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### H88-0130.10. Riepma, Sears F. (1878-1977). Papers, 1812-1995 (bulk, 1882-1977). 7.00 linear ft. PARTIALLY RESTRICTED

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**H88-0130.10.** Riepma, Sears F. (1878-1977).

Papers, 1812-1995 (bulk, 1882-1977). 7.00 linear ft.

**PARTIALLY RESTRICTED**

### Abstract

Personal papers of Sears Frederick Riepma, minister in the Reformed Church in America (1903-1913), the Presbyterian Church (1913-1930), and the Episcopal Church (1930-1950). The collection also contains materials on the Riepma and Van Zwaluwenburg families. The latter was the family of Riepma's first wife, Mary Elizabeth Van Zwaluwenburg (1880-1938). Included are photographs, scrapbooks, genealogies, autobiographies, photo albums, books, and correspondence.



Accession No.: H88-0130.10  
Provenance: Riepma and Van Zwaluwenburg Families  
Donor: Mary Riepma Ross  
Photographs: Boxes 1-5, 7-11, 14  
Processed by: Christopher Stewart Gray, 1977-1983  
Craig G. Wright, January 1991  
Larry J. Wagenaar, November 1995  
Ena Brooks, September 1998

### Biography

Sears Frederick Riepma was born in 1878 in Delfzijl, The Netherlands. He entered the United States through Ellis Island in 1894, en route to Holland, Michigan. In 1900, Riepma became a U.S. citizen and received his B.A. from Hope College. He was awarded a Professorial Certificate from the Western Theological Seminary in 1903. In 1904, he married Mary Elizabeth Van Zwaluwenburg in Holland. They had five children together.

During his career, Riepma served three denominations. Initially, he served the Reformed Church in America from 1903 to 1913, and had ministries in Detroit, Hoppers (Iowa), Oklahoma City, and Grand Rapids. He then moved to the Presbyterian Church, serving from 1913 to 1930 in Olathe (Kansas), Rockford (Illinois), Independence (Missouri), and Lincoln (Nebraska). In 1931, Riepma was ordained into the Episcopal Church. He became a deacon in 1931 and a priest in 1932. Riepma served the Episcopal Church in Kansas City, Independence, and Springfield (Missouri). He retired from the Christ Episcopal Church in Springfield in 1950, but continued to lead services on many occasions.

Sears Riepma was a staunch supporter of the ecumenical movement and preached at churches of more than a dozen denominations in Springfield and the Ozarks area. He also actively utilized the radio to spread his ideas. In 1934, he began a series of Saturday afternoon Sunday School lessons and Sunday morning sermons. After about ten years of these programs, Riepma switched to Sunday evening altar talks, which continued until 1957. From 1959 to 1965, he had another radio program entitled "Weekend Meditations." Riepma delivered the opening prayer of the 92nd Congress in November of 1971.

In 1947, Riepma established a systematic program of assistance, which helped more than 30 Dutch families immigrate to the United States in the wake of World War II. Riepma was held in high esteem by his community, as shown by the memorial presented by his friends at the *Springfield News and Leader* and the fact that the Empire Bank named one of its rooms after him.

Riepma's wife Mary Elizabeth died in 1938, and he married Maie Vail Smith the following year in Springfield, Missouri. Maie passed away in 1954. In 1956, Riepma married again, this time to Dorothy May Wing Cribbs. Dorothy died in 1967, and Riepma passed away in 1977. He was buried in Springfield next to his first wife and his first born, Freda, who had died of an illness in 1929.

### Scope and Content

The Sears Frederick Riepma papers consist of materials from 1812 to 1991 (bulk, 1882-1977), which document the life and activities of the Riepma and Van Zwaluwenburg families. This record group consists of folders divided into 13 subgroups: Riepma Family Records; Riepma Family Memorabilia; Van Zwaluwenburg Family Records; Sears Frederick Riepma (SFR) Autobiography; SFR and Family; SFR Marriages; SFR Children; SFR Personal Papers and Photographs; SFR Ministerial Activities; Correspondence from Radio Listeners; Oversize Certificates; Last Years and Death; and Family Books.

One of the greatest strengths of this collection is its abundance of visual materials. There are well over one thousand photographs, ten photo buttons, four slides, and eight photo albums. These materials document the Riepma and Van Zwaluwenburg family members, life at Hope College during the turn of the century, Sears' ministries, and trips to Europe. Many of the older photographs are especially interesting due to their "natural" composition instead of the stiff posed nature so prevalent in images from that time period. For example, there are photos of picnics, parties, students relaxing and studying, and fishing. These give researchers a more realistic idea of activities of that era.

The primary focus of the collection is on the life and activities of Sears Frederick Riepma. The most thoroughly documented aspects of his life are his ministerial activities, excursions to Europe, and his autobiography, *Rev. Sears F. Riepma 1878-1977: My Ancestry, Life and Ministry*. These materials shed light on the personal side of Riepma. They reveal a very giving, spiritual man whose sense of humor and positive outlook on life was a benefit to all who came in contact with him.

Documents relating to family records primarily consist of genealogies and autobiographies. Most of the later material in the collection, 1978-1986, is newspaper clippings and correspondence relating to family members. The grade records of Riepma's children are **RESTRICTED**. These items were collected by Mary Riepma Ross while she was the caretaker of the family archive. Collection is organized alphabetically.

### Container List

Box 1

RIEPMA FAMILY RECORDS, 1871-1981

Riepma Genealogy, Death Notices, Certificates, 1925-1968 (D/E)  
Genealogy of Riepmas et. al. by Catherine Ten Berge and Other Ten Berge Material,  
n.d., 1924-1929, 1946, 1960, 1970 (photos, 17 items)  
Buildings and Land - Groningen Province and Appingedam, n.d., 1971, 1981 (D/E)  
Catechetical Instruction Book Used by Nellie, 1889 (D)

PHOTOGRAPHS, 1871-1977

Jurrien Siert Riepma, Wives Jantje Bart and Anna Eppens, and Family (including  
Sears), 1888, 1893, 1898, 1900, 1902, 1947 (11 items)  
Frederikus "Fritz" Riepma (1882-1918) and Family, 1893, 1919, 1933, 1936-1937  
(9 items)  
Berend "Bert" Jan Riepma (1880-1929) and Wife Maggie, n.d., 1893, 1910 (4 items)  
Grietje "Margaret" (1873-1933) and Petronella "Nellie" (1876-1905) Riepma and  
Family, n.d., 1895-1898 (7 items)  
Neighbors (including: Ebeliena Blaauw, Jautje De Boer, and Ida ten Cate), n.d.,  
1871, 1899 (46 items)  
Locations - Uitwierda, Appingedam, Olnij, and Gravesites, n.d., 1907, 1975, 1977  
(21 items)  
Negatives from Albums and Photographs (27 items)

Box 2

RIEPMA FAMILY MEMORABILIA, 1882-1903

Riepma Family Scrapbook, 1882-1903  
Photo Buttons of: Jurrien, Grietje, Aunt Ijkje Blink and Mother, Siers, and Fritz, n.d.  
(5 items)  
Photo Buttons of: Grietje's Beau, Grietje's First Husband, John Kleis; Nellie and  
Grietje; and two of Jan, n.d. (5 items)

Box 3

VAN ZWALUWENBURG FAMILY RECORDS, 1812, 1896-1980

Genealogy of Van Zwaluwenburgs, 1939, 1947  
Christmas Card, n.d.  
Kremers, Alice Van Zwaluwenburg (1856-1935)  
Kremers House, 1977-1978  
Photographs, n.d., 1903 (11 items)  
Poppen, Anna Van Zwaluwenburg (1860-1926), n.d., 1980 (photos, 2 items)  
Van Zwaluwenburg, Cornelius (1862-1935)  
Correspondence about Family Genealogy, 1929-1930  
Correspondence and Clippings, 1935, 1937  
Photographs, n.d. (6 items)  
Van Zwaluwenburg, Jacob (1843-1939), Autobiography and Correspondence, n.d.,

1962, 1979  
Van Zwaluwenburg, James (1874-1922)  
Death, 1922  
Photographs, n.d. (6 items)  
Van Zwaluwenburg, Reyer  
Autobiography, n.d., 1952  
Photographs - Including Wife Anna Kools and Family, n.d., 1896-1907, 1938  
(30 items)  
80th Birthday Tribute, 1912  
War of 1812 - Payroll Roster of 4th Regiment, Kentucky Volunteer Militia,  
September-November 1812  
Winter, Jerry P., "My Boyhood Days," Autobiography, 1957

Box 4

SEARS FREDERICK RIEPMA AUTOBIOGRAPHY, 1974-1982

Draft of Autobiography, 1974 (2 folders)  
Typed Copy of Autobiography, n.d.  
Pictures and Titles for Autobiography, with Veloxes and D.P.'s Never Used  
*Rev. Sears F. Riepma 1878-1977: My Ancestry, Life and Ministry.* 1979  
Correspondence and Clippings Regarding Autobiography, 1979-1982

Box 5

FAMILY BOOKS

Jantje B. Riepma - Psalm Book, 1875 (D)  
Grietje Riepma - Autograph Book, 1888-1894  
Sears Frederick Riepma  
Hope College Photo Album, 1897-1900  
Photo Album, 1898-1908 (includes: Hope College; Monroe, S.D.; Hospers,  
Iowa; Detroit, Macatawa Park, and Ann Arbor)

Box 6

FAMILY BOOKS (cont.)

Sears Frederick Riepma (cont.)  
Diaries, 1937  
Diaries, 1973, 1974  
Guest Book for 90th Birthday Celebration, 1968  
*Ask Now of the Days That are Past: A History of the First Presbyterian Church,  
Independence, Missouri* by Nancy M. Ehrlich, 1989. (talks about SFR's  
ministry)  
Mary Elizabeth "Lizzie" Van Zwaluwenburg

Childhood Church Book, 1884 (D) and Prayer Book, 1931  
Childhood New Testament, 1900 (D) and New Testament, 1904 (D)

Box 7

FAMILY BOOKS (cont.)

Scrapbook, 1907-1917 (Includes: New Jersey; The Netherlands; Grand Rapids; Olathe; Holland, MI; Hospers, IA)  
Scrapbook, 1905-1950 (Trips to The Netherlands 1907 and 1947, and Dutch Inheritance)  
Scrapbook, 1954-1969 (Europe, marriage to Dorothy, ministerial activities)

Box 8

FAMILY BOOKS (cont.)

Photo Album of Riepmas in the Netherlands, 1940s  
Souvenir Photo Album of Delfzyl 1900-1910, 1954  
*Drenthe in Michigan* by H. J. Prakke, 1983

SFR AND FAMILY (1894-1918)

Ellis Island Immigration Facilities, 1948, 1976  
First Trip Diary by SFR, 1894-1896  
Miscellaneous - Kalamazoo, Hope College, Benton Harbor, Hospers, n.d., 1900, 1938, 1966, 1985  
Hope College (1896-1900)  
Photographs, n.d., 1898-1900, 1976  
Postcard to Jurrien, 1903  
"Through the West on Wheels," Article written by SFR for *The Anchor*, 1899  
Trip to Netherlands 1907  
Articles by SFR, 1907-1908 (D/E)  
Memorabilia, 1907  
Photographs, 1905-1908 (16 items) (captions, D/E)  
Correspondence (with English translations)  
Anna, 1914 (D/E)  
Barend Riepma to Family, 1903, 1908, 1909 (D/E)  
Postcards, Riepma Family, 1903, n.d.  
SFR to Family (mostly parents), 1907-1915, n.d. (D/E)

Box 9

SFR AND FAMILY (1894-1918) (cont.)

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (1908-1911) and Grand Rapids, MI (1912-1913),

Photographs, 1908-1912 (8 items)  
Olathe, Kansas (1913-1919)  
    "The Hundredth Milestone: The First United Presbyterian Church 1865-1965," 1965  
Photographs, n.d. (42 items)  
Hollister and Neosho (Missouri) and Camp Grant, (Rockford, Illinois) (1917-1918),  
Photographs, n.d., 1919, 1926 (40 items)

SFR AND FAMILY (1918-1960)

Photo Album, 1918-1935 (includes: Kansas City, Independence, Hollister, Camp Grant,  
and Topinabee, Michigan)  
Independence, Missouri (1919-1927) - Photographs, n.d., 1932 (15 items)  
Lincoln, Nebraska (1927-1930) - Photographs, n.d., 1927-1930 (9 items)  
Springfield, Missouri (1933-1950)  
    Clippings, 1978-1981  
    Photographs, n.d., 1932-1948 (39 items)  
Trips to Europe  
    General, 1949-1974  
    Maps of Groningen Province, n.d.  
    Photographs, n.d., 1946-1974 (142 items)  
Family Photographs, n.d., 1940-1960 (44 items)

Box 10

SFR MARRIAGES, 1897-1970

Mary Elizabeth "Lizzie" Van Zwaluwenburg (1880-1938)  
    General, 1904, 1918-1929, 1937-1938  
    Photographs, n.d., 1897, 1903, 1937 (22 items)  
Maie Vail Smith (1879-1954)  
    Clippings and Letter, n.d., 1939, 1954  
    Death Certificate, 1954  
    Photographs, n.d., 1947-1957 (40 items)  
Dorothy Wing Cribbs (1894-1967)  
    Clippings and Scholarship Agreement, 1959, 1963, 1968  
    Death Certificate, 1967  
    Photographs, 1956-1970 (70 items)

Box 11

SFR CHILDREN, 1906-1991

Freda Gwendolyn Riepma (1906-1929)  
    Correspondence from SFR, n.d., 1918, 1926  
    Illness and Death, 1929-1931 (photos, 3 items)

Photographs, 1906-1909, 1920-1928 (52 items)  
School Materials, 1923-1928 (includes: diary, diplomas, essay, and  
correspondence)  
Mary Elizabeth Riepma (1910-2013)  
Clippings, n.d., 1947, 1953, 1967, 2013  
Correspondence  
From SFR, 1930, 1942-1976  
General, 1927-1991 (scattered)  
Regarding Her Birth, 1910  
Photographs, n.d., 1926-1995 (43 items)  
Reminiscences of Mary Riepma Ross

Box 12

SFR CHILDREN, 1906-1991 (cont.)

Siert Frederick Riepma (1911- )  
Clippings, n.d., 1928-1961 (scattered)  
Photographs, n.d., 1914, 1973 (7 items)  
Anna Margaret Riepma Gray (1918- )  
Clippings, 1942, 1953, 1962-1966  
Correspondence, 1938-1944  
Photographs, 1939-1966 (12 items)  
Marjorie Louise Riepma (1920- )  
Clippings, 1945, 1960-1968  
Photographs, 1937-1979 (60 items)  
Children's Grades (**RESTRICTED**)

Box 13

SFR PERSONAL PAPERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS, 1902-1977

Correspondence, 1949, 1970, 1977  
Hope College, 50th Reunion of the Class of 1900, 1950  
Clippings, 1937-1938, 1963-1977  
Enrollment Card, Kalamazoo College, 1895  
Photographs, 1902-1976 (58 items)  
Tall Ships, 1975-1976 (photos, 4 items)

MINISTERIAL ACTIVITIES, 1900-1983

Benton Harbor (1900) and 1st Reformed Church of Detroit (1903-1905), Clippings and  
Copies of Ordination and Preaching License, 1900, 1903, 1943  
Early Parishes (1903-1919), Photographs, 1899-1907 (10 items) (oversize, in Box 17)  
Articles for Newspapers in Iowa and Holland (MI), 1909-1911 (D/E)  
Historical Sketches, Mostly Unpublished, n.d. (D)



First Presbyterian Church, Olathe, Kansas (1913-1919), 1913-1919, 1983  
First Presbyterian Church, Independence, Missouri (1919-1927), Clippings and  
Programs, 1919-1927, 1959, 1974, 1976  
Second Presbyterian Church, Lincoln, Nebraska (1927-1930), Clippings and Programs,  
1927-1929  
Scrapbook, 1928-1933  
Ordination in Episcopal Faith (1931) and Trinity Episcopal Church, Independence,  
Missouri (1931-1932), Correspondence and Clippings, 1931-1933, 1972, 1983  
Christ Church, Springfield, Missouri (1933-1950)  
Clippings, 1933-1959  
Photographs, n.d., 1940-1953 (17 items)

Box 14

MINISTERIAL ACTIVITIES, 1900-1983 (cont.)

Aid to Dutch Refugees, Clippings, 1947-1953  
Retirement, Clippings and Correspondence, 1950 (photo, 1 item)  
White House Visit, Clippings and Correspondence, 1950 (Harry S. Truman signature)  
Holy Week Services at Fox Theater (1951-1953), Clippings, Correspondence and  
Programs, 1951-1960  
Miscellaneous Ministerial Activities, Clippings, Correspondence and Notes, 1952,  
1966, 1971, 1976  
Opening Prayer of 92nd Congress, 1971

Box 15

RADIO MATERIALS, 1936-1983

Correspondence from Radio Listeners, 1936-1946, 1948, 1959-1960 (13 folders)  
Radio Broadcasts, 1950-1965  
*Weekend Meditations*, Publication and Buyer Lists, 1980-1983  
"The Way I Sing It," Speech, n.d.  
Notes, n.d.

Box 16

LAST YEARS AND DEATH, 1943, 1950, 1958-1981

SFR in Springfield (1960-1977)  
Clippings, Correspondence and Address Book, 1966, 1973-1977  
Photographs and Slides, 1964, 1972-1979 (42 items)  
SFR Death and Notices, Clippings and Correspondence, 1977-1979  
SFR Funeral, 1977  
Memorials to SFR  
Color Illustration, n.d.

General, 1977-1978  
Photographs, 1950, 1978 (3 items)  
Prepared by Chris Gray, 1977  
Condolences and Reminiscences, 1977-1981  
SFR Documents, Passport, Cemetery Deed, Estate, Death Certificate, 1937, 1939,  
1974, 1977  
Inventory of Memorabilia, 1943, 1958, 1977

Box 17

OVERSIZE MATERIALS, 1903-1973

Sears Frederick Riepma

Diploma from Western Theological Seminary, 1903  
YMCA Service Certificate, 1918  
Episcopal Ordination Certificate, 1923  
Christ Church USO Certificate, 1940  
Ordination as Deacon in Trinity Episcopal Church, Independence, Missouri,  
1931  
Certificates, Naturalization, USO, Ararat Temple, Evangel College, Preaching  
Licenses, 1903, 1929, 1931, 1937, 1969, 1973  
Cassette Tape and Notes, 1972

Freda Riepma

Latin Diploma from Milwaukee-Downer Seminary, 1923  
Diploma from Kansas City Junior College, 1925  
Early Parishes (1903-1919), Photographs, 1899-1907 (10 items)