

# Guide to the Whitener Family Papers

RG 151



Compiled by Martha Lund Smalley

1998

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<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	3
Requesting Instructions .....	3
Administrative Information .....	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition .....	3
Conditions Governing Access .....	3
Preferred Citation .....	4
Processing Information .....	4
Biographical / Historical .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	4
Arrangement .....	4
Collection Contents .....	6
Series I: Correspondence .....	6
Sterling W. and Marie Whitener .....	6
Sterling H. and Barbara Whitener .....	6
Family correspondence .....	6
General correspondence .....	6
Circular letters .....	7
Series II: Notes and Writings by SHW .....	8
Series III: Collected Material .....	9
Writings of others .....	9
Miscellaneous publications .....	9
Related to mission work in China .....	9
Related to mission work in Hong Kong .....	9
Series IV: Biographical Documentation .....	10
Selected Search Terms .....	11

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Yale Divinity Library  
409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301  
divinity.library@yale.edu  
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 151

**CREATOR:** Whitener, Sterling Hegnauer, 1921-

**TITLE:** Whitener Family Papers

**DATES:** 1945-2000

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3 linear feet (6 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Letters, photographs, and collected material, primarily from the late 1940s and early 1950s document the work of the Whiteners and the history of Christianity in Hunan Province, China and in Hong Kong. The elder Whiteners, Sterling W. and Marie, were missionaries in Yueyang (Yochow), Hunan Province, China from 1919 to 1948, serving under the Reformed Church in the United States and the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Their son, Sterling H. Whitener, and his wife Barbara were missionaries in Hunan Province from 1946 to 1950 and in Hong Kong from the early 1950s to 1967.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.151>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.151>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box  
f. folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of the Whitener family.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Preferred Citation

Whitener Family Papers (RG 151), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

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## Processing Information

Place names were modernized in the description, with the name originally used in the collection material or in an older version of the finding aid in parenthesis: e.g. "Beijing (Peking)" or "Benin (Dahomey)".

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## Biographical / Historical

Sterling Wilfong Whitener was born in 1894 in North Carolina. He married Marie Hegnauer in 1919 and they left for China that year, serving as missionaries first under the Reformed Church in the U.S. and later under the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Following language study in Nanjing (Nanking), the Whiteners were stationed in Yueyang (Yochow), Hunan Province. Sterling was assigned to evangelistic work and Marie worked with a women's Bible school. Following their furlough in 1924 the Whiteners returned to Yueyang (Yochow) but in 1927 political disturbances forced their evacuation to Shanghai and then to the United States, where Sterling served three churches in Thomasville, NC. From 1928 to 1934 the Whiteners again served in Yochow. Due to the political situation, Sterling worked with famine relief during the floods of 1930 while the family was evacuated to Shanghai for six months. Sterling also organized relief programs for refugees fleeing fighting. Following furlough in 1934, the Whiteners returned to Yueyang (Yochow). During 1939 to 1941 the Whiteners were evacuated to Yuanling in western Hunan Province due to air raids. Marie was in Shanghai during 1940 so that the children could attend Shanghai American School. From 1941 to 1946 the Whiteners were on an extended furlough in North Carolina, unable to return to China because of war conditions. They returned to Yueyang (Yoyang, Yochow) in 1946 and Marie died in Hankou (Hankow) in 1947. Sterling returned to the United States in 1948 and died in North Carolina in 1950.

Sterling Hegnauer Whitener was born in China in 1921, son of Sterling and Marie. After receiving a B.A. from Catawba College and a M.Div. from Yale Divinity School, Sterling H. and his wife, Barbara Brown Whitener, joined his parents in Yueyang (Yoyang), Hunan Province in 1946, serving under the Evangelical and Reformed Church. After one year of educational work, Sterling H. was involved in evangelistic work and acted as treasurer for the mission. SHW and BBW stayed in Hunan until September 1950. Following Sterling H.'s study for an S.T.M. degree at Yale Divinity School, they returned to mission work in Hong Kong. Sterling H. assisted refugees at the Rennie's Mill Camp and worked with the Hong Kong Council, Church of Christ in China, organizing a Social Welfare Department for the Church. He also served as an interim director of Church World Service and helped found Chung Chi College. After taking his MSW degree while on furlough in 1965, he taught at the University of Hong Kong until 1967.

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## Scope and Contents

[I. Correspondence, 1946-1995.](#)

[II. Notes and Writings of SHW, 1945-1972, n.d.](#)

[III. Collected Material, 1946-1995, n.d.](#)

[IV. Biographical Documentation, 1947-2000, n.d.](#)

These papers provide valuable documentation of the issues, events, and transactions surrounding two areas: 1) the transfer of power from a Western mission agency to the Church of Christ in China and 2) the Church and Communism in China from 1948 to 1952. They also provide information about rural work in Hunan Province and church social service work in Hong Kong.

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## Arrangement

I. Correspondence, 1946-1995

II. Notes and Writings of SHW, 1945-1972, n.d.

III. Collected Material, 1946-1995, n.d.

IV. Biographical Documentation, 1947-2000, n.d.

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence

Sterling W. and Marie Whitener		
b. 1, f. 1-3	Family letters	1946 May-1949 Jul
b. 1, f. 4	General correspondence with Board of International Missions, Hartman, and others	1948-1949
Sterling H. and Barbara Whitener		
Family correspondence		
b. 1, f. 5-8	Letters to/from brothers and Sterling W. Whitener	1946 Oct-1953 May
General correspondence		
b. 1, f. 9	B, incl. Beeken, Beck	
b. 1, f. 10-16	Board of International Missions (see also: Gregory and Hartman)	1946 Dec - 1965 Nov
b. 1, f. 18	C-D	
b. 1, f. 18-21	Daniels, Bill and Jane	1947 Apr-1951 Oct
b. 1, f. 22	E-F, incl. Elinor, Faucett	
b. 1, f. 23-24	Farnam, Vernon	1949 Sep-1951 Aug
b. 2, f. 25	G	1950 Feb
b. 2, f. 26-30	Gregory, Paul and Kit (see also International Board of Missions)	1947 Aug-1967 Sep
b. 2, f. 31	H	
b. 2, f. 32-39	Hartman, Ward (see also International Board of Missions)	1948 Mar -1952 May
b. 2, f. 40	I-K	
b. 2, f. 41	L, incl. Li, Liu	
b. 2, f. 42	Latourette, Kenneth Scott	1946 Aug-1953 Jan
b. 2, f. 43-46	Leonard / Liu Zhongcheng	1989 Oct-1995 Nov
b. 2, f. 47	M	
b. 2, f. 48	O-P, incl. Price	

## Sterling H. and Barbara Whitener &gt; General correspondence (continued)

b. 2, f. 49	S, incl Stange, Stowe	
b. 2, f. 50	T-Y, incl. Whitehead, Yearick	
b. 2, f. 51	Ziegler, Reynold and Ann	1947 Apr-1950 Feb
b. 2, f. 52	Fragments	
b. 3, f. 56	Chinese language correspondence	
	Circular letters	
b. 3, f. 53-55	Circular letters sent by Sterling H. and Barbara Whitener	

**Series II: Notes and Writings by SHW**

b. 3, f. 57	Student paper: "Chinese Church Architecture"	1945
b. 3, f. 58	Student paper: "The Growth of Church Self-Government in North Hunan"	1951
b. 3, f. 59	Student paper: "The Interpretation of History in Chinese Christianity"	1952
b. 3, f. 60	"A Program for Rural Improvement for Yoyang, Hunan, China"	n.d.
b. 3, f. 61	"A young man returns home to marry his cousin" and others	n.d.
b. 3, f. 62	Notes on Chinese Communism	
b. 3, f. 63	"Chinese Communist Attitude Toward Religion and Treatment of Religious Groups"	ca. 1951
b. 3, f. 64	Sermon	1958
b. 3, f. 65	"The Future of Undergraduate Social Worker Education and the Role of the B.A. Worker"	1972



**Series III: Collected Material**

Writings of others		
b. 3, f. 66	Lindbeck, Luce, Niebuhr	1946-1951
b. 3, f. 67	Grace Liu, Daniel Bays, Leonard	1954-1994
b. 3, f. 68	Papers re. Christianity and Communism	1949-1951
Miscellaneous publications		
b. 3, f. 69	Publications of the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy	1950, n.d.
b. 3, f. 70	English language pamphlets by Mao Tse-tung and Wu Hsiu-chuan	1949-1951
b. 3, f. 71	Chinese language pamphlets with English titles; "Karl Marx or Jesus Christ" by V. R. Edman; "Communism's Three-fold Challenge to the Christian Church" by S. Boyle; "The Social and Economic Responsibility of the Church" by J. Vos	ca. 1949-1950, n.d.
b. 3, f. 72	Chung Hwa English Fortnightly - 6 issues	
b. 3, f. 73	Chinese language reports	1950
b. 3, f. 74	Hoy Hospital - 90th anniversary booklet	1992
b. 3, f. 75	Huping College - 20th anniversary booklet	1992
Related to mission work in China		
b. 4, f. 76	Financial records and reports	1945-1948
b. 4, f. 77	Minutes and reports	1949-1950
b. 4, f. 78	Re. Hunan District	1948-1949
b. 4, f. 79	Re. Huping Middle School	1950
Related to mission work in Hong Kong		
b. 4, f. 80	Minutes of Social Welfare Committee, CCC, Hong Kong District	1955-1956
b. 4, f. 81	Miscellaneous reports	1949-1966
b. 4, f. 82	Children's work (Grampian Village, Homantin Faith Hope Club)	1953-1954
b. 4, f. 83	Refugee village biographies	n.d.
b. 4, f. 84-85	Re. social welfare work in Hong Kong	1962-1966
b. 4, f. 86	Re. education strategies	1965-1966
b. 4, f. 87	Plays and pageants	1955-1956
b. 4, f. 88	Scripts to accompany slide and film presentations	n.d.
b. 4, f. 89-90	News clippings and items	1956-1995

**Series IV: Biographical Documentation**

Material in missing box 5; consult with Special Collections staff.

	Biographical information re. Sterling W. and Marie H. Whitener, incl. summary of ministry and memorial tributes	
	Biographical information re. Sterling H. and Barbara Whitener, incl. certificates from YDS and University of North Carolina	
	Re. "Mission Roots" tour to China led by SHW	1992
	Re. China tours led by SHW	1996, 2000
	Re. Fulbright year	1973-1974
b. 6, f. 96	Photographs and slides, incl. Hunan Synod meeting and re. mission work	1947-1950, n.d.

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Missions -- China

### **Names**

Whitener, Sterling Hegnauer, 1921-

### **Corporate Body**

Evangelical and Reformed Church -- Missions --  
China