

# Guide to the Charles and Joy Sheffey Papers

RG 219



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2009

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New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301

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

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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 219

**CREATOR:** Sheffey, Charles

**TITLE:** Charles and Joy Sheffey Papers

**DATES:** 1913-1985

**BULK DATES:** 1922-1943

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 10 linear feet (17 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Charles and Joy Sheffey were American Methodist medical missionaries who served in Wembo Nyama, Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) between 1922 and 1944. Letters, journals, and writings of Charles and Joy Sheffey document their medical work and record their reactions to the culture and environment they encountered in Africa.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.219>

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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.219>.

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 Grace Sheffey Webb, 2009

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Preferred Citation

Charles and Joy Sheffey Papers (RG 219), Special Collections, Yale Divinity Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Date	Event
1894 June 19	○ Charles Phillips Mahood Sheffey born in Lynchburg, VA, son of Edward Fleming Sheffey and Mattie Mahood Sheffey
1907 May 26	○ Mae Joy Burch (Sheffey) born in Danville, VA, daughter of Nannie Towsey Burch and Rev. William G. Burch, a Methodist minister in the Virginia Conference
1911-1915	○ CPMS attended Randolph Macon College, receiving A.B. and M.A. degrees
1921	○ CPMS graduated from School of Medicine of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, followed by additional training at New York Postgraduate Medical School ; he also served as an intern at Norfolk Protestant Hospital
1922-1926	○ CPMS served as medical missionary in Wembo Nyama, Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) under the Methodist Board of Missions
1920s	○ JBS attended Longwood College and Lynchburg College, continuing her nursing training in Richmond, VA and Philadelphia, PA
1930	○ CPMS and JBS married while CPMS was on extended stay in U.S. due to illness of his father
1931	○ CPMS and JBS sailed for Africa, spending some months at École de Médecine Tropicale in Belgium en route; arrived in Congo in July
1931-1944	○ CPMS and JBS ran a medical training center in Wembo Nyama and provided surgical services to a region that spanned a 500-mile radius.
1931	○ Daughter Grace born; she later attended the Central School for missionary children in Lubondai
1935	○ Daughter Nancy born
1945	○ Sheffey family returned to Lynchburg, VA where CPMS practiced medicine until his retirement in 1969
1957	○ CPMS received honorary LL.D. degree from Randolph Macon College
1985 March 8	○ CPMS died

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## Scope and Contents

Letters, journals, and writings of Charles and Joy Sheffey document their medical work and record their reactions to the culture and environment they encountered in Africa. Circular letters and writings provide substantive documentation of their life and work in the Belgian Congo between 1922 and 1944. Letters to and from their children Grace and Nancy provide detail about the life of missionary children in Africa. Of particular note are the records that Charles Sheffey kept to describe operations performed at the Wembo Nyama hospital and surrounding area. Collected material includes documentation of the Methodist Mission, school books in African languages used in its schools. Photographs document the Sheffey family and their mission in Wembo Nyama

The collection contains a notable number of diverse artifacts. These include African musical instruments, a "witch doctor's magic gourd", jewelry, metal implements, and textiles.

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## **Arrangement**

- I. Correspondence
- II. Writings
- III. Notes and Diaries
- IV. Biographical Documentation
- V. Collected Material
- VI. Photographs
- VII. Artifacts

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence, 1914-1983

#### Family correspondence

b. 1, f. 1	Charles to Joy, prior to their marriage	1930 Oct-Dec
b. 1, f. 2	Charles to/from Joy, primarily prior to their marriage	1930, 1937, 1938
b. 1, f. 3	Charles and Joy from their parents, primarily prior to their marriage	1922-1931 Jan
b. 1, f. 4, 5	Charles and Joy from their parents	1931 Feb - Dec
b. 1, f. 6	Charles and Joy to/from family members including excerpts of letters from Joy describing native customs, lions, locust.	1932 -1933
b. 1, f. 7	Charles and Joy to/from family members, including excerpts of letters from Joy describing locusts, incident with leopard, medical work and her letter describing the Mission's historical pageant (1939)	1934-1942
b. 1, f. 8-12	Charles and Joy to their daughter Grace, written from Wembo Nyama while Grace was away at Central School in Lubondai Letters contain descriptions of everyday life at the Mission	1941 Aug- 1943 Nov
b. 1, f. 13	Nancy Sheffey to her sister Grace, written from Wembo Nyama while Grace was at Central School in Lubonda Interesting child's perspective on life at the Mission	1942-1943
b. 1, f. 13	Grace Sheffey Webb to/from her aunt Grace	1966

#### General correspondence

b. 1, f. 14	Published and mimeographed letters by Charles Sheffey describing his work in Africa	1923
b. 1, f. 15	Primarily typescript letters from CPMS to churches describing his work	1932-1934
b. 1, f. 16	To/from others, including letter from President Franklin Roosevelt thanking JBS for Belgian Congo stamps, and circular letters of JBS	1935-1940 Mar
b. 1, f. 17	To/from others, including circular letters of JBS describing their work	1940 Nov - 1944
b. 1, f. 18	To/from others, including re. book re. Sheffey family history	1972-1977
b. 1, f. 19	Letters of others, including excerpts from letters of Paul Alexander from Belgian Congo (1961)	1914-1961

**Series II: Writings, 1924-1960, n.d.**

## By Charles Sheffey

b. 2, f. 20-22	Poems #4-91	1925-1927, n.d.
b. 2, f. 23	Articles and essays, including "Surgery by Lamplight in the Congo", "Early Work among the Lepers of the Belgian Congo", "Death and Funeral Rites Among a Primitive People", "Two Hundred Miles Across Africa on a Bicycle", "African Youth and a Christian World", reports on medical work	1923-1924

## By Joy Burch Sheffey

b. 2, f. 24	Essays, stories, newsletters, including series of "Tom Tom Notes", "Twenty-five Years of History Pass in Review", "Black Reflects Lights", others	1933-1960
b. 2, f. 25	Essays and stories, including "Ekanda, One of God's Black Children", "Great African Chief Reaches Journey's End", "On to Africa; a brief study of the Belgian Congo... for use in Sunday Schools and Public Schools"	1939, n.d.
b. 2, f. 26	Essays and stories, including "What the Native African Eats", "Again to the Heart of Africa", "African Womanhood", "A Leopard in a Rabbit Trap?", "Spreading the Gospel Among the Bush-people", "Congo Doctor"	1943, 1944, n.d.

## By Grace Burch Sheffey

b. 2, f. 27	Compositions, including "My Favorite Vacation Spot", "Sandcastles", "Irish Superstitions", etc.	1946, n.d.
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## By others

b. 2, f. 28	Including poem "The Missionary Call" by Joy's mother Nannie Towsey Burch, essays by Lilian Mahood, "My Trip Home: Belgian Congo - USA 1946" by Serena Kelly	1939, n.d.
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**Series III: Notes and Diaries, 1922-1942**

b. 2, f. 29-30	Three notebooks with handwritten notes by CPMS recording operations he performed	1931-1944
b. 2, f. 31	Miscellaneous notes by CPMS and JBS	1931-1932, n.d.
b. 3, f. 32	"Line a Day" diary of CPMS	1923-1925
b. 3, f. 32	"My Travels" notebook and small diary	1938
b. 3, f. 33	Bound journal of CPMS	1922-1925



**Series IV: Biographical Documentation, 1913-1985**

b. 3, f. 34	Biographical sketches of CPMS and JBS	1931-1985
b. 3, f. 34A	Student Volunteer Movement applications (Charles Phillips Mahood Sheffey)	1921
b. 3, f. 35	"Wedding Memories" volume	1930
b. 3, f. 36-37	Newspaper clippings about CPMS	1917-1974
b. 3, f. 38	Health information and miscellaneous biographical documentation about families	1915-1972
b. 3, f. 39, 40	Information about grandfather of CPMS, Rev. Robert Sayers Sheffey, including book <i>Brother Sheffey a Christian Who Knew the Power of Prayer</i> by Willard Sanders Barbery	1922-1946, n.d.
b. 3, f. 41	Information about father of CPMS, Edward F. Sheffey	1918-1933, n.d.
b. 3, f. 42	Miscellaneous family biographical information	1913-1969, n.d.
b. 4, f. 43-46	Genealogical documentation re. Sheffey and Mahood families	

**Series V: Collected Material**

b. 4, f. 47	Related to Methodist mission in Congo medical work	1937, n.d.
b. 4, f. 48	Related to Methodist mission in Congo conference	1943
b. 4, f. 49	Handmade Bible story booklet in African language	n.d.
b. 4, f. 50	Related to Central School for Missionaries' children, Lubondai	1939, 1944
b. 4, f. 51	Issues of "Jungle Log" published by the students of Central School for Missionaries' Children, Lubondai	1942-1946.
b. 4, f. 52	African language writings	n.d.
b. 4, f. 53	Maps of Congo; book <i>Belgian Congo at War</i>	
b. 4, f. 54	Miscellaneous programs, cards, clippings	
b. 5, f. 55-60	African language school books, Bible lessons, catechism, primarily published by the Methodist Episcopal Church Mission, Wembo Nyama	1940-1944, n.d.
b. 5, f. 61	Pamphlets from "Little Books for Africa" series, published in London: "The Leopard and the Goat", "Tombo Temba" "Hausa Tales", "The Blood Brother"	1927, n.d.
b. 6	Books from the library of CPMS and JBS: <i>Africa Disturbed</i> ; <i>Along the African Path</i> ; <i>Appointment Congo</i> ; <i>The Call of the Congo</i> ; <i>Congo Crosses: A Study of Congo Womanhood</i> ; <i>The Cross Over Africa</i> ; <i>Daughter of Africa</i> ; <i>Doctor of the Happy Landings</i> ; <i>God's Ravens</i> ; <i>More About Africa</i> ; <i>Out of Africa</i> (by Emory Ross);	
b. 7	Books from the library of CPMS and JBS: <i>Rural Prospect</i> ; <i>The Salt Baby</i> ; <i>Seeing Africa</i> ; <i>Sons of Africa</i> ; <i>Tales from Africa</i> ; <i>Walter Russell Lambuth</i> ; <i>The Way in Africa</i> ;	

**Series VI: Photographs**

b. 5, f. 62	CPMS, JBS and daughters (See also Box Ov1 for framed portraits of CPMS)	1920s-1940s, n.d
b. 5, f. 63	Members of extended Sheffey family	1923, n.d.
b. 5, f. 64-65	Wembo Nyama mission and en route	1930s, 1940s
b. 5, f. 66	Photographs and clippings from display illustrating mission work These clippings and photographs were arranged on large pieces of paper and were likely used when the Sheffeyes were visiting churches to talk about their work.	No date

**Series VII: Artifacts**

b. Ov1	Textiles: ten woven mats
b. Ov2	Textiles: book bags, placemats, napkin, trivets
b. Ov3	Textiles: woven mats
b. Ov4	Metal: 12 inch knife, 1 copper hatchet, Y-shaped hairpin; letter opener; copper cross; metal anklet
b. Ov5	3 hand made cloth dolls, 3 strands of red and white beads; 1 strand of witch doctor's beads with leopard tooth; headband for mourning; native comb; fan; ceremonial rattle; baby rattle
b. Ov6	Wooden stool; feathered witch doctor's hat
b. Ov7	Underwood typewriter
b. Ov8	Woven carrier, grass skirt, tortoise shell; "witch doctor's magic gourd"; thumb piano
b. Ov9	Large woven basket; Musical instrument made from snakeskin and ivory
b. Ov10	Wooden messenger drum with drum sticks and metal staff
b. Ov11	Ivory: 6 carved tusks; 2 strands of beads, 2 ivory bracelets; 6 animal and human figurines; butter knife and an arrowhead; miscellaneous small objects
b. Ov12	Ivory: 2 carved tusks; 2 vases; candleholder; picture frame; miscellaneous object
b. Ov13	3 hatchets; textiles, child's shirt; wooden, "small idol"; 2 anklets; 4 Y-shaped hairpins; 3 arrowheads; cutlery; 2 rocks; miscellaneous metal objects

## **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**

Missions -- Congo (Democratic Republic)

### **Corporate Body**

Methodist Episcopal Church -- Missions --  
Africa