For Rachel Henderlite 1965 was a momentous year. Not only did she become the first ordained woman minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), she also participated in the March to Montgomery and became Professor of Christian Education at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (APTS), making her the first woman at the seminary to serve full-time in that position.

I moved to the capital of the Lone Star State in January 1976, ten years after Rachel, and Austin would be my hometown for the next twenty-four years, one less than her. Now, twenty-four years after I first saw this pioneering woman’s personal papers in her home garage, I have finished processing the collection.

Officially known as Record Group 504, its nearly 50 cubic feet of materials contain vital historical documentation such as correspondence, subject files, and audio-visual recordings. The collection illuminates Rachel’s life, work, and ministry, including the contributions she made through her teaching, ecumenical work, and support for social justice causes such as the Civil Rights Movement.

Processing Rachel’s papers brought me to the end of a long and gratifying journey that has followed the same path as the collection, including stops in Austin, Montreat, and Philadelphia. As so often with endings, this one harkens back to the beginning.

(continued on page 4)
In the wake of the Second World War, American Presbyterians responded to Europe’s desolated social fabric by organizing the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Europe Mission, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Ninety-eight cubic feet of Europe Mission records are currently being processed at PHS. The collection guide will be available this fall as Record Group 508.

American Presbyterians had undertaken mission work in Europe earlier in the 20th century—founding the American Churches in Paris and Berlin as well as contributing to relief during the Russian famine—but only began a continent-scale effort in the mid-1940s. Responding to the World Council of Churches’ appeal for an ecumenical reconstruction effort, the PCUSA established contact with CIMADE, the Comité Inter-Mouvements Auprès Des Evacuées, a group that had been sheltering and feeding refugees in France since 1940.

In addition to contributing to the first ecumenical conference of ministers in Yugoslavia, held at Novi Vrbas in 1948, the PCUSA Europe Mission went on to support ECLOF, the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund; build the Christian conference center Foyer John Knox; and contribute to the ongoing relief and reconstruction work of the World Council of Churches Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee, and World Service. In doing so, the PCUSA Europe Mission pivoted from relief of Europeans—as the economic engine sparked by the Marshall Plan turned over—to relief of immigrants to Europe and the distribution of aid from European churches to Africa and the Middle East.

Events documented in the Europe Mission records serve as a precursor to Europe’s present day struggles to accommodate displaced people amid rising waves of ethno-nationalism. We look forward to sharing more about Presbyterian witness in Europe with you.

PHS is the proud recipient of a 2018 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Humanities Collections and Reference Resources grant. The $44,000 grant allows us to plan for a large-scale digitization project for the Religious News Service photograph collection, which includes 68,000 images dating from 1945 to 1982. The candid snapshots, photojournalistic images, arranged portraits, and group shots capture a diverse array of subjects, faith groups, and historical events including U.S. presidents and presidential elections; the emergence of the Religious Right; the Civil Rights Movement; anti-war demonstrations; the Watergate scandal; the energy crisis; the Iranian revolution; and conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and Northern Ireland.

At the conclusion of this pilot project, 500 newly scanned images will be available to the public through the PHS online archives, Pearl. If you’d like to support this or similar projects, please visit www.history.pcusa.org/give

DIGITIZING RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE PHOTOS

1 March on Washington leaders confer with President John F. Kennedy in the White House, 1963.
2 Digitization and Metadata Technician Allison Davis and PHS CopiBook planetary scanner.
3 College student contemplates the draft during the Vietnam War, 1967.
4 Religious News Service ledger used to record photograph location and subject, 1973.
5 Heaven Pacers hot rod club president Don Marker prays before race, Oakland, California, 1955.
6 Methodist church built as a project of the U.S. Armed Forces Assistance to Korea Program, Sokto, Korea, 1954.
I can look inside the boxes and folders and see names and faces of Presbyterian ministers and educators I initially encountered as a student at APTS and later as the seminary’s first archivist. Rachel’s papers connect me with my own past and remind me that history is a subject best explored at the primary source.

I first examined the largest portion of Rachel’s papers when they were packed into four filing cabinets in her ranch-style house in Austin. That was March 1994, almost three years after her death. In reporting back to APTS President Jack Stotts, I informed him that I found correspondence indicating Rachel’s intent to donate her papers to the PCUS Historical Foundation in Montreat, North Carolina—her home state.

The papers traveled to Montreat later that year, along with documentation that included photographs and a brief inventory I had made of the filing cabinets. I followed in 2000, taking the position of collection management archivist at Montreat. Before my arrival staff created a box list for Rachel’s papers, but the collection required further work and processing before being made available to researchers. I transferred to PHS in Philadelphia in 2002. A little over four years later, when the Society’s office in Montreat closed, it was the papers’ turn to follow me north.

During my first fourteen years in Philadelphia I never forgot about the work remaining to be done on Rachel’s papers. When the opportunity arose last year, I approached the processing in stages—beginning with the physical challenges, such as weeding duplicate materials and rehousing items into nearly a thousand folders, and then building to the intellectual challenge of writing the collection guide. A guide serves as a collection’s roadmap. I wanted this one to efficiently steer researchers toward an understanding of Rachel’s years in Austin and, before that, Richmond, where she worked at the Presbyterian School of Christian Education and served as an active member of All Souls Presbyterian Church, the predominantly African American congregation where she was ordained.

I hope that the processed collection aids researchers in exploring the life and legacy of an amazing human being—not only what Rachel thought and felt, but what she did to make the world a better place. Visitors to the PHS building can explore the extensive collection Rachel created and first collected in those garage filing cabinets. Remote visitors can access the guide on our website and explore digitized content using the Society’s online archives, Pearl: digital.history.pcusa.org

I am particularly pleased that the Rachel Henderlite Papers are available to researchers in 2018, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the APTS archives, an institution I helped organize. If “you can’t go home again,” as another Presbyterian from North Carolina once wrote, archival collections can sometimes get you closer.

1 Bill with Michelle Francis of PHS Montreat Office, APTS Stitt Library in Austin, 1996.
2 Bill working at Austin Public Library, circa 1982.
3 Rachel’s ordination ceremony in Richmond, All Souls Presbyterian Church, 1965.
4 Filing cabinet from Rachel’s Austin home, 1994.
5 Rachel at the 15th Plenary of the Consultation on Church Union, 1982.
6 Bill with collection highlights, PHS board presentation, 2018.
7 Re-folded and re-boxed Henderlite Papers at PHS, 2018.
8 Rachel leading an ecumenical worship service, 1970s.
Henderlite Collection Milestones
Influences, Honors, and the Art of Teaching

Circa 1912: New Testament presented to Rachel Henderlite by the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) Committee of Publication for memorizing and reciting the Catechism for Young Children. Three people approved the presentation including Henderlite’s father (pictured), a pastor she later referred to as the biggest influence on her life.

1946: Letter from H. Richard Niebuhr expressing the theologian’s “delight and approval” regarding the reprint of Henderlite’s 1945 PCUS General Assembly Training School inaugural address. Henderlite regarded Niebuhr as her second biggest influence.

1965: Bulletin of ordination service at All Souls Presbyterian Church, the predominantly African American congregation in Richmond where Henderlite was a member. Henderlite was the first woman ordained as a minister in the PCUS.

Circa 1966: Letter from Margaret Rigg, a former student of Henderlite’s who earned international acclaim for her calligraphy. Rigg shared her teacher’s passion for social justice causes and would herself become an influential educator at Florida Presbyterian College, later renamed Eckerd College.

1982: Recording and worship bulletin demonstrating Henderlite’s commitment to interdenominational efforts such as reunion between the PCUS and United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the ecumenical Consultation on Church Union.

1983: Union Medal presented to Henderlite by Union Theological Seminary, New York City. The official decree notes that, “In a polity that calls its ministerial leaders ‘teaching elders,’ you taught generations of ministers-to-be to enfold the art of teaching into all the other arts of ministry.”

We collect, preserve, and share the memories and milestones of countless lives of service. Researchers from around the world discover family connections, explore collection materials dating back to the sixteenth century, and learn in new ways through digitization, online catalogues, and website resources.

This vital work and stewardship requires substantial annual funding. Your support is essential to all we do, and every contribution large or small helps us reach our 2018 fundraising goal. Please use the enclosed envelope to make your gift today. Thank you for making possible so many stories of faith.
IN THIS ISSUE:

page 1, 4, 5 The Rachel Henderlite Papers
page 2 Mission In Europe
page 3 Digitizing Religious News Service Photos
page 6, 7 Henderlite Collection Milestones
page 7 Stewarding History

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Sanctuary Geneva

Download this year's church bulletin insert featuring the history of John Calvin’s Geneva: www.history.pcusa.org/rs

The mission of the Presbyterian Historical Society is to collect, preserve, and share the story of the American Presbyterian experience with Presbyterians, the scholarly community, and the general public. Unless otherwise stated, all images come from the PHS collection.