

WILLIAM R. MEDLING COLLECTION

AR 732



Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives

Nashville, Tennessee

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William R. (Bill) Medling Collection, 1907 – 1989

AR 732

Summary

Main Entry: William R. Medling Collection

Date Span: 1907 – 1989

Abstract: Collection contains Bibles, hymnals, a history of the Japan Baptist Convention, histories of missions in Japan, typescripts, and photographs. Much of the material is in the Japanese language.

Size: 2 linear ft. (three boxes)

Collection #: AR 732

Biographical Sketch

William R. (Bill) Medling was born May 28, 1914, in Fukuoka, Japan, the fourth of five children of Southern Baptist missionaries Paul and Lenna Medling. The Medlings had been appointed missionaries in 1907, but their tenure was relatively short. Paul Medling died of pneumonia during the flu epidemic in 1919; Lenna Medling returned to the United States with the children the following year and died in 1942.

When the family returned to the United States, moving to Jackson, Tennessee, Bill Medling was five years old. He graduated from Union University in Jackson in 1935 and from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1938. He met Louise Gulley (b. 1915) at seminary while she was a student in the Woman's Missionary Union Training School in Louisville. They married May 26, 1939, and had four children: twins Paul and Edward, Bob, and Carol Ann.

Medling served as a pastor in Slayden, Mississippi, from 1938 to 1942. He entered the United States Army in 1943, attending Chaplain's School at Harvard University for three months and then serving as chaplain at Deshon General Hospital in Butler, Pennsylvania. From 1944 to 1946, he served in Shemya, Alaska. He was discharged from the Army in March, 1946.

On April 10, 1946, Bill and Louise Medling were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as missionaries to Japan. From June 1946 until October 1947, they studied Japanese at the University of California, Berkeley. They arrived in Tokyo in the late fall of 1947, devoting most of their first two years in Japan to language study.

From 1949 to 1960, the Medlings worked in Kumamoto. Bill engaged in evangelism and church planting, while Louise taught Sunday School and worked with women and young people. They

served in Okayama from 1960 to 1964, moved to Okinawa, and served there from 1965 until 1978. They retired in 1979 to Nashville, Tennessee, where they continued working with Japanese nationals through local church ministries.

Scope and Content

The collection contains two linear feet of material dating from 1907 to 1989 and consisting of publications, unpublished typescripts, and photographs. Publications include Bibles, hymnals, a history of the Japan Baptist Convention in Japanese, English-language histories of missions in Japan, a report of the Japan Baptist Mission dated 1935, and a 1950 handbook of the Mission. In addition, there is an unpublished autobiographical account of the Medlings' work in Japan and thirty-four photographs in the collection. Most of the photographs date from the period of Paul and Lenna Medlings' service, 1907 – 1920, and include pictures of the Medling family and of Japanese and American leaders of Baptist work in Japan during that period.

Arrangement

Arranged by material type and alphabetically by topic .

Provenance

Donated by William R. Medling, 1990.

Preferred Citation

William R. Medling Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Access Restrictions

None

Subject Terms

Southern Baptist Convention. Foreign Mission Board
Missions – Japan
Baptists – Missions

Related Materials

Parker, F. Calvin. *The Southern Baptist Mission in Japan. 1889 – 1989*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991.

Two folders regarding the appointments and work of Paul and Lenna Medling can be found in the Foreign Mission Board Missionary Correspondence Files (AR 551-2), Box 39.

The Papers of Elizabeth Watkins (AR 810) also document Southern Baptist missions in Japan during the post-war period.

Container List

Box 1

- 1.1 Artifacts
- 1.2 Japanese scarf
- 1.3 Ceremonial tea cup, 16th century

Box 2

- 2.1 Biographical: Autobiography and chronologies
- 2.2 Correspondence: Foreign Mission Board, 1939
- 2.3 English-language Publications: *Baptist Program*, Sesquicentennial Issue, 1970
- 2.4 English-language Publications: Calloway, T. N. *Japanese Buddhism and Christianity*. Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1937
- 2.5 English-language Publications: “Go and Bear Fruit.” Okinawa Baptist Association, 1971
- 2.6 English-language Publications: Handbook of the Japan Baptist Mission, 1950
- 2.7 English-language Publications: Hines, Gene. *Japan: The Challenge and the Promise (Foreign Mission Study)*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1989
- 2.8 English-language Publications: Japanese grammar, ca. 1900 – 1920
- 2.9 English-language Publications: *Lantern Lights of the West Japan Mission*, 1935
- 2.10 English-language Typescripts: Beck, Carl. “Anabaptist-Mennonite Beginnings,” 1964
- 2.11 English-language Typescripts: Culpepper, C. L. “Baptist Distinctives”
- 2.12 English-language Typescripts: Duck River Baptists
- 2.13 English-language Typescripts: Fulop, Robert E. “Baptist Beginnings”
- 2.14 English-language Typescripts: Future missions, planning materials, 1974
- 2.15 English-language Typescripts: Japan Baptist Mission histories and chronologies
- 2.16 English-language Typescripts: Japanese geography, history, and poetry
- 2.17 English-language Typescripts: Routh, E. C. “The Foreign Mission Board Historical Sketch,” 1970
- 2.18 Japanese-language Publications: Bible, ca. 1900 – 1920
- 2.19 Japanese-language Publications: Bibles, tracts, and church members’ handbook, ca. 1950s – 1970s
- 2.20 Japanese-language Publications: *History of the Japan Baptist Convention, 1889 – 1959*
- 2.21 Japanese-language Publications: Hymnal, ca. 1890 – 1910
- 2.22 Japanese-language Publications: Hymnals, 1950s
- 2.23 Japanese-language Publications: Medling, William R., *History of Christian Evangelism*, ca. 1950s – 1960s
- 2.24 Japanese-language Publications: Unidentified (5 items)

Box 3

- 3.1 Photographs: Collages, Medling family and Japanese friends, ca. 1907 – 1920 (2 sheets, 14 images)
- 3.2 Photographs: Groups – Japan Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, 1918 (1 photo)
- 3.3 Photographs: Groups – Japan Mission Meeting, 1918 (1 sheet, 6 images)
- 3.4 Photographs: Groups – Japanese and Americans, ca. 1907 – 1919 (3 photos)
- 3.5 Photographs: Groups – Japanese and Americans, ca. 1950s (1 photo)
- 3.6 Photographs: Japanese scenes, ca. 1907 – 1920 (2 photos)
- 3.7 Photographs: Medling family, ca. 1907 – 1920 (8 photos)