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Abstract

Hope College class of 1898; Western Theological Seminary class of 1901; missionary in South India; principal of the Union Theological Seminary at Pasumalai in South India, 1917-1942. Collection includes articles, photo albums, clippings, correspondence, books, and medals relating to his work in India. Contains secondary sources documenting his interest in the Pilgrims and Dutch influence on the United States. Also includes a photo album with extensive commentary about a vacation in Great Britain, 1936-1937.

Accession No.: H88-0005
Provenance: John J. Banninga
Photographs: In oversized photo albums
Processed by: Craig G. Wright, May 1991

Biography

John J. Banninga was born to Jan and Elizabeth Banninga in 1875 in Muskegon, Michigan. His parents were born in Uithuizen, Groningen Province, the Netherlands, and emigrated to America in 1867. Banninga graduated from Hope College in 1898, the Western Theological Seminary in 1901, and received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Hope in 1917. He married Sophia Maria “Mary” Damson in 1901, who had been a teacher in the Holland Public School system for seven years. Banninga was the first person to be commissioned at Hope Reformed Church under a new form of service adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Church in America which provided for the commissioning of people for foreign missions. John and Mary left for India in 1901 and served there for forty-two years. In 1917, Banninga became the principal of the Union Theological Seminary at Pasumalai in South India, a position he would hold for 25 years. The school served as a training ground for Indian pastors and evangelists.

Banninga was instrumental in the drive to create a United Church of India. He served as secretary for the first fifteen years of the organization and as a council member until his retirement.

After his retirement in 1942, John and Mary moved to Claremont, California. Mary died in 1949, and John remarried in 1952 to Helen Elizabeth Vogleson. John J. Banninga passed away in 1963.

Scope and Content

The John J. Banninga papers consist of materials from 1906 to 1974 which document his work in India. Included are articles, photo albums, correspondence, clippings, books and medals. There are also materials about the establishment of the “Pilgrim Collection” at the Hope College Library which relates to the pilgrim fathers and the influence of the Netherlands on the English
Commonwealth and the United States.

The materials have been arranged alphabetically by topical heading with the exceptions of eight odd-sized, alternate format items which have been placed at the end of the collection. These items include three books about the Church of South India, three service medals awarded to Mr. Banninga, and two oversized photo albums. Correspondents include: John W. Beardslee, Jr., Edward D. Dimnent, Irwin Lubbers, and Calvin A. Vander Werf.

Container List

Box 1

Biographical, n.d., 1963-1985
Articles, 1947, 1962, 1974

Stokes, Steven R. “John J. Banninga: His Life, His Work, His Missions,” 1974 (student paper)

Church of South India, 1909-1954
General, n.d., 1954
Visitor Log and Scrapbook, 1909-1949

Correspondence, 1912-1974

Beardslee, John W., Jr., 1912 (photocopy, original in the New Brunswick Theological Seminary)
Dimnent, Edward D., 1920, 1922
General, n.d., 1963, 1974
Kollen, Gerrit J., 1912
Lubbers, Irwin, 1948-1962
Vander Werf, Calvin A., 1963-1964

Pilgrim Collection, 1953-1965

Articles, n.d., 1953

Banninga, Helen. “Legacy of the Pilgrim Fathers to America,” n.d.
Banninga, Dr. John. “Seed Corn - Sifted and Cultivated or Europe's Gift to America through the Pilgrim Fathers,” n.d.
“Dutch Influence on American Civilization,” n.d.

Bibliographies, n.d., 1955
Clippings, 1963-1964
Correspondence, n.d., 1958, 1965

Box 2

Books on the Church of South India

Newbigin, James Edward Lesslie. The Reunion of the Church: A Defense of
the South India Scheme, 1948 (dedicated to Dr. J. J. Banninga)
Paul, Rajaiah David, M.A. The First Decade: An Account of the Church of South India, 1958

Medals
Kaiser-I-Hind Medal; awarded for meritorious service on behalf of India and its people
1914-1918 War Medal; awarded for service in Mesopotamia under the YMCA
Pasumalai Conference Medal; awarded for remembrance of service

Photo Albums
“A Summer in Great Britain,” 1936-1937 (includes extensive commentary)