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## Chapter 3

# Mr. and Mrs. H. I. Briggs and Family

Raising a Family, 1919–1945



*Irwin and Myrtle Briggs, daughters Laura and Mildred, at Taylor University in 1922.*

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### Mr. and Mrs. H. I. Briggs

We stayed at my folks home until time to go to college; Taylor University, in Upland, Indiana. We went by train. Irwin had gone there the year before the war until April. We stopped in Chicago and saw the Graingers and the folks where I worked. The folks where I worked gave us a guitar and a mandolin. The mandolin belonged to their sister who had gone as a missionary to China. The guitar was the youngest girl's, but she never touched it to play, so they gave them to us. We used them later to play and sing to the shut ins. Irwin taught me how to play the mandolin; he could play almost anything.

### The Briggs attend Taylor University in Upland, Indiana

At Taylor University, we rented a four room house (small I suppose), on the campus for \$60 a year. Furnishing the house, I had my dresser and mirror my brother had made. We got a new mattress from Montgomery Wards with money I had put in the bank. I had \$350 saved from that job and besides I was always lending money and I got that paid back; at least \$100 I'd loaned out.

My mother gave me the quilts my grandmother Crabtree had made and never been used. Irwin had a pair of blankets that we slept

between; the only sheets we had or needed then. He bought an oil stove to cook on and a tub and washboard (that was the laundry), with my money. He made a cupboard out of boards. The school had a farm from other students that had graduated and left, so we got a table and chairs to use and a heating stove. I had some crocheted rugs I'd made in the past and remnants of curtain materials which I made window curtains of. So we had a real nice set up!

While we were there, Laura and Mildred were born: Laura on July 24, 1920, and Mildred, August 30, 1921.

While in Taylor, Irwin worked in a glass factory or any job he could find to buy food and clothes, pay tuition at school and rent. He helped the farmer in the country. Before Mildred was born he got government compensation for the years in the army where he lost one third of his hearing; \$150 a month.

We took in a friend, Harry Ward, for board and room and he went to school. Then Irwin's sister Catherine boarded with us and went to college. He paid her tuition. She helped me with the work and caring for the babies.



1920: Eva Briggs holding daughter, Edwynna, on the right and, Laura Briggs, on the left. Edwynna was born July 17, a week earlier than Laura. Eva was married to Orie, Irwin's brother.

## Myrtle & Irwin at Taylor University

The first year at Taylor, Mama started taking some Bible courses and started to learn to play the piano. But before long she was not feeling too well and had to stop. When Mama asked Daddy's sister, Verna, (she was also attending Taylor), what was wrong, Verna told her that she had just been living with the Briggs' too long. That summer the Briggs family grew to three when Laura Margaret entered the scene.

Times were hard as far as money went, and in addition to his studies, Daddy had to do all kinds of odd jobs to get money to keep the family going. He told about picking up coal that had fallen along the railroad tracks and selling it, digging ditches, and cutting corn. All through his sophomore year he worked from eleven p.m. to seven a.m. in a bottle factory. He also went to a farm, butchered hogs, cut them up and peddled them door-to-door.

About a year after Laura was born, another member of the family was expected. Grandma Crabtree came to be on hand for the event. She waited around and waited and waited and finally decided she had to get home to her family in Nebraska, so she left. About a month and a week after expected, I made my appearance.

Daddy's sister, Aunt Catherine, was staying with us so she could attend classes, too. So the three of them arranged it so someone would always be with the babies, Laura and me. Sometimes they fixed bottles of cocoa for us to keep us busy until someone made a hurried trip home for a turn to be with us. That's the way I remember the story, anyhow.

—Mildred Lufburrow, daughter ❀



The Briggs Family: Irwin is holding Mildred and Myrtle is standing beside Laura.



Laura and Mildred push their buggies with their dolls in front of their home in Upland, Indiana.



Irwin holding Laura and Mildred. Taylor University, 1922.

## Irwin, Myrtle, Laura, and Mildred Briggs



*Irwin, Myrtle, Laura, and Mildred.*



*Mildred and Laura and their dolls.*



*The twosome: Laura and Mildred.*



*Myrtle and daughters Laura and Mildred.*



*Laura with her dolls and buggy. Mildred is sitting in the wagon.*



*Laura and Mildred show off their long curls.*



*Mildred and Laura and their dolls.*



### Irwin Graduates from Taylor

After Irwin graduated from college, we went to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and lived above a mission. Orie and Eva Briggs lived there, too, in another apartment. They [Irwin and brother Orie] worked that summer in railroad yards and got some money ahead.

That fall we went to my folks in Nebraska, Long Pine, by train. My father had an up-to-date shoe repair shop in Long Pine and repaired shoes.

On the train before we got home, we met the Superintendent of Schools whose brother was a preacher. She said a conference was meeting in West Nebraska, so we got home and stayed overnight, and Irwin took the train to the conference.

### The Briggs in Harrison, Nebraska, 1923–1925

They gave him a church in Harrison, Nebraska. Our daughter Mary was born there on July 17, 1925. We were there [Harrison, Nebraska] two years and Irwin decided to go to New Jersey to seminary.

### The Briggs Family Travels to Drew Seminary in New Jersey

We packed everything on our Model T Ford. Mary was three weeks old. We stopped in Nebraska to see our folks first. After a short visit, we went on to Drew Seminary in New Jersey.

### The Briggs arrive at Drew University

Three weeks later we arrived in the middle of the night. Not knowing where to go, Irwin pitched the tent right in the middle of the campus. Next morning it caused no small stir. In fact, it was in all the papers, even over to London, England.

## Harrison, Nebraska



*Harrison Pharmacy and Post Office.*



*Summer and winter photos of the church and parsonage.*



*Laura and Mildred on swings.*



*Laura and Mildred with Aunt Mary, Myrtle's sister. Mary visited Myrtle in the summer of 1925, and was there when Mary Rosamond arrived on July 17.*



*School in Harrison, Nebraska.*

## Leaving Nebraska



*John Crabtree, Myrtle's father, is to the left of the Briggs' car.*

The Briggs Family visited Myrtle's parents John and Ida Crabtree in Long Pine, Nebraska, on the way to New Jersey.

That was the way Daddy fixed the car when we came East in 1925. Everything we owned was inside or hanging on the outside. The horns were a gift from the young people in the Harrison, Nebraska Church when he left.  
—Mildred Lufburrow, daughter. ❀



*John and Ida Crabtree's Long Pine home. In the photo: Ida Crabtree, Myrtle, Laura and Mildred sitting on the car, and Irwin Briggs in the car.*



*Laura and I are the two on the ends on the right. I don't know the other three; probably Nebraska children. I think we had rabbits at Harrison, Nebraska. We don't look very old there, so I assume it was taken before we came east.  
—Mildred Lufburrow, daughter*



*Laura and Mildred are on the horse. The others may be cousins.*

Laura and Mildred had over 36 dolls sent to them that Christmas. Some of them were packed up and sent to cousins.

Drew Seminary gave Irwin a church there to make his way in seminary: Vincentown one year, and then Sparta and Ogdensburg, New Jersey. While at Sparta, John Clinton Briggs, named for his two grandfathers, was born, October 31, 1927.

Irwin served other churches: Broadway, Hainesville, Layton and Walpack, and Barryville, Eldred, and Pond Eddy. ❀



*From the left: Orie and Eva Briggs, Myrtle holding baby Mary, and Irwin Briggs. Front row: Edwynna, Orie and Eva's daughter, and Mildred and Laura Briggs.*



## The Briggs Family Travels to Drew University

### The Briggs Arrive at Drew University

Mildred remembers they arrived at Drew University a day late; too late for the church that had been promised to Irwin to pastor. The family stayed with a little old lady they called Grandma Dinninger, until something else could be worked out.

### Irwin's Letter

As quoted by Ezra Tipple, President of Drew University:

*We decided that our hour had struck. We must either go now or give up our hope of a seminary education. The average minister could never save enough out of his meager salary to afford himself an education. He must somehow leap the gap and get it as he goes along. We felt that a little more preparation would multiply our effectiveness in the kingdom, and therefore we owed it to God, to the folks and to ourselves to get that equipment. We just pulled stakes and came. ❀*



*Irwin pitched the tent right in the middle of campus. Irwin, Myrtle holding six week old Mary. Laura and Mildred are in the matching coats.*



*Camping on the way to New Jersey.*



*Irwin titled this photo, "Original motels."*



*Laura and Mildred take a break from riding in the car.*



*Laura and Mildred.*



*Cooking on the way.*

## Eastward Ho!

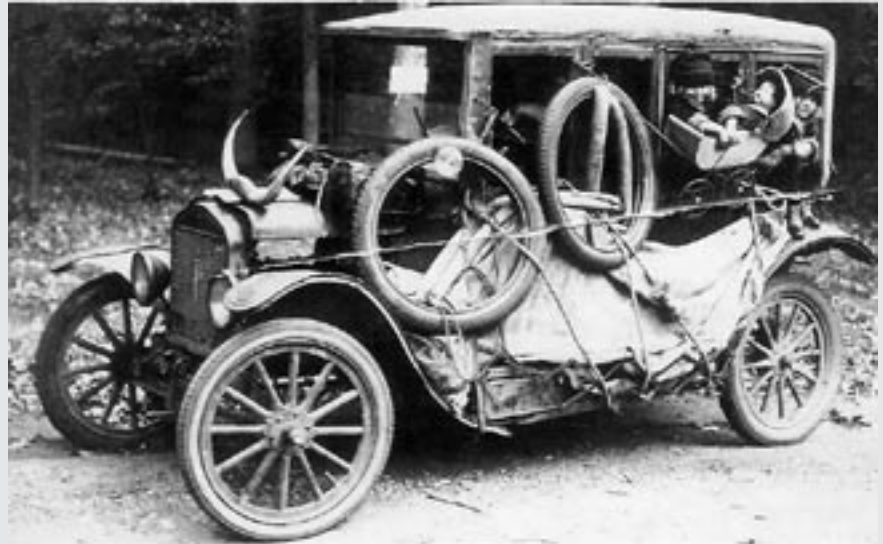
**A story pithed with the hardihood of some modern pilgrim, written by Marion Furness, and published in *The Christian Student*, November, 1925.**

At half past three o'clock on the morning of October 4, 1925, a 1922 Model-T Ford covered with the dust of many states rattled through the Bowne Memorial Gateway of Drew Theological Seminary and came to a labored halt.

### The Duffel Itemized

Besides the occupants of the car, who were the Rev. H. Irwin Briggs, his wife and three children, the Ford contained three extra tires, a wash tub, fifty-seven varieties of kitchen utensils, bedding, three suitcases, a score of bundles, a doll and doll carriage, and a pair of cow horns. Most important to them in their present situation was a tent donated by Chicago friends with whom they had sojourned. They pitched it in the dark and dropped off into a weary slumber from which they were wakened about eight o'clock by curious and solicitous students.

Twenty-three days before, the Briggses had started out from Harrison, Nebraska, with a rousing send off by the local Epworth League. The pair of cow horns was presented to them as a souvenir of the occasion. Eleven of the twenty-three days were spent in visiting friends and in repairing the Ford. The actual distance covered on the trip was 2,073 miles, or an average of 172 miles a day in actual running time. They passed through nine states, two Indian reservations, and crossed two mountain ranges. The undaunted Ford carried on nobly to the end of the trip. Mr. Briggs expects it to take him back



*Briggs vehicle complete with steer horns. Laura and Mildred are looking out the back windows.*

to Harrison at the end of his three years at Drew.

### Baby Gained a Pound

The baby of the party, Mary Rosamond, aged six weeks, gained one pound on the trip. All three of the children survived the ordeal and seemed none the worse for their experience. Mary Rosamond can truthfully relate in after years that one third of her earlier life was spent in a Ford.

### A Western Circuit

The Rev. Mr. Briggs' story is an interesting one. He graduated from Taylor University in 1923, and in that same year accepted a pastorate in Harrison. He was the only resident clergyman of any denomination in the county. His congregation, numbering ninety-eight people, represented a dozen different denominations. In addition, he preached in several schoolhouses near the village.

When he went to Harrison in 1923, the church paid him \$700 in cash and produce and the Board of Home Missions added \$300. Next year, despite the collapse of the cattle industry, and the failing of one of the town banks, the citizens added \$100 to his salary and paid it in cash.

In 1924, the local bank failed, and the church lost about \$1000. To prevent it from having to close its doors, Briggs gave his personal note for \$150. Incidentally, he is still paying interest on this note.

When he decided to go to Drew to continue his studies, he managed to raise \$1200 to provide for his successor. ❀

## The Young Briggs Family



*Irwin and Mrytle Briggs.*



*Laura holding baby Mary, and Mildred.*



*Baby Johnny in the tub.*



*Mildred and Laura all dressed up.*



*Mary Rosamond Briggs.*



*Mildred, John, Laura, and Mary Briggs.*



*Mary in the buggy.*



*Baby Mary is in the buggy. Laura and Mildred are on either side.*



*Mary, Laura holding baby John, and Mildred.*



## The Young Briggs Family



*John and Mary on the swing.*



*Laura and Mildred on the swingset Irwin made.*



*Mary and John holding cats.*



*Daddy cut out a photo of me with curls, glued it on to a photo of me with a bob hairstyle, and labeled it, "Before and After."—Mildred (Briggs) Lufburrow*

### **"Mildred, before and after."**

The back of the photo reads: When I was 5, I was very sick. My hair started coming out, so they took me to a barber to see if cutting would stop its coming out. He clipped first one side and then the other, and left me with what I considered a boy bob, which I hated because then they thought (when Mama put us in "play clothes") Oh you have one little girl (Laura) and one little BOY!!! (ME). At that time that was anathema to me. ❀

## Myrtle Briggs, Mother

Mama had been a teacher and liked to teach us as soon as we could be taught anything, I suppose. The story is told about the District Superintendent's visit. At breakfast he asked for a negg. I (three years old) am supposed to have corrected him(!!) and said, "It isn't a negg. It's an egg."

Early on I remember "spelling" B-a-n-a-n-a, and Mama would stop us when we got that far, because we didn't know how many n-a's to keep going with.

There were other words, too, and little rhymes like: "Do the best you can, however you can to as many as you can, as often as you can." Also: "A place for everything and everything in its place."

Mama liked fancy work and taught us girls to make our own clothes, and how to embroider and crochet.

She also started each one of us on the piano. Mama had a year of piano lesson sheets from her lessons at Taylor; and that is what she used to start all four of us.

Laura and I started on the old pump organ in the Broadway parsonage until we got a piano. I remember how wonderful it was to play a piece (Mama was teaching us simple hymns by that time) on the "new" piano. Daddy taught us instruments. We had quite a family orchestra.

—Mildred Lufburrow, daughter ❀



*Laura, Irwin, Myrtle, Mildred, John, and Mary Briggs.*



*The Briggs family visited Ida Crabtree when they were in Nebraska for Irwin's father's funeral. In the back is Irwin Briggs holding John, Ida Crabtree, Myrtle, LeRoy and Mary Crabtree. In front is Mildred, Laura, and Mary.*

## The Briggs Children



*Laura and Rosebud, John and the cat, Mildred and Dimples, Mary and Virginia.*



*Myrtle with her children: Mildred, Johnny, Mary, and Laura.*



*Mildred Louise Briggs.*



*The Broadway School Laura and Mildred went to in New Jersey.*

### Dimples & Rosebud

We (Laura and I—we were always together) were about 8 and 9 at Broadway, New Jersey. We had finished looking at all of our gifts that Christmas and I was trying not to be disappointed because it was the first Christmas with no new doll!

Mama had made some pretty new clothes for Laura's Annabelle and my Clarabelle and had put them in a nice toolbox for each of us. I was glad for the pretty new doll clothes, but that was not a new dolly! Then Daddy said, "Look under your chair." (We each had a chair that they had put our presents on by the tree.) There was a big box under our chairs labeled, "From Sandy Claws"—but it was in Daddy's handwriting I noticed.

What a change in my feelings when I opened it and saw Dimples! She had a pretty yellow dress and came already named by the makers. Laura's was named Rosebud. By that time the baby no longer needed the baby bed, so we put our dolls in the baby bed to keep smaller hands away from them and took real good care of them.

—Mildred (Briggs) Lufburrow ❀



## The Briggs Children Growing Up



*John Clinton Briggs.*



*Johnny holding a big fish.*



*Mary and her doll Virginia.*



*Mary holding her doll, Laura and Mildred hold cats, and Johnny looks at a book. Notice the mandolin and trumpet.*

## Hainesville, New Jersey



*Hainesville, January 10, 1932. Myrtle with her children who are getting over the chickenpox. From the left: Mary, Mildred, Laura, and Johnny.*



*Myrtle in front of the Hainesville home.*



*Hainesville parsonage: Mary is by the porch with her doll buggy and Johnny is by the pump.*



*The Briggs Family. In Back row: Laura, Myrtle, and Irwin. Front row: John, Mary, and Mildred.*

## Barryville and Eldred Churches



*Barryville, New York, Methodist Church Parsonage.*



*Mary Rosamond Briggs, 1938.*



*Methodist Church in Eldred, New York.*

### **The Move to Barryville**

When I was in third grade, we moved to Barryville, New York. My guess is it was about 1933.

Daddy had three churches from the beginning. Barryville and Eldred alternated; one in the morning and one in the evening. The next Sunday was just the opposite. Pond Eddy was always in the afternoon at 2:00. Through the winter we had prayer meetings, I believe at all three churches, though Pond Eddy stands out the most in my mind. We lived there for about 13 years. My folks took a sabbatical while I was in my last year of Nurse's training in 1945 or 1946.—*Mary (Briggs) Austin* ❀



## The Briggs Children Grow Up



*Laura and Mildred's graduation from the 8th grade.*



*Barryville, New York, Parsonage and Church.*



*Enlargement of Indy Clark Briggs, Myrtle, John, and Mary.*



*John Clinton Briggs.*



*The Briggs in 1940: Irwin, John with Pal, Indy (Irwin's mother), Mary (my mother) with Buff the cat, and Myrtle Briggs. Grandpa loved to take pictures and he took this one with a remote he rigged up.*



*John with sisters Laura and Mildred.*

## Summertime in Barryville, New York



*The Briggs family at the beach in 1943: Irwin, Myrtle; the Briggs Girls: Mildred, Laura, Mary; John and Mary.*

### Summers in Barryville, New York

The parsonage in Barryville overlooked the Delaware River. Summers were spent swimming, playing music, sewing, embroidering, tatting, or crocheting. A linen hanky cost 10 cents and thread cost 10 cents.

—Mildred (Briggs) Lufburrow ❀



*The Briggs family at a monument on the Minisink battlefield, a battle in the Revolutionary War.*



*Mildred, Laura, Johnny, and Mary.*



*Summertime on the front porch of the Barryville parsonage. Myrtle, John, Laura, and Mildred.*

## The Musical Briggs Family



*Mary and John in their band uniforms.*



*Laura with her violin, and Mildred with her trumpet.*



*South Fallsburgh Music Festival. Mary with friends Marion and Jean.*



*Mary at South Fallsburgh Music Festival.*



*The Briggs Band. Notice the dishpan fiddle that Irwin made with a broom handle, dishpan, cello bridge and one cello string.*



## The Briggs Family and their Pets



*Irwin, dog Pal, Myrtle, Laura, and Mildred.*



*Irwin, Johnny, Laura or Mildred, and Mary by the bunny cage.*



*Johnny with Flemish giant rabbit.*



*Mary (my mom), Myrtle, Johnny, dog Pal, and bunnies.*



*Myrtle feeding a bunny rabbit with a doll bottle.*



*Photo Caption: "What's it bird." I think Grandpa made the bird out of gourds.*

## The Briggs' Family Dog, Pal



*Pal, the well-loved Briggs family dog.*



*Mildred with dog Pal, and bunnies.*



*Pal sits at the head of the boat.*



*Pal walks the rail fence.*



*Pal and Johnny.*



*Pal in front of Stella and Goldie Leavenworth's home. My parents, Mary and Art Austin, rented this home when they were first married. Goldie was my dad's cousin.*



## The Delaware River

These photos were found in Mary Briggs Austin's grand collection of photos and family information.

The Delaware River flowed in front of the Briggs' home in Barryville, New York. A new bridge was built to replace the old one. That entailed dynamiting through rock.

Also included are photos showing major flooding in Barryville. They were captioned, *Barryville afloat*. ❀



*Dynamite to blast through the rock for the new bridge.*



*Dynamiting rock for the new bridge.*



*New bridge under construction.*



*Looking across the Delaware River, you can see the Barryville Methodist parsonage and church.*



*A view of the Shohola bridge and flooding.*



*John the barber's house in Barryville is surrounded by flood waters.*



*Photo caption: "We are all down on the bridge."*