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A Guide to the  
George Aaron Barton Papers  
1903-1942

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UPT 50 B293

Prepared by Denise Piezynski under the direction of Theresa R. Snyder  
November 1989

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**PROVENANCE**

Transferred from Bennet Hall, 1955.

**ARRANGEMENT**

This collection consists of two series: Personal Papers and Manuscripts.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

George Aaron Barton was an author, scholar, and Professor of Semitic languages. Born in Quebec, Canada, Barton became a minister in the Society of Friends in 1879, after attending the Oakwood Seminary in Poughkeepsie, New York. He continued his education at Haverford College, earning his B.A. in 1882 and M.A. in 1885. He worked briefly in the insurance field before teaching at the Friends School in Providence, Rhode Island from 1884 to 1889. He then resumed his studies at Harvard, focusing on religion, Assyriology and Semitic languages. After gaining his Ph.D. in

1891, Barton became a professor of Semitic languages at Bryn Mawr College, where he also served as college chaplain.

In 1922 Barton came to the University of Pennsylvania where he succeeded Morris Jastrow as professor of Semitic languages and the history of religion from 1922 to 1931 and then as a professor emeritus from 1932 until his death. While at Penn, he also served as the director of the American School of Oriental Research in Baghdad, 1921-1934. After leaving the Society of Friends in protest of its World War I pacifist stand, Barton was ordained as an Episcopal priest in 1919; he was professor of New Testament literature at the Divinity School of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Philadelphia from 1922 until 1937.

Internationally known for his writings on Biblical subjects, Barton was also a noted scholar of archeology, helping appraise and interpret the findings of many archeological expeditions of the Middle East. His publications on cuneiform writing included work with texts from Penn's University Museum collections as well as with other Sumerian tablets. He also became interested in biblical archeology, writing a popular text book on the subject, published in 1916. His extensive scholarly publications addressed not only Semitic languages and biblical archeology, but also translations and commentaries on biblical texts.

After Barton's first wife, Caroline Brewer Danforth, died in 1930, he later married Katherine Blye Hagy. Barton and his first wife had one adopted son.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The George A. Barton Papers, 1903-1942, concern both his personal life and his career. As a Professor whose interests and expertise crossed several disciplines, his collection includes papers relating to a variety of topics. A small portion of the collection is comprised of Barton's personal papers including letters and essays on his personal religious and political beliefs, book reviews, and lecture notes. The bulk of the collection deals with the research Barton conducted in the fields of Christianity, Archeology, and Mysticism.

Concerning the topic of Christianity the papers include: a critique of Torrey's Aramaic theory of the Gospels; numerous notes; outlines; and essays regarding the gospels and the life of Jesus. There are also notes and essays on the Apocalypse, and essays and articles on Christianity in general.

Barton's papers on archeology contain translations of texts, including Egyptian translations and those of Gudea Cylinders, A and B; essays on early man and Indo-Sumerian seals with illustrations; correspondence regarding the Hittite code and archeological finds from 1927-1928; photographs of inscriptions and tablets; and Barton's description of Herbert Clark's archeological collection.

Documenting his interest in Mysticism are notes; bibliographies; copies of students' papers, 1927; and an outline and notes for his book, entitled Mysticism. There is some correspondence regarding attempts to have the book published posthumously.

Barton's papers contain the unpublished manuscript of Mysticism (820 p., 1929), and manuscript of his published book The Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad (578 p., 1928).

### **CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS**

#### **Corporate Name(s)**

- University of Pennsylvania. College of Arts and Sciences.

#### **Genre(s)**

- New Testament scholars--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

#### **Occupation(s)**

- College teachers--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

#### **Subject(s)**

- Archeology--Research.
- Christianity--Research.
- Mysticism--Research.
- Semitic languages--Study and teaching.

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**INVENTORY**

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