

John and Isabel Merrill papers, 1865-1990. MS5373

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Congregational Library & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	Merrill, John Ernest
Creator:	Merrill, Isabel Trowbridge
Creator:	Trowbridge, Margaret Riggs
Creator:	Trowbridge, Tillman C.
Creator:	Merrill, George
Title:	John and Isabel Merrill papers, 1865-1990.
ID:	MS5373
Date [inclusive]:	1865-1990
Physical Description:	2.01 Cubic Feet (4 boxes)
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	John Ernest Merrill was born on May 9, 1872, in New York. His parents were George and Eunice Merrill. Isabel Trowbridge Merrill was born in London on August 12, 1876. Her parents were Tillman C. and Margaret Riggs Trowbridge. John and Isabel met while the two were in Aintab and would be married in 1905. They had two children, Dorothy and Margaret. Both John and Isabel were ABCFM missionaries in Turkey, specifically at the Central Turkey College. John would go on to be the president of the college and its successor, the Aleppo College in Syria while Isabel worked at the Girls' School in Aintab. They would leave the Middle East for the final time in 1936. Isabel died in Beacon, New York, on March 5, 1950, and John died in Bellows Falls, Vermont, on September 22, 1960. The collection contains records from John and Isabel Merrill, alongside other extended members of their family. This includes various diaries and journals, writings and reports, and letters.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the John and Isabel Merrill papers, 1865-1990, MS5373. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Biographical Information

John Ernest Merrill was born on May 9, 1872, in New York. His parents were George and Eunice Merrill. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1891 and again in 1894 with his Ph.D. He would go on to graduate from the Hartford Theological Seminary in 1896 and then spend time at the University of Berlin. He died in Bellows Falls, Vermont, on September 22, 1960.

Isabel Trowbridge Merrill was born in London on August 12, 1876. Her parents were Tillman C. and Margaret Riggs Trowbridge. She went to Ferry Hall Seminary in Illinois and graduated from Vassar College in 1900. She died in Beacon, New York, on March 5, 1950.

Isabel grew up in Aintab as her father was the president of the Central Turkey College. He died when she was 12 and the family moved to Constantinople to be with her grandfather, Elias Riggs. She would attend the Women's College in Constantinople and was taught Greek by her grandfather. Following her time at Vassar, she took up a position at the Girls' School in Aintab where she met John.

John and Isabel were married in Switzerland on August 9, 1905. They had two children, Dorothy and Margaret. Both John and Isabel were ABCFM missionaries in Turkey, specifically at the Central Turkey College. Isabel, Margaret, and Dorothy would leave the country in May 1917, and John would not be able to join them in United States until the summer of 1920. John and Isabel returned to the Middle East in 1924 as John became the president of Aleppo College in Syria, the successor of the Central Turkey College. They would retire and leave for the United States in 1936.

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Scope and Contents

The collection contains records from John and Isabel Merrill, alongside other extended members of their family. This includes various diaries and journals, writings and reports, and letters.

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Arrangement

The collection has been arranged into three series, with each one being further arranged chronologically by start date.

Series 1: Diaries and Journals, 1865-1950

Series 2: Writings and Reports, 1872-1990

Series 3: Letters, 1876-1935

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Restrictions on Access

Access to this collection is unrestricted and open to the public.

Restrictions on Use

Items in this collection are subject to U.S. Copyright Law. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine the copyright status of collection items and to secure any permissions necessary for their reproduction and publication. Requests for permission to publish material must be discussed with the archivist or librarian.

Acquisition Information

Materials were donated to the Congregational Library & Archives by Priscilla D. Hall in June 2018; 2018-14.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Billy McCarthy, September 2026 using DACS.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Additional letters by Isabel can be found in the "Vassar College Student Materials Collection, 1859-2025". Additional records from the Riggs family can be found from SALT Research based in Istanbul, Turkey.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Children of missionaries.
- Diaries.
- Letters.
- Missionaries -- Turkey.
- Missionaries' spouses.
- Universities and colleges -- Administration
- Central Turkey College
- Merrill, Isabel Trowbridge
- Merrill, John Ernest
- American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
- Aleppo College
- Coons, Margaret Merrill
- Dorman, Dorothy Merrill

Bibliography

Dorman, Dorothy Merrill. *The Belle of the Bosphorus: A Loving Tribute To My Mother Isabel Trowbridge Merrill* [Unpublished manuscript]

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Collection Inventory

Diaries and Journals, 1865-1950

Physical Description: 24 Items (2 folders and 22 volumes)

Scope and Contents

This series contains journals and diaries from John Merrill, Isabel Merrill and Isabel's mother Margaret Riggs Trowbridge.

Title/Description	Instances	
Margaret Riggs Trowbridge's Journal, 1865-1867	box 1	volume 1
John Merrill's Journal, 1890	box 1	volume 2
John Merrill's Journal, 1890	box 1	volume 3
John Merrill's Journal, 1891	box 1	folder 1
John Merrill's Journal, 1891-1893	box 1	folder 2
Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1893	box 1	volume 4
Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1895	box 1	volume 5
John Merrill's Journal, 1902-1933	box 1	volume 6
John and Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1905	box 1	volume 7
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1918-1919	box 1	volume 8
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1920-1921	box 1	volume 9
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1922-1923	box 1	volume 10
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1924-1925	box 1	volume 11
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1927-1928	box 1	volume 12
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1929-1930	box 1	volume 13
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1931-1932	box 1	volume 14

Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1933-1934	box 1	volume 15
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1935-1936	box 1	volume 16
Isabel Merrill's Diaries, 1937, 1944	box 1	volume 17
Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1936-1937	box 1	volume 18
Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1945	box 1	volume 19
Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1946	box 1	volume 20
Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1948	box 1	volume 21
Isabel Merrill's Diary, 1950	box 1	volume 22

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Writings and Reports, 1872-1990

Physical Description: 32 Items (1 folder and 31 volumes)

Scope and Contents

This series contains writings and reports, most attributed to John Merrill from his time working in Turkey as part of the American Commissioners for Foreign Missions. A large portion of these works related to the Central Turkey College and its successor, Aleppo College. Other material in the collection includes personal files between John and Isabel, a biography of Isabel Merrill by Dorothy Merrill Dorman, and photographs.

Title/Description	Instances	
John and Isabel Merrill's personal files, 1872-1906	box 4	folder 5
Central Turkey College documents, 1872-1908	box 2	folder 11
The Transcendental Aesthetic: a thesis, 1890	box 2	folder 12
The Parallel Development of Ideals and Institutions, 1893	box 3	volume 1
Biographies and tributes, 1910-1961	box 4	folder 6
Information regarding conditions in the interior, 1915	box 2	folder 13
Central Turkey College reports, 1916-1923	box 2	folder 14
Letters related to "Near Eastern" affairs, 1922	box 2	folder 15
Aleppo College letters and documents, 1924-1929	box 2	folder 16
The Gospel of the Glory of the King, 1926	box 2	folder 17
Aleppo College documents (1 of 2), 1931-1936	box 4	folder 2
Aleppo College documents (2 of 2), 1931-1936	box 4	folder 3
The School of Religion, 1931	box 2	folder 18
Gaziantep Hospital annual report, 1932	box 2	folder 19

Muhammad and the Hebrew-Christian Tradition, 1939	box 3	folder 1
Documents on Christian-Moslem relations, 1942-1950	box 3	folder 2
Aleppo College letters, 1944-1952	box 3	folder 3
John Merrill writings and correspondences, 1946-1950	box 4	folder 1
Let Us Follow the Gleam, 1949	box 3	folder 4
75th Anniversary Celebration of Aleppo College, 1951	box 3	folder 5
Alumni dinner for John Merrill, 1955	box 3	folder 6
Seekers for the Way of Life by Fred Field Goodsell, 1970	box 3	folder 7
The Belle of the Bosphorus by Dorothy Merrill Dorman, 1990	box 3	folder 8
Confirmation of John Merrill's diploma, undated	box 3	folder 9
Suhuf - for Christian Friends of the Muslims, undated	box 3	folder 10
The Book of Central Turkey College, undated	box 3	folder 11
Problems of American Education in the Near East, undated	box 3	folder 12
Oration: The World was Ready, undated	box 3	folder 13
A Serious Call to A "Concern" for the Muslims, undated	box 3	folder 14
The Finger of God by Samuel Barsoumian, undated	box 3	folder 15
Mission and Union in Syria and Turkey, undated	box 3	folder 16
Photos, undated	box 4	folder 4

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Letters, 1876-1935

Physical Description: 19 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains letters mostly written by John and Isabel Merrill to their daughters Margaret and Dorothy, but also to extended family and friends. The series also has letters by Isabel's father, Tillman C. Trowbridge and John Merrill's father, George Merrill. There are also letters from John Merrill that relate to his work through the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Arrangement

The letters were kept in the arrangement that they were received, with only slight edits to folder titles for readability.

Title/Description	Instances	
Letters from Tillman C. Trowbridge to his children, 1876-1886	box 1	folder 3

Letter from George Merrill to John Merrill, 1897	box 2	folder 9
Letters from John Merrill to various family members, 1897-1898	box 1	folder 4
Letters to John Merrill from the ABCFM, 1897-1900	box 1	folder 5
Letters to John Merrill on passports and finances, 1898-1899	box 1	folder 6
Letters to John Merrill from siblings and aunts, 1898-1905	box 1	folder 7
Postcards, 1898-1927	box 1	folder 8
Letters to John Merrill from George Merrill, 1900-1905	box 1	folder 9
Letter to John Merrill from W. W. Peet, 1916	box 1	folder 10
Letters to Margaret Merrill from extended family, 1927-1929	box 1	folder 11
Letters from John and Isabel Merrill to daughter Margaret, 1927-1931	box 2	folder 1
Letters between Merrill extended family, 1928	box 2	folder 2
Letters from John and Isabel Merrill to daughters Margaret and Dorothy, 1929-1931	box 2	folder 3
Letters from John and Isabel Merrill to daughters Margaret and Dorothy, 1929-1931	box 2	folder 4
Letter from John Merrill on a family gathering, 1932	box 2	folder 5
Isabel Merrill letters to daughter Margaret, 1933	box 2	folder 6
Letters from John and Isabel Merrill to daughters Margaret and Dorothy, 1933-1934	box 2	folder 7
Letter fragments, 1934, undated	box 2	folder 8
Letters from John Merrill to daughter Margaret, 1935, undated	box 2	folder 10

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