

# Guide to the Eli Smith Family Papers

RG 124



Compiled by Martha Lund Smalley

1997, 2003, 2015

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<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

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## Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	3
Requesting Instructions .....	3
Administrative Information .....	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition .....	3
Conditions Governing Access .....	3
Preferred Citation .....	4
Biographical / Historical .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	4
Arrangement .....	5
Collection Contents .....	6
Series I: Correspondence .....	6
ES to brother, Benjamin Smith .....	6
ES from brother, Benjamin Smith .....	6
ES to other family members .....	6
ES to others .....	6
ES from others .....	6
Mehitable (Hetty) Butler Smith to family members in the U.S. ....	7
MBS to/from others .....	7
Charles H. Smith .....	7
Other correspondence .....	7
Series II: Writings .....	9
Writings of Eli Smith .....	9
Writings of Mehitable Butler Smith .....	9
Writings of Charles H. Smith .....	9
Writings of others .....	9
Series III: Personal Items and Memorabilia .....	10
Series IV: Photographs/Drawings, n.d. ....	11
Series V: Research Materials of Margaret Russell Leavy .....	12
Family correspondence .....	12
Eli Smith to others .....	12
Correspondence of others .....	13
Writings of Eli Smith .....	13
Collected material / notes / fragments .....	13
Writings by Margaret Leavy Russell .....	13
Selected Search Terms .....	14

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Yale Divinity Library  
409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301  
divinity.library@yale.edu  
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 124

**CREATOR:** Smith, Eli, 1801-1857

**TITLE:** Eli Smith Family Papers

**DATES:** 1821-1964

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 4 linear feet (9 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Letters, journals, and writings in this record group document Eli Smith's missionary work in the Middle East. Letters of his third wife, Mehitabel Simpkins Butler Smith, provide valuable documentation of her ten years in the Middle East. Research materials gathered by Margaret Leavy complement the original holdings. Eli Smith, an early missionary to the Middle East serving under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, is best known for his translation of the Bible into Arabic.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.124>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.124>.

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 the descendants of Eli Smith, including Margaret Russell Leavy.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Preferred Citation

Eli Smith Family Papers (RG 124), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Date	Event
1801	○ Born in Northford, CT
1821	○ Graduated from Yale College
1826	○ Ordained into the ministry ○ Graduated from Andover Theological Seminary ○ Appointed by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions as associate editor of its publishing house in Malta
1829, 1830	○ Travels through Greece, Asia Minor, Armenia, Georgia into Persia led to publication of a book entitled <i>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 Christianity of Oormiah and Salmas.</i>
1833	○ Married Sarah Lanman Huntington (died 1836)
1838	○ Traveled with Edward Robinson through Sinai, Palestine and southern Syria
1841	○ Married Maria Ward Chapin (died 1842); one son born, Charles H. Smith, who later became Larned Professor of History of Yale University
1846	○ Married Mehitable Simpkins Butler; children: two daughters and three sons
1844-1857	○ Smith worked on the translation of the Bible into Arabic under the auspices of the American Bible Society and the American Mission in Syria
1857	○ Died in Beirut

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## Scope and Contents

[I. Correspondence](#)

[II. Writings](#)

[III. Personal Items and Memorabilia](#)

[IV. Photographs and Drawings](#)

[V. Research Materials of Margaret Russell Leavy](#)

Eli Smith was a prominent early missionary to the Middle East. The letters, journals, and writings in this collection document his important role in the designing of Arabic fonts and translation of the Scriptures into Arabic, his explorations of the Middle East, and his life and work in general. This collection is also valuable for its documentation of the life of Mehitable Butler Smith, Eli's third wife, who spent ten years in the Middle East. Her letters to her family in America provide regular, detailed descriptions of her daily life as missionary wife and mother during this early era.

Series V, Research Materials of Margaret Russell Leavy, contains notes and photocopies gathered by Mrs. Leavy in the process of her research on Eli Smith and his family. Included are some material copied or transcribed from the notable collection of Eli Smith Papers held at Harvard's Houghton Library. The repositories from which the photocopies and transcripts were obtained are noted on the materials donated by Mrs. Leavy. Some transcripts prepared by Mrs. Leavy of original letters held in the Yale Divinity Library have been interfiled with the originals in Series I. Series V concludes with drafts of the major work on Smith that Margaret Leavy was preparing. Two works by Margaret Leavy related to Eli Smith are in

the Library's cataloged collection: *Eli Smith and the Arabic Bible*, Yale Divinity School Library Occasional Publication No. 4, (1993), and "Looking for the Armenians: Eli Smith's Missionary Adventures 1830-1831" published in *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 50 (Dec., 1992).

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## **Arrangement**

- I. Correspondence
- II. Writings
- III. Personal Items and Memorabilia
- IV. Photographs and Drawings
- V. Research Materials of Margaret Russell Leavy

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence

ES to brother, Benjamin Smith		
b. 1, f. 1	from Yale College, Union Academy (Georgia), Andover Seminary	1821-1825
b. 1, f. 2	from Malta, Beirut, Erzurum	1826-1830
b. 1, f. 3	from Northford (Connecticut), Boston, Mt. Lebanon, Beirut, Smyrna	1833-1837
b. 1, f. 4	from Charlestown (Massachusetts), Beirut	1840-1844
b. 1, f. 5	from Beirut, Mt. Lebanon	1851
ES from brother, Benjamin Smith		
b. 9, f. 1	from Northford, CT	1827
ES to other family members		
b. 1, f. 6	to parents, parents-in-law, from Bennington, Beirut, Mt. Lebanon	1833, 1842-1849
b. 1, f. 7	to L.I. Hoadly (brother-in-law), from Rochester	1841
b. 1, f. 7	to William Thompson (brother-in-law), from Mt. Lebanon	1849
b. 1, f. 8	to Mrs. William Thompson (sister-in-law), from Beirut	1851
b. 1, f. 9	to Mehitable (Hetty) Butler (prior to marriage)	1846
b. 1, f. 10, 11	to Mehitable (Hetty) Butler Smith (wife), incl. from Cyprus, Constantinople, Trezibond	1848 (?), 1856, n.d.
b. 1, f. 12	to/from children (Charles, Mary, Sarah)	1856, n.d.
ES to others		
b. 1, f. 13	incl. to Henry White (excerpt) and to Rev. Ward in India (transcription)	1831-1856
b. 1, f. 14	"Dying Message of Rev. E. Smith to Dr. DeForest"	1857
ES from others		
b. 9, f. 2	Jonah Brewer, from Constantinople, Smyrna, Malta	1827-1828
b. 9, f. 3	Gio. Caravella	1828
b. 9, f. 3	R. K. Finch, from Gibraltar	1827
b. 9, f. 3	William C. Fowler, from Middlebury	1828
b. 9, f. 4	D.L. Goodwin, from Wilkinsonville	1828
b. 9, f. 4	Homan Hallock, from Malta	1827
b. 9, f. 4	Harris & Co., from Alexandria	1828

## ES from others (continued)

b. 9, f. 4	Assaad Jacob (Asaad El Khaiat), from Beirut	1828
b. 9, f. 5	D. Macpherson, from Alexandria	1828
b. 9, f. 5	J. Maltby, from Sutton, MA and "Missionary Rooms"	1827, 1828
b. 9, f. 6	T. Muller, from Cairo, Alexandria	1828
Mehitable (Hetty) Butler Smith to family members in the U.S.		
b. 1, f. 15	from Green Bay, Wisconsin, Northampton (?) (prior to marriage)	(1846?)
b. 1, f. 16	incl. account of voyage to Beirut	1846 Nov-1847 Feb
b. 1, f. 17	from Beirut, Bhamdoun (Mt. Lebanon)	1847 Mar-Sep
b. 1, f. 18	from Beirut, Bhamdoun, Abieh	1848
b. 1, f. 19	from Beirut, Bhamdoun, Jaffa	1849
b. 1, f. 20	from Beirut	1850
b. 1, f. 21	from Beirut, Bhamdoun	1851
b. 1, f. 22	from Beirut, Bhamdoun	1852
b. 1, f. 23	from Beirut	1854-1856
b. 1, f. 24	from Beirut re. death of husband	1857
b. 1, f. 25	from Beirut	n.d.
MBS to/from others		
b. 2, f. 1	to ES	1856
b. 2, f. 2	from Charles	1857, 1858
b. 2, f. 3	to Charles	1862-1865, n.d.
b. 2, f. 4	incl. from Azariah Smith, William Benton, Edward Robinson, President T.D. Woolsey of Yale	1848-1865, n.d.
Charles H. Smith		
b. 2, f. 5	incl. to/from cousin, uncles, sister	1852-1867
b. 2, f. 6	incl. from James Ford Rhodes, T.T. Munger	1890-1930, n.d.
Other correspondence		
b. 2, f. 7	C.C. Aratoon to Jacob Wortabet (?) (translation from Armenian)	1831
b. 2, f. 7	to "Brethren of the Syrian Mission" from Rufus Anderson	1856
b. 2, f. 7	to Dr. Stearns from Henry Harris Jessup	1856
b. 2, f. 7	to Dr. Thompson from classmate of ES re. conversion of ES in 1820	1858

## Other correspondence (continued)

b. 2, f. 7	to Benjamin Smith from James S. Dennis, Librarian of the Syria Mission, incl. info. re. translation work of Eli Smith	1885
b. 2, f. 7	W.R. Dwight to Miss Butler	1854



**Series II: Writings**

Writings of Eli Smith		
b. 2, f. 8	Journals: #1, 2, 3	c. 1829-1830
b. 2, f. 9	Journals: #4, 5, 6	c. 1829-1830
b. 2, f. 10	Journals	1848, n.d.
b. 2, f. 11	Notebooks: one of quotations; one recording correspondence of ES	c. 1830, 1848
b. 2, f. 12	printed address: "Trials of Missionaries"	1832
b. 2, f. 12	printed address: "The Missionary Character"	1840
b. 2, f. 13	Reports on the translation of the Scriptures into Arabic	1844, 1854
b. 2, f. 14	Translation by ES of "A Treatise on Arabic Music", chiefly from a work by Mikhail Meshakah of Damascus (offprint from <i>Journal of American Oriental Society</i> and holograph ms.)	n.d.
b. 9, f. 7	<i>Researches of the Rev. E. Smith and Rev. H.G.O. Dwight in Armenia</i> by Eli Smith: 2 volumes, with annotations and enclosures	1833
Writings of Mehitable Butler Smith		
b. 2, f. 15	Journal - brief accounts of journeys	1846-1850
b. 2, f. 15	Two accounts of her years in Syria	after 1857
b. 2, f. 15	Ms. article submitted to <i>The Congregationalist</i> re. early women's mission work; "Ancient History of Armenia"	n.d.
b. 2, f. 15a	"In Memoriam of my Husband"; "Protestant Movement in Hasbelga, Arizona"	n.d.
Writings of Charles H. Smith		
b. 2, f. 16	Journal of trip to Constantinople	1856
b. 2, f. 16	"Concerning Eli Smith - A Brief History of His Life and Work"	n.d.
Writings of others		
b. 3, f. 1	Unidentified ms. article submitted to the "Scientific Journal"	1825
b. 3, f. 2	Newspaper account of address by ES at meeting of Foreign Missionary Society in New York ( <i>Morning Herald</i> , New York)	1840
b. 3, f. 3	"Monody on the Death of Dr. Eli Smith" by Naseef el Gazjy	1857
b. 3, f. 4	"Publication Work of the American Press, Beirut" by F.E. Hoskins	n.d.
b. 3, f. 5	"Data Furnished by Dr. C.V.A. Van Dyck with Reference to the Translation of the Scriptures into the Arabic Language under the Auspices of the American Mission in Syria and the American Bible Society"	1885
b. 3, f. 6	"Brief Documentary History of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Arabic Language by Rev. Eli Smith, D.D. and Rev. C.V.A. Van Dyck, D.D."	1900

**Series III: Personal Items and Memorabilia**

b. 3, f. 7	Notes, excerpts collected by family members re. life and work of Eli Smith/List of writings by ES	
b. 3, f. 8	Eli Smith's last words to his son, Charles	1857
b. 3, f. 8	Lock of hair	1857
b. 3, f. 8	Bill for board at Seminary	1825
b. 3, f. 9	Miscellaneous memorabilia relating to Hetty Smith	1840s-1893
b. 3, f. 10	Miscellaneous memorabilia relating to Charles H. Smith	1866-1909
b. 4, f. 1	2 volume family Bible, including genealogical material re. Smith family	
b. 5, f. 1	Arabic Bible inscribed "To the honored memory of Eli Smith from his unworthy successor in the work, C.V.A. Van Dyck"	1867
b. 5, f. 2	Arabic language material: "The Sweet Story of Jesus" by Mrs. J.D. Date inscribed by S.M. Zwemer	(1912)
b. 5, f. 3	Miscellaneous Arabic language material	
b. 8	Robe and hat worn by Eli Smith while on horseback trips to Syria	

**Series IV: Photographs/Drawings, n.d.**

b. 5, f. 4	Portraits of Eli Smith	n.d.
b. 5, f. 5	Portraits of Sarah Huntington Smith and Maria Chain Smith	n.d.
b. 5, f. 6	Illustration of the Theological Institute at East Windsor	n.d.
b. 5, f. 7	Miscellaneous, incl. The Protestant Female Seminary at Beirut	n.d.

## Series V: Research Materials of Margaret Russell Leavy

Family correspondence		
b. 6, f. 1	Eli to sister Hannah	1827 Jun 23
b. 6, f. 2	Eli to Sarah Huntington Smith's father	1842 Jun, Nov
b. 6, f. 3	Sarah to Lydia Sigourne and Rufus Anderson	1830 Dec - 1831 Sep
b. 6, f. 4	Mehitable (Hetty) to sons Ned and Ben	1883 Jun
Eli Smith to others		
b. 6, f. 5	To Rufus Anderson re. ordination	1826 Apr
b. 6, f. 6	To Rufus Anderson from Malta and Beirut	1827 Mar, Jun, 1828 Aug
b. 6, f. 7	To Rufus Anderson	1828 Sep, 1829 Dec
b. 6, f. 8	To Rufus Anderson	1830 Jan, 1831 Mar
b. 6, f. 9	To Rufus Anderson	1831 Sep
b. 6, f. 10	To Isaac Bird from Beirut	1826 Dec, 1827 Sep, Nov
b. 6, f. 11	To Isaac Bird	1850 Mar, Nov, 1851 Jun
b. 6, f. 12	To Chasseaud	1842
b. 6, f. 13	To Jeremiah Evarts	1827 Jan, Mar, 1828 Mar, Jun
b. 6, f. 14	To Jeremiah Evarts	1828 Oct, Dec, 1829 Jan
b. 6, f. 15	To Jeremiah Evarts	1830 May
b. 6, f. 16	ES and H.G.O. Dwight to Evarts	1830 Jun
b. 6, f. 17	ES and H.G.O. Dwight to Evarts	1831 Jan
b. 6, f. 18	ES and H.G.O. Dwight to Evarts	1831 Jan, Mar, Nov
b. 6, f. 19	To Goodell	1831 Jan
b. 6, f. 20	To Hoadley	1831 Feb
b. 6, f. 21	To Jowett (from Bird, Goodell, and ES)	1829 Feb
b. 6, f. 22	To Edw. Robinson	1852 Sep
b. 6, f. 23	To Moses Stuart	1832 Jan

Eli Smith to others (continued)

b. 6, f. 24	To Henry White	1831 Oct
b. 6, f. 25	To Leonard Wood	1826 May
b. 6, f. 25a	To Society of Inquiry, Andover Seminary	1829, 1840
Correspondence of others		
b. 6, f. 26	Smylie Robinson to ES	1852 Jul, 1856 May
b. 6, f. 27	J.L. Porter, Henry Hill, and James Gordon to ES	1852, 1856
b. 6, f. 28	Henry Jessup to Dr. Stearus	1856 Aug
b. 6, f. 29	Extract from Jessup letter	1856 Aug
b. 6, f. 30	John Nicolayson to Bird, Goodell, and ES	1827 Dec
b. 6, f. 31	H.G.O. Dwight from Tebreez	1830 Dec
b. 6, f. 32	G.B. Whiting to Isaac Bird	1841 Nov
Writings of Eli Smith		
b. 6, f. 33	Dissertation, Andover Seminary	n.d.
b. 6, f. 34	"Use of the Press in the East"	1829-1830
b. 6, f. 34	"Syria: Hints respecting its Political State" (Missionary Herald, September 1829, page 279)	1829
Collected material / notes / fragments		
b. 6, f. 35	Fragmentary writings of ES	n.d.
b. 6, f. 36	Memoir of Rev. Henry Martyn	1844
b. 6, f. 37	Published material re. ES	1833
b. 6, f. 38	Excerpts from letters of various people	n.d.
b. 6, f. 39	Letter in French by ES in an autograph book	1821
b. 6, f. 40	Letter fragments	n.d.
b. 6, f. 41	Letter to ES granddaughter and excerpt from "A Land of Blessing" by John Brinton	1964
Writings by Margaret Leavy Russell		
b. 7, f. 42	Drafts of Chapters 1 -11, Biography of Eli Smith	

## **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.

### **Preferred Titles**

*Bible -- Translating*

### **Subjects**

Missions -- Syria

### **Names**

Smith, Eli, 1801-1857

### **Corporate Body**

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign  
Missions