



BHC-MSS 0231

## Guide to the Papers of Rev. Charles William Simpson and Family July 2022

### **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Simpson, Charles William; Bridgeport Christian Union

**Title:** Papers of Rev. Charles William Simpson and Family

**Dates:** 1909-1966

**Quantity:** .8 linear feet

**Abstract.** Rev. Charles William Simpson ran the original Bridgeport Christian Union when it began in 1910, staying on for a number of years. Material in the collection primarily relates to Rev. Simpson's tenure in overseeing the Bridgeport Christian Union, and includes early correspondence related to establishing the union, as well as some personal papers related to himself and his family.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

### **Biographical History:**

The Bridgeport Christian Union began in 1910 after the urging of resident Jeremiah Holmes. The organization presents its origins in the apocryphal story of a 24-year-old woman who walked into a saloon, drank a strong drink (called poison in the story) and died thereafter. This woman's death brought attention and need to help the alcoholics and the out of work in the city.

In 1910, the Union opened at 24 Bank Street, renting out three floors of the building there. In 1920, a new building was opened at 794 Main Street. Men would work in the wood yard in exchange for a bed to sleep in, a haircut, clothes, and a meal ticket for a neighboring eatery. It was managed by Rev. Charles William Simpson until 1934.

The Bridgeport Christian Union was well received in the city, serving the homeless, out of work, and with a special emphasis on alcoholics. Salvation through religion was a huge component of staying at the Bridgeport Christian Union, similar to how Alcoholics Anonymous relies on a higher power in its 12-step program.

Bridgeport Christian Union merged with Goodwill Industries in 1951, although the reason for the merger is not clear.

Reverend Charles William Simpson was a Methodist minister who served in Methodist churches in Connecticut and New York. He was born in Reed City, Michigan on January 2, 1874 to Mertie Anne Pegg and Edward Simpson. He attended Notre Dame and then Boston University, where he graduated BU's theological school in 1907.

Simpson was installed at Shelburne Falls Church, then transferred in 1910 to begin the work of the Bridgeport Christian Union. He served at the union for 25 years, acted as the chaplain at the

Fairfield County Jail, and taught bible classes. Following his service, he provided services for other Methodist churches.

He wed Jean MacPhee Paterson in 1910, the same year Simpson arrived in Bridgeport. Jean was a noted member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in the city. They had three sons together. Simpson later married Gracie B. Mabey in 1950. In his spare time, he was a member of the Freemasons at St. John's Lodge #8 in Bridgeport.

Following retirement, Simpson moved in with his son David L. Simpson Senior. Rev. Simpson died on August 21, 1966.

**Scope and Content note:**

Material in the collection primarily relates to Rev. Simpson's tenure in overseeing the Bridgeport Christian Union, and includes early correspondence related to establishing the union, annual reports, and newspaper clippings documenting events at the union, as well as its eventual transfer to Goodwill Industries.

Among his personal papers are photographs including the first Sunrise Service at Beardsley Park, newspaper clippings, a sermon, some additional material, and obituaries.

Also included in the collection is a brief poem in the memory of David L. Simpson, the donor's father who worked at General Electric, and a photograph of a rally on McLevy Green held during the Nixon/Kennedy debates that the donor helped to organize as a part of the Collegiate Republicans Club at the University of Bridgeport. One of the banners from the photograph is housed in box 2.

**Arrangement note:**

Material is divided into three series. The first focuses exclusively on the Bridgeport Christian Union, with an emphasis on the foundation and early years up into 1934. It is arranged with information about planning first, then annual reports, with all other material placed chronologically. Clippings are placed at the end.

Series II contains subject files related to Rev. Simpson and are arranged alphabetically. Series III contains some material regarding David Simpson Sr. and David Simpson Jr. and their activities in Bridgeport.

**Administrative information:**

**Provenance:** Gift of David Simpson Jr., accession #2022.18

**Preferred Citation:**

Papers of Rev. Charles William Simpson and Family (BHC-MSS 0231), Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

**Names and Subject Tracings**

*Personal names*

Simpson, Rev. Charles William

Simpson, David L. Sr.

Simpson, David L. Jr.

*Corporate names*

Bridgeport Christian Union Inc.  
Goodwill Industries

*Subject tracings*

Bridgeport, Conn.  
Nonprofit Social Service Organizations

**Detailed box/folder listing**

Series I, Bridgeport Christian Union

Box 1

1. Suggested policy for rescue and relief organization, c. 1909
2. Bridgeport Christian Union annual reports, 1909-1934
3. Dedication and event material for new building, 1919-1920
4. Correspondence, 1909-1935
5. Clippings, 1909-1976
6. Clippings, 1909-1976

Series II, Personal Papers of Rev. William Simpson

7. Everyman Bible Class Booster, 1952
8. The Goodwill Industries: a manual, 1935
9. Sermon, 1959
10. Sons of Veterans, 1935
11. Trinity Methodist Church 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 1963
12. Clippings regarding Rev. Simpson
13. Photographs, 1950, undated
14. Obituaries, 1966
15. Additional material, 1944, undated

Series III, Material relating to David Simpson Sr. and Jr.

16. David L. Simpson Sr.
17. Photograph, rally on McLevy Green during Nixon/Kennedy debate, 1962

Box 2

Banner from rally held on McLevy Green by the University of Bridgeport Collegiate Republicans during the Nixon/Kennedy debates, 1962