

# **Guide to the Robert Thomas Parsons Collection**

1940



## **ARCHIVES & HISTORY**

General Commission on Archives and History

**THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**



## Robert Thomas Parsons Collection

1940

0.18 cubic feet

gcsh.ms.gcsh4223

The purpose of this finding aid is to help you understand the nature of this collection and to assist you in the retrieval of material from this collection. The following pages contain a brief biographical history of the person, or persons, who created or collected these papers, followed by a general description of the collection in the scope and content note. If more detailed information is warranted then series descriptions also appear. The container listing appears last and is the listing of material in each box, or container, of this collection. To request material you need to turn to the container listing section. It is essentially a listing of file folders, or artifact items, in the collection. Each folder, or item, has a call number associated with it. Each folder also lists the inclusive dates of the material in the folder. On the material request form list both the call number and the folder, or item, title. Use a different line for each folder, or item, requested. When your request sheet is complete, or full, bring it to the archivist and the material will be retrieved.

### Biographical Note

Robert Thomas Parsons (1904-?) was a Church of the United Brethren in Christ missionary, pastor, and academic. Parsons was born on September 27, 1904 to J.B. Parsons, D.D. and Ada Parsons in Dayton, Ohio.

Parsons received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana Central College in 1926, and a Bachelor of Divinity from Bonebrake Theological Seminary in 1929. He was ordained, and in 1929 went to serve as a missionary under the Foreign Missions Board of the United Brethren in Christ to the Kono tribe in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Parsons would return to the United States on his first furlough in 1933 to enroll as a Ph.D. candidate in the Kennedy School of Missions at Hartford Theological Seminary. During his second furlough in 1937, alongside his Ph.D. work, he received a Master of Arts from Cornell University. Parsons then returned to Sierra Leone for two years and taught at Union College in Bunumbu.

Parsons completed his dissertation in 1940, and went on to serve Fifth Ave Church in Columbus, Ohio. Parsons would join the faculty at Hartford in 1947 as a Professor of African Studies, and would later become Dean of the Kennedy School of Missions. Parsons would make a handful of other trips back to Africa for research. He also went on to serve on committees of the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of Churches. His dissertation was published in book form as "Religion in an African society: A Study of the Religion of the Kono People of Sierra Leone in its Social Environment With Special Reference to the Function of Religion in that Society" by Brill in 1964.

### Scope and Content Note

The Robert Thomas Parsons Collection contains both a complete copy and a partial copy of Parsons' Ph.D. dissertation from the Kennedy School of Missions of the Hartford Seminary Foundation. The first folder contains biographical data and a photograph of Parsons from a collection of his papers at Hartford Theological Seminary. A complete manuscript of the thesis, titled "The Function of Religion in an African Society", is collected in two volumes. A partial collection of the thesis containing sections III, IV, V, VI, and VII is collected in two volumes and marked with a logo from the Department of World Missions of the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

### Arrangement



Material has been arranged in the following manner. Documents arranged by record type.

## Related Material

Scarritt-Bennett Center Records

Hartford Theological Seminary Archives

## Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding this collection.

## Use Access

Detailed use restrictions relating to our collections can be requested from the office of the archivist at the General Commission on Archives and History. Photocopying is handled by the staff and may be limited in certain instances. Before using any material for publication from this collection a formal request for permission to publish is expected and required.

## Preferred Citation

When citing material from this collection please use the following format: Direct reference to the item or its file folder, Robert Thomas Parsons Collection, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey. Do not make use of the item's call number as that is not a stable descriptor.

## Index Terms

### *Subject Terms*

Missionaries  
Missions - Africa  
Religion

### *Geographic Terms*

Africa  
Africa, West  
Sierra Leone

### *Genre Terms*

Dissertations, Academic  
Photographs

### *Subject Names - Corporate Bodies*

Church of the United Brethren in Christ  
Hartford Seminary Foundation. Kennedy School of Missions.  
Hartford Theological Seminary

### *Occupation Terms*

Minister  
Missionary  
Professor

## Table of Contents



## Container List

Call Number	Folder Title	Date(s)
1586-3-3:1	Biographical Data and Photograph from Hartford Theological Seminary	Undated
1586-3-3:2	The Function of Religion in an African Society, Volume I by Robert Thomas Parsons	1940
1586-3-3:3	The Function of Religion in an African Society, Volume II, Robert Thomas Parsons	1940
1586-3-3:4	The Function of Religion in the African Society, Section III - The Life of the Village	1940
1586-3-3:5	The Function of Religion in the African Society, Sections IV, V, VI, VII	1940