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# Guide to the Earle and Thelma Ballou Papers

RG 165



Compiled by Martha Lund Smalley

2000

409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301

[divinity.library@yale.edu](mailto:divinity.library@yale.edu)

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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 165

**CREATOR:** Ballou, Earle H. (Earle Hoit), 1892-1987

**TITLE:** Earle and Thelma Ballou Papers

**DATES:** 1911-1997

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 8 linear feet (21 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Substantive correspondence, photographs, and slides document the Ballous' life and work in China. Earle and Thelma Ballou were missionaries in Tianjin (Tientsin), North China, serving under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) from 1916 to 1948.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.165>

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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.165>.

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 Ballou family.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Preferred Citation

Earle and Thelma Ballou Papers (RG 165), 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

Earle Ballou was born in Saxton's River, Vermont on May 17, 1892. After graduation from Yale College in 1912 he served as Academic Secretary of Dwight Hall, the Yale YMCA for one year and then attended Hartford Theological Seminary. Earle married his hometown friend, Thelma Havens, in March 1916. Thelma Havens Ballou was born in Chester, Vermont on December 8, 1890. For two years after her graduation from Middlebury College she taught English, history, biology, and German at Springfield High School, Springfield, Vermont, and then attended the Kennedy School of Missions in Hartford for one year.

Earle was ordained as a Congregational minister in June 1916. The Ballous left for North China in July 1916, where they served under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Earle and Thelma were stationed in Tianjin (Tientsin) and Beijing (Peking). Their first son, Hubbard, was born in 1917 and he was later joined by three brothers.

While in China Earle worked closely with the Chinese churches both in Tianjin (Tientsin) and as Secretary of the North China Kung Li Hui and the National Christian Council of China. During the Second World War he was detained by the Japanese in Manila until September 1943 when he was repatriated on the *Gripsholm*. After three years as Executive Secretary for the United Board for Christian Colleges in China, he returned to China, only to be recalled in 1948 to be Acting Secretary for China for the American Board. From 1950 to 1959 he was Executive Secretary of the Congregational Christian Service Committee. He then was called upon by Church World Service to be interim director of a project in Hong Kong for five months and served the National Council of Churches in New York until his retirement in 1961, when the Ballous returned to their hometown, Chester, Vermont.

Earle Ballou died in 1987 and Thelma in 1988. Additional information about their lives and work is available in *Thelma Ballou: From the Green Mountains to the Middle Kingdom*, a biography published by the Ballou's daughter-in-law Patricia K. Ballou in 1997.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection is notable for the regular, detailed correspondence of Earle and Thelma to their families in the United States. The same time period, from 1916 through 1940, is documented thoroughly by both Earle and Thelma, offering the opportunity of comparison between their differing views on issues and events. The correspondence is made more valuable by the availability of a biography of Thelma, *Thelma Ballou: From the Green Mountains to the Middle Kingdom*, by Patricia K. Ballou, which provides information about the Ballous' families and background. The Personal Items and Memorabilia series includes documentation of North China American School, where the Ballou children attended and of Yenching University, which Hubbard Ballou attended. An interesting set of glass slides showing mission activities and other scenes in China completes this collection. Additional materials were donated by the Ballou family in 2011, including correspondence, memorabilia, and the sermons/addresses by Earle Ballou found in Series VI.

The Ballou Papers complement papers of other ABCFM North China missionaries held by the Yale Divinity Library, including those of Hugh Hubbard, Harold Matthews, and Constance Buell.

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## Arrangement

- I. Correspondence of Earle Ballou, 1916-1948
- II. Correspondence of Thelma Ballou, 1911-1948
- III. Personal Items and Memorabilia, 1916-1997, n.d.
- IV. Photographs, 1918-1941

V. Glass Slides, n.d.

VI. Addendum: Sermons/addresses of Earle Ballou, 1938-1976

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence of Earle Ballou, 1916-1948

#### EHB to his parents

b. 1, f. 1	Traveling across the U.S.; descriptions of stops at Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, etc; sailed on RMS Empress of Russia on August 10; stops in Japan; arrival in Beijing (Peking) September 8	1916 July-September
b. 1, f. 2	From Beijing (Peking); including re: attending language school, work with Chinese students in the Peking College Club; description of a Chinese funeral	1916 October-December
b. 1, f. 3	From Beijing (Peking); including re: daily life; son Hubbard Walter Ballou born on January 26; Earle teaching Bible class	1917 January-March
b. 1, f. 4	Including re: continuing language study; visits with other missionaries; visit to Tianjin (Tientsin); visit to Tsing Hua school; summer at Beidaihe (Peitaiho) resort	1917 April-June
b. 1, f. 5	Including re: political unrest; summer activities; language study; flooding in Tianjin (Tientsin) putting their property as risk; move to Tongzhou (Tungchou [Tongxian]) in September	1917 July-September
b. 1, f. 6	Including re: awaiting return to Tianjin (Tientsin), which is still flooded; descriptions of flood damage; Earle returns to home and resumes of language study; work with refugees at Christian Union Camp; work at YMCA camp	1917 October-December
b. 1, f. 7	Including re: return of Thelma and Hubbard to Tianjin (Tientsin), Earle working at YMCA and language study	1918 January-March
b. 1, f. 8	Including re: visit of Earle to outstations with food and aid; making plans for primary schools; meetings held by George Sherwood Eddy result in many conversions of Chinese men; family goes to Beidaihe (Peitaiho) for summer; Earle attending conferences	1918 April-June
b. 1, f. 9	Including re: after return from Beidaihe (Peitaiho), Earle teaching English at boys' school in Tianjin (Tientsin)	1918 July-September
b. 1, f. 10	Including ill health, continued work at YMCA and Bible classes; celebration of Armistice; organization of "Congregational Church of Hopei", Hebei; mission trip to countryside with Mr. Stanley	1918 October-December
b. 1, f. 11	Incl. re. return to U.S. for four month furlough	1919 Jan-May
b. 1, f. 12	Including re: return to Tianjin (Tientsin) in September; student strikes; political unrest; purchase of land for new school; attendance at conference of Interchurch World Movement in Shanghai	1919 August-December
b. 1, f. 13	Incl. re. boycott of Japanese goods; continued student unrest; police opposition to publicity for China for Christ Movement; trip to country outstations	1920 Jan-Apr
b. 1, f. 14	Including re: daily life; civil war and unrest; move to Beidaihe (Peitaiho) for summer	1920 May-July

## EHB to his parents (continued)

b. 2, f. 15	Including re: return to Hebei (Hopei); contracts for house to be built in Beidaihe (Peitaiho); missionary retreat to discuss their work; trips to country churches; shipment of grain and clothing to Qinghai (Chinghai)	1920 September-December
b. 2, f. 16	Incl. re. routine of mission and relief work; birth of son Laurence Havens Ballou	1921 Jan-Apr
b. 2, f. 17	Including re: devastation from earthquake in north in December; attendance at Council meeting in Beijing (Peking); move into new house in Beidaihe (Peitaiho); Earle's return to Tianjin (Tientsin); extensive Red Cross road building to facilitate famine relief	1921 May-August
b. 2, f. 18	Including re: extended stay in Beidaihe (Peitaiho) due to Thelma's illness; trips to country outstations; mission compound life	1921 September-December
b. 2, f. 19	Incl. re. routine of mission life; civil war threatening	1922 Jan-Apr
b. 2, f. 20	Including re: Council meeting; civil unrest; soldier activity; conference in Tianjin (Tientsin); vacation in Beidaihe (Peitaiho)	1922 May-August
b. 2, f. 21	Incl. re. special meetings with Sherwood and Brewer Eddy; extended trip to country; preaching campaign	1922 Sep-Dec
b. 2, f. 22	Incl. re. planning for furlough; trips to country	1923 Jan-May
b. 2, f. 23	Incl. re. return from furlough with new son, Robert; now living in Hsiku-E station; Chinese fighting nearby; trips to flooded areas to plan relief	1924 Aug-Dec
b. 2, f. 24	Including re: mission work, meetings, country trip; building new house in Hebei (Hopei) to which they will move	1925 January-April
b. 3, f. 26	Including re: District Education Committee meeting in Beijing (Peking); student riots in Shanghai; country trip	1925 May-August
b. 3, f. 27	Incl. re. fighting nearby; refugees in Hsiku compound	1925 Sep-Dec
b. 3, f. 28	Incl. re. family life; refugees; soldier activity; martial law	1926 Jan-Apr
b. 3, f. 29	Including re: Council meeting; new church built in Hsiku; family to Beidaihe (Peitaiho) for summer; pirates invade Beidaihe (Peitaiho)	1926 May-August
b. 3, f. 30	Incl. re. preparation for school opening in new quarters; meetings and social events; son Christopher born Nov. 1	1926 Sep-Dec
b. 3, f. 31	Incl. re. foreigners and missionary institutions in danger in central China; Nanking incident; preparations for possible evacuation	1927 Jan-Apr
b. 3, f. 32	Including re: calming of unrest; family to Beidaihe (Peitaiho); retreat and business meetings at Tongzhou Qu (Tunghsien)	1927 May-August
b. 3, f. 33	Including re: family returns to Tianjin (Tientsin); Hubbard goes to Tongzhou (Tungchow) school; more military unrest	1927 September-December
b. 3, f. 34	Including re: attending mission's Annual Meeting in Beijing (Peking); mention of Eric Liddell; military unrest causing uncertainty	1928 January-April
b. 3, f. 35	Including re: War news; discussions re: emergency action; family moved to Concessions for safety; back to Hebei (Hopei); preparation for school	1928 May-August

## EHB to his parents (continued)

b. 3, f. 36	Incl. re. family life; new automobile; Earle on trip to countryside; Christmas celebrations	1928 Sep-Dec
b. 3, f. 37	Incl. re. tales of treacherous travel, dust storms, mission life	1929 Jan-Apr
b. 3, f. 38	Including re: holiday honoring Sun Yat Sen's coffin being transported by train through Tianjin (Tientsin) to Nanjing (Nanking)	1929 May-August
b. 3, f. 39	Incl. re. government regulation of school ("any attempt to attract students to religion is forbidden"); Chinese church enters on "Five Year Movement" to strengthen and expand the church.	1929 Sep-Dec
b. 3, f. 40	Incl. re. family illnesses; Eric Liddell preaching at Union Church; gathering of clergy at Russian Club to discuss protests of persecutions in Russia	1930 Jan-Apr
b. 4, f. 41-49	Letters	1930 May-1934 Apr
b. 5, f. 50-57	Letters	1934 May-1936 Dec
b. 6, f. 58-65	Letters	1937 Jan-1939 Aug
b. 7, f. 66-70	Letters	1940 Aug-1943 Aug
EHB to Thelma and children See also letters of Earle to son Hubbard in Series 2		
b. 21, f. 2	Letters to Thelma and children while on furlough	1930-1931
b. 21, f. 3	Letter to Thelma regarding plans for departure from China	1941 Dec; 1932 Feb
b. 7, f. 71-77	Letters	1946 Sep-1948 Mar
EHB to others		
b. 21, f. 3	Circular letters, incl. "Peiping Bulletin" Nos. 15, 22-24; Letter to ABCFM North China Missions re. departure from mission	1937, 1938, 1941 Nov
b. 21, f. 4	Letters to Mr. Lund, and "Dear Friend"; excerpts of letters	1947, 1948



**Series II: Correspondence of Thelma Ballou, 1911-1948**

To THB from her parents		
b. 8, f. 78-90	Letters	1911 Jan-1916 Jun
From THB to her parents		
b. 9, f. 91-107	Letters	1911 Mar-1918 Dec
b. 10, f. 108-125	Letters	1919 Jan-1922 Apr
b. 11, f. 126-149	Letters	1922 May-1927 Aug
b. 12, f. 150-182	Letters	1927 Oct-1935
b. 13, f. 183-184	Letters	1938-1940
THB and EHB to son Hubbard		
b. 21, f. 5-7	Letters to Hubbard while at North China American School, Tongzhou (Tungchow)	1931-1934
b. 21, f. 8	Letters to Hubbard at Yenching University	1934-1936
b. 21, f. 9	Letters to Hubbard at Yale	1936-1937
b. 21, f. 10	Circular letters of other missionaries and writings sent as enclosures in letters to Hubbard	1937-1938
THB to/from other family members		
b. 13, f. 185	Laurence (brother)	1911-1916
b. 13, f. 186	Misc. (incl. one letter to Earle)	1911-1940
b. 21, f. 11	Letters to "Dearest", "Dear Ones All"	1944
THB to/from others (non-family)		
b. 13, f. 187	Misc.	1911-1935

**Series III: Personal Items and Memorabilia, 1916-1997,n.d.**

b. 13, f. 188	Programs, diary, etc.	
b. 18, f. 1	Folder of documents compiled by Henry L. Ballou (Earle's father) re. the Ballous' work in China, including telegrams, memorabilia, Chester, VT church communications, petition of Chinese Christians against Article XIX, Clause 2 of the Draft Constitution for the Republic of China, that "in the State Education the Confucian Doctrine shall be the Basis of Moral Instruction"	1916-1930, n.d.
b. 18, f. 2	Affidavits listing personal property of Ballous left behind in Beijing (Peking) and Beidaihe (Peitaiho), executed at the U.S. consulate in Shanghai	1941
b. 18, f. 3	North China American School yearbooks The 1939 yearbook (Pagoda) has been placed in Record Group No. 209, China American Schools, in order to complete the run of NCAS yearbooks available there.	1933-1941
b. 18, f. 4	North China American School diploma and report card of Hubbard Ballou; photographs of Principal Lund of NCAS and Hubbard Ballou, NCAS cloth shield	n.d.
b. 18, f. 5	Yenching University Faculty and Student Directories	1934-1936
b. 18, f. 6	Yenching University publication: "Yenching Windows" - "published by the class of English 32, Yenching University, Peiping, 1935"	1935
b. 19, f. 1	Yenching University yearbook	1936
b. 21, f. 15	Yenching University memorabilia: Programs from events: "May Dah Foo Loo - or It Happened at Yen-tsing" (operetta) and "1935 Yenching Revue"; "Freshman Ten Commandments"	1935, n.d.
b. 21, f. 16	Yenching University Alumni Association directories	1938-1945
b. 19, f. 2	Anniversary publications of Lu Ho, ABCFM boys' school at Tongzhou (Tungchou) and Yu Ying, ABCFM boys' school in Beijing (Peking)	1987, 1990
b. 19, f. 3	<i>Thelma Ballou: From the Green Mountains to the Middle Kingdom</i> , by Patricia K. Ballou; source notes for the book	1997
b. 21, f. 14	Eulogy presented by David M. Stowe at funeral of EHB	1987
b. 21, f. 14	Obituary for THB	1988

**Series IV: Photographs, 1918-1941**

b. 13, f. 189	People	
b. 13, f. 190	Beidaihe (Peitaiho)	
b. 13, f. 191-192	Tianjin (Tientsin)	1918-1929
b. 13, f. 193	Beijing (Peking)	1934 February
b. 13, f. 194	Beijing (Peking)	1939-1941
b. 19, f. 4	Group photo of North China Li Hui Council at annual meeting in Fenzhou (Fenchow), Shansi, with key to identify individuals	1937 April
b. 21, f. 1	Photograph album of Hubbard Ballou from North China American School (NCAS)	1933

## Series V: Glass slides, n.d.

b. 14, f. 195 [China](#)

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b. 15, f. 196 [China](#)

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b. 16, f. 197 [China](#)

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b. 17, f. 198 [Egypt and Jerusalem](#)

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b. 20, f. 1 [China](#)

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## Series VI: Addendum: Sermons/ addresses of EHB

b. 21, f. 12	Address by EHB at opening convocation of Peiping Union Medical College (PUMC)	1938
b. 21, f. 13	Sermon: "Our Search for God"	1958
b. 21, f. 13	Address to Vermont Congregational Conference: "Who Would Have Thought It?"	1960
b. 21, f. 13	Sermon on 60th anniversary of his ordination: "A Journey Not Alone"	1976

## **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**

Missionaries  
Missions -- China

### **Names**

Ballou, Earle H. (Earle Hoit), 1892-1987  
Ballou, Thelma

### **Corporate Body**

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign  
Missions