American Constantinople Relief Committee records 4492542

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Summary Information

Repository:	Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary
Creator:	American Constantinople Relief Committee
Title:	American Constantinople Relief Committee records
ID:	4492542
Date [inclusive]:	1912 -- 1914
Physical Description:	0.25 linear feet 0.25 linear feet; 1 box
Language of the Material:	English

Abstract: The American Constantinople Relief Committee formed in 1912 to raise money for war refugees in Turkey and surrounding area, and disbanded in 1914 after questions of integrity were raised against the secretary's fundraising practices. The collection contains correspondence, committee minutes, reports sent to missionaries in the field, news clippings, photographs, and publicity materials.

Preferred Citation

Item description, 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.

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Biographical / Historical

The Committee for the Relief of the Wounded and Starving in Constantinople and the Balkan States held their inaugural meeting November 13, 1912. Reverend William I. Haven, secretary of the American Bible Society, gathered individuals from missionary and educational institutions interested in raising money for the people of Turkey in the aftermath of the Balkan War and the continuing effects of the Armenian Genocide. Honorable Oscar S. Strauss, former ambassador to Turkey, was chosen chairman with Reverend Henry Otis Dwight as vice-chairman. Over $20,000 was raised in two months from private individuals, which was then distributed by the American Red Cross Committee in Constantinople via Branch Treasurer,

William Peet. The Relief Committee elected as secretary William Willard Howard in February 1913, who called upon churches in the United States for donations. Reportedly over 75,000 letters were sent, which raised an additional $22,000, approximately.

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Biographical / Historical

A complaint was raised against the American Constantinople Relief Committee in 1913 by the Post Office Inspector because of Howard; it was revealed he was being investigated as a fraudulent promoter. The Relief Committee, which also objected to Howard's fee of one-fourth the total funds raised, ceased collecting money for refugees until further information could be found. During that time Howard traveled to Albania in October 1913 to see the conditions for himself. The Relief Committee ceased existence by 1914 and fundraising efforts were taken over by other missionary societies, such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

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Scope and Contents

This collection contains correspondence, committee minutes, reports sent to missionaries in the field, news clippings, photographs, and publicity materials. Correspondence, which comprises the bulk of the collection, shows the frequent sums of money being sent in small increments for relief work and acknowledgment of donations. Other details describe the experience of those in places such as Albania, Thrace, Bulgaria, and Turkey who were subject to severe disease; overcrowded hospitals from civilians and soldiers; official numbers of refugees; and the number of buildings destroyed. Telegrams asking for aid; information on other missionaries in the area; and information about Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, United States Ambassador in Constantinople, are also included. Other correspondence deals with people looking for information on the legitimacy of the Relief Committee and William W. Howard, who wrote many letters asking organizations for donations to the Committee. Howard's letters discuss his own findings when traveling across Albania.

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Arrangement

This collection is arranged by format.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

XML instance document created by Brigette C. Kamsler. EAD was imported spring 2019 as part of the ArchivesSpace Phase II migration. EAD spot checked and corrected and description updated by Leah Edelman. 2013-06-25 2019-05-20 2020-07-03

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 accessioned by the Burke Library at the time of the MRL's closure in 1976.

Processing Information

Correspondence and other records were cataloged by Lynn A. Grove on 1988-07-18. 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. The finding aid was created by Brigette

Kamsler in 2011, reviewed and updated by Sarah Davis in 2014 with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, and edited by Leah Edelman in 2020.

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.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

MRL 12: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions records, 1878-1958, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

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Controlled Access Headings

- International relief -- Turkey -- Istanbul
- Turkey -- Religious life and customs

Burke Library record group:

Missionary Research Library Archives: MRL2, Near/Middle East

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Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances
Correspondence of W. W. Peet, August 1913 -- January 1914	

	box 1	folder 1
Correspondence of W. W. Peet, January 1914 -- June 1914	box 1	folder 2
Correspondence of William W. Howard, May 1913 -- April 1914	box 1	folder 3
Correspondence of Oscar S. Strauss, 1913	box 1	folder 4
Correspondence of Oscar S. Strauss, 1914	box 1	folder 5
General correspondence, 1912 -- 1913	box 1	folder 6
General correspondence, 1914	box 1	folder 7
Minutes and reports, 1912 -- 1914	box 1	folder 8
News clippings, 1913	box 1	folder 9
Photographs , circa 1912 -- 1914	box 1	folder 10
Publicity materials, 1913 -- 1914	box 1	folder 11