

Bowles family correspondence, 1922-1960
HC.Coll.1212
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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections

2009.10.29

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Summary Information

Repository	Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections
Creator	Bowles, Gilbert, 1869-1960
Creator	Bowles, Minnie, 1868-1958
Title	Bowles family correspondence
Date [inclusive]	1922-1960
Extent	3.0 containers
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Bowles family was deeply involved with Quaker missionary and relief work during the 20th century. In 1900, the Bowles moved to Japan under the auspices of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and managed the Friends School and established the Tokyo Friends Center. During World War II, the Bowles family moved to Hawaii and worked with war refugees. The Bowles family correspondence consists of correspondence from Gilbert and Minnie Pickett Bowles to their son Gordon Townsend Bowles from 1922 to 1932 and to Gordon Townsend and Jane T. Bowles from 1932 to 1960. This correspondence is essentially family correspondence, but also includes information regarding the Bowles' Quaker relief work, their views on Quakerism and their day-to-day activities.</p>

Preferred Citation note

Haverford College Library, Haverford, PA, Quaker Collection, Bowles family correspondence, Coll. No.
1212

Biographical note

The Bowles family was deeply involved with Quaker missionary and relief work during the 20th century. Gilbert Bowles was born on October 16, 1869 to Iowa Quaker farmers, Ephraim and Elizabeth Epperson Bowles, and educated at the Jewell County School for teacher training and Northbranch Friends Academy. He taught at various schools before returning to college and earning his BA and MA from William Penn College, Iowa, and his PhD from the University of Chicago, Illinois. Minnie Macy Pickett was born in 1868, the daughter of Evan and Huldah Macy Pickett, and married Gilbert Bowles on December 31, 1898 after teaching for five years at the Tokyo Friends School. They had four children.

Following the birth of their son, Herbert, on October 12, 1900, the Bowles moved to Japan “to share in the Friends work in Tokyo,” (Sketch of Gilbert Bowles’ Life). “Between 1901 and 1941, the Bowles and their growing family served six terms in Japan under the auspices of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) ... [and they] managed the Friends School and established the Tokyo Friends Center.” (Historical Dictionary of Friends, p. 30)

Minnie Pickett Bowles taught at the Friends Girls School in Tokyo, Japan, and by the 1940s, approximately one hundred girls were graduating annually. She also taught Bible classes to more than 2,000 young men as well as cooking and sewing.

In Tokyo, Gilbert Bowles restructured the Friends' Meetings in Japan; taught Bible classes; and served as chairman of the Trustees. He also participated in the fellowship of the mission center. Primarily, though, Gilbert Bowles' greatest efforts were in peacemaking and he worked in China, Japan, Korea and Hawaii. He helped organize the Japan Peace and Arbitration Society in 1906, the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Hawaii and, later, the United Nations Association. In 1915, Gilbert Bowles wrote the Japanese Law of Nationality. He testified to the American Congress about the dangers of the Immigration Act and the Naval Appropriations Bill in the 1920s.

In 1941, the Bowles' relocated to Hawaii and during World War II, Gilbert Bowles ministered to families of Japanese who were interned during World War II, and to the internees themselves. He worked with Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Filipinos, and Jewish refugees, helping them to understand their civil rights and responsibilities, securing jobs for them when possible, representing them and their interests in court, and visiting them in prison. After World War II, the Bowles performed relief work for the Japanese through the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends World Committee for Consultation. The Bowles' children attended the American School in Japan. Gordon T. Bowles, born June 25, 1904, attended the school, as did his older brother, Herbert, and his older sister, Helen, and graduated in 1921. Gordon Bowles graduated from Earlham University in 1925 and completed his education at Harvard University, earning his PhD in anthropology. In 1942, he “received a fellowship to the Guggenheim Foundation for analyzing Hawaiian skeleton remains while working for the Bishop Museum in Honolulu,” (EMuseum of Minnesota State University). Gordon Bowles worked for the Far Eastern Section of the State Department through which he helped plan for the restructuring of Japanese government following the end of the War. Gordon Bowles then accepted a position as professor of anthropology at Syracuse University. In 1958, he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun by the government of Japan. Gordon Bowles most famous book, *The People of Asia*, was published in 1977. In

the early 1930s, Gordon married Jane T. Bowles, who helped open the Hawaii Branch of the American Friends Service Committee. Minnie Pickett Bowles died in 1958 and her husband, Gilbert, died in 1960. Their son, Gordon T. Bowles died in November 1991, after almost a century of service by the Bowles family.

Bibliography:

Abbot, Margery Post, Mary Ellen Chijilke, Pink Dandelion and John William Oliver, *Historical Dictionary of Friends*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003.

Bowles, Gilbert. "Sketch of Gilbert Bowles Life, Probably Written in 1950s," http://www.sanchristos.com/GILBERT_BOWLES.pdf

Earlham College. "Earlham's History with Japan: Graduates receive Medals of Honor," http://www.earlham.edu/~jpnstudies/earlham_history_japan/MedalWinners.html

EMuseum @ Minnesota State University, Mankato. "Gordon Bowles, 1904-1991," http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/information/biography/abcde/bowles_gordon.html

Scope and Contents note

The Bowles family correspondence consists of correspondence from Gilbert and Minnie Pickett Bowles to their son Gordon Townsend Bowles from 1922 to 1932 and to Gordon Townsend and his wife, Jane T. Bowles from 1932 to 1960. From 1922 to approximately 1943, Gilbert and Minnie Bowles lived and worked in Japan under the auspices of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox). During that time, they wrote regularly to their son and daughter-in-law with letters describing their daily activities, their work as missionaries, and their travels throughout the world. They also expressed the typical parental concerns with their son requesting information about his life, his grades in school, and his thoughts on his future profession. The family's closeness despite great distance was maintained through their correspondence, which often reads like a spoken conversation. One letter, demonstrating the difficulties of living so far apart, reads, "Thank thee from my heart for telling me so much of thy heart ... when reading and re-reading each word of this letter, my ... regret was that I could not be with thee for a heart-to-heart talk, or at least know exactly where to write thee," (Letter from Gilbert Bowles to Gordon T. Bowles, August 15, 1925). From 1943 until their deaths in 1958 and 1960, Minnie and Gilbert Bowles lived in Hawaii.

The Bowles' letters from Tokyo and Hawaii are filled with information about their work. Minnie Bowles writes extensively of her Bible Classes and her teaching as well as their many visitors and guests. Overall, their travels throughout the world are well documented in their correspondence. In addition to their work, there is conversation about Quakerism and their beliefs, descriptions of their services and even consideration of Meetings attended. Although references are made to certain international events such as Herbert Hoover's election, Admiral Toga's military funeral, and the end of World War II, the true value of

these letters is in the descriptions of daily life and work. The letters are frequent and descriptive and read almost like a diary.

Researchers interested in the Bowles family, Quaker missionary work, Quakers in Japan and Hawaii during and following World War II and Japan before and after World War II will find this collection to be extremely valuable. The letters are indicative of strong family ties and the efforts and sacrifices made to maintain relationships despite distance and time.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections 2009.10.29

Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use note

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Archives with requests for copying and for authorization to quote or reproduce the material. For publication, permission must be obtained from Jane Bowles, daughters Barbara Swan or Anne Pipae, or niece Helen Nicholson.

Custodial History note

Gift of Jane Bowles, 1989

Processing Information note

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

This collection was *minimally processed* in 2009-2011, as part of an experimental project conducted under the auspices of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries to help eliminate processing backlog in Philadelphia repositories. A minimally processed collection is one processed at a less intensive rate than traditionally thought necessary to make a collection ready for use by researchers. When citing sources from this collection, researchers are advised to defer to folder titles provided in the finding aid rather than those provided on the physical folder.

Employing processing strategies outlined in Mark Greene's and Dennis Meissner's 2005 article, *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing Approaches to Deal With Late 20th-Century*

Collections, the project team tested the limits of minimal processing on collections of all types and ages, in 23 Philadelphia area repositories. A primary goal of the project, the team processed at an average rate of 2-3 hours per linear foot of records, a fraction of the time ordinarily reserved for the arrangement and description of collections. Among other time saving strategies, the project team did not extensively review the content of the collections, replace acidic folders or complete any preservation work.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Haverford College: Bowles family papers, 1161; Academy of Natural Sciences: Gordon Townsend Bowles papers.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- American Friends Service Committee.
- Friends Girls School (Tokyo, Japan).
- Friends World Committee for Consultation.
- Japan Friends' Mission (Tokyo, Japan).
- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends (Orthodox : 1827-1955).
- Society of Friends.
- United Nations Association.

Genre(s)

- Correspondence.
- Family papers.
- Postcards

Geographic Name(s)

- Hawaii
- Japan

Occupation(s)

- Missionaries.

Personal Name(s)

- Bowles, Gilbert, 1869-1960
- Bowles, Gordon Townsend
- Bowles, Jane T.
- Bowles, Minnie, 1868-1958

Subject(s)

- Quaker missionaries
- Quaker women
- Quakers
- Reconstruction
- Refugees
- World War II.

Series I. From Gilbert and Minnie Bowles to Gordon Townsend Bowles

Collection Inventory**Series I. From Gilbert and Minnie Bowles to Gordon Townsend Bowles 1922-1932****Box**

1922-1926

1

1926-1928

1

1929 January-June

1

1929 June-December

1

1930-1931

1

Series II. From Gilbert and Minnie Bowles to Gordon Townsend and Jane T. Bowles**Box**

1932

1

1933

2

Series II. From Gilbert and Minnie Bowles to Gordon Townsend and Jane T. B...

1934	2
1935	2
1936	2
1937-1938	2
1939	2
1940-1941	2
1942	3
1943	3
1944	3
1945	3
1946	3
1947	3

Series II. From Gilbert and Minnie Bowles to Gordon Townsend and Jane T. B...

1948

3

1949

3

1950-1951

3

1952-1953

3

1954

3

1956-1957

3

1958-1960

3