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American University of Beirut
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Henrietta Butler Smith Collection, 1827-1995

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

Contact information:

asc@aub.edu.lb

Webpage:

www.aub.edu.lb/libraries/asc

Descriptive Summary

Call No: AA: 7.5

Library Catalog ID: [b22071908](#)

Record Creator: Henrietta "Hetty" Simpkins Butler Smith.

Collection Title: Henrietta Butler Smith Collection, 1827-1995.

Collection Dates: 1827-1995

Physical Description: 2 boxes (1 linear foot)

Language(s): English

Administrative Information

Source: The Collection was bought from a vendor in the States during the summer 2018.

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

Photocopying Restriction: No photocopying restriction except for fragile material.

Preferred Citation Henrietta Butler Smith Collection, 1827-1995: Box no., File no., American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

Scope and Content

Correspondence of the family of Mrs. Henrietta "Hetty" S. Butler Smith, wife of Missionary Reverend Eli Smith. The collection contains approximately 145 letters, including around 92 letters written by Ms. Smith to her two sons, Edward "Ned" Robinson Smith (artist), and Benjamin Eli Smith (editor of the Century Dictionary); 11 letters written by Benjamin Eli Smith to his mother when he was studying in Germany, in addition to letters from Sarah Smith to her mother Hetty Smith, and other letters, ephemera & photos. Dates of the documents range from 1827-1995.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in five series:

- Series I:** Correspondence
- Series II:** Ephemera
- Series III:** Photos
- Series IV:** Postcards
- Series V:** Handwritten and printed Publications

Biographical Sketch

Henrietta "Hetty" Simpkins Butler Smith (1815-1893)

Henrietta Simpkins Butler was born in 1815 in Northampton, MA. She was the daughter of Daniel Butler (1768-1833) and Elizabeth Simpkins (1774-1849). Her father, Daniel Butler, a native of Hartford, CT, moved to Northampton, MA, where he worked as a merchant. Daniel Butler was the son of Capt. Daniel Butler (1712-1766) and Sarah Bull

(1726-1804). Henrietta's mother, Elizabeth Simpkins was a native of Boston, MA and the daughter of John Simpkins (1740-1831) and Mehitable Torrey Kneeland (1738-1817) and the granddaughter of John Simpkins (1740-1831), a commissioned captain in the Massachusetts Militia in the Revolutionary War under Col. Henry Bromfield in 1776.

Together, Elizabeth Simpkins and her husband Daniel had at least seven children: Ann Butler (1797-1828); John Simpkins Butler, MD (1803-1890); Sarah Butler (1805-1806); Sarah Torrey Butler (1811-1862); Maria Butler (1814-1901); Hetty Simpkins Butler (1815-1893); and Elizabeth Wells Butler.

Hetty Butler married missionary Eli Smith on 7 Oct 1846 at Northampton, MA. She was also a missionary herself. Eli Smith was an American Protestant Missionary and scholar, born on 15 Sept 1801 at Northford, CT, into a family known for its piety. His father was a farmer, shoemaker, and deacon. Eli's uncle Samuel Whitney, who at the age of twenty-four had accompanied him to Yale, dropped out of Yale to become one of the pioneering missionaries to Hawaii in 1819. Eli went on to graduate from Yale in 1821 and from Andover Theological Seminary in 1826. He worked in Malta until 1829. Later, and in company with H. G. O. Dwight traveled through Armenia and Georgia to Persia. Dwight and Smith published their observations, *Missionary Researches in Armenia* in 1833 in two volumes. Eli Smith settled in Beirut in 1833. Along with Edward Robinson, he made two trips to the Holy Land in 1838 and 1852, acting as an interpreter for Robinson in his quest to identify and record biblical places in Palestine. He is known for bringing the first printing press with Arabic type to Syria (from Malta). He went on to pursue the task of translating the Bible into Arabic, a task he considered to be his lifetime achievement. Smith died before completing the translation, and the work was completed by Cornelius V. Van Dyck of the Syrian Mission. The translation was published between 1860 and 1865.

Hetty and Eli had five children, all born in what was then called Syria, (today's Beirut, Lebanon). After the death of Eli Smith, Hetty moved back to America with her children and lived at East Windsor, Hartford County, CT, where she and her family are mentioned in the 1860 and 1870 Census. Her daughter, Mary Elizabeth Smith, was educated at the Female Seminaries in Hartford and Ipswich, Massachusetts and later taught at the Female Seminary at Mt. Auburn, Cincinnati. Mary Elizabeth became a well-known lecturer and was listed in the Women's *Who's Who* of America by John William Leonard 1914-1915. Mary Elizabeth married Seneca Sheldon Marcy (1827-). Hetty also had a daughter, Sarah Butler Smith (1851-1905) who married Theodore L. Stiles (1848-) and a son Edward Robinson Smith (1854-1921). There are several letters in this collection by Sarah Butler Smith Stiles. Sarah married Stiles in 1872 at Amherst, MA and they moved to Tucson, AZ, where her husband Theodore, an attorney, opened a legal practice. The couple lived in Tucson for about nine years. Theodore soon became a judge but was indicted for embezzlement. His wife (Sarah) was granted a divorce. Sarah moved to Coronado Beach, CA, where Hetty visited her and wrote to her grandson Edward. Sarah Butler Smith Stiles married again William Derbyshire Curtis (1844-1917), of Lenox, MA who was a state legislator & public official. There was also an older son of Hetty & Eli Smith, Charles H. Smith who is found living with his mother and siblings in the 1860 Census, listed as a student. By the time, the 1880 Census, Hetty is found living in Amherst, MA, with her son Benjamin and Edward both attending Amherst University.

Hetty died in Lyons, MI, on 26 July 1893, and was buried at the family plot at Bridge Street Cemetery, at Northampton, MA.

Benjamin Eli Smith (1857-1913)

Benjamin Eli Smith, L.H.D., was born on 7 Feb 1857 in Beirut, the Ottoman Empire (now Lebanon). Smith graduated from Amherst College (A.B., 1877; A.M., 1881), earning the degree of L.H.D. in 1902. He studied at Gottingen and Leipzig, Germany and was an instructor of mathematics at Amherst in 1878-1880, and in psychology at Johns Hopkins University in 1881-1882. He was managing editor (1882-1894) of the first edition of the Century Dictionary and became editor-in-chief of the revised edition after the death of editor William Dwight Whitney in 1894. As the editor, he was also responsible for the Century Cyclopedia of Names (1894), the Century Atlas (1897), the two-volume Century Dictionary Supplement (1909), and the revised and enlarged Century Dictionary, Cyclopedia, and Atlas (twelve volumes, 1911). Additionally, he translated Schwegler's History of Philosophy and Cicero's De Amicitia, as well as edited selections from other works. Benjamin Eli Smith died on 18 March 1913. Benjamin married Cornelia "Cora" Shelton (1853 -) in 1883, daughter of Margaret Shelton. Together they had a daughter Miriam Gray Smith (1890-1978). In 1900 to 1910, Smith is found living with his wife Cora and their daughter Miriam at New Rochelle, NY. Miriam Gray Smith married physician/surgeon Thomas Hubbard Russell (1886 -) in 1915 and made their home at New Haven, Connecticut, where together they had three children: Margaret, Thomas, and John. Their daughter Margaret was a graduate of Vassar College and Yale Law School. She married Stanley Leavy. In an issue of the "Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society" offered in this collection, Margaret Leavy (1918-2007) published an article on Eli Smith as a student at Yale. The archives offered here appear to come down through the family to Miriam Gray Smith Russell.

Edward Robinson Smith (1854-1921)

Edward Robinson Smith was the older son of missionaries Eli Smith and his wife Hetty Smith. He was born in Beirut, Syria (later Lebanon) on Jan 3rd, 1854. He attended Phillips Academy, Andover, and the Institute of Technology, Worcester, as well as Amherst College. He studied sculpture with Dr. William Rimmer in Boston, also was instructor in Normal Art School, 1876-1878; studied sculpture and painting at Paris, Munich, and Florence in 1878-1880 and instructor in modeling and art anatomy at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1880-1881. He pursued the profession of sculpture and painting at Boston and New York City from 1881. He later was appointed reference librarian at Avery's Architectural Library at Columbia University in 1894 and as instructor in modeling in the Architectural Department at Columbia and at Teachers 'College, in 1900. He was associated with Hon. Russell Sturgis in the preparation of the Dictionary of Architecture, published by MacMillan in 1901. He lectured on history of arts at the University Extension Exchange starting in 1909. He contributed to the Century Dictionary, as well as the New International Encyclopedia, and the architectural journals of his day.

In addition to the above, Edward Robinson engaged in biblical studies He translated scriptural works from classical languages, as well as German translations. His Greek and

English Lexicon of the New Testament (1836; last revision, 1850) became a standard authority in the United States and was reprinted several times in Great Britain. His work in Biblical Geography and Biblical Archaeology conducted in the Ottoman-ruled Palestine region in the late 1830s and 1850s, earned him the epithets "Father of Biblical Geography" and "Founder of Modern Palestinology." Eli Smith traveled with Edward Robinson, making two trips to the Holy Land with him in 1838 and 1852, where he acted as Robinson's interpreter in his quest to identify and record biblical place names in Palestine.

Subject Headings

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Artist -- Correspondence.

Cairo (Egypt) -- Description and travel.

City and town life -- California.

Collectibles.

Encyclopedias and dictionaries.

English language -- Dictionaries.

Jessup, Henry Harris, 1832-1910.

Missionaries -- American -- Lebanon -- 1800-1900.

Missionaries -- Syria -- Correspondence.

Mothers -- Correspondence.

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

Smith, Benjamin Eli, 1857-1913.

Smith, Edward Robinson, 1854-1921.

Smith, Eli, -- 1801-1857.

Universities and colleges -- Germany.

Van Dyck, Cornelius Van Alen, 1818-1895.

Whitney, William Dwight, 1827-1894

Container List

Series I: Correspondence

Box 1

File 1: Two letters, one letter is written by Eli Smith to his brother B. Smith written from "Beyrouth" 26 March 1827; and one to his Brother & Sister from Malta, 24 July 1828.(These are later typed copies of letters of Eli Smith.)

File 2: Eleven letters by Benjamin Eli Smith, writing from Gottingen & Leipzig, Germany, to his mother, Mrs. Henrietta "Hetty" S. Butler Smith, 24 Oct 1880 to 22 May 1881. B.E. Smith went to Europe to study at university. He writes to his mother of the differences between German and American education, of his boarding house, his professors, and the weather.

File 3: Twenty letters from Mrs. Henrietta "Hetty" S. Butler Smith to her son Benjamin Robinson Smith, from 28 Apr 1883 to 21 May 1888. The collection includes several

undated letters (which seem to be from the same date given the similarities); with letters (being typed copies of the originals written by: James S. Dennis, Beyrouth, Syria; American linguist, philologist, and lexicographer W. D. Whitney, of New Haven, CT; American mineralogist and physicist E. S. Dana, New Haven, CT; American hymnologist Waldo S. Pratt, Hartford, CT ; American architect and art critic Russell Sturgis, NYC, NY; American entomologist L. O. Howard, Washington, DC; and American printer and scholarly author on typography Theo. L. DeVinne, NYC, NY; 13 Mar 1885 to 20 Oct 1891. The bulk of these typed copies deal with Smith's work as co-editor for the Century Dictionary of the Century Publishing Company. The correspondents seem to have had a hand in the Dictionary project.

File 4: Incoming letters to Edward Robinson Smith 1882-1891

- 4 a- Incoming letters to E. R. Smith 1882-1886
- 4 b- Incoming letters to E. R. Smith 1887-1888
- 4 c- Incoming letters to E. R. Smith 1890-1891
- 4 d- Incoming letters to E. R. Smith 1889 and undated

Ninety-one incoming letters, written to Edward "Ned" Robinson Smith at NYC, NY, dated from 18 Oct 1882 to 28 Sept 1891, includes several undated letters, but from the same period. Correspondents include: instructor Clifford R. Bateman, of Columbia College, NYC ; George A. Plimpton, of Ginn & Co, Publishers, NYC, NY ; his sister Sarah B. Stiles, of Coronado Beach, CA ;and 83 letters written by his mother, Mrs. Henrietta "Hetty" S. Butler Smith, written mostly from Amherst, MA, but also some from Tucson, AZ; Middletown, CT; Lakewood, NJ ; Brooklyn, NY; Haines Falls, NY ;Lyons, MI; San Diego, CA ;and Coronado Beach, CA different parts of North America, where she moved for a while staying with her daughter Sarah for some time. A number of the letters written to Edward "Ned" Robinson Smith by his mother show the relationship of the mother with her son, with her worrying about him, his life as an artist, the lack of income, his debts at home, the embarrassment of these debts, his health, the death of his good friend Clifford R. Bateman who was trying to help Smith attain employment in New York. Once she moves to California, she beckons him to move there, with descriptions of her life in California, Coronada Beach, the real estate development possibilities, the vineyards, and fruit groves.

File 5: Twenty-one miscellaneous letters, July 1883 to 24 May 1884. 6 letters written to "Cora" who would appear to be Cornelia Shelton, wife of Benjamin Eli Smith Russel- they were written by her mother-in-law Mrs. Henrietta "Hetty" S. Butler Smith; 2 letters are written to Mrs. Miriam Gray Smith Russell, 1 letter is by Sarah Stiles to her mother Mrs. Henrietta S. Butler Smith; with several miscellaneous letters; 8 copied letters are: 3 of the copies are excerpts of the same letter, recounting Clara Smith's visit to Eli Smith's grave in Lebanon; another 2 letters are copies of the full letter of Clara Smith's visit to see Eli Smith's grave, which included touring Africa; another letter is a copy of a letter sent by Mrs. Miriam Gray Smith Russell to Newton F. McKeon, of Amherst College Library, recounting the back story of her father Benjamin Eli Smith's role (an Amherst alumni) in the publication of the Century Dictionary; the final two copies of letters are the same letter written by Mary A. Smith to Mrs. Miriam Gray Smith Russell, informing her of her friend Clara Smith's visit to Eli Smith's grave, amongst other things.

Series II: Ephemera

Box 2

File 1: Twenty four miscellaneous handwritten & typed pieces (over 60 pp) includes: "Management of Grapes" by William Forsyth, "Rules for French Pronunciation," "French Pronunciation," "Rules for the Pronunciation of Latin," typed copy of "On the Translation of the Bible into Arabic" by Eli Smith, typed copy of "The Churchman," August 28, 1915, typed copy of "Date Furnished by Dr. C.V.A. Van Dyck with Reference to the Translation of the Scriptures into the Arabic Language under the Auspices of American Mission in Syria and the American Bible Society," amongst other miscellaneous mss & typed items; plus 10 used envelopes; 3 newspaper clippings (brittle); 1 invitation to Varnishing Day Reception, National Academy of Design (1912); 1 printed notice for meeting for the Friends of the Canal Railroad Extension (1852); 1 circular for A. Raymond & Co., NYC (not dated); 1 oversize copy of 1830 map and itinerary of a journey of the Peloponnesus and Greek Islands; 4 incomplete letters (6 mss pp) of Henrietta "Hetty" Simpkins Butler Smith (not dated); and one pocket watch cord/holder, made from human hair with mss note explaining how the item came to be and whose hair it belonged to; Autograph album of Miss Carrie Bird (the daughter of Isaac Bird); quotes and signatures by several family figures and Syriac scholars and authors.

Series III: Photos

Box 2

File 2

- Two oval photos in cases with hinge cover, portrait of a woman, note inside case states "Dear Aunt Sally, Papa's oldest sister, M.G. R."
- Portrait of a woman, black and white 8×11
- Portrait of a woman, black and white, 8×11
- Portrait of Hetty (third wife of Elie Smith), Black and white, 9 ×13
- Full length portrait of man, written on edge of photo is "Who is this man Uncle Ed," possibly a photo of Edward Robinson Smith; Hall photographer, black and white 10×6 cm.
- One portrait of Elie Smith, black and white 21×26 cm.
- One copy of lithograph by W.H Bartlett, engraved by J. B. Allen, entitled "Beirut and Mount Lebanon" black and White; Image 13×19.5 cm, on mount 20×25cm.
- One Copy of lithograph entitled "Protestant Female Seminary at Beirut; 11.5×18.5 cm, on mount 20.5×25.5 cm.
- Five negatives of photos of a house, presumably a former house of the Smith family; one is a negative of a portrait of Eli Smith.

Series IV: Postcards

Box 2

File 3:

- Four postcards white and black of the congregational church in Northford CONN, 14×9 cm.
- One colored postcard of the congregational church destroyed by fire, December 23, 1906, 14×9 cm.
- Eighteen black and white with small portrait on one side 13×7.5cm.; mostly addressed to Edward Robinson Smith, and written by his mother Henrietta "Hetty" Simpkins Butler Smith, dated 1883-1891, addressed to Smith at NYC, NY.

Series V: Handwritten and Printed publications

Box 2

- Handwritten cookbook with some Syrian recipes; by Elizabeth Butler; 1821
- Smith, Eli. *"An Address on the Missionary Character"*. Boston: Printed by Perkins & Marvin, 1840. 34 pp.
- Smith, Eli & Van Dyck, C. V.A. *"Brief Documentary History of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Arabic Language"*. Beirut, Syria: American Presbyterian Mission Press, [1900] "Printed for the Syrian Mission, April 1900." 33 pp.
- *"Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society"*. Vol. 41/ No. 2. Spring 1995. Edited by Lawrence Kenney. [New Haven:] Phoenix Press, 1995. (Includes article "The Making of a Missionary: Eli Smith at Yale, 1817-1821," by Margaret Leavy.

Related material

Archival Material

- [Missionaries](#)

Books

- Dennis, J. S. (2009). A sketch of the Syria mission. [Charleston, CA]: Bibliolife. [J 266.51:D411s](#)
- Doğan, M. A., Sharkey, H. J., & University of Utah Press. (2011). *American missionaries and the middle east: Foundational encounters*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press. [J 266.023:M627a:2005:c.1](#)
- Glass, D. (1998). *Malta, Beirut, Leipzig, and Beirut again: Eli Smith, the American Syria Mission and the spread of Arabic Typography in 19th century Lebanon*. Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. [J 686.2:G549m:c.1](#)
- Jessup, H. H. (1910). *Fifty-three years in Syria*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company. [CA 922.573:J581f:v.1:c.1](#)

- Jessup, H. H. (2002). *Fifty-three years in Syria*. Reading: Garnet. [J 922.573:J581fa:v.1:c.1](#)
- Khalaf, S. (2012). *Protestant missionaries in the Levant: Ungodly Puritans, 1820 - 60*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. [J 266.59:K451p:c.1](#)
- Whitney, W. D. (1889). *The Century dictionary: An encyclopedic lexicon of the English language: prepared under the superintendence of William Dwight Whitney*. New York: Century Co. [CA:R 413:W623c:v.1-6](#)
- Whitney, W. D. (1903). *The Century dictionary and cyclopedia: A work of universal reference in all departments of knowledge, with a new atlas of the world*. New York: Century co. [CA:R 423:C397c:v.1:c.1](#)
- Whitney, W. D. (1914). *The Century dictionary: an encyclopedic lexicon of the English language: prepared under the superintendence of William Dwight Whitney*. New York: Century Co. [CA:R 423:C397ce:c.1](#)
- *Researches of the Rev. E. Smith and Rev. H.G.O. Dwight in Armenia: Including a Journey through Asia Minor, and into Georgia and Persia, with a Visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormiah and Salmas: by Eli Smith*. (1833). Boston: Crocker and Brewster. [CA 915.66:S646r:v.1:c.1](#)
- Salibi, K., & Khoury, Y. K. (1995). *The missionary herald: Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819-1870*. Amman: Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies. [CA 266.023:M678m:v.1-5](#)
- The Karaite tradition of Arabic Bible translation: a linguistic and exegetical study of Karaite translations of the Pentateuch from the tenth and eleventh centuries C.E. / Meira Polliack. [J 222.104:P774k:c.1](#)

Online Book

- Emmons, Nathanael. [1794]. [A discourse, preached at the ordination of the Rev. Eli Smith, \[electronic resource\]: to the pastoral care of the church in Hollis, November 27th, MDCCXCIII](#). [Worcester]: Printed at Worcester, Massachusetts by Leonard Worcester

Related Photos

- [Portrait of Eli Smith, 1800s](#)
- [Syrian Protestant Mission, 1893](#)
- [Syrian Missionaries, 1907](#)
- [Missionaries, 1891](#)

Poster

- Linguistic and Cultural Aspects of Arabic Bible Translation [graphic]. [SC Ps:AUB:2008/12/12-13\(03\):15](#)