

# Guide to the Isaac Bird Papers

MS 82



compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

February 1983

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 82

**CREATOR:** Bird, Isaac, 1793-1876

**TITLE:** Isaac Bird papers

**DATES:** 1752-1873

**BULK DATES:** 1812-1873

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1.75 linear feet (4 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Missionary. Correspondence, diaries, sermons and miscellaneous papers of Isaac Bird and other members of the Bird family chiefly relating to missionary work in Palestine and other parts of the Near East (1822-1830). Bird's studies at Yale College (1812-1816) and at the Andover Theological Seminary are documented in correspondence and in notebooks of debates, sermons and lectures. His principal correspondents are Josiah Brewer, Pliny Fisk, William Goodell and Eli Smith. Family members whose letters are in the papers include his wife, Ann Parker, his son, James and his brother-in-law, James Kinball. Included also are documents and manuscripts in Arabic.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0082>

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To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

- b. box
- f. folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mrs. William Nesbit, Jr., 1947-1960 and by purchase from E.J. Van Lennep, 1932-1945.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

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### Preferred Citation

Isaac Bird Papers (MS 82). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

ISAAC BIRD, 1793-1876 (Y.1816)

ISAAC BIRD, son of Isaac and Rhoda (Selleck) Bird, was born in Salisbury, Conn., June 19, 1793.

He spent the year after graduation as a teacher in the academy in West Nottingham, Md., and in Nov., 1817, entered Andover Theol. Seminary. His three years there were passed in close companionship with his classmates, William Goodell and Daniel Temple, the associates of his future missionary life, and the three friends together offered themselves on graduating to the American Board for work among the heathen. Mr. Bird spent two years in the service of the Board in this country, and was ordained, with Mr. Temple, at North Bridgewater, Mass., Oct. 31, 1821. He was married, Nov. 18, 1822, to Ann, daughter of Capt. Wm. Parker, of Dunbarton, N. H., and they embarked the next month with Mr. and Mrs. Goodell for Malta. He passed the succeeding winter in Jerusalem, and, the next 13 years in or near Beirut, Syria. In the summer of 1836 he returned to the United States, on account of the long continued ill-health of his wife, and was for the next two years employed as an agent of the American Board. In Sept., 1839, he began to give instruction in the Theol. Seminary in Gilmanton, N. H., where he remained for six years, during the last part of the time serving as Professor of Sacred Literature. From 1846 to 1869 he conducted a family school in Hartford, Conn., and then removed to Great Barrington, where he died at the residence of his son, June 13, 1876, at the age of 83. His wife survives him. Of their ten children four died in infancy. One son graduated at Dartmouth College in 1844, and another at this College in 1848. The eldest son is a missionary on Mount Lebanon, and the eldest daughter is the wife of Rev. Dr. Van Lennep, so long a missionary in the Turkish Empire.

From *Yale College Obituary Record*, 1876.

JAMES BIRD, 1826-1901 (Y. 1848)

JAMES BIRD, son of Isaac and Ann (Parker) Bird, was born September 28, 1826, in Beyroot, Syria, where his parents were missionaries of the American Board. Owing to the failure of his mother's health he came to

America with his parents when he was nine years old, and entered college from Gilmanton, N. H., where his father was Professor in the Theological Seminary.

Immediately after graduation he joined his father in carrying on the Pavilion Family School for boys in Hartford, Conn. In 1869 he moved to Great Barrington, Mass., and continued the school under the name of Sedgwick Institute. Ten years later he removed to Auburndale, Mass., where he remained eight years, and during a portion of this time received a few young boys into his family and taught them. In 1887 he returned to Great Barrington, and resumed teaching in Sedgwick Institute with his nephew, Edward J. Van Lennep, who was then in charge. Later he was in the real estate and insurance business, and clerk of the district court of southern Berkshire. While on his way to the court house on the evening of May 17, 1901, he fell from a railroad trestle near his home and was killed. He was in his 75th year. He united with the Center Church in Hartford, Conn., in 1852.

He married, on October 10, 1855, Elise D., eldest daughter of Rev. William Goodell, D.D. (Dartm. 1817), missionary to Turkey. Mrs. Bird died in 1895, and an only daughter at the age of 15 years in 1876. On April 27, 1898, Mr. Bird married Cornelia Helen Pattison, of Great Barrington, who survives him, together with a sister in Great Barrington and a brother, Rev. William Bird (Dartm 1844), who has been for forty-eight years a missionary in Syria. A sister married Rev. Henry J. Van Lennep (Amherst 1837), formerly for thirty years a missionary in Turkey.

From *Yale College Obituary Record*, 1901.

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## Scope and Contents

The Isaac Bird Papers contain correspondence, journals, sermons, and miscellaneous papers of Isaac Bird and other Bird family members relating for the most part to missionary activity in Malta and the Levant in the first half of the nineteenth century. Bird, a Congregational minister, studied at Yale College and Andover Theological Seminary before being sent overseas by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1822. His correspondence, approximately 140 letters, spans his career. Most of his correspondents are Yale and Andover graduates who also served in the Near East, including Josiah Brewer (1796-1872), Pliny Fisk (1792-1825), William Goodell (1792-1867), and Eli Smith (1801-1857). Family members with whom Bird corresponded include his wife, Ann Parker, his son James, and his brother-in-law James Kimball.

Bird's studies at Yale and Andover are described in the early portion of the correspondence, and in the first few of his journals (folders 16-20). Also in the collection are a memorandum book of debates and sermons at Yale (1812-1816), and two notebooks of lectures Bird attended at Andover. The subject matter of all of these papers is largely the state of religion and religious studies in New England in general and at Yale, Andover, and Harvard in particular. Included in the correspondence are a number of letters exchanged between student groups and churches at those three institutions (folders 1-3).

Missionary activities in the Near East form the subject matter of the bulk of the correspondence and of Bird's journals. The papers offer a view of missionary life in Malta, Syria, Palestine, Istanbul, and Egypt, and describe the trials and tribulations of Bird and his fellow workers. Their relations, both good and bad, with local ethnic and religious groups are documented, as are the activities of their converts, disputes with the Board of Commissioners, the ravages of epidemics, and the effects of the Ottoman Empire's foreign affairs, wars, and internal politics. The correspondence includes such items as a French description of the battle of Navarino (folder 8) and a variety of documents in Arabic; further Arabic letters and documents may be found in folder 45. Bird's journals for the period 1822-1830 contain very detailed descriptions of his work, colleagues, and adventures. There are occasional items of correspondence bound in, and copies of letters and documents in Arabic and Italian.

Other papers of Isaac Bird preserved here are a commonplace book, copies of the Gospels in shorthand, a few receipts and certificates, a passport, a photograph, and a printed advertisement for the Theological Seminary in Gilmanton, New Hampshire. Bird's son James is represented by five letters (1845-1847) describing his life at Yale in the class of 1848 and by a photograph. Also in the collection are a photograph, sermons, and other writings by Jonathan Bird (1747-1813; Y.1768), sermons of Samuel Bird (d. 1784) and

James Diman (1707-1788), and, finally, a folder of notes compiled by E. J. Van Lennep about the Isaac Bird Papers and the people who created them.

These papers came to Yale largely through purchases from E. J. Van Lennep, 1932-1945, and from Mrs. William Nesbit, Jr., 1947, 1958, and 1960.

A partial index to the correspondence is provided at the end of this register.

## Collection Contents

### Inventory, 1752-(1812-1873), undated

1.75 linear feet (4 boxes)

Correspondence		
b. 1, f. 1-15	1813-1816, 1818-1838, 1841-1847, 1850-1851, undated A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	1813-1816, 1818-1838, 1841-1847, 1850-1851, undated
Journals		
b. 1, f. 16-25	1813-1818 Apr, 1819 September-October, 1820 October-December, 1822 December-1823	1813-1818 Apr, 1819 September-October, 1820 October-December, 1822 December-1823
b. 2, f. 23-25	1824 January-1830 Oct, 1827-1860	1824 January-1830 Oct, 1827-1860
b. 2, f. 26	Commonplace book	undated
b. 3, f. 27	Memorandum book	1812-1816
Andover notebooks		
b. 3, f. 28	"Drs. Woods and Porter" English	1817-1820
b. 3, f. 29	"Stuart's Lectures" English	1818-1820
Shorthand books		
b. 3, f. 30	Gospels	1853-1854
b. 3, f. 31	Gospel of St. Matthew	1855
b. 3, f. 32-33	Sermons and addresses	1816-1843, undated
b. 4, f. 34	Lord's Prayer in Arabic written by I. Bird	1873 May 12
b. 4, f. 35	Receipts	1814, 1816, 1825
b. 4, f. 36	<a href="#">Certificates</a>	1816-1822
b. 4, f. 37	Passport	1823 December 29
b. 4, f. 37	<a href="#">Photograph</a>	[c. 1870]

b. 4, f. 38	Miscellaneous	1861, undated
b. 4, f. 39	Bird, James (1826-1901; Y. 1848): photograph	[c. 1866]
	Bird, Jonathan (1747-1813; Y. 1768)	
b. 4, f. 40	"Credenda" English	[c. 1770]
b. 4, f. 40	Letter to niece Fanny Butler (published 1813)	1811 February 1
b. 4, f. 40	Photograph	undated
b. 4, f. 41	Sermons	1792-1805
b. 4, f. 41	"Eighteen Sermons on Various Subjects" English	1797
b. 4, f. 42	Bird, Samuel (d. 1784): sermons	undated
b. 4, f. 43	Diman, James (1707-1788): sermon	1753
b. 4, f. 44	"Confession of Faith as used by Docr Stiles in Yale College" English	1780 December 30
b. 4, f. 45	Maronite Bishop of Beirut and Maronite Patriarch: copies of letters to Assad Ibu Shidiak in Arabic	1825 October
b. 4, f. 45	Other letters and documents in Arabic	undated
b. 4, f. 46	Notes about the Isaac Bird Papers compiled by E. J. Van Lennep	undated



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## Partial Alphabetical Index to Correspondence

Miscellaneous letters to or from Isaac Bird, from Dec. 13, 1813 to Feb. 23, 1833 [11 items]  
Isaac Bird, ALS to Rev. Pliny Fisk, 1820 Apr 27, Salem 3 pp. folio  
Autograph draft of letter from I. Bird to E. Lord. Jerusalem [Palestine], Mar. 23, 1824.  
Isaac Bird, ALS, with address, to Rev. Josiah Brewer 1828 Feb 12, Beyroot, 3 pp.  
Isaac Bird, ALS to Mrs. A.P. Bird, 1829 Jul 1, Malta, Ruins of Carthage 3 p. In Misc. mss. by Jonathan and Isaac Bird and Samuel Bird.  
Isaac Bird, to J.W. Farren, 1834 Apr 27, Beyroot, 1p.  
Bird, James, ALS to Isaac Bird from his second son, James Bird (ya1e 1848) New Haven 1845 Dec. 1  
Bird, Jonathan, 1746/7-1813. Yale, 1768, ALS to Mrs. Fanny Butler from her uncle J. Bird, 1811 Feb 1. 24 pp. "The substance of this was published in the Panoplist at Boston vol.8, new series, the Feb. no. for 1813. He died the same year, Oct.22 at Rev. Bassetts, in Hebron."  
Brewer, Josiah, ALS to Isaac Bird, 1826 Nov 25 4 pp./ ALS to Isaac Bird, 1831 Aug 2, Smyrna 3 pp.  
Brewer, Josiah, 1796-1872, ALS to Messrs. Bird, Goodell, and Smith 1828 Nov 21, Boston  
Josiah Brewer, ALS to Mrs. Isaac Bird-1830 Apr 10 Smyrna, 31/2 pp.  
A.L. Brown, letter to Isaac Bird, Jun. 1813 Apr 7, Middlebury Coll.  
Chasseaud, G., A receipt for one dollar given to the Rev. Isaac Bird, 1825 Dec 21, Beyroot, 1/2p.  
ALS from C.D. Coxe to Isaac Bird, Feb. 6. 1830.  
ALS from Cap. John Downs to Isaac Bird, William. Goodell, and Eli Smith, U.S.S. "Java", Smyrna [Turkey], June 10. 1828  
Durand, M. A., ALS to Isaac Bird, 1824 Feb 2, N.M. 2pp.  
Dutton, Matthew R., 1753-1825, Yale 1808, ALS to Isaac Bird, 1823 Sep 29, New Haven. 3 1/2 PP.  
Fisk, Pliny, ALS to Isaac Bird and William Goodell 1823 Nov 22, Jerusalem. 1 1/2pp.  
Fitch Eleazar T. 1791-1871. Yale 1810, ALS to Isaac Bird, 1842 May 12, New Haven. [Contains a copy of the 18th chapter of Heinichen's edition of the History of Eusebius, with notes on its meaning.] 2 1/2pp.  
Fowler, William Chauncey, 1793-1881, 5 ALS to Isaac Bird, 1818 Jul 6; Nov; N.H. 1819 Feb 4; Sep; 1820 Jan; 1, 1, 3, 2, 3, PP ALS to Isaac Bird, 1820 Jan 8 1 p. folio  
Gliddon, John/ ALS to Isaac Bird, 1827 Jul 18, Alexandria 4pp.  
William Goodell, ALS to the Rev & Mrs. Isaac Bird, 1824 Jun 19 Sidon, 1 1/4 PP.  
Goodell, William, Two letters in Arabic addressed to Eli Smith and William Goodell, 1829 Beyroot, 2, 1 pp  
Gridley, Frederick, 1796-1871. Yale 1816, ALS to Isaac Bird, 1819 Oct 16 Watertown 3 PP.  
Kent, Aratus, 1794-1869. Yale, 1816, ALS to Isaac Bird, 1818. Apr. 25, N.Y. 3 PP.  
James Kimball, ALS to Isaac Bird, 1828 Sep 15 Townshend, 4pp.  
Jonas King, ALS to Isaac Bird, 1830 Dec 30, Yenos, 3 1/2 pp.  
Morse, Richard Cary. 1795-1868  
ALS to the Rev. Isaac Bird, 1823 Jun 2, N.Y.  
ALS John Nicolayson to Isaac Bird, 1834 Feb 19, Jerusalem, 2 1/2 pp.  
ALS from Ogden, David L. (Y 1814) to Rev. Isaac Bird. 1822 Mar 5  
ALS from Charles A. Parsons to E.J. Van Lennep, Feb. 12. 1899  
Asaad Ibn Shidiak, bishop of Beyroot, 2 ALS probably to Isaac Bird, 1825 Oct. (Written in Arabic 1/2pp.  
Letters to Mr. Bird from Eli Smith, n.d.; J.M./ Winshall, 1813 Oct 4; M.T. Cohan, 1832 Mar 2., Dr. Rufus Anderson, 1882 Jun 22. Communication in Arabic  
Smith, Eli. 1801-1857. Yale 1821, 3 ALS to Isaac Bird, 1826 Dec,12, Alexandria; 1827 Nov 13, Mansourie First letter is addressed to Messrs. Bird & Goodell  
Smith, Eli, 1801-1857. Yale 1821, [Two letters in Arabic addressed to Eli Smith and William Goodell, 1829 Beyroot, 2, 1 pp.  
ALS to Isaac Bird from Eli Smith, 1835 Oct 13, Beyroot (p.s. added Nov.30) 4 pp.  
ALS with address, to Bird from Eli Smith, 1850 March 1, Beirut, 3pp.  
ALS from Rev. Eli Smith to Isaac Bird, Jul 30, 1851;  
Temple, D., ALS to Isaac Bird and William Goodell 1826 Nov 2, Malta 2 pp.  
Van Lennep, J., ALS to Isaac Bird, Smyrna, 1830 Jul 26 2 pp. Folded in this letter is not by E.J. Van Lennep

ALS William Williams, 1797-1860 to Isaac Bird, 1819 Oct 28, springfield, 1p.  
Williams, William, 1797-1860 (Yale 1816), ALS to Isaac Bird, 1819 Nov 22, Northampton 3½ p. Filed  
under Isaac Bird. Papers

LETTERS TO Isaac Bird from:

Alumni Delegates of Yale College to General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, 1833

Asaad Ibn Shidiak

Bird, James

Brewer, Josiah

Clark, Justin W.

Chapin, G.H.

Chasseaude, G.

Durand, M.A.

Dutton, Matthew R.

Fisk, Pliny

Fitch, Eleazar T.

Fowler, William Chauncey

Gliddon, John

Goodell, William

Gridley, Frederick

Kent, Aratus

Kimball, James

King, Jonas

Nicholayson, John

Phi Beta Kappa

Emith, Eli

Temple, D.

Van Lennep, J.

Williams, William

Winchell, Abraham

Woods, A.

Yale College, Society of inquiry respecting missions.

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## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Clergy  
Literature -- History and criticism  
Manuscripts, Arabic  
Missionaries  
Missions -- Middle East

### Geographic Names

Jerusalem -- Description and travel  
Middle East  
Palestine -- Description and travel

### Genres / Formats

Diaries  
Sermons

### Names

Bird, Isaac, 1793-1876  
Bird, James, 1825-1901  
Bird, Jonathan, 1747-1813  
Bird, Samuel, 1724-1784

### Corporate Bodies

Andover Theological Seminary  
Yale College (1718-1887). Class of 1816  
Yale University -- Students