

**Presbyterian Church  
in the U.S.A.  
Board of Foreign Missions**

**Korea Mission Records  
1903-1957**

*Guide to the Scholarly Resources  
Microfilm Edition*

Published in cooperation with the  
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## INTRODUCTION

American Presbyterians have a strong tradition of mission work both to Native American populations and abroad. Presbyterians built congregations, and, when they had gathered enough congregations, organized presbyteries and synods, thereby emphasizing the corporate character of the Christian experience and the connectional nature of the Reformed tradition. Presbyterians considered corporate responsibility for the whole as essential to a faithful Christian life.

As early as 1801 the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. developed its own mission enterprises, sending missionaries overseas to fulfill the "Great Commission" of Christ. In 1810 it joined with several other denominations to organize the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. John Rice Holt (1777-1831) of the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia framed the importance of the entire church, working beyond individuals to spread the Gospel: "The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is a missionary society, the object of which is to aid in the conversion of the world, and every member of the church is a member for life of said society, and bound in maintenance of his Christian character, to do all in his power for the accomplishment of the object." Presbyterians gradually expanded their own foreign and home mission boards to fulfill this vision. Among the many splits and schisms in the American Presbyterian Church was the one resulting from the Civil War. The "northern" and "southern" streams of the church both founded missions in various parts of the world.

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Northern stream Presbyterian mission work in Korea (Chosen) commenced in 1884 when Dr. Horace and Mrs. Frances Messenger Allen of the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A.'s Shanghai station were transferred to Pyengyang, Korea. Shortly thereafter, they were joined by the Reverend Horace G. Underwood, the first ordained missionary to Chosen. Early mission work centered in Seoul and Pyengyang, and eventually nine stations were established. The others were Taiku (1899), Syenchuin (1901), Chairyung (1906), Chungju (1908), Kangkai (1908), Andong (1910), and Hingkin in Manchuria (1918). Mission work in Korea was done in cooperation with several other denominations that included Methodists; Southern, Canadian, and Australian Presbyterians; Baptists; Anglicans; and Methodist Episcopalians. The Presbyterians and Methodists were the two largest groups operating in Korea. In 1887 the first Protestant Church was organized by the Presbyterians in Seoul. In 1907 all four Presbyterian groups, which had originally convened as the Presbyterian Council in 1889, established the Union Presbyterian Church of Korea, with its first General Assembly being held in 1912. By 1935 there were 327,600 Protestant Christians of all denominations in Korea.

Medical work played a prominent role in the Presbyterian Church's missionary efforts in Korea. In 1885 Dr. Horace Allen founded the Royal Korean Hospital in Seoul that eventually became the Severance Union Hospital, Medical College, and Nurses' Training School. A hospital was established in Pyengyang in 1896 in conjunction with the Methodists. The church's educational work

commenced rather late and was complicated by a variety of difficulties, one of which was language. Primary schools, academies for boys and girls, a theological seminary (in Pyengyang in 1907) and several colleges (including one in Pyengyang in 1906 and one in Seoul in 1915) eventually were developed. The theological seminary in Seoul was an interdenominational effort with the Methodists and represented only one example of denominational cooperation. Others included the Pierson Memorial Bible School, the Christian Literature Society, and the Union Language School.

Mission work in Korea has been complicated by several factors not common to other missions. The Japanese occupation of Korea, subsequent annexation in 1910, and presence until 1945 did much to undermine the work of the missionaries. The Korean conspiracy case began in 1910 with an evangelistic campaign that caused Japanese fear that church leaders would overshadow civic authority. Their fears culminated in the arrest of hundreds of Christians in 1911 and 1912, including some accused of conspiracy to murder the governor general. Most were eventually pardoned through imperial clemency in 1915. In 1915 the Japanese attempted to get education into their own hands by promulgating educational ordinances that forbade all religious instruction in schools, as well as making other requirements. Mission schools were given ten years to adapt. After much correspondence, conferences with government officials, and public pressure from the United States and Great Britain, changes in Japanese requirements in the 1920s enabled a majority of Presbyterian missionary

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schools to continue, provided religious instruction was given outside the regular curriculum. The Shrine Issue, which came to a head in 1935, was viewed as another attempt to reduce the role of the Church in Korea to the will of the Japanese Emperor. The Japanese government required that students in all schools worship the picture of the Emperor and at Shinto Shrines. Likewise, both the Second World War and the Korean War caused periods of retrenchment for the church.

### ***Scope and Content***

Record Group 140 documents the work of the PCUSA's Korea Mission through the files of the Secretaries of the Board of Foreign Mission based in New York City. It continues the series of secretaries' records dating from 1884 to 1911 that were previously filmed. While there is a small amount of material dating prior to 1903, the bulk of these records date from 1911 onwards. The microfilm ends in 1957, reflecting the administrative changes brought about by the 1958 union of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the United Presbyterian Church of North America, forming the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. These are primarily the PCUSA's reports and correspondence reflecting the church's educational, medical, and evangelistic work.

Included are histories, mission reports, field correspondence, Board of Foreign Missions circular letters, educational and medical work records, and missionary personal correspondence. Field correspondence generally includes

the following: cables, apportionment of work, mission stations lists (mainly pre-World War II), mission annual meeting notes, executive committee minutes, related correspondence, mission budgets, financial records, station quarterly letters, publicity articles from missionaries, general correspondence of the Board to Korean Christians, and miscellaneous correspondence. The calendars to correspondence available in this collection are but partially reliable guides to contents. Letters missing from calendared files may be found in appropriate subject files. Cooperating Board correspondence contains extensive mission correspondence with the board, and with the Board of Foreign Missions.

These records may be used to investigate a range of East Asian and Korean studies, missionary and religious studies, educational, and medical topics. There is information about specific educational and medical institutions and issues surrounding their founding and functioning, material dealing with the Shrine Question, the Korean Conspiracy, and the Korean Independence Movement.

The records are arranged in four series:

- Series 1: Korean Mission Reports, 1911-1954
- Series 2: Korean Mission Field Correspondence and Board Circular Letters, 1910-1953
- Series 3: Korean Mission and Educational Work, 1903-1957



Series 4: Korean Mission Missionary  
Personal Correspondence,  
1909-1954

### ***Notes to Researcher***

Only a portion of Record Group 140, Board of Foreign Missions, Korea Mission, Secretaries Files, 1903-1972 has been filmed. Post-1957 papers records in this record group will become available to researchers as the general PC(USA) access restriction of fifty years from date of creation elapses and may eventually be available on microfilm.

This record group was not given a high quality of processing. Researchers will have to use patience, ingenuity, and perseverance to find specific materials.

### ***Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—Department of History and Records Management Services***

The department is the national archives and historical research center of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Headquartered in Philadelphia, with a regional office in Montreat, North Carolina, and a records management program at the denomination's headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, it serves the administrative, legal, and historical needs of the church's national agencies, middle governing bodies, and local congregations as well as scholars and the general public. The department houses the official records

of the denomination and its predecessor denominations; personal papers of prominent Presbyterians; the records of ecumenical organizations such as the American Sunday School Union and the National Council of the Churches of Christ; and special collections and rare books supporting research in Presbyterian history. Collection emphases include church legal and administrative decisions; religion and life in Colonial America; the American Revolution; the First and Second Great Awakenings; missionary work among Asians, Africans, and Native Americans; the New Republic; the Civil War and Reconstruction; Westward expansion; Civil Rights and other race issues; social justice issues; and ecumenical movements.

The Department of History traces its lineage to the founding of the Presbyterian Historical Society in 1852. In 1925 the society was designated the Department of History of the Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (northern stream). The Presbyterian Historical Society of the Synod of Texas was organized in 1902. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (southern stream) designated the society as its official historical society in 1926, moving its collection to Montreat, North Carolina, and renaming it the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. As a result of the union of the northern and southern streams of the church, the Department of History and the Historical Foundation were merged in 1988. The Presbyterian Historical Society is now a voluntary support organization for the Department of History.

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Additional information about the department's program, policies, and holdings are available from the department: 425 Lombard St., Philadelphia, PA 19147-1516; 215/627-1852; Fax 215/627-0509; [preshist@shrsys.hslc.org](mailto:preshist@shrsys.hslc.org); Montreat: Box 849, Montreat, NC 28757; 828/669-7061; Fax 828/669-5369; [pcusadoh@montreat.edu](mailto:pcusadoh@montreat.edu).

Margery N. Sly  
Philadelphia, PA  
September 1998

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3	Institutions/Projects, Annual Reports, 1930-1953 Missionary Reports, Miscellaneous Missionary Reports, quarterly & annual, 1911-1913
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6	Missionary Reports, quarterly & annual, 1924-1929
7	Missionary Reports, quarterly & annual, 1929-1933
8	Missionary Reports, quarterly & annual, 1933-1937
9	Missionary Reports, quarterly & annual, 1937-1954
10	Missionary Reports, quarterly & annual, 1954-1969

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*Series 2: Korea Mission Field Correspondence and  
Board Circular Letters, 1910-1953*

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12	1927-1951 Calendared Field & Executive Correspondence, 1911
13	Calendared Field & Executive Correspondence, 1912-1916
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