



Archives and Special Collections Department,
American University of Beirut
Beirut, Lebanon
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American Press Collection, 1866 - 1964

A Finding Aid to the Collection at the University Libraries, AUB
Prepared by Iman Abdallah Abu Nader

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Descriptive Summary

Call No.: AA: 7.1

Library Catalog ID: [b14620728](#)

Record Creator: Ḥalabī, Rizq Allāh, 1910-1989.

Collection Title: American Press (a.k.a. American Mission Press) (المطبعة الاميركانية)

Collection Dates: 1866-1964

Physical Description: 1.3linear feet (4boxes)

Abstract: The American Press was founded by the American Mission to Malta in 1822. It was moved to Beirut in 1834, after many difficulties. The American Mission Press contributed immensely to the intellectual and printing boom witnessed by the region at the end of the 19th and the turn of the 20th century. *Al Matbaah al Amirikiyah* had its own movable letter block print design (English, and Arabic—known as “American Arabic”), and it published numerous Arabic authored and translated books. The Arabic wooden letter blocks, as well as some of the Press early documents, are currently housed in ASC, Jafet Memorial Library.

Language(s): Arabic& English

Administrative Information

Source: The collection was donated to Jafet Library by Samia Halabi, daughter of Rizkallah Halabi last manager of the American Press, through Jean Dayeh, in 2001.

Access Restrictions: The collection can be consulted within the premises of the Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut.

Photocopying Restriction: No photocopying restriction except for fragile material.

Preferred Citation: American Press Collection, 1866-1964, AUB, AA: 7.1, Box no.-, File no.-, American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

Scope and Content

The American Press collection consists of archival material compiled by the last manager of the printing press, Rizkallah Halabi, between 1954 and 1963. The collection includes the press’s historical information, minutes of meetings, reports, books related to religious issues such as Catholicism, science, and religion, and English letters blocks. It also features documents related to employees of the American Press, (work permits, financial and medical reports, and Press syndicate), and some of the correspondence of Rizkallah Halabi. The collection is essential and instrumental to researchers interested in the history of publishing in Lebanon, the role the American Press played in the intellectual and printing boom witnessed by the region at the end of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century as well as the Arab renaissance.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in six series:

- Series I:** Historical Information about the press establishment, transfer, and functions
- Series II:** Correspondence of Rizkallah Halabi, etc.
- Series III:** Minutes of Meetings and Reports (medical & financial)
- Series IV:** Books and Publications (1866-1963)
- Series V:** Documents related to Employees and the Syndicate
- Series VI:** English letters block& drawers with cases for letters

Historical Sketch

After the establishing the American Press (a.k.a. American Mission Press)¹ in Malta in 1822, missionaries moved the printer to Beirut (Zoqāq el-blāt) in 1834. It stood out among other printing presses in the region. The press published material in seven languages: Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Hebrew, Greek, Kurdish, and Spanish. At first, it was commissioned to publish books of theology required for missionary purposes; the American Press later published books, authored by the missionaries and locals, in different subjects for academic purposes. The American Press had agents in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Zanzibar, Syria, Iraq, Persia, India, Philippine, Australia, United States, and Brazil. In addition, the Press introduced printing Arabic letters with diacritical marks (*al-ḥarf al-mashkūl*)², referred to as the American font (*al-ḥarf al-amerīkāni*). Several prominent American missionaries managed the press operations among them were Eli Smith, Cornelius Van Dyck, William Thomson, and Henry Jessup. The missionaries recruited local men as printers, binders, type compositors, copyists, translators, authors, and correctors. Among the scholars and literary men associated with the American Press were Fāris al-Shidyāq, Nassif al-Yāzījī, Butrus al-Bustānī, Tānnūs al-Ḥaddād, Yūsuf al-Asīr al-Husaynī, Ibrahim Hourani, and Assad Khairallah. The Press published around 2960 books during its 142 years of service. Around the 1950s, the administration of the press was transferred to the National Evangelical Synod in Syria and Lebanon and its name was changed to the National Evangelical Press with Rizkallah Halabi, journalist and educator from Zahlé, as its manager. The Press was shut down in 1965.

Subject Headings

American Press.

American Mission Press (Syria).

American Mission Press (Syria) -- History -- 19th Century.

Arabic type.

Book industries and trade -- Lebanon.

Imprints -- Lebanon -- Beirut.

Printing -- Specimens.

Printing, Arabic -- Lebanon -- Beirut -- History -- 19th century.

Printing, Arabic -- Lebanon -- Beirut -- History -- 20th century.

Publishers and publishing -- Lebanon -- Beirut -- History -- 20th century.

Publishers and publishing -- Lebanon -- Beirut -- History -- 19th century.

Lebanon -- Imprints.

المطبعة الأميركية.
المطبعة الأميركية (سوريا).
المطبعة الأميركية (سوريا) -- تاريخ -- القرن التاسع عشر.
الحرف العربي.
الكتب، صناعة وتجارة -- لبنان.
المطبوعات -- لبنان -- بيروت.
الطباعة -- عينات.
الطباعة العربية -- لبنان -- بيروت -- تاريخ -- القرن التاسع عشر.
الطباعة العربية -- لبنان -- بيروت -- تاريخ -- القرن العشرون.
الناشرون والنشر -- لبنان -- بيروت -- تاريخ -- القرن التاسع عشر.
الناشرون والنشر -- لبنان -- بيروت -- تاريخ -- القرن العشرون.
لبنان -- المطبوعات.

¹In Arabic it is referred to as *Al-matab'a al-amerikaniya* (المطبعة الاميركانية)

²*Al-ḥarf al-mashkūl* (الحرف المشكول) refers to letters with vowels such as *addamma* (الضمة), *al-fatha* (الفتحة); etc.

Container List

Series I: Historical Information about the press establishment, transfer, and functions

Box1

File 1

Miscellaneous; Publicity History:

Copy of letter written to Edward Ford father of Dr. George Ford by W.W. Eddy, Sidon, March 1st, 1866.

The Board of foreign missions, New York. April 11, 1921.

Letter to the leaders of the foreign mission study class, April 18, 1921.

The American Press – One hundred years in Arab-Asia by Charles A. Dana, Manager, June 1, 1921.

The American Press, Beirut, Syria, June 1921.

Price list of the American Press Books, undated.

شذرات عامة من تاريخ المطبعة الأميركية في بيروت.

Series II: Correspondence of Rizkallah Halabi, etc.

Box1

File 2

F.E. Accad, February 28, 1963.

Letter from Rizkallah Halabi to Benjamin Weir, May 7, 1963.

Minutes of meeting for the closure of American Press, 1964.

تقرير أمانة سر السينودس الأنجليي، ١٩٥٨-١٩٥٩.

رسالة من رئيس مصلحة الصحافة والقضايا القانونية الى هنري كلكر ١٥ ايار، ١٩٦٢.

جريدة وميزانية المطبعة الأميركية، ١٩٦١.

Series III: Minutes of Meetings and Reports

Box1 (cont.)

File 3

Minutes of meeting for the closure of American Press, 1964.

Series IV: Books and Publications (1866-1963)

Box1(cont.)

File 4

Augustin and the Church books from American Press

File 5

“Syria at a Glance”

File 6

A version of “Roman Catholicism since Trent”

File 7

Religious handbooks

File 8

Book exhibition, 1963

File 9

Lists of the American Press publications

File10

Lists of the American Press titles at Jafet Library, 1954

Series V: Documents related to Employees and the Syndicate

Box2 (Work permits, medical and financial records)

- File 1 Work permits of press employees
- File 2 Report on the American Press employees
- File 3 American Press employee related formalities
- File 4 Medical reports of employees at the American Press; Financial records and Press Syndicate
- File 5 Financial records and receipts of the American Press, (15a & 15b) files
- File 6 Miscellaneous
- File 7 Syndicate of the Press Owners in Lebanon

Series VI: Wooden English letters blocks

- Box 3 English block letters of the American Press
- Box 4 Drawers divided into cases for alphabet letters.

Related Material at AUB

Archival Material

- Cornelius Van Allen Van Dyck: AUBites files: AA:6.1
- Butrus el Bustani: AUBites files: AA:6.1
- Missionaries AA: 7.5
- Office of University Publications 1970 AA:2.5.2.10.2
- AUB Press AA:2.7.2
- Personnel Department, 1924-2005:AA:2.5.0.3

Articles

- Womack, D. (2019). *Protestants, Gender and the Arab Renaissance in Late Ottoman Syria*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Retrieved May 2, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvggx3mk

• المعارف في سوريا، المقتطف، (١٨٨٣. آذار)، العدد ٨، ص. ٤٦٥

Books

Books about the American Press

- al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah (Bayrūt). (1884). *Bayān as‘ār al-kutub al-mawjūdah fī al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah fī Bayrūt / [al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīya]*. Bayrūt: [al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah]. [CA 015.5692:B619bA:1884:c.1](#)
- American Mission Press (Syria). (1885). *Specimens of Arabic founts, plain and fancy English founts, etc., etc., in use at the American Mission Press, Beirut, Syria*. Beirut: American Mission Press. [CA 686.2:S741s:c.1](#)

- American Mission Press (Syria). (1891). *Barnāmij al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah lil-Mursalīn al-Amīrkānīyīn fī Sūryah* = *Illustrated catalogue and price list of publications of the American Mission*. [Bayrūt]: [publisher not identified]. Retrieved April 30, 2020 from <http://tinyurl.gale.com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/tinyurl/CrMyB8>
- American Mission Press (Syria). (1923). *Centennial of the American Press of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Beirut, Syria, 1822-1922*. Beirut: American Press. [J 266.569:A51c](#)
- American Mission Press (Syria). (1934). *al-‘Īd al-mi‘awī li-naql al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrikānīyah á Bayrūt, 8 Ayyār sanat 1834-8 Ayyār sanat 1934: mi‘at sanah fī khidmat al-lughah al-‘Arabīyah*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrikānīyah. [CA 266.569:M42iA](#)
- Auji, H. (2013). *Between script and print: Exploring publications of the American Syria Mission and the nascent press in the Arab world, 1834–1860* (Order No. 3596991). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1449841527). Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/docview/1449841527?accountid=8555>
- Auji, H. (2016). *Printing Arab modernity: Book culture and the American Press in nineteenth-century Beirut*. Leiden: Brill. [J 070.5:A923p](#)
- *Catalogue of the American press*. (1947). Beirut, Lebanon: Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. [CA 016.956:P928c](#)
- Jessup, H. H. (1910). *Fifty-three years in Syria*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co. [CA 922.573:J581f:v.1](#); [CA 922.573:J581f:v.2](#)
- *Maṭba‘at Būlāq*. (2005). al-Iskandarīyah: Maktabat al-Iskandarīyah. [CA 015.6216:M425sA](#)
- Şābāt, K. (1958). *Tārīkh al-ṭibā‘ah fī al-Sharq al-‘Arabī*. Miṣr: Dār al-Ma‘ārif.
- Womack, D. F. (2019). *Protestants, Gender and the Arab renaissance in late Ottoman Syria*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. [J 289.95:W872p](#)
- شيخو، لويس. (١٩٩٥). *تاريخ فن الطباعة في المشرق*. بيروت: دار المشرق. [J 686.209:S538tA](#)
- دايه، جان. (١٩٩٦). *المعلم رزق الله حلبى*. قبة الياص: منشورات قبة الياص. [J 892.78:Ha457YdA](#)

Books by Different Authors Printed by the American Press

- Bustānī, A. A. (1927). *Al-Bustan: Wa-huwa mu‘jam lughawī*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. [CA 492.7:B981mA:c.1](#)
- Defoe, D., & Bustānī, B. B. (1904). *Kitāb al-tuḥfah al-bustānīyah fī al-asfār al-Kurūsīyah, aw, Riḥlat Rūbiṣṣun Krūzī*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. [CA 828:D314rA:1904:v.1-2](#)
- Ford, G. (1923). *Kitāb al-qawl al-ṣaḥīḥ fī sirat Yasū‘ al-Masīḥ*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. [J 232.9:F699qA:c.1](#)
- Ḥaddād, T. B., Wahbah, A. J., Hudson, E. H., & Furayḥah, S. K. (1932). *Majmū‘at alfāz wa-muṣṭalahāt ṭibbīyah bi-al-lughah al-‘Arabīyah al-‘ammīyah li-Sūriyā wa-Filasṭīn*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. [CA 610.3:M233mA:v.1-2:c.1](#)
- Ḥūrānī, I. (1914). *Kitāb daw‘ al-mashriq fī ‘ilm al-manṭiq*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. [J 160:H39dA:c.1](#)
- Jessup, H. H. (1871). *Kitāb zanābiq al-ḥaql, aw, al-Tuḥfah al-bahīyah li-awlād Sūriyah*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. [CA:F 242:J58kA:c.1](#)
- Khabbāz, H. (1911). *Kitāb al-adillah al-bahīyah fī ithbāt da‘wā al-naṣrānīyah*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah. [CA 239:K45aA:c.1](#)
- West, R., & Khulī, B. (1903). *Mustaḥdath fī al-ḥisāb*. Bayrūt: [al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīrkānīyah]. [CA 511:W51mA:v.1:c.1](#); [CA 511:W51mA:v.2:c.1](#)

Digital Resources

- [Syria-Lebanon Mission Records, RG 492, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Box 45 files 13-15](#)
- [Lindner, C. \(2013\). American Mission Press: An American Barn in Beirut](#)
- [Lindner, C. \(2016\). “Burj Bird” and the Beirut Mission Compound: Researching Women in the Protestant Church of Ottoman Syria](#)

– [نشأة الطباعة في بيروت](#)

Thesis

- Kafi, H. (1986). *The book industry in Lebanon: Publishing houses and reading habits*. [Pj:153:c.1](#)

Photographs

- Blatchford Collection
Vue de Beyrouth [American Mission Church], Beirut. Ph:1/197
Eglise Anglo-Américaine, Beyrouth [i.e. American Mission Church], Beirut. Dumas, Ph:1/198
- Beirut American Church, 1871-1900 [Ph:SPC-AUB:1871:1-5:31](#)
- AUB Librarian’s visit to American Press, 2013 (Digital photos)

Posters

- Print Cultures in the 19th-Century Islamic World.Ps:AUB:2017/02/21(01)

LibGuides

- [Al-Nahda \(Arabic Renaissance\) : النهضة العربية Nahda Press صحافة النهضة](#)
- [Boutros Al Boustani \[Butrus al-Bustani\] \(1819-1883\): a Lebanese Scholar](#)