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

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

Descriptive Inventory

MSS 636 HELM, Margie May, 1894-1991

1½ boxes. 19 folders. 385 items. 1912-1975. Originals, photocopies.

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

BOX 1	Margie Helm	1912-1975	322 items
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Correspondence	1912-1956	51 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1957-1975, n.d.	71 items
Folder 4	Logan Presbyterial Society – Correspondence, programs	1949-1950	12 items
Folder 5	Historical data on Cumberland Presbyterian Churches	1951, n.d.	20 items
Folder 6	Historical data on Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky	1949-1959, n.d.	13 items
Folder 7	Western Kentucky Presbyterial Society – Minutes, programs, etc.; “Development of the Presbyterian Church in Western Kentucky: The Presbytery of Princeton,” by F. C. Pogue	1951-1967	15 items
Folder 8	Historical data on churches for Western Kentucky Presbyterial Society	1950-1951	14 items
Folder 9	Biographical data on pastors	n.d.	19 items
Folder 10	Women’s Synodical Society in the Synod of Kentucky – Constitution and by-laws	1957, n.d.	2 items
Folder 11	Women’s Synodical Society in the Synod of Kentucky – Programs, reports, correspondence, history 1956-1966	1948-1970	62 items
Folder 12	Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green – Miscellaneous	1943-1961	20 items
Folder 13	Presbyterian Church USA – Miscellaneous printed matter	1949-1955	8 items
Folder 14	Bowling Green Presbyterian Church – Sesquicentennial – Minutes, correspondence	1967-1969	14 items

BOX 2	Margie Helm	1949-1968	63 items
Folder 1	Presbyterian Church – Missions – Reports, correspondence	1949-1968, n.d.	34 items
Folder 2	Inter-Racial Commission of Bowling Green – Reports, attendance lists, correspondence	1949-1956	21 items
Folder 3	Desk diaries	1952, 1955	2 items
Folder 4	Desk diaries	1957	2 items
Folder 5	Loose material from desk diaries	n.d.	4 items

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.

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

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 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 Cumberland Presbyterian Church – Franklin – Relating to B1,F8
 Gasper River Cumberland 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
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 Mt. Lebanon Presbyterian Church – Warren County – Relating to B1,F5,11
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 Old Union Cumberland Presbyterian Church – Warren County – Relating to B1,F8
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 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
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