920-1921
1	4	2	Genealogy Correspondence, 1937-1954
1	4	3	Genealogy Notes and Drafts, 1954-1975

Series 2: Professional Materials, 1887-1974

2	5	1	General Work Papers, 1887-1971
Church Ministry			
2	5	2	Correspondence, 1949-1950
2	5	3	Correspondence: Harold J. Horn Estate, 1930-1931
2	5	4	Receipts and Administrative Correspondence, 1935
2	5	5-6	Talks: Notes and Drafts, 1932-1961
2	5	7	Sermons for Special Days, 1929-1933
2	5	8	Christ Evangelical Reformed Church 200 th Anniversary Event, 1939
2	5	9	"The Shuttle" Songbook and Bach's <i>Passion</i> Program, 1962

Series 2: Professional Materials (Cont'd)

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
Church World Service			
2	6	1	Africa: Correspondence and Reports, 1971-1973 [OS]
2	6	2	Africa: Correspondence and Notes, 1972
2	6	3	Africa: Reports and Notes, 1965-1972
2	6	4	Africa: Reports, 1969-1972 [OS]
2	6	5	Africa: Botswana Health Reports and Minutes, 1971-1972
2	6	6	Africa: Namibia Correspondence and Articles, 19??
2	6	7	Africa: Uganda Correspondence and Reports, 1970-1972
2	6	8	Haiti Trip, 1973-1974
2	7	1	CWS Brochures and Promotional Materials, 1953-1964 [OS]
2	7	2	World Service Representative Reports, 1954-1960
2	7	3	United Clothing Appeal Promotional Materials, 1958-1965 [OS]
2	7	4	United Clothing Appeal Newsletters, 1961-1967
2	7	5	Certificate of Appreciation, 1961

Series 3: Audio/Visual Materials, 1947-1968

3	8	1	Filmstrip, [19??]
3	8	2	Filmstrip, "Ease their Burden," New Zealand, 1966
3	8	3	Audographs: Safari, Bed Testers, Horror Story, VW Rally, 1958
3	8	4	Audographs, 1962-1963
3	8	5	Audographs, [19??]
3	8	6	Audographs: blank discs, [19??]
3	9	1	Printing plate: schoolroom diagram, [1????]
3	9	2	Slides: Honduras, Ecuador, Chile, 1963
3	9	3	Slides: Africa Group A-E: Madagascar, Angola, Congo, Burundi, 1963
3	9	4	Slides: Africa Group F-G: Uganda, 1963
3	9	5	Slides: Africa Group H-I: Madagascar, Niger, Ghana, 1963
3	9	6	Slides: Africa Group K: Algeria, 1963
3	9	7	Slides: Uganda Kampala AACC Conference, 1964
3	9	8	Slides: Jordan, YWCA/YMCA Conference, 1964
3	9	9	Slides: India, Naples, Poland, 1962-1967
3	9	10	Slides: Refugees, Tibet, Cameroon, [19??]
3	9	11	Photographs, 1957-1968
3	9	12	Photographs: Germany [19??]
3	9	13	Photographs: Takana Farm High School, Punjab, India, 1959
3	10	1	Photographs: Europe, unlabeled
3	10	2	Photographs: Czechoslovakia, 1947
3	10	3	Photographs: Bavaria Kremer, 1947
3	10	4	Photographs: Germany, 1947
3	10	5	Photographs: Denmark, 1947

Series 3: Audio/Visual Materials (Cont'd)

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
3	10	6	Photographs: S.S. Moremakite, 1947
3	10	7	Photographs: Pinchicha Volcano, Quito, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	8	Photographs: Otovalo Market & People, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	9	Photographs: Guavaquil, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	10	Photographs: Moianda Volcano, Andes, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	11	Photographs: Mountain Peaks, Andes, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	12	Photographs: Cotopaxi Vocano, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	13	Photographs: Hacienda Picalqui, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	14	Photographs: Quito, Ecuador, 1951
3	10	15	Postcards: unaddressed, 1947-1969
3	10	16	Postcards: addressed to R.H. Helfferich, 1948-1957
3	10	17	Postcards: addressed to Mrs. William U. Helfferich, 1946-1957
3	10	18	Postcards: addressed to Merritt Helfferich, 1948-1950
3	10	19	Postcards: addressed to miscellaneous recipients
3	10	20	Postcards: blank, drawings and paintings
3	10	21	Postcards: blank, religious art and museums
3	10	22	Postcards: blank, United States travel
3	10	23	Postcards: blank, Europe and other international travel

OS Oversize Materials, 1982-1972