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William James & Clara Bishop Papers, 1901-1969

William James Bishop

Clara Bishop

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**William James and Clara Bishop
Papers, (1901-1969)**

Center for Restoration Studies
Manuscripts #347

Abilene Christian University Special Collections and Archives
Brown Library
Abilene Christian University
Abilene, TX 79699-9208

24 April 2023

About this collection

Title: William James and Clara Bishop Papers

Creator: William James, (1872-1912) and Clara Bishop, (1878-1970)

Identifier/Call Number: Center for Restoration Studies Manuscripts #347

Physical Description: 3 linear feet (2 boxes)

Dates (Inclusive): 1901-1969

Dates (Bulk): 1910-1916

Location: Center for Restoration Studies

Language of Materials: English, Japanese

Scope and Content Note: This collection contains letters, photos, and books related to William and Clara Bishop's mission work for the Churches of Christ in Japan.

Biographical Note: The following biographical note was excerpted from therestorationmovement.com:

“Little is known about William Bishop's childhood except that he attended Nashville public schools and served in an apprenticeship in the printing business before entering Nashville Bible School. He married Alice Davis, a young widow, and began planning to go to Japan. After he found that his efforts to fundraise money for their trip had not produced enough money, he and Alice determined to go as far as their funds allowed. Having made this decision, he received the necessary funds and even more for his planned printing work. Upon arrival in Japan, despite Alice's sickly condition, they threw themselves into their work. Alice soon became sick and died only nine months after their wedding. Two year after her death, he began a correspondence with Clara Elliot, a former acquaintance, and by letter, they secretly made plans for marriage. He promised to return to the United States and marry her in the spring of 1902. Returning to Japan, Clara became his partner in the work which prospered. Bishop greatly desired to publish McGarvey's *Commentary on Acts* in Japanese. Requests for funds were sent to churches in the States, but little was given. Determined to continue, Bishop gathered the necessary funds by selling his printing press and hiring himself out to the largest Christian publishing house in Japan. He distributed the commentary free of charge to Japanese evangelists of all denominations throughout the country and even made it available in Shinto temples and priests. In 1912, Bishop was diagnosed with tuberculosis and moved back to Los Angeles where he died later that year. Clara returned to the states with their two daughters to be with him in his last moments, but they arrived two days after his death. Clara and their daughters returned to Japan to continue their work for several more years. They returned to Texas where Clara began working at Abilene Christian College in 1921 as President Jesse P. Sewell's and President Batsell Baxter's secretary and dormitory hostess. Five years later she was named registrar of the college and served in that

office until her retirement in June 1951. She moved to live with her daughter in Missouri in 1952 and later passed away in 1970.”¹

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Mary Bishop Alredge

Date of Acquisition: 15 May 2007

Accession Number: R2007.188

Date of Accession: 15 May 2007

Accessioned by: Reid

Processor and Date of Processing: Diana Fleming, Brady Cox, 11 May 2016

Finding Aid Creator and Date: Diana Fleming, Brady Cox, 11 May 2016

Finding Aid Update: Mac Ice, Amanda Dietz, Ashlen Planes, 24 April 2023

¹ William James Bishop, [therestorationmovement.com, www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/california/bishop.htm#8](http://therestorationmovement.com/www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/california/bishop.htm#8)

Using this collection

Processing Status: Processed

Conditions Governing Access: Materials are housed in the Abilene Christian University Special Collections and Archives, Brown Library, Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas and are non-circulating. Access is available during normal business hours; prior appointments are preferred.

Conditions Governing Use: Materials are housed in the Abilene Christian University Special Collections and Archives, Brown Library, Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas and are non-circulating. Access is available during normal business hours; prior appointments are preferred.

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Arrangement of Materials: This collection was reboxed and reordered in order to match the finding aid previously created for it when it was added to the University Manuscripts.

Separated Materials: None

Subjects and Keywords

Churches of Christ -- History -- 20th century

Churches of Christ -- Japan

Manuscripts

Inventory

Box 1

[First Folder] Finding Aid

1- [Various correspondence and a biography of William J. Bishop]

Photocopies of Materials in Folder 1

2- [Various correspondence (1 of 5)]

Photocopies of Materials in Folder 2

3- [Various correspondence (2 of 5)]

Photocopies of Materials in Folder 3

4- [Various correspondence (3 of 5)]

5- [Various correspondence (4 of 5)]

Photocopies of Materials in Folder 5

6- [Various correspondence (5 of 5)]

Photocopies of Materials in Folder 6

Box 2

“Plain Statement of the Work in Japan” by William J. Bishop

“History of the Church in Japan” by Yunosuke Hiratsuka

Japanese translation of “History of the Church in Japan” by Yunosuke Hiratsuka

[Photographs]