

Yale University Library  
Yale Divinity Library

# Guide to the James Laughton Papers

RG 190



Compiled by Martha Lund Smalley

2003, 2010

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

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

<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

---

## Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	3
Requesting Instructions .....	3
Administrative Information .....	3
Conditions Governing Access .....	3
Preferred Citation .....	4
Processing Information .....	4
Biographical / Historical .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	4
Arrangement .....	4
Collection Contents .....	5
Series I: Correspondence .....	5
Family .....	5
Other Letters .....	5
Series II: Writings, n.d. ....	6
Series III: Collected Material .....	7
Series IV: Biographical Information .....	8
Series V: Addendum - 2010 .....	9
Selected Search Terms .....	10

---

## 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 190

**CREATOR:** Laughton, James Fyfe

**TITLE:** James Laughton Papers

**DATES:** 1920-1955

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2.5 linear feet (5 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Letters, writings, and collected material document the life and work of James Fyfe Laughton. Laughton was born of missionary parents in China, returning to Scotland to continue his education. He later studied at Crozer Seminary in Chester, PA, was ordained to the Baptist ministry in 1912, and served as pastor of a church in Westport, New York for seven years. In 1920 he was called by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society to direct the work of their mission ship "Fukuin Maru" sailing among the islands of the Inland Sea and coast of Japan. He returned to America in 1926, traveled widely, and was engaged in religious education, lecturing, writing, and pastoral work.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.190>

---

## 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.190>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

---

## Preferred Citation

James Laughton Papers (RG 190), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

---

## 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)".

---

## Biographical / Historical

James Fyfe Laughton was born in northwest China, son of Scottish Presbyterian missionary parents. He attended the Quaker Mission School for missionary children in Chongqing (Chungking). He went to Scotland for further study and attended various academies, and the Technical Naval College in Greenock. He was in the British Naval Service but resigned to become a missionary. Feeling the need for further study, he went to the U.S. in 1910 and attended Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1912 and served as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Westport, New York for seven years. In 1920 he was called by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society to captain their mission ship "Fukuin Maru" sailing among the islands of the Inland Sea and coast of Japan.

Laughton returned to the U.S. in 1926 after the work of the "Fukuin Maru" was turned over to the Japanese, traveling widely on the way. The next few years were spent lecturing before various church and community groups and teaching. In 1929-1930 he served as Associate and Executive Secretary of Religious Education in the state of Maine. He was then called to become the pastor of the Woodhaven Baptist Church, Queens, New York, where he served for ten years. He traveled to Germany in 1934 to study the political, religious, and social conditions there. He served as chaplain for various ocean cruise lines during the 1930s.

Laughton was a lecturer at the International Seminary, East Orange, New Jersey prior to his call to the First Congregational Church, Ticonderoga, New York in 1941. He later served the Rugby Congregational Church in Brooklyn, NY and the Prospect Heights Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, NY. He had a particular interest in inter-racial and inter-creedal groups. Laughton also was a writer, columnist, and cartoonist for various newspapers. He died in June, 1962.

---

## Scope and Contents

Laughton's eclectic career as a missionary, minister, lecturer, and writer is documented sporadically in this small collection. Of particular interest are the materials related to Laughton's work on the "Fukuin Maru" mission ship in Japan between 1920 and 1926.

---

## Arrangement

- I. Correspondence
- II. Writings
- III. Collected Material
- IV. Biographical Material
- V. Addendum - 2010

---

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence

	Family	
b. 1, f. 1	Letters to his wife	1942, 1943
	Other Letters	
b. 1, f. 2	Samples of testimonials on 25th anniversary of ordination	1937 Feb
b. 1, f. 3	Letters of reference - testimonials	1949, 1953
b. 1, f. 4	Miscellaneous	1931-1949
b. 1, f. 5	Letters on leaving Westport NY Church	1920
b. 1, f. 6	Re. ministry - Maine Council of Religious Education	1931
b. 1, f. 7	Re. ministry - Woodhaven Baptist Church	1931, 1942
b. 1, f. 8	Recommendations re- chaplaincy - US Reserves	1941, 1942
b. 1, f. 9	Re. ministry - 1st Congregation Church - Ticonderoga	1941, 1942
b. 1, f. 10	Re. ministry - Rugby Church - Brooklyn	1947
b. 1, f. 11	Advocacy letters for people in military	1946-1955
b. 1, f. 12	Advocacy letters for refugees	1949, 1950

**Series II: Writings, n.d.**

b. 1, f. 13	"The Romance of the Jews"	n.d.
b. 1, f. 14	Re. parents' mission experience in China	n.d.
b. 1, f. 15	"Is there memory in heaven?"	n.d.
b. 1, f. 16	"A Voice by the Wayside" - Columns - including "Don't be in a hurry"; "Can you take it"; "Servants"; "Confidence"; etc.	
b. 1, f. 17	"The Pulpit Speaks" - collection	
b. 1, f. 18	Sermons A - F: including "Andrew - the first Christian worker"; "The Church and the Hour"; "Facing Life"	
b. 1, f. 19	Sermons G - H: including "Getting together"; "The Gospel and our world"; "How it all began"	
b. 1, f. 20	Sermons I - J: including "Immortality and Nature"; "Is a Cross Necessary?"; "Is there a future for religion?"	
b. 2, f. 21	Sermons K - N: including "Keeping Out of the Fog"; "Love and Learn"; "New Life"	
b. 2, f. 22	Sermons O - Q: "Outside and Inside"; "Pentecost"; "Pioneering With Christ"	
b. 2, f. 23	Sermons R - W: "Ready-made Clothes"; "Seeing Things"; "Self-Starters"; "The Weakness of Christianity"	
b. 2, f. 24	Sermons - Untitled	
b. 2, f. 25	Bible Studies: including "Who is God"; "The First Age"	
b. 2, f. 26	Lectures: including "Personal Work and Pastoral Visitation"; "Your Aim in Life"	
b. 2, f. 27	"The Gospel in Symbols"; "A Dollar Speaks"	
b. 2, f. 28	Certificate of Baptism	1954
b. 2, f. 29	Sermon Fragments	

**Series III: Collected Material**

b. 2, f. 30	Woodhaven Baptist Church - Youth group material, "Who is Who" "The Assistant Pastor" plus Rugby Church News	
b. 2, f. 31	Publications re- Unamerican Activities	
b. 2, f. 32	Booklets - "The Christian Commitment"; "Gleanings"	
b. 2, f. 33	Micellaneous items	
b. 2, f. 34	Brotherhood activities - interaction with Jewish community	
b. 2, f. 35	Photographs: Laughtons	
b. 2, f. 36	Photographs: Others; Buildings	
b. 3, f. 37	Photographs: Baptismal water from Jordan River	
b. 3, f. 38	Photo album - Scotland, Japan	
b. 3, f. 39	Ship's Logs - "Fukuin Maru" - Japan and "Resolute" (Cruise Ship)	
b. 3, f. 40	Masonic Movement	
b. 3, f. 41	Notes and Quotes	
b. 3, f. 42	News Clippings	
b. 3, f. 43	Scrap Book	1925-1930
b. 3, f. 44	Scrap Book	

## **Series IV: Biographical Information**

b. 3, f. 45      Certificates, statements, booklets

---



**Series V: Addendum - 2010**

b. 4, f. 1	Letter from JFL's wife Elizabeth (Walker) to her family; Christmas greeting card with photo of JFL	ca. 1940s
b. 4, f. 2	Letter copybook of Elizabeth Walker (Laughton), with enclosures	1907-1911
b. 4, f. 3	Legal documents related to family of Elizabeth Walker (Laughton)	1892
b. 4, f. 4	Photograph of Fukuin Maru ship anchored in Inland Sea , Japan; ribbon with "Fukuin Maru" printed on it	1926, n.d.
b. 5	<a href="#">Glass lantern slides from Japan</a> <a href="#">RG190-0005: 2024-01-12</a> Containing portraits.	ca. 1920s
b. 6	<a href="#">Glass lantern slides from Japan</a> <a href="#">RG190-0006: 2024-01-30</a> Containing photographs of local landscapes.	ca. 1920s
b. 7	<a href="#">Glass lantern slides from Japan</a> <a href="#">RG190-0007: 2024-01-30</a> Containing a series of photographs from a nautical group trip.	ca. 1920s
b. OV1	American flag flown on the Fukuin Maru 1921-1923	1920s
b. OV2	Framed photograph of crew of mission ship Fukuin Maru 1922-1926 with Mr. and Mrs. Laughton	ca. 1926
b. OV2	Mounted photograph of Fukuin Maru in the Japan Inland Sea	ca. 1920s

## **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 -- Japan

### **Names**

Laughton, James Fyfe

### **Corporate Body**

American Baptist Foreign Mission Society