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May 2012

### W05-1295. Bilkert Family. Papers, 1892-1987. 0.50 linear ft.

Western Theological Seminary

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**W05-1295. Bilkert Family.**

Papers, 1892-1987. 0.50 linear ft.

Abstract

Henry Arjen Bilkert was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on June 24, 1892. He received his AB from Hope College in 1914, degrees from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1914 and 1916, and a degree from Western Theological Seminary in 1917. He was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Michigan in 1917. He served as a missionary, with his wife Anna, to Arabia from 1917-1929 before being killed by a Bedouin bandit on January 21, 1929, near Basrah, Mesopotamia. His wife, Anna Monteith Bilkert, returned to Kalamazoo, Michigan, with their four children in May 1929. She later returned to Bahrain with her second husband, Dr. Paul Harrison, in 1941 and returning in 1949 and settled down in Berea, Kentucky, to work at the small hospital there. They stayed there until 1952 when they returned to Bahrain for a two-year stint to replace Jerry and Rose Nykerk who had returned to the United States while they recovered from tuberculosis. In 1954, Paul and Anna Harrison settled at Penney Farms in Florida to head up the staff of medical personnel at the clinic there that cared for the retirement home occupants. At Penney Farms, Anna Harrison wrote a book about Dr. Paul Harrison's life in the Arabian Mission called *A Tool in His Hand*. This book was published in 1958. She went on to write *Pearls Are Made* in 1950 (reprinted in 1958) for use in Reformed Church education and Sunday school classes. In the fall of 1962, Paul Harrison passed away after a brief illness and Anna stayed on at Penney Farms. On December 25, 1963, she remarried Paul Johnson, a close friend of Paul Harrison. They remained at Penney Farms during the winter months and summered in Bay View, Michigan, until Paul's death in November 1975 from cancer. Anna passed away naturally on March 31, 1987, also at Penney Farms. She is buried between Paul Harrison and Paul Johnson at Penney Farms. The collection includes Henry Bilkert's copy of the Abcarius' English-Arabic Dictionary [1906], photocopy and digital photographs of the Bilkert family scrapbook, clippings on the family's activities home and abroad, memorial service speeches for Henry A. Bilkert by John Van Ess and C. S. G. Mylrea, Board of Foreign Missions correspondence to Henry A. Bilkert, correspondence from Bilkert, writings of Margaret Bilkert Lemmer (*The Life of Anna M. Johnson*, 1894-1987, n.d. and *Memoirs of a Missionary Child*, n.d.), and the books written by Anna M. Harrison (*A Tool in His Hand*, 1958, and *Pearls Are Made*, 1958).



Accession No: W05-1295  
Provenance: Bilkert Family, Margaret Bilkert Lemmer  
Donor: Montieth Bilkert, Margaret Bilkert Lemmer  
Photographs: 45 on Scrapbook images on CD  
Processed by: Geoffrey Reynolds, May 2005

Biography

Henry Arjen Bilkert was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on June 24, 1892. He received his AB from Hope College in 1914, degrees from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1914 and 1916, and a degree from Western Theological Seminary in 1917. He was licensed and

ordained by the Classis of Michigan in 1917. He served as a missionary, with his wife Anna, to Arabia from 1917-1929 before being killed by a Bedouin bandit on January 21, 1929 near Basrah, Mesopotamia. His wife, Anna Monteith Bilkert, returned to Kalamazoo, Michigan, with their four children in May 1929.

Anna Bilkert and her children then relocated to a house, provided for by Charles Crane, in Maplewood, New Jersey. Later Anna married fellow missionary and medical doctor Paul Harrison in the offices of the Mission Board Rooms in New York City, New York, on September 21, 1931.

Once the marriage had taken place, the couple returned to Arabia with the four youngest children of the new family (Tim and Dorothy Harrison and Barbara and Virginia Bilkert). The four oldest (Paul and Clinton Harrison and Margaret and Monteith Bilkert) remained in the United States with relatives. Paul and Anna returned with their four youngest children in 1939 and began a life of traveling around the United States to speaking engagements. In March 1941 they returned, this time without any children, to Bahrain, a small island in the Persian Gulf. They returned in 1949 and after a short spell on the campus of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, they settled down in Berea, Kentucky, to work at the small hospital there. They stayed until 1952 when they returned to Bahrain for a two-year stint to replace Jerry and Rose Nykerk who had returned to the United States while they recovered from tuberculosis.

In 1954, Paul and Anna Harrison settled at Penney Farms in Florida to head up the staff of medical personnel at the clinic there that cared for the retirement home occupants. At Penney Farms, Anna Harrison wrote a book about Dr. Paul Harrison's life in the Arabian Mission called *A Tool in His Hand*. This book was published in 1958. She went on to write *Pearls Are Made* for use in Reformed Church education and Sunday school classes.

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### Scope and Content

The collection includes a photocopy and digital photographs of the Bilkert family scrapbook, clippings on the family's activities home and abroad, memorial service speeches for Henry A. Bilkert by John Van Ess and C. S. G. Mylrea, Board of Foreign Missions correspondence to Henry A. Bilkert, correspondence from Bilkert, writings of Margaret Bilkert Lemmer, and the books written by Anna M. Harrison.

### Container List

Board of Foreign Missions, 1917

Books

Harrison, Anna M.

*A Tool in His Hand*, 1958

*Pearls Are Made*, 1958

Henry Bilkert's copy of the Abcarius' English-Arabic Dictionary [1906]

Lemmer, Margaret Bilkert

*The Life of Anna M. Johnson*, 1894-1987, n.d.

*Memoirs of a Missionary Child*, n.d.

Clippings, 1915-1954

Correspondence, Henry A. Bilkert, 1927-1929

Memorial Service for Henry A. Bilkert, 1929

Photographs (CD) of Scrapbook, 1892-1929

Scrapbook (photocopy), 1892-1929