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Papers, 1883-2008. 2.50 linear ft.

Abstract

Member of the Hope College class of 1883; medical missionary to Amoy, China, from 1888-1910. The collection includes biographies, clippings, correspondence, memorials, pamphlets and articles about his life and work, memorials, two books of photographs about his work in Amoy, China, and one book of photographs illustrating his trip to Europe and China.

Accession No.: H88-0117
Provenance: John A. Otte
Donor: Phillip DeVelder; Hope College; Elaine Scholten Stephan
Photographs: 40 images (Box 1), 208 images (Box 3), 197 images (Box 4)
Processed by: Rebecca A. O’Shesky, February 1992
Abby Platt, March 1998

Biography

John Abraham Otte was born on August 11, 1861, in Vlissengen, Netherlands. On February 22, 1867, the Otte family left the Netherlands for America. John Otte received his Bachelor of Arts from Hope College in 1883. From there, he attended medical school at the University of Michigan, where he gained his M.D. in 1886. On September 15, 1886, Otte was appointed the first RCA medical missionary to China. From 1886 to 1887, he did his post-doctoral work at the University of Amsterdam and Utrecht.

On August 16, 1887, Otte married Frances F.C. Phelps in North Blenheim, New York. Frances was the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Philip Phelps, Jr.

Otte left for China on November 5, 1887. It wasn’t until January 13, 1888, that he arrived in Amoy, China. On May 29, 1888, John Philip Otte was born in Amoy. Almost a year later, on March 29, 1889, Otte opened the Neerbosch Hospital in Sio-khe, China. From 1890 to 1894, he and Mrs. Otte had three additional children: Eliza Phelps (January 12, 1890), Francis Robert (March 12, 1892), and Adriana Talmage (July 13, 1894).

It wasn’t until February 23, 1895, that the Otte family returned to the U.S. for the first furlough and, during this time, also visited the Netherlands. It was during this furlough that Otte was licensed and ordained by the Michigan Classis (September 1896). He continued his mission work in Amoy after being ordained, but left John Philip behind with his parents. After returning to Amoy, the Hope and Wilhelmina Hospitals were opened in April 1898. In November 1901, Mrs. Otte and the three children returned to the U.S. It wasn’t until May 1903 that John Otte returned to the U.S. on his second furlough. From December 1904 to February 1905, he continued his furlough in the Netherlands. On March 21, 1905, Otte again returned to Amoy to continue his mission work. While in China, his fifth child, Margaret Wilhelmina, was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on May 19, 1905. Otte returned home for a short visit in May 1908 for a leave of absence. He returned again to Amoy in October 1908 and stayed there until his death.

Dr. John Abraham Otte died in Amoy, China, on April 14, 1910, from pneumonic plague.
Scope and Content

The collection includes biographies, clippings, correspondence, memorials, pamphlets and articles about Otte’s life and work, memorials and two books of photographs about his work in Amoy, China, and one book of photographs illustrating his trip to Europe and China.

Container List

Box 1

Articles
- Foreign Missions, 1886-1949
- *Messengers of Hope*, 1907-1915
- Biographical, 1887, 2008

Correspondence
- From John A. Otte
  - Business (transcripts), 1907-1910
  - Family (transcripts), 1903-1910
  - General (originals, photocopies, transcripts), 1901-1907 (3 folders)
  - General (originals, photocopies, transcripts), 1907-1950 (3 folders)
  - General (originals), 1908-1910

Box 2

Correspondence (cont.)
- From John A. Otte (cont.)
  - Misc. (transcripts), 1899-1910
  - Otte, Frances Phelps, 1908-1909 (3 items)
  - Phelps, Catherine, n.d.
  - Unaddressed, 1893-1910

- Otte, John Philip to Gordon Van Wylen about John A. Otte, January 3, 1973
- Scholten, George B., Paul Fried about John Otte, October 1, 1974

Memorials, 1910
- Notebook, 1891-1951

Pamphlet, *The Healing Art in China*, 1907

Photographs
- Individual, John A. Otte, 1883, ca.1885, 1886 (4 items)
- Groups, 1891-1905 (10 items)
  - Chinese, n.d., ca. 1891 (3 images)
  - Missionary Society, n.d. (1 image)
  - Otte with Frances Phelps Otte, n.d., 1895, 1905 (3 images)

Locations
China, n.d. (1 image)
Dutch Reformed Church, Neshanic, New Jersey, n.d. (1 image)
New Brunswick, New Jersey Railroad Station, ca. 1885 (1 image)
Otte’s gravesite with Amoy Mission students, 1910 (2 images)

Box 3

Album of Otte’s Trips to China, n.d. (53 images)
Album of Otte’s Trips to China, n.d. (155 images)

Box 4

Album of Otte’s Trips to China and Europe, 1890s (193 images)
Photographs of China, n.d. (4 images)