

HESS, AUBREY FRANKLIN, 1874-1935.

Aubrey Franklin Hess papers, 1911-1984

Emory University
Pitts Theology Library
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Hess, Aubrey Franklin, 1874-1935.
Title: Aubrey Franklin Hess papers, 1911-1984
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 436
Extent: 2.5 cubic feet (5 boxes)
Abstract: This collection contains sermons, lectures, correspondence, newspaper clippings and family papers of Rev. Aubrey Hess. Initially ordained in the Methodist Protestant church, he later served Congregational and Unitarian-Universalist churches.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

No restrictions on access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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Related Materials in This Repository

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta records (RG 026)

Source

Jay Kiskel, October 2018.

Custodial History

The collection had been in the possession of Rev. Hess widow, Jean Hess. Upon her death in 1984 the collection passed to her grandchildren, Cathlean Utzig and Jere Wells.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Aubrey Franklin Hess papers, MSS 436, Archives and Manuscript Dept., Pitts Theology Library, Emory University.

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Processing

Processed by Jay Kiskel, October 2018.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Aubrey Franklin Hess was born December 8, 1874 in Virginia and died unexpectedly on October 27, 1935 in Clarksburg, West Virginia. Hess received a (insert degree) from the Westminster Theological Seminary, Maryland (1903), Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees from the University of West Virginia in 1906 and 1907 respectively. It is assumed that he received an honorary Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from West Lafayette College, Ohio.

Hess was initially ordained in the Methodist Protestant church in 1896. He subsequently served West Virginia Methodist Protestant churches in Nestorville (1896 - 1897) and St. Mary's (1898 - 1900). Hess then returned to academic studies from 1901 to 1908. While attending West Virginia University, Hess was part-time minister to the Methodist Protestant in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Hess paused his ministerial career in 1908 when he accepted a one-year teaching assignment at Kansas City University, Missouri.

In 1909 upon completion of his one-year teaching assignment, Hess returned to West Virginia and assumed the pastorate of the Methodist Protestant Church in Buckhannon. At this time, Hess was also active in Methodist Protestant denominational affairs. He was successfully nominated by the 1908 and 1912 quadrennial conference to the Board of Governors of his alma mater Westminster Theological Seminary. Locally, Hess led balloting to become the state president of the West Virginia denomination conference, but withdrew his name due to the health of his wife.

Two years later in 1911, Hess resigned his West Virginia pastorate to assume the presidency of the West Lafayette College, Ohio the newest of the educational institutions maintained by the Methodist Protestant Church. Among the actions taken by Hess as president at West Lafayette College was his proposal to consolidate his college with the Michigan based Adrian College; another Methodist Protestant Church educational institution. The West Lafayette College trustees, however, voted to surrender control of the college to the General Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church for liquidation. At the 1916 Methodist Protestant quadrennial conference the matter was resolved with the decision to consolidate the two colleges to Adrian, Michigan. Hess was appointed as Adrian's new president. Hess remained at Adrian College until he resigned in 1917 to resume pastorate duties at the First Congregational Church of Manistee in Michigan.

There is little in the public record on Hess's pastorate in Manistee from 1917 to 1921. The only contemporary comment on Hess's pastorate is offered in a history written of the Manistee church. "Reverend Dr. A. F. Hess was a man with a 'brilliant mind and an eloquent tongue.' He made patriotic addresses all over the country. He formed a group of around 100 men to discuss the war and other questions of the day. He gave a series of lectures on psychology."

During his Manistee pastorate Hess was also recognized by the American City bureau as one of America's 100 best speakers in the United States.

Hess's next pastorate was at the First Methodist Protestant Church (1921 – 1925) in Fort Worth, Texas. This pastorate was the result of a decision made by the Methodist Protestant Home Mission to send a minister to the Dallas – Fort Worth area to help build up the church in that area. Unfortunately the public record of Rev. Hess's endeavors is silent. What is clear is that he departed Fort Worth in 1925, left the Methodist Protestant denomination to assume the pastorate of the First Congregational Church in Beaumont, Texas.

The pulpit in Beaumont had become opened following the resignation of the church's founder Dr. Samuel Holden who after two years accepted an appointment to the office of the assistance superintendent of the Congregational church in the central south region. Dr. Holden in founding the church said, "In the record of our Lord's life He gives us in clear language, so plain that He cannot be misunderstood or misinterpreted, at least four tests of a Christian disciple." Those tests were loyalty to the truth, love of humanity, doing good and cross bearing or as Holden noted the totality of life is summed up in what good we may do in life.

Sermon topics in his inaugural year reflected both his desire to prepare his flock to be Christian disciples and his belief that religion includes the embrace of the human experience. Those topics include: "The Appeal and Response of Christ's Love as Revealed in Human Relationships," "Shall We Cease to Think in Matters of Religion or Adopt a Policy of Blind Faith" and "The God of Human Experience."

Hess extended his ministry beyond his Sunday pulpit to what was described in the local newspaper as a "Miniature University." The Tuesday morning Woman's Lecture club was devoted to a series of lectures by Hess on the philosophy of religion that explored world religions. Wednesday night classes offered lectures on general psychology. Friday night classes were designed for parents with lectures on child psychology. Several of these lectures also aired on the local KFDM radio station. A Boy's Science Club was also conducted with the purpose of explaining, as Hess said, "the what and why" of things to the church youth.

A large advertisement for the First Congregational Church in the Beaumont Enterprise reflected both Hess's and the church's character, "This is a distinctive church with a distinctive aim. It has no creed and values truth more highly than belief. It is emphatically opposed to ignorance, prejudice, religious bigotry, injustice and desecration of human values.

During his pastorate Hess made nation-wide news in 1927 when he changed the traditional wedding vow of "until death us do part" to "as long as this union shall last." Hess believed in the separation of state and church. That although his church granted divine sanction for a civil ceremony, state law retained provisions for marriage annulment regardless of the words used in the wedding ceremony. Hess also dropped the use of the word "obey" from the wedding service. Rather he solicited a promise given freely to provide, protect and keep pure and unspotted. Hess concluded his reasoning saying, "I would not under any circumstances perform a ceremony where these conditions were not agreed to. I never ask if they will 'obey.' What's the use?"

Hess's pastorate in Beaumont ended in 1930 when he accepted a call to the United Liberal Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

Hess's call to the Atlanta was the result of outreach Hess did to Rev. George F. Patterson, Executive Vice President of the American Unitarian Association in Boston, Massachusetts. In a November 29, 1929 letter from Hess to Patterson, Hess followed up on a conversation the two

gentlemen had at the Southwestern Federation of Religious Liberals regarding Hess's desire to fellowship with the Unitarians.

Hess's new pastorate (1930 – 1935) at the United Liberal Church inserted him in a religious environment that was distinctively unique. The United Liberal Church was the result of a 1918 decision by local Atlanta Unitarians and Universalists to merge into a single congregation. This local merger pre-dates the national merger of the two denominations in 1961.

The 1918 merger was intended to be “a temporary merger to last for the duration of the war (World War I) and help win the war by saving fuel and light.” However, the merger continued until 1950 when internal and external conflicts over racial and political issues resulted in the collapse of this joint Unitarian Universalist congregation.

Hess had assumed a pulpit in Atlanta that had been vacant for nine months following resignation of Rev. Clinton Lee Scott. Scott had been a popular minister who had provided the joint congregation a sense of unity and achieved a sense of financial stability that had long eluded the congregation. Hess wrote to Rev. George F. Patterson one month after arriving in Atlanta stating that not yet acquired “definite knowledge as to the real conditions of the Atlanta Church.

Rev. Hess served the Atlanta congregation until 1935 when he unexpectedly died.

Personal Life

In May 1897 Hess married Sabina Francina “Bina” Livesay in West Virginia. In that marriage, four children were born; Aubrey W. (1899 – 1929), Adrian T. (1900 – 1939), Robert LD (1903 – 1992), Wanda L. (1908 – 1997). Hess's marriage to Bina ended sometime in mid 1920's. Hess subsequently remarried Jean Markley (nee Van Horn). In that marriage, one child, Jean Cathlean born 1928.

His widow Jean Hess remained an active member of the United Liberal Church until that congregation collapsed in 1950. Jean Hess continued her active membership in the rebirth of the new Unitarian Universalist congregation under the minister of Rev. Ed Cahill. That new congregation gave rise to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta (UUCA) in the early 1960's.

Denominational Positions

1896-1897 Minister - Nestorvillie Methodist Protestant Church, WV

1897-1900 Minister - St. Mary's Methodist Protestant Church, WV

1901-1903 Student - Westminster Theological Seminary, MD

1903-1908 Student - University of West Virginia, Morgantown, WV

1903-1908 Minister - Methodist Protestant Church, Buckhannon, WV

1908-1909 Professor - Kansas City University, MO

1909-1911 Minister - Methodist Protestant Buckhannon, WV

1911-1916 President - West Lafayette College, OH

1916-1917 President - Adrian College, MI

1917-1921 Minister - First Congregation Church, Manistee, MI

1921-1925 Minister - First Methodist Protestant Church, Fort Worth, TX

1925-1930 Minister - First Congregational Church, Beaumont, TX

1930-1935 Minister - United Liberal Church (UU), Atlanta, GA

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of sermons delivered by Rev. Hess from 1922 - 1930, lectures from Hess's Miniature University conducted at the First Congregational Church in Beaumont, TX, personal and church related correspondence by Rev. Hess and his wife, Jean Hess, Sunday school lesson notes from Hess's ministry in Manistee, MI, personal family including wills and correspondence, newspaper clipping and two manuscripts.

Arrangement Note

The papers are arranged into six series:

- (1) Sermons. Sermons delivered by Rev. Hess from 1922 to 1935. When possible the sermons were dated via a search of archival newspapers. Each sermon folder contains an inventory developed during the archival newspaper search. The list shows the sermons listed in the archived newspaper, a Yes / No indicator if the sermon is in this collection. Notation is provided if no sermon information was provided in the newspaper. There are several folders of sermons that could not be dated by this process and are stored in folders with an assumed date.
- (2) Lectures. Lectures delivered by Rev. Hess at his Miniature University at the First Congregational Church, Beaumont, TX. Lectures were held on a regularly weekly basis. Folders marked with a specific year, but lectures series may span several years.
- (3) Correspondence. Private and church related correspondence by Rev. Hess and his wife, Jean Hess.
- (4) Family papers. Property matters of Mr. Frank P. Markly and his wife Jean Markley (nee Van Horn). Jean Markley later remarries Aubrey Hess and assumes the surname of Hess. Will and settlement papers for Jean Van Horns parents (John and Alpha Van Horn) and grandparents (George and Hannah R. Van Horn).
- (5) Newspaper Clippings and Photographs. Various newspaper clippings regarding Rev. Aubrey Hess and his wife Jean Hess (a.k.a. Jean Markley).
- (6) Manuscripts. Unpublished Manuscripts.

Documents are arranged whenever possible in chronological order. Very few of the original documents were dated. Nor did the order of documents when received for arrangement provide any reliable or consistent method to ascertain the chronology of documents. To determine the date of documents, extensive research was conducted using archival newspapers to determine the dates of sermons and lectures. Some original documents could not be assigned a date via this method and were arranged with an assumed date or period of time when the documents were created.

Container List

Sermons

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Sermons, 1922, 1925 - First Methodist Protestant Church, Fort Worth, TX.
1	2	Sermons, 1926 - First Congregational Church, Beaumont, TX.
1	3	Sermons, 1927 - First Congregational Church, Beaumont, TX.
1	4	Sermons, 1928 - First Congregational Church, Beaumont, TX.
1	5	Sermons, 1929 - First Congregational Church, Beaumont, TX.
1	6	Sermons, 1930 - First Congregational Church, Beaumont, TX and United Liberal Church, Atlanta, GA.
1	7	Sermons, 1931 - United Liberal Church, Atlanta, GA.
1	8	Sermons, 1932 - United Liberal Church, Atlanta, GA.
1	9	Sermons, 1933 - United Liberal Church, Atlanta, GA.
2	1	Sermons, 1934 - United Liberal Church, Atlanta, GA.
2	2	Sermons, 1935 - United Liberal Church, Atlanta, GA.
2	3	Sermons, Assumed 1927 - 1929.
2	4	Sermons, Assumed 1927 - 1929.
2	5	Sermons, Assumed 1927 - 1929.
2	6	Sermons, Assumed 1927 - 1929.

Lectures

2	7	Lectures, 1917 - 1921 (ca) - First Congregation Church, Manistee, MI. Sunday School Lessons.
2	8	Lectures, 1917 - 1921 (ca) - First Congregation Church, Manistee, MI. Sunday School Lessons.
2	9	Lectures, 1917 - 1921 (ca) - First Congregation Church, Manistee, MI. Sunday School Lessons.
2	10	Lectures, 1927 - Old Testament.
2	11	Lectures, 1926 - 1927 - Bible Forum.
3	1	Lectures, 1927 - 1929 - Wednesday Night Psychology.
3	2	Lectures, 1927 - Tuesday Night Philosophy of Religion. Lectures 2 - 59.
3	3	Lectures, 1927 - Child Psychology. Radio lectures on KFDM.
3	4	Lectures, 1927 - New Testament. Lectures 1 - 35.
3	5	Lectures, Undated - Origin and Rise of our Christian Doctrines.
3	6	Lectures, 1928 - How We Got the Bible. Lectures 1 - 49.
3	7	Lectures, various date. The Thursday School of Instruction, Boy's Club - Evolution, Art of Study, Woman's Club - Shakespeare.
3	8	Lectures, 1935 Rethinking Unitarianism A Handbook for Discussion Groups. Ferry Beach pamphlet, 1936.

Correspondence

- 3 9 Correspondence, 1914, 1921, 1925 - Private correspondences Aubrey and Jean Markey (nee Van Horn). Jean Markley later changes her name in marriage to Rev. Hess.
- 3 10 Correspondence, 1915 - West Lafayette College.
- 3 11 Correspondence, 1921 - First Congregational Church of Manistee, MI.
- 3 12 Correspondence, 1927 - 1930 - Rev. Aubrey Hess.
- 3 13 Correspondence, 1930, 1931 - First Congregational Church of Manistee, MI.
- 3 14 Correspondence, 1935, 1948 - Aubrey and Jean Hess personal letters.
- 3 15 Correspondence, 1934 - 1936 - Jean Hess property related issue.
- 4 1 Correspondence, 1935 - 1936 - Jean Hess church related topics.
- 4 2 Correspondence, 1976, 1978, 1984 - Meadville-Lombard Hess Scholarship Fund.
- 4 3 Correspondence, 1978, 1980 - Jean Hess.
- 4 4 Correspondence, 1984 - Death of Jean Hess.

Family Papers

- 4 5 Family Papers, Frank and Jean Markley (nee Van Horn) property related topics.
- 4 6 Family Papers, John and Alpha Van Horn.
- 4 7 Family Papers, George and Hannah Van Horn.
- 4 8 Family Papers, Jean Markley musical documents. Harmony Club booklets, Fort Worth, TX, Piano Recital by Pupils of Mrs. Jean Markley, music booklet (Jean Van Horn).
- 4 9 Family Papers, Alliance Aircraft owned by Rev. Hess's sons Aubrey and Adrian.

Newspaper Clippings and Photographs

- 4 10 Newspaper Clippings, 1925 - 1930. Summary of sermons by Rev. Hess at the First Congregational Church, Beaumont. TX. Dates on newspaper clipping reflects the Sunday when the sermon was delivered. Sermon summaries were published on Monday.
- 4 11 Newspaper Clippings, 1927, 1930, 1935. Aubrey Hess general clippings, comments on change to marriage vows, Miniature University, Boys Science Club, human interest story on Hess, Hess accepts new pastorate (1930), Hess on need for liberal religion (1935).
- 4 12 Newspaper Clippings, 1928. Advertisement that appears in the Beaumont Enterprise regarding the First Congregational Church. Collection of other descriptions.
- 4 13 Newspaper Clippings, 1920's - Jean Markley regarding musical performances.
- 4 14 Newspaper Clippings, 1935. Rev. Aubrey Hess Obituary.
- 5 1 Photographs.

Manuscripts

- 5 2 Manuscript, The Remaking of Self.
- 5 3 Manuscripts, One Hundred and One Questions and Answers to Religiously
Perplexed Minds.
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