



ArchivesSpace

a community served by †Lyrasis

Near East Relief Committee records10126110

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on January 14, 2025.

Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

Telephone: (212) 851-5606

burke@library.columbia.edu

URL: <https://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke.html>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	4
Arrangement	5
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	6
Controlled Access Headings	7
Burke Library record group:	7
Collection Inventory	7
Series 1: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief	7
Series 2: Near East Relief	10

Summary Information

Repository:	Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary
Creator:	Near East Relief (Organization)
Title:	Near East Relief Committee records
ID:	10126110
Date [inclusive]:	1904 -- 1950
Physical Description:	10.25 linear feet 10.25 linear feet; 18 boxes, including 1 OS box
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	This collection contains records related to the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, established in 1915 to respond to the Armenian Genocide, and incorporated through an Act of Congress and renamed Near East Relief in 1919.

Preferred Citation

Item description, MRL2: Near East Relief Committee records, 1904-1950, series #, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) was established in 1915 at the urging of America's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr. to respond to the Armenian Genocide. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire caused millions of Assyrians, Armenians, Greeks, and other minority groups to be displaced. Under the leadership of James L. Barton and Cleveland H. Dodge, the organization raised millions of dollars through public rallies, church collections, assistance from other charitable organizations and foundations. The funds were delivered through the American Embassy in Constantinople and distributed via missionaries and consuls. After World War One, the committee widened its scope of activities to include Russian Armenia, where hundreds of thousands had taken refuge, and in 1919 became incorporated through a charter granted by the United States Congress. At this time it was renamed "Near East Relief" Committee (NER)

and its directors were William Howard Taft, Charles Evans Hughes, and Elihu Root. Between 1915 and 1930, NER administered \$117,000,000 of assistance, in addition to delivering food, clothing, and materials for shelter, and setting up refugee camps, clinics, hospitals, orphanages, and centers for vocational training. NER is credited with having cared for 132,000 Armenian orphans scattered across the region and eventually spent over ten times of its initial estimate in reaching close to two million refugees. In 1930, NER was renamed the "Near East Foundation" (NEF) to reflect a shift in emphasis away from relief work to more sustained, long term development-oriented involvement in the region. At this time it was directed by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Allen Dulles. It became the primary U.S. relief agency for the near east region, and later served as the model for President Truman's Four-Point Program, USAID, and the Peace Corps. As of 2012, NEF still operates in seven countries in Africa and the Middle East with a focus on empowering local communities to become agents of their own development.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

William Walker Rockwell was a Congregationalist minister who was associate professor of church history and librarian of Union Theological Seminary from 1905 to 1942. Rockwell was an active member of Near East Relief who collected materials on behalf of the organization in addition to composing several pamphlets to help gather public support for its cause. Rockwell's material comprises the earliest records in the collection. Talcott Williams was the first director of the Columbia University Pulitzer School of Journalism. Williams was born in Turkey, the son of Congregational missionaries. Williams' father helped to establish Roberts College in Istanbul and the American College in Beirut.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

This collection contains, in Series 1, correspondence, notes, articles, pamphlets, reports and source files largely collected by William Walker Rockwell and related to the beginning of the organization and the specific needs and conditions of Armenia and Syria. The correspondence documents the experiences of those in war-torn areas and the need for aid. Some documents contain copies of other material not directly related to the ACASR, such as other committees with related goals. Rockwell's materials also include his own writings, such as for the pamphlet, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians*, 1916. The remainder of the series offers source files, also collected by Rockwell, on ACASR work and what other organizations, such as the Federal Council of Churches and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, were doing to help. Series 2 contains records (largely collected by Talcott Williams) which show the expanded mission of the organization, including bulletins, cablegrams and

other correspondence, newspaper clippings, press releases and fundraising materials, Executive Committee dockets, and minutes from other committees as well as reports on topics such as education in orphanages and religious education. Notable members of the organization, such as Cleveland Dodge and Charles Vernon Vickrey, Executive Secretary of Near East Relief, are represented, as is the plight of many displaced groups, such as Assyrians, Greeks and Armenians. These records show aid extended to Armenia, Syria, Persia, Beirut, Greece and other locations in Asia Minor. The series concludes with information from the Golden Rule Society, also collected and owned by Williams.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

This collection is organized in two unarranged series: Series 1: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief; and Series 2: Near East Relief.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

Telephone: (212) 851-5606

burke@library.columbia.edu

URL: <https://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke.html>

Revision Description

PDF converted to EAD and description updated by Leah Edelman. 2024-01-24

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Onsite storage.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Formerly part of the independent Missionary Research Library (MRL), these records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929, and accessioned by the Burke Library at the time of the MRL's closure in 1976.

Processing Information

In 2009, student Rachel Long processed a portion of the Executive Committee minutes, which had been discovered as a small unprocessed collection. The majority of the current papers were combined after selection from the large group of unprocessed Mission Research Library archives. Order was imposed with an attempt to keep together materials collected by specific individuals in a chronological order, in order to show the growth and expansion of the organization. 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. Photocopies of fragile newspaper clippings have been produced. The finding aid was created by Brigitte C. Kamsler, Kristen Leigh Southworth, and Amy Meverden in 2013 with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, and edited by Leah Edelman in 2024.

Conditions Governing Use

Some material in this collection may be protected by copyright and other rights. Information concerning copyright, fair use, and reproduction requests can be consulted at Columbia's Copyright Advisory Office.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Materials

Near East Foundation records, 1915-2005. The Rockefeller Archive Center.

Related Materials

MRL2: American Constantinople Relief Committee Records, 1912-1914, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Related Materials

MRL 2: Mary Lewis [Mrs. W. A.] Shedd papers, 1918, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Armenian question
- World War, 1914-1918 -- Refugees
- Iran
- Syria
- Greece
- Turkey
- Armenia
- Williams, Talcott, 1849-1928
- Rockwell, William Walker
- American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief
- Near East Relief (Organization)
- Near East Foundation

Burke Library record group:

Missionary Research Library Archives: MRL2, Near/Middle East

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Collection Inventory

Series 1: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1904 -- 1950

Physical Description: 2.75 linear feet 2.75 linear feet; 6 boxes

Conditions Governing Access:

Conditions Governing Access

This series is open for research.

Arrangement

This series is unarranged.

Scope and Contents

This series contains correspondence, notes, articles, pamphlets, reports and source files related to the beginning of the organization and the specific needs and conditions of Armenia and Syria. The correspondence documents the experiences of those in war-torn areas and the need for aid. The bulk of William Walker Rockwell's extensive correspondence is from 1911-1917. The letters go into detail regarding conditions in Armenia, such as deportations and poor treatment of individuals. Correspondence is from individuals and locations throughout the world, such as Germany and Switzerland. Rockwell also wrote to Ambassadors Henry Morgenthau and Abram I. Elkus, US Ambassadors to Turkey. Many of the documents contain copies of other material not directly related to the ACASR, such as other committees with related goals. Rockwell's materials also include his own writings, such as for the pamphlet, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians*, 1916. The remainder of the series offers source files, also collected by Rockwell, on ACASR work and what other organizations, such as the Federal Council of Churches and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, were doing to help.

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence, 1915 -- 1950	box 1	folder 1-3
Correspondence: From Armenians, 1915 -- 1917	box 1	folder 4
Correspondence: Conditions in Armenia, 1915 -- 1916	box 1	folder 5
Correspondence, 1916 -- 1917	box 1	folder 6-7
Correspondence: Ambassadors Morgenthau and Elkus: US Ambassadors to Turkey, 1916 -- 1917	box 1	folder 8
Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians by Rockwell, 1916	box 1	folder 9-10
Financials, 1916	box 1	folder 11
Copies, 1915	box 1	folder 12-13
Armenian Deportation, 1915; 1950	box 1	folder 14
Germans and Swiss, 1915 -- 1950	box 1	folder 15-16
Correspondence, 1911 -- 1917	box 2	
Germany and the Armenian Sufferers: Manuscript and Source Material, 1914 -- 1917	box 3	folder 1
Deportation of the Armenians: Correspondence, Manuscripts, Pamphlet, 1915 -- 1916	box 3	folder 2
Armenia Bibliography: Correspondence, Drafts, Notes, 1916	box 3	folder 3
Guides and Notes for Speakers and Auxiliary Organizations, 1916	box 3	folder 4
Rockwell Handwritten Notes and Pamphlets on Persia, 1916	box 3	folder 5
Financial Information on Relief Work in Persia, 1916	box 3	folder 6

Near East Relief Committee records10126110

Rockwell Plans and Outline for Publication on Armenia, 1915 -- 1916	box 3	folder 7
Rockwell Manuscript and Handwritten Notes on Turkey, Russia, Armenia and Ottoman Empire, 1916	box 3	folder 8
Rockwell Material: Bulletins, Cablegrams, Clippings, Correspondence, Minutes, Reports, Notes, President Wilson's Appeal, 1917 -- 1918	box 3	folder 9-12
American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) Circulars, 1915 -- 1916	box 4	folder 1
Finances: Clippings, Correspondence, Notes, Treasurer's Reports, 1916	box 4	folder 2
Armenia and Syria Material with Rockwell Annotations, 1915 -- 1916	box 4	folder 3-14
Publications and Clippings, 1910 -- 1918	box 5	folder 1-4
Booklets, 1915 -- 1917	box 5	folder 5
Pamphlets and Articles, 1915 -- 1916	box 5	folder 6
Denial of Actions by Turkey, 1915 -- 1916	box 5	folder 7
Eyewitness Reports, Notes and Clippings, 1915 -- 1916	box 5	folder 8-9
Statements from Eyewitnesses: Adana, Mersina and Marsovan, Turkey, 1915 -- 1916	box 5	folder 10-12
Muslim Sentiment and Missionary Safety, Clippings and Reports, 1915	box 5	folder 13
Persia Annotated Notes, 1915 -- 1916	box 5	folder 14
Persia Maps, 1915 -- 1916	box 5	folder 15
Persia Missions, 1915 -- 1916	box 5	folder 16
Persia: Armenian and Syrian Refugees, 1916	box 5	folder 17
Persia Sources, 1916	box 5	folder 18
Persia: Paul Shimmon Printed Material and Correspondence, 1916	box 5	folder 19-20
American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Material on Turkey: Annual Reports, Pamphlets, Quarterly News Bulletins, Turkey Bulletins, 1904 -- 1917	box 6	folder 1
Federal Council of Churches Material on Near East: Clippings, Correspondence, Resolution, 1918 -- 1922	box 6	folder 2
Clippings, Correspondence and Notes on Denials of Atrocities against Armenians, 1915 -- 1916	box 6	folder 3
Rockwell-Collected Source Files on World War One, 1914 -- 1917	box 6	folder 4-13

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Near East Relief, 1914 -- 1936

Physical Description: 7.5 linear feet 7.5 linear feet; 12 boxes

Conditions Governing Access:

Conditions Governing Access

This series is open for research.

Arrangement

This series is unarranged.

Scope and Contents

This series contains records (largely collected by Talcott Williams) which show the expanded mission of the organization, including bulletins, cablegrams and other correspondence, newspaper clippings, press releases and fundraising materials, Executive Committee docket, and minutes from other committees as well as reports on topics such as education in orphanages and religious education. Notable members of the organization, such as Cleveland Dodge and Charles Vernon Vickrey, Executive Secretary of Near East Relief, are represented, as is the plight of many displaced groups, such as Assyrians, Greeks and Armenians. These records show aid extended to Armenia, Syria, Persia, Beirut, Greece and other locations in Asia Minor. The series concludes with information from the Golden Rule Society, also collected and owned by Williams.

Title/Description	Instances	
Bulletins, Cablegrams, Clippings, Correspondence, Minutes, Reports on Education in Orphanages, Donation Reports, Fundraising Materials, Press Releases, Report on Refugees, Report on Religious Education, 1920 -- 1927	box 7	folder 1-12
NER Cablegrams and Financials, 1915 -- 1922	box 7	folder 13
NER Pamphlets, 1923 -- 1926	box 7	folder 14
NER Correspondence, Reports, Minutes, Articles, 1920 -- 1936	box 8	folder 1-11
Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 1920 -- 1927	box 9	folder 1-6
Bulletins, 1924	box 9	folder 7
Newsletter, 1920 -- 1921	box 9	folder 8
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1920 -- 1927	box 10	
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1920 -- 1927	box 11	
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1920 -- 1927	box 12	
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1920 -- 1927	box 13	
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1920 -- 1927	box 14	
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1920 -- 1927	box 15	

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1920 -- 1927	box 16	
Oversize Maps and Posters, 1914	box 17OS	
Golden Rule Society: Correspondence and Pamphlets, 1924 -- 1925	box 18	folder 1-3
Religious Education in Near East, Correspondence, Agenda and Pamphlets, 1923 -- 1924	box 18	folder 4-5
Talcott Williams Correspondence and Notes, 1925 -- 1927	box 18	folder 6-7
NER Pamphlets, 1923 -- 1925	box 18	folder 8

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)