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## Ethel A. Killgrove Papers

1948-1962 (*Bulk:* 1949-1951)

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Between 1948 and 1951, Chicagoan Ethel A. Killgrove worked as a missionary with the Sudan Interior Mission. A graduate of the St. Paul Bible Institute, Killgrove was based in Aden, Yemen, and worked spreading the gospel and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. After returning home in 1951, Killgrove studied education at Wheaton College (Bed, 1959) and Roosevelt (MEd., 1963), teaching in elementary schools in Illinois and Chester County, Pa. She died in Lancaster, Pa., in 2002.

The 142 letters that Killgrove wrote home to her parents and brother Tom include fascinating information on life as a missionary in British-controlled Aden and Ethiopia during the transitional years following the end of World War II. From her perspective on

the southern rim of the Middle East, Killgore was witness to the of the impact of the formation of the state of Israel and the growing hostility toward colonial domination in the Arab world and Africa. The collection includes an excellent photograph album with 55 images of her time in mission, along with 65 other images.

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## Background on Ethel A. Killgrove

An elementary school teacher and missionary, Ethel Amelia Killgrove was born in Chicago on Sept. 5, 1919, the eldest of two children of a printer and newspaper linotype operator, Talieferro Elmore Killgrove, and his wife Amelia Milner White. Working as a stenographer in Chicago following her high school graduation, Killgrove found her calling in evangelical religion. At the end of the Second World War, she enrolled in the St. Paul Bible Institute in 1946-1947, expressing an interest in "child evangelism" and preparing herself to become a missionary.

Joining the Sudan Interior Mission in 1948 (now known as Serving in Mission or SIM), Killgrove was assigned to work in the Crater district of Aden, Yemen for two years, but worked equally in Addis Ababa and other locations in Ethiopia. The Sudan Interior Mission had been established by Canadians Walter Gowans, Roland Bingham, and American Thomas Kent in 1893 with the goal of evangelizing the sixty million people of sub-Saharan Africa. Killgrove's assignments included working with Arab and Ethiopian women and teaching in the missionary school for girls in both countries, but she was also involved in Christian radio broadcasting in Ethiopia.



Ethel A. Killgrove and Mr. Braden at the mike in studio, Addis Ababa

After the end of her mission in the late summer 1951, Killgrove returned home to Chicago and to her education. Attending the University of Illinois for a time, she transferred to Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., where she received a degree in elementary education in 1960, later earning her master's in education from Roosevelt College (1963). She taught in Glen Ellyn, Ill., later moving to Pennsylvania to become a reading specialist for the Upper Darby School District outside of Philadelphia. She never married. Killgrove remained active in religious work after retiring from teaching in the 1980s, organizing a ministry for the elderly, Vision of Harvest Inc. She died on April 25, 2002, at the age of 82.

## Scope of collection

The 142 letters that Killgrove wrote home to her parents and brother Tom include fascinating information on life as a missionary in British-controlled Aden and Ethiopia during the transitional years following the end of World War II. From her perspective on the southern rim of the Middle East, Killgore was witness to the of the impact of the formation of the state of Israel and the growing hostility toward colonial domination in the Arab world and Africa. The collection includes an excellent photograph album with 55 images of her time in mission, along with 65 other images.

Typical of Killgrove's letters are one written to her mother from Aden, February 18, 1949:

"I have only a couple more lessons to take in colloquial grammar. I'm so glad for this teacher & hope I can continue with him for the classical Arabic also He is quite a figure in political circles among his own people and I cannot help but pray that he might become a Christian & use his influence in a way to help his people. These Arabs really have revolutionary ideas sometimes which gets them into trouble... Don't show these lines to anyone but the ruling power of Britain is not viewed favorably by all her subjects... But this is a valuable port city and of course it will be held as long as possible. Do tell me all you can find out about Palestine & Trans-Jordan & situation there. I heard bits on radio but the news is so brief..."

April 10, 1949 (Aden):

We had visitors here in Aden last week, and some that we all appreciated very much. It was our Mission's Home Director, Dr. Darroch and an old pioneer missionary who spent 40 years in Africa, Mr. Tommy Titcombe... They have been making a tour of all our stations in Africa... and they came to us last, and now will be going to England to confer with members of our SIM Council there and then on to the U.S... Mr. Titcombe is a scream, and gave us quite a few good laughs and a lot of good advice. He is a short fellow, just plain ordinary folks, with a ridiculous sense of humor. He has a lot of good common sense and helped us all a lot

with things like language problems. He is keenly interested to see that we Arab workers get good instruction in the classical Arabic... On Friday afternoon we had a dedication service of our new compound in Ma-alla... the dispensary bldg. is completed and also the 10 small rooms to be used for class rooms, etc., and the wall around the compound... My little organ with me behind it furnished the music. We sang and Dr. Darroch spoke... It is the only missionary work in Ma-alla, and it is a very crowded Arab and Somali section of Aden. It is near the sea, near the oldest ship-building yards in the world. It is not a very scenic location however, as the incinerators which burn the garbage are on one side of us a half mile off, and a poor "sweeper's" quarters are on another side and a very barren graveyard on another side. But our main bldg. will face the crowded Ma-alla section..."

June 2, 1949 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia):

I arrived in AA on Sunday evening after an interesting but tiring trip... The altitude does not bother me one bit, and the cool air is wonderful... On Monday, I'm to travel down country with our Field Dir. And his wife to some stations about 150 miles south... Our mission compound is on the edge of the city here, up high on a hill, and consists of several rows of temporary living rooms, the beginnings of a radio station, two lovely little cottages, a garage. This is called just "headquarters" and there are about 10 to 12 people living here, most of them working in various jobs here. In the city is our Bookstore and it is a very good one too. AA is a larger city than Aden, very different too and it has more modern shops. The whole city is scattered over some very large hills and valleys and is difficult to get around without a car... I have a tiny little room in a row of temporary rooms. The walls are of some kind of straw covered over with a thin plaster. The roof is of corrugated aluminum. The floor is the ground, covered with straw mats. And it is very comfortable... I left Aden on Thursday, just a week ago. The plane trip to Djibouti was smooth and good. Then I continued by plane to Dire Dawa but that part was very rough... Had an interesting time getting my Ruppees changed into Ethiopian dollars by the help of a Greek merchant. The Greek people on this side of the world are the kindest and friendliest there are, and I have a high regard for them. They are also simply wizards in languages. You never have seen such brilliant linguists! I think they are smarter than the Jews in the U.S. I wished so many times that I knew some Italian or French because both are used widely in East Africa. My Spanish does not much... There are Arabs here and so probably next month I'll be doing some visitation. They keep their women secluded here also, just as in Aden..."

November 15, 1949 (Aden)

The language is really the biggest thing these days. And at last I do have some help - an elderly English woman, whose husband is the Church of England minister - helps me twice a week. I have Arabic reading in the Gospel of St. John every Wednesday afternoon and also she helps me on Saturday mornings with words and phrases that I need for the school. ... She began the Danish Mission girls school about 20 years ago, and she told me that she started when she had only been here for 6 months!... The article you sent about Jews leaving Arabia is partially true, and its no secret here that thousands have been leaving every week. They come in by truck loads - the camp is not heavily guarded! Its outside the city with only a few guards, but thousands fly from here each week. I think most of them have left by now. They lived here since the Assyrian captivity I think. They speak only Arabic, too. It will be a dreadful winter in Palestine for them because they are used to the heat and of course food is scarce and so is housing in Palestine. Mail going out of Palestine is censored of course...

February 19, 1951 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

Today was a national holiday, some kind of annual remembrance of a massacre that took place during the occupation here. All the flags were out and monuments of special significance to the day were decorated. Addis Ababa, as a city, has a lot of monuments and markers of history of the country. A group of us decided that it would be a good day for a picnic, and so fifteen of us climbed into our station International and set out for "In Toto" mountain top ... we went back a little ways to a Coptic church, and for a small fee we were permitted to enter and look around. It wasn't like anything I've ever seen before, although many things reminded me of parts of other temples I've seen in other places. It was a kind of rounded building, with a verandah and lattice work painted brilliant blue and green. ... Inside there was a corridor or hallway which circled completely around the bldg., the walls of which were covered with very interesting Ethiopian paintings, done right on the walls, and depicting various stories and parts of their worship. I have not learned their stories and traditions, so didn't understand much of the pictures, but they were done in brilliant colors and were very nicely painted. ... we came to a part of the corridor which was partitioned off with draperies, and we heard the sound of chanting and drums. There were the priests with their very queer drums, and a funny kind of a rattle used to help beat out the time, and they were chanting a weird kind of chant. ... They faced steps going up to a doorway leading to the inside of the building, however we were informed that no one goes inside except a very special priest, and so of course we were not permitted to enter..."

May 1, 1951 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia):

Did I tell you that Helen Sefl went home with a nervous breakdown? You know, she was the girl that was living with me in Aden. She had come there a few months before I did, and somehow never could seem to make the adjustments necessary. She allowed so many things to bother her, and in February she went home because she just seemed to go to pieces. ... Helen was so blue almost all the time that I lived with her. Most girls who come out to foreign countries find the first year kind of hard but then get used to things and are quite happy. Of the four of us girls that went to Aden for Arab work under this mission, I am the only one

still on the foreign field. The other three went home with physical or mental breakdowns... I have every expectation of going back to Arabia one of these days, but probably not in the same set-up that I went before. This mission won't be going into further Arab work, I am quite positive, as they prefer to stay in Africa...

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Ephemera: missionary announcements and greeting cards

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Killgrove, Ethel A.: Photograph album: Aden, Yemen, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
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## Administrative information

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The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

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Sudan Interior Mission

### Contributors

Killgrove, Ethel A. [main entry]

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