Helm, Margie May, 1894-1991 (MSS 636)

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 636  HELM, Margie May, 1894-1991


SC2018.49.1

Related collection: MSS 552

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Margie May Helm, the second child of Ellen “Nellie” (Blakey) Helm (1865-1920) and Dr. Thomas Oliver Helm (1859-1937) of Sugar Grove, Butler County, Kentucky, was born in Auburn, Logan County, Kentucky on 21 August 1894. She attended Auburn Seminary from 1901-1910, when her family moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Helm attended Bowling Green High School and in 1912 was valedictorian of its first graduating class. In 1916, she received her A.B. degree from Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in Lynchburg, Virginia, and in 1922 was awarded a certificate in Library Science from the Pratt Institute Library School in Brooklyn, New York. In 1933, she received her M.A. degree from the University of Chicago.

In 1920, Helm joined the Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teachers College (now WKU) as an assistant to librarian Florence Ragland. She succeeded Miss Ragland as head librarian in 1923 and served in that position until 1956, when she was appointed Director of Library Services.

Margie Helm was an active member of the Bowling Green Presbyterian Church where, in 1969, she became its first woman elder. She held several offices in the Presbyterial and Synodical Societies of the United Presbyterian Church USA, including president of the Logan Presbyterial Society from 1949-1950, historian of the Western Kentucky Presbyterial Society, and vice president and historian of the Kentucky Synodical Society. She was also a member of the Inter-Racial Commission of Bowling Green, a citizens’ group created to help improve education and employment opportunities for the African-American community.

Margie Helm died on 19 December 1991 at the age of 97 and was interred in Bowling Green’s Fairview Cemetery.
COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists primarily of material created or acquired by Margie Helm in connection with her various administrative posts in the Presbyterian Church and her work as a church historian. Also included are materials documenting her work with the Inter-Racial Commission of Bowling Green, Kentucky. An inventory is in Box 1, Folder 1.

Box 1 includes general correspondence (Folders 2 and 3). A small amount is personal and professional, but most relates to Margie Helm’s activities in the Presbyterian Church: administration, arranging presbyterial meetings, goals for missions, and especially her work collecting historical data on early Presbyterian churches in western Kentucky and seeking out appropriate repositories for church records. She corresponds with other church historians such as Kate (Clagett) Duncan, Robert Stuart Sanders and Littleton Groom; Groom’s letters also contain personal news. A letter to a young relative about to enter the ministry (Folder 3) prompts her to outline her ancestors’ role in the founding of churches in the region.

Correspondence and programs relating to the Logan Presbyterial Society (Folder 4) date from Margie Helm’s term as president just before the Society’s 1950 merger with the Princeton Presbytery to form the Western Kentucky Presbyterial Society; materials on the new body (Folder 7) include the constitution and bylaws, minutes, budgets and programs as well as a history of the old Princeton Presbytery. Historical data on Presbyterian churches (Folders 5, 6 and 8) often includes associated women’s organizations and missionary societies. Information on the Presbyterian Church in Bowling Green (Folder 6) is supplemented by biographical data on its pastors (Folder 9). Materials relating to the Kentucky Synodical Society (Folders 10 and 11) include Margie Helm’s history covering 1956-1966 (Folder 11; for a history covering 1951-1956, see MSS 552 HELM, Margie, Box 7, Folder 7). Material relating to Margie Helm’s local church, the Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green, includes session committee lists, her pastor’s newsletters from a trip overseas (Folder 12), and planning documents for the celebration of the church’s sesquicentennial (Folder 14). Miscellaneous printed matter on the Presbyterian Church (Folder 13) includes meeting and retreat programs, and a building program brochure for North Carolina’s Barber-Scotia College, described as the only Presbyterian four-year college for African-American women.

Box 2 contains reports and correspondence on missionary work of the Presbyterian Church (Folder 1) and Margie Helm’s desk diaries (Folders 3 and 4) in which she records various data on church histories, reminders, professional notes, and religious thoughts. Also included (Folder 2) are meeting attendance lists, correspondence and reports relating to the Inter-Racial Commission of Bowling Green, organized in 1949. The Commission’s interest in improving vocational opportunities for African-American students prompted an evaluation of the facilities at Bowling Green’s State Street High School and queries to school superintendents in adjoining counties about establishing a regional high school for African Americans.

Correspondence with the Southern Regional Council includes literature on the Council’s history and achievements as well as arrangements for Commission membership in its Kentucky Division. A 1956 women’s club program by Margie Helm, “Attempts to Find the Christian Attitude Toward Integration of the Public School System,” calls for fairness and goodwill in striving toward equality for African Americans.
**SHELF LIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 1</th>
<th>Margie Helm</th>
<th>1912-1975</th>
<th>322 items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td>1912-1956</td>
<td>51 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>1957-1975, n.d.</td>
<td>71 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>1949-1950</td>
<td>12 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Logan Presbyterial Society – Correspondence, programs</td>
<td>1951, n.d.</td>
<td>20 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 5</td>
<td>Historical data on Cumberland Presbyterian Churches</td>
<td>1949-1959, n.d.</td>
<td>13 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 6</td>
<td>Historical data on Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky</td>
<td>1951-1967</td>
<td>15 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 7</td>
<td>Western Kentucky Presbyterial Society – Minutes, programs, etc.; “Development of the Presbyterian Church in Western Kentucky: The Presbytery of Princeton,” by F. C. Pogue</td>
<td>1950-1951</td>
<td>14 items</td>
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<td>Folder 8</td>
<td>Historical data on churches for Western Kentucky Presbyterial Society</td>
<td>1950-1951</td>
<td>14 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 9</td>
<td>Biographical data on pastors</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>19 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 10</td>
<td>Women’s Synodical Society in the Synod of Kentucky – Constitution and by-laws</td>
<td>1957, n.d.</td>
<td>2 items</td>
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<td>Folder 11</td>
<td>Women’s Synodical Society in the Synod of Kentucky – Programs, reports, correspondence, history 1956-1966</td>
<td>1948-1970</td>
<td>62 items</td>
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<td>Folder 12</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green – Miscellaneous</td>
<td>1943-1961</td>
<td>20 items</td>
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<td>Folder 13</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church USA – Miscellaneous printed matter</td>
<td>1949-1955</td>
<td>8 items</td>
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<td>Folder 14</td>
<td>Bowling Green Presbyterian Church – Sesquicentennial – Minutes, correspondence</td>
<td>1967-1969</td>
<td>14 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 2</td>
<td>Margie Helm</td>
<td>1949-1968</td>
<td>63 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church – Missions – Reports, correspondence</td>
<td>1949-1968, n.d.</td>
<td>34 items</td>
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<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Inter-Racial Commission of Bowling Green – Reports, attendance lists, correspondence</td>
<td>1949-1956</td>
<td>21 items</td>
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<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Desk diaries</td>
<td>1952, 1955</td>
<td>2 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Desk diaries</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>2 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 5</td>
<td>Loose material from desk diaries</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>4 items</td>
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</table>

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS HELM, Margie, 1912-1975
636 1894-1991

Correspondence and papers of Margie Helm, Auburn, Kentucky native and longtime Western Kentucky University head librarian, relating principally to her work for the Presbyterian Church. Also includes materials documenting her service on the Inter-Racial Commission of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

1½ boxes. 19 folders. 385 items. Originals, photocopies.

SC2018.49.1

**SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

African Americans – Bowling Green – Clubs B1,F3
African Americans – Bowling Green – Relating to B2,F2
African Americans – Education – Bowling Green B1,F5; B2,F2
African Americans – Education – North Carolina B1,F13
Antioch Church – McLean County – Relating to B1,F8
Barber-Scotia College – Concord, North Carolina – Relating to B1,F13
Bookmobiles – Warren County – Relating to B1,F3
Bowling Green Academy – Bowling Green B1,F5
Breckinridge, Mary Carson, 1881-1965 B1,F3
Bush, Mary (Coke) B1,F3
Caney Fork Presbyterian Church – Butler County – Relating to B1,F5
Cawein, Madison Julius, 1865-1914 B1,F2
Clergy – Presbyterian  B1,F9
Clubs – Bowling Green – George Washington Carver Club  B1,F3
Cumberland Presbyterian Church  B1,F2,3,5
Drake, Julia Angeline, 1892-1970  B1,F2
Drake, Louise (Carson), 1894-1979  B1,F2
Duncan, Claudius D., 1895-1961  B1,F3
Duncan, Kate Northcott (Clagett), 1892-1983  B1,F3
First Presbyterian Church – Auburn – Relating to  B1,F8
Franklin Presbyterian Church – Franklin – Relating to  B1,F8
Gasper River Presbyterian Church – Logan County – Relating to  B1,F5
Glasgow Presbyterian Church – Barren County – Relating to  B1,F5
Grider, Jesse Smith, 1828-1911 – Relating to  B1,F9
Groom, Charles Littleton, 1896-1975  B1,F3
Harris, Stella Dorinda, 1881-1958  B1,F3
Hatcher, Mattie Louise, 1871-1963  B1,F3
Helm family – Relating to  B1,F3
Helm, Harold Holmes, 1900-1985 – Correspondence  B1,F3
Helm, John Blakey, 1899-1979  B1,F3
Historic houses – Butler County  B1,F2
Integration and segregation, Racial – Comments about, 1956  B2,F2
Kereiakes, Spero Gus, 1934-2003 – Letter to  B1,F3
Kuykendall family – Relating to  B1,F2
Marrowbone Presbyterian Church – Marrowbone – Relating to  B1,F2
McLean family – Relating to  B1,F3
Missionary societies – Presbyterian  B1,F2,6,8,11; B2,F1
Mizpah Church – Warren County – Relating to  B1,F8
Mt. Lebanon Presbyterian Church – Warren County – Relating to  B1,F5,11
Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church – Muhlenberg County – Relating to  B1,F8
Nahm, Max Brunswick, 1864-1958 – Relating to  B1,F3
Neal, Mary Julia, 1905-1995  B1,F2
Old Union Cumberland Presbyterian Church – Warren County – Relating to  B1,F8
Palmore, James, d. 2008  B1,F2
Philips, Emanie Louise (Nahm) Sachs Arling, 1893-1981 – Correspondence  B1,F3
Pilot Knob Presbyterian Church – Simpson County – Relating to  B1,F2,5
Pine Grove Presbyterian Church – Warren County – Relating to  B1,F3
Pleasant Hill Methodist Episcopal Church – Warren County – Relating to  B1,F3
Presbyterian churches – Bowling Green – Relating to  B1,F5,6,12,14
Presbyterian churches – Synods and councils  B1,F10,11
Presbyterian Church – Logan Presbytery – Relating to  B1,F3-5,8
Presbyterian Church – Princeton Presbytery – Relating to  B1,F7
Presbyterian Church – Western Kentucky Presbyterial Society  B1,F7
Race relations – Bowling Green, 1950s – Relating to  B2,F2
Radio – Comments about, 1928  B1,F2
Rice, Laban Lacy, 1870-1973 – Letter to  B1,F3
Round Pond Presbyterian Church – Simpson County – Relating to  B1,F8
Sanders, Robert Stuart, 1880-1971 – Correspondence  B1,F3
Smiths Grove Presbyterian Church – Warren County – Relating to B1,F8
Southern Regional Council B2,F2
State Street School – Bowling Green – Relating to B2,F2
Streeter, Thomas Winthrop, 1883-1965 B1,F2
Thatcher, Maurice Hudson, 1870-1973 B1,F3
Trenton Presbyterian Church – Todd County – Relating to B1,F8
Trinity Cumberland Presbyterian Church – Warren County – Relating to B1,F5
Vietnam War, 1961-1975 – Comments about, 1968 B1,F3
Weldy family – Photograph B1,F3
Weldy, Robert K. B1,F3
Whitaker, Francis J., 1916-1994 B1,F3
Woodburn Church – Warren County – Relating to B1,F8

Niedermeier/Jeffrey 04/11/2018