The Archives of the American Friends Service Committee

History through the eyes of peacemakers
"The AFSC Archives is simply the richest collection in which I have had the pleasure to work. Scholars of nearly any mid-twentieth century social movement will find a goldmine of detailed information here."

—Dr. Tracy E. K'Meyer
University of Louisville

"The archives of AFSC provide unique insights into the history of some troubled times, places, and people, and of the American Friends who worked in their midst. I am profoundly grateful to have been able to access the treasure trove of collections, which are carefully and expertly preserved for future scholars."

—Professor Peter Gatrell
University of Manchester, UK


Background image: minutes from AFSC’s first meeting, 1917.
AFSC was founded by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors with a peaceful and constructive alternative to military service. The Quaker spiritual commitments to personal integrity, bearing witness to one’s faith, speaking truth to power, and taking responsibility for one’s actions and their consequences are all reflected in the historical record and contribute to the uniqueness of the collection.

From decisions of the AFSC Board of Directors to the actions of individual workers, the primary sources contained in the AFSC Archives provide a level of forethought, analysis, detail, and perspective that is not often seen in historical documentation.

Engaged in social and political action throughout the 20th century, members of the AFSC furnish a singular lens through which to view the events that shaped our world.
Highlights of the collection include descriptive reports, correspondence, images, and other unique materials related to topics such as:

- The efforts of young aid workers in France during and after WWI
- Famine relief projects in eastern and northern Europe in the 1920s
- An extensive collection of children's artwork from WWI to the present
- International and domestic work camps and youth exchanges beginning in the 1930s
- Child resettlement and feeding during the Spanish Civil War
- Depression-era relief efforts in the coalfields of Appalachia.
- Assistance to refugees in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East displaced by WWII
- Support for interned Japanese-Americans
- Post-WWII reconstruction efforts in Europe, Asia, and Africa
- Cold War-era dialogues between the Communist bloc and the West
- The AFSC prosthetics hospital in Quang Ngai, Vietnam, during the Vietnam War
- Divestment from South Africa during the anti-apartheid movement
- Reform of U.S. immigration policy and work on the Mexico/U.S. Border
- Engagement with Native American rights, issues, and communities
- Death penalty, solitary confinement, and inhumane treatment in U.S. prisons
- Government surveillance and violations of civil liberties
- Challenging the U.S. military-industrial complex

Below: Distribution of food and other relief to the people of Pforzheim, Germany was funded in part by a group of American Pforzheimers and supervised by AFSC, 1948.

AFSC is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice, as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing on continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, the AFSC nurtures the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social relations and systems.

To schedule a visit, contact the archivist at:

AFSC Archives
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Phone: (215) 241-7044
Email: archives@afsc.org

For nearly 100 years, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has worked for lasting peace with justice in the U.S. and around the world. The collection of the AFSC Archives includes:

- Photos
- Artwork
- Films
- Statistical information
- Correspondence
- Reports
- Personal journals
- Oral histories
- Publications
- Objects

For a detailed description of our holdings, please visit www.afsc.org/archives