

M. Henry Kerr Cameroon expedition papers

1000

Finding aid prepared by Kristi Gutknecht.

Last updated on March 02, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

July 2009

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Kerr, M. Henry, 1869-1935
Creator	Kerr, S. Logan, d. 1968
Title	M. Henry Kerr Cameroon expedition papers
Call number	1000
Date [bulk]	1895-1899
Date [inclusive]	1892-1968
Extent	1.1 linear feet (one manuscript box and one scrapbook box)
General Physical Description note	The collection comprises file box and one scrapbook box. The scrapbook's binding is no longer intact, but each page is in clear, legible condition. The scrapbook's organization mixes subjects and media in a roughly chronological form; some of the pages may be out of order.
Language	English
Abstract	Henry Kerr (1869-1935), a Presbyterian minister, worked in several villiages in Cameroon, West Africa from 1892-1899. The Presbyterian Mission League tasked him with expanding the mission locations, translating hymns and the four Gospels, teaching, and promoting industry. Contained in the collection are his own photos and correspondence, both letters sent and replies. The bulk of the collection is in the format of a scrapbook compiled by Kerr.

Cite as:

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. M. Henry Kerr Cameroon expedition papers. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date accessed].

Biography/History

M. Henry Kerr (1869-1935), a Presbyterian missionary, worked in small, formerly German-controlled villages in Cameroon, Africa from 1892-1899, particularly Batanga, Elat, and Efulen. The Presbyterian mission league tasked him with “building the mission stations, locating sites, teaching the natives handcrafts and initiating the industrial training schools” (Kerr, S. Logan, 1958). Kerr took a strong interest in the native language, Bulu, and worked with minister Adolphus C. Good (1856-1894) to translate the four Gospels, as well as several hymns.

In 1898, Kerr briefly returned home to marry Margaret McClean Logan; the couple returned to Cameroon that year and worked together as missionaries. However, in 1899, Margaret Kerr became ill and the couple returned to the United States. They resided in Flourtown, Pennsylvania and did not return to the mission field (The Presbyterian Historical Society, <http://www.history.pcusa.org/>).

Scope and Contents

The Henry Kerr papers came to the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1968 when Janet S. Kerr, Henry Kerr’s daughter-in-law, donated them. At that time, the loose papers were organized approximately by date and subject and placed into folders; the scrapbook appears to have been left in the order it was originally created. When this finding aid was written in March 2009, the loose papers were reorganized in a more definitive subject and date scheme and separated into the series: Correspondence, Diaries, and Printed Material; no items were discarded. The scrapbook was left in its original order.

The papers measure 1.1 linear feet, contained in one manuscript box and one scrapbook box. The bulk of the material was written by Kerr on site in Cameroon in the village of Batanga between 1895 and 1899. Kerr retained both letters he sent and letters sent in reply from the United States, as well as clippings from an unknown print media source detailing and promoting the Presbyterian missionary efforts for the benefit of American readers. Also contained is a manuscript of the book *The Beloved: an Iowa Boy in the Jungles of Africa*, a compilation of letters and short memoirs regarding the mission work in Batanga; unique to this edition is a forward by S. Logan Kerr, Henry Kerr’s son.

The loose papers comprise correspondence between Kerr and his friends and family in the United States, depicting both day-to-day life as a missionary in the Cameroon, as well as the political and business affairs of the missionary league. Also contained are diary pages, photos and postcards made from Kerr’s

own photos, and several published materials Kerr used or contributed towards during his work in Cameroon. These published materials include: a canvas map of West Africa; *Mbamba foé Mateus*, *Markus*, *Lukas ba Yòhanes be ñga tili*, a Bulu translation of the four Gospels by A.C. Good to which Kerr contributed; and a book of hymns translated into Bulu by Kerr et. al.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

July 2009

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Use Restrictions

Although many items from the archives are in the public domain, copyright may be retained by the authors of items in these papers, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law. The user is fully responsible for compliance with relevant copyright law.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Scrapbooks

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Cameroon

OCCUPATION(S)

- Women missionaries

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Kerr, Janet K.
- Kerr, M. Henry, 1869-1935

SUBJECT(S)

- Bulu language
- First Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia, Pa.)

Bibliography

Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions. Edited by Gerald H. Anderson. New York: Macmillan Reference, 1998.

The Presbyterian Historical Society. <http://www.history.pcusa.org/>

Collection Inventory

CORRESPONDENCE.

Series Description

Two handwritten letters from Kerr in Cameroon to his father in the United States, dated October 23, 1893 and May 26, 1894, respectively. The subjects are day-to-day, newsy descriptions of life and work in Cameroon. A portion of a typed letter to John Gillespie in New York City, New York, USA, consulting engineer for the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. The letter details Kerr's work in Cameroon so far and his plans for the near future. A typed letter from Ellen C. Parsons, another missionary and accomplished writer, sending good wishes to Kerr upon the death of his friend and coworker Adolphus C. Good. This letter is dated December 23, 1894.

Folder two of two contains correspondence from Janet K. Kerr concerning the donation of the collection. Letters and an inventory of objects not donated to the museum such as pottery and jewelry.

Correspondence 1893-1894.

Correspondence 1967-1968.

DIARIES 1893-1894.

Series Description

Contains three longhand diary entries concerning work and life in Cameroon.

PRINTED MATERIAL, 1854-1959.

Series Description

Folder one of four contains works Kerr produced or contributed towards. Postcards from his photos, hymnals, and a translation of the Gospel.

Folder two of four contains a page of barometric dates and a newspaper page in an unknown African language (possible Ethiopic).

Folder three of four contains a map of West Africa used by Kerr and several pamphlets from ~1930-~1950 to promote and educate the public on the missionary efforts in West Africa.

Folder four of four contains *The Beloved: An Iowa Boy in the Jungles of Africa*.

Printed Material 1894-1909.

Printed Material.

Printed Material 1930-1950.

Printed Material 1959.