

Guide to the Virginia M. (Jennie) Atkinson Papers

1886 - 1951



ARCHIVES & HISTORY

General Commission on Archives and History

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Virginia M. (Jennie) Atkinson Collection,

1886 - 1951

0.23 Cubic feet

gcah.ms.739

Many of the items in this collection have been laminated in something other than mylar. 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

Virginia "Jennie" M. Atkinson (1861-1941) was a Methodist Episcopal Church, South, missionary in China from 1884-1940. After graduating from Lagrange Female College in Georgia, she went to China in October 1884 with Laura Haygood. Working primarily in the Shanghai and Soochow regions, Atkinson taught, was instrumental in establishing several schools, and involved in women's work.

In Soochow, she was placed in charge of the city day schools under the Woman's Board and later established a center in the western part of the city which accommodated four of the schools. She founded the Atkinson Academy for Boys in 1896 and the Davidson Girls' School. When the Boxer Rebellion erupted, she took many Chinese Christians to Japan where they were refugees for four months. In 1901 Atkinson returned to Soochow and continued her work with the day schools. During this period of her work another center, the Embroidery Mission, was opened, providing evangelistic work, teaching, and housing for many Chinese women.

Atkinson also purchased land, with the approval of the Women's Board, to provide buildings for the Davidson Girls' School, the Louise Home for Missionaries, the Moka Garden Embroidery Mission, and the Kindergarten and Kindergarten Training School. She then moved to Changshu to work with Chinese teachers and Bible women (evangelist/teachers for women). With the assistance of her Alabama Conference, Atkinson again purchased land near the Center at Moka Garden, on which the Dowdell Church was built for the Embroidery Mission and the women's work of the church.

Upon her retirement in 1927 with emeritus status she received special permission to stay in China near Soochow, remaining through the Japanese invasion, ministering to the Chinese. Due to poor health and the growing threat of war, Atkinson eventually left China in 1940. She was later buried in China.

Scope Note

This collection contains materials related to Virginia M. Atkinson. Included in this collection is correspondence from 1886-1950. This includes outgoing correspondence written by Atkinson between 1886 and 1941, letters addressed to her friends and associations, and birthday greetings received by Atkinson on her eightieth birthday. Many of these letters are from her former students. There is also an address book kept by Atkinson. Personal reminiscences of Atkinson are contained in these papers. This includes remarks about her travel to China from Georgia, conditions in Shanghai, travel in the interior regions of China, and events in Soochow. There are approximately twenty personal accounts of several

Chinese individuals who became refugees during the Sino-Japanese Conflict (1938- 1941). Atkinson had some connection to these people, but it is unclear as to whether she interviewed them for an oral history project or recounted their stories or rewrote what she was told by them. Some of the accounts are handwritten, and others are typed. A charity distribution list kept by Atkinson during this time is available. It contains a record of cash receipts from 1938 and a relief fund record from 1941. Other items in this collection include a few documents written in Chinese, an undated speech given by one of Atkinson's pupils, a 1932 news clippings from an unidentified newspaper on the troubles in China, and three small photographs: one of Atkinson in her later years, one of Yui Soo-Lan, and one of an unidentified man. In addition, there is also some biographical material on a student Atkinson sponsored, Katherine Lew. Included are two undated letters written by Lew and some biographical information on her and her husband, Timothy Tingfang Lew.

Arrangement

Material has been arranged in the following manner. The Virginia M. Atkinson Papers have been organized by record type. Items within each record type are arranged chronologically, with all undated materials at the front of each folder.

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding this collection.

Preferred Citation

When citing material from this collection please use the following format: Direct reference to the item or its file folder, Virginia M. Atkinson 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 Names - Personal

Lew, Katherine
Lew, Timothy Tingfang

Subject Topics

Missions
Sino-Japanese Conflict, 1937-1945-Personal narrative, Chinese
Women

Subject Geographic

China

Genre

Clippings
Correspondence
Pins (Jewelry)
Reminiscences
Speeches

Occupations

Missionary

Table of Contents

Container List

Call Number	Folder Title	Date(s)
1305-3-2:1	Correspondence	1886-1942
1305-3-2:2	Correspondence, Friends and Associates	1922-1950
1305-3-2:3	Correspondence, 80th Birthday	1941-1942
1305-3-2:4	Address Book	Undated
1305-3-2:5	Personal Reminiscences	Undated
1305-3-2:6	Refugee Accounts	1938-1941
1305-3-2:7	Cash Receipts and Relief Fund Records	1938-1941
1305-3-2:8	Katherine Lew Items	1950-1951
1305-3-2:9	Speech	Undated
1305-3-2:10	News clipping	1932
1305-3-2:11	Chinese documents	Undated
1305-3-2:12	Photographs	Undated