

Guide to the William Bird Papers

YCAL MSS 1562



by Elise Riley

September 2026

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 1562

CREATOR: Bird, William, 1888-1963 , author

TITLE: William Bird papers

DATES: 1749–2013

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 4.92 linear feet (8 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English; French

SUMMARY: Correspondence, writings, photographs, personal papers, legal papers, printed material, and other papers by or relating to William Bird.

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

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.williambird>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Second Story Books on the Ezra Pound Archives Fund, 2026.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The William Bird papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

William Bird papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Yale Archival Processing Manual.

Related Materials

Related material: William Bird Ezra Pound papers (YCAL MSS 178)

William Bird (1889-1963)

William Augustus Bird was born in Buffalo, New York, on January 2, 1889. He graduated from Trinity College, Hartford in 1912 and became a journalist in New York City, where he married Sarah (Sally) Costello. In 1920, he and longtime friend David Lawrence founded the Consolidated Press Service, and Bird moved with his family to Paris to take charge of the office there. They were to remain in France for 20 years.

Shortly after arriving in Paris, Bird became interested in the "hobby" of hand printing, bought a full set of Caslon type, and began printing brief works, including his own *A Practical Guide to French Wines* (1922). He moved the press into offices at 29, quai d'Anjou and announced the formation of Three Mountains Press; the colophon stylized both his initials and the three mountains of Paris and carried a verse from Psalm 121, "Levavi oculos meos in montes."

In April 1922, Bird met fellow journalist Ernest Hemingway as they were traveling to the Conferenza Internazionale Economica de Genova; he suggested that Bird contact a friend of his, American poet Ezra Pound. Pound immediately began to argue that Bird should "print the MODERNS." Bird agreed, appointing Pound editor of Three Mountains.

Between April 1923 and the end of 1925, Three Mountains Press published nine works. They included *Indiscretions*, *Antheil* and the *Treatise on Harmony*, and *A Draft of XVI Cantos* by Ezra Pound; *The Great American Novel* by William Carlos Williams; in our time by Ernest Hemingway; and *Distinguished Air* by Robert McAlmon. In addition, Bird provided free office space to Ford Madox Ford for the founding of transatlantic review.

Bird lost interest in the press, however. In 1928 he sold his handpress and typecases to Nancy Cunard and supervised its transportation to her home at Réanville, where it became the press for her Hours Press. In the following year, he sold his remaining stock of unsold books to "an American named Schwartz" for \$150.00.

Bird continued his successful career as a journalist. He covered Admiral Byrd's flight over the North Pole from Spitzbergen in 1926, and in 1928 became president of the Anglo-American Press Association. The Consolidated Press Service was dissolved in 1933, and Bird joined the New York Sun as chief foreign correspondent. Bird and his family fled to Spain after the fall of France in 1940; in July of that year he wrote a series of articles for the Sun warning Americans war with Hitler was imminent.

After World War II the Birds moved to Tangier, where he was appointed an American representative to the Legislative Assembly of the Tangier International Zone in 1948. He was the editor of the English-language Tangier Gazette until 1960, when the Moroccan government, which had assumed authority over Tangier in 1956-57, closed the newspaper. Bird returned to France, where he died in Paris in August, 1963. He was survived by his daughter, Ann France Bird Wilson.

- Ducharme, Diane, 2003. "Guide to the William Bird Ezra Pound Papers." William Bird Ezra Pound papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Scope and Contents

The William Bird papers consists of correspondence, writings, photographs, and other material related to Bird's personal and professional life. Bird worked as a journalist in France and Morocco from the 1920s to the 1960s and the collection holds drafts of radio broadcasts and correspondence with editors at *New York Sun* and *The New York Times*. Also included are the letters Bird sent to his wife Sarah primarily during World War II and photographs of their family life and travels in Europe.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Correspondence, 1794, 1910-1964; II. Personal papers, 1880-2013; III. Professional papers, 1927-1997.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1794, 1910-1964

0.67 linear feet (2 boxes)

This series contains correspondence to and from members of the Bird family. The bulk of the correspondence was generated by William Bird and captures his personal life with his wife, Sarah (referred to as Sally), his brother Cyrus (referred to as Rem), and his daughter Ann France, (referred to as Francie) and professional life as a reporter and editor in France and Morocco.

Also included in this series is a small amount of correspondence for Sarah Bird and Ann France Wilson.

Materials in this series are arranged by correspondent.

William Bird correspondence		1916–1963
Incoming		1916–1963
b. 1, f. 1	Antheil, George	1927
b. 1, f. 2	Beatty, Harold	1930
b. 1, f. 3	Bird (Wilson), Ann France	circa 1950s
b. 1, f. 4	Bird, Cyrus Remington	1950-1963
b. 1, f. 5	Bird, Helen M.	1959
b. 1, f. 6	Bird, Helen R.	1936
b. 1, f. 7	Bird, Seth	1937
b. 1, f. 8	Dewart, Thomas W.	1944-1945
b. 1, f. 9	Duvernois, Henri	circa 1940s
b. 1, f. 10	Friendly, Edwin	1945
b. 1, f. 11	Georger, Robert	1962
b. 1, f. 12	Joyce, James	1929
b. 1, f. 13	Manny, W. Roy	1953
b. 1, f. 14	Morton, Charles	1949
b. 1, f. 15	Nolan, Peggy	1962
b. 1, f. 16	Northwestern Library News	1962
b. 1, f. 17	Poli, Bernard	1962
b. 1, f. 18	Powel, C.R.	1946
b. 1, f. 19	Richardson, Hadley	undated
b. 1, f. 20	Robinson, Donald	1950
b. 1, f. 21	White House invitations	1916-1919

William Bird correspondence > Incoming (continued)

b. 1, f. 22	Werkers, Lorna	1926-1931
b. 1, f. 23	Wessels, Harry	1962
b. 1, f. 24	Willard, Grace	undated
b. 1, f. 25	Wilson, Thomas W.	1950
b. 1, f. 26	Correspondence regarding <i>A Practical Guide to French Wines</i>	1943-1949
b. 1, f. 27	Telegrams/letters referring to Billy's death	1926
b. 1, f. 28	Hemingway, Ernest (copy)	circa 1926
b. 1, f. 29	Pound, Dorothy and Ezra	circa 1926
b. 1, f. 30	Unsorted correspondence	1942-1962
b. 1, f. 31	Letterheads	circa 1940s
	Outgoing	1925-1950
b. 1, f. 32-33	Bird, Sarah	1925-1945
b. 2, f. 1	Cracco, F.	1949
b. 2, f. 2	Flavin, Martin	1944
b. 2, f. 3	Commandant Schiffer	1940
b. 2, f. 4	Speed, Keats	1950
b. 2, f. 5	Thackery, Theodore (Ted)	1947
b. 2, f. 6	Wilson, Thomas W.	1950
b. 2, f. 7	Worth, Cedric	1943
b. 2, f. 8	Letter drafts	1942
b. 2, f. 9	<i>New York Sun</i> correspondence Includes both incoming and outgoing correspondence between William Bird and editors and journalists at <i>New York Sun</i> when Bird worked as a foreign correspondent.	1929-1938
b. 2, f. 10	Envelopes	undated
b. 2, f. 11	Sarah Bird correspondence	1912-1944
b. 2, f. 12	Costello, Patience	1912-1931
b. 2, f. 13	Unsorted correspondence	1929-1944
b. 2, f. 14	Ann France Bird Wilson correspondence	1927-1964
b. 2, f. 15	John Bird to Seth Bird letter	1794
b. 2, f. 16	Third party correspondence	1910-1926

Series II: Personal papers, 1880–2013*3.58 linear feet (4 boxes)*

This series contains materials related to William Bird's personal life and includes his personal writing projects and financial records for his time living abroad in France and Morocco, along with ephemeral items such as clippings and photographs.

Materials in this series are arranged into four subseries: Writings, Financial records, Personal records, and Photographs.

	Writings	1937–1955
b. 3, f. 1	"Illusion"	undated
b. 3, f. 2	<i>A New Dictionary of Philosophy</i>	undated
b. 3, f. 3	<i>A Practical Guide to French Wines</i>	circa 1940s
b. 3, f. 4	"Spitsbergen"	undated
b. 3, f. 5	Various writings	1937-1955
	Financial records	1923–1961
b. 3, f. 6	Insurance and taxes: The Mill, Moulin de Houx	1923-1946
b. 4, f. 1	Taxis-Citroen stock certificated	1928
b. 3, f. 7	Banque de Paris	1941-1948
b. 3, f. 8	Sarah Bird: Wabash Railway Company stock certificate	1942
b. 3, f. 9	Bills and contact lists	1942-1948
b. 3, f. 10	United States tax records	1943
b. 3, f. 11	Apartment	1944-1946
b. 3, f. 12	Insurance	1946-1949
b. 3, f. 13	Apartment: taxes, rent	1949
b. 3, f. 14	The Mill: taxes	1949
b. 3, f. 15	Moses Pariente Bankers	1949-1956
b. 3, f. 16	Life insurance	1950
b. 3, f. 17	Police d'Assurance [insurance policy]	1961
	Personal records	1884–2013
b. 3, f. 18	Wine orders and lists	1884, 1933-1934
b. 3, f. 19	Map of Chartres	1903
b. 6	Scrapbook	1905-1912
b. 3, f. 20	"The Trinity Ivy"	1912

Personal records (continued)

b. 3, f. 21	Clippings	1907-1983
b. 3, f. 22	Ephemera	1925-1943
b. 5, f. 1	Casino Municipal de la Baule theatre program	1928
b. 5, f. 2	Passports, identifications, and visas	1929-1959
b. 4, f. 2	Trinity College diploma	1940
b. 5, f. 3	William Bird Tangier, Morocco Library catalog	circa 1940s
b. 5, f. 4	American Kennel Club registration certificate	1941
b. 5, f. 5	Moulin de Houx visitors' log	1949-1951
b. 5, f. 6	Research on William Bird's papers	2013
b. 5, f. 7	Bird family history	undated
b. 5, f. 8	Inventory of collection	undated
b. 5, f. 9	Thackeray excerpts	undated
	Photographs	1880-1959
b. 5, f. 10-14	Photographs Contains photographs of the Bird family including early prints of William, photos of the Bird family in Paris with William and Sarah's late son Billy, travels in Europe, scenes from World War II, and life in Tangier.	1880-1959
b. 4, f. 3	25th Convention U.S. Brewers Association Committee of Entertainment print	undated
b. 5, f. 15	Photographic prints	undated

Series III: Professional papers, 1927–1997*0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)*

This series contains materials related to William Bird's professional life as a journalist and editor. Included in the materials are the scripts for Bird's NBC radio broadcast during World War II and drafts for his reporting work in Tangier after the war. Also included in this series is articles and speeches created by Bird's son-in-law, Thomas Wilson.

Materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

b. 7, f. 1	Association of the Anglo-American Press of Paris	1927
b. 7, f. 2	William Bird reporting 1940-1944	1933-1946
b. 7, f. 3	William Bullitt visit to Paris	1934-1935
b. 7, f. 4	National Broadcast Company [NBC] radio scripts	1938-1940
b. 7, f. 5	Resume	1939
b. 7, f. 6	Travel authorizations and vouchers	1939-1945
b. 7, f. 7	Office of War Information	1943-1945
b. 7, f. 8	Comite Francais de la Liberation Nationale memorandum	1944
b. 7, f. 9	Psychological Warfare Branch [PWB] records	1944
b. 7, f. 10	<i>New York Times</i>	1948-1949
b. 7, f. 11	Tangier legation of the US	1948-1950
b. 7, f. 12	Tangier reporting	1949-1961
b. 7, f. 13	The Moghreb Press S.A. contract	1956
b. 4, f. 4	Three Mountain Press announcement for "Sixteen Cantos" by Ezra Pound	undated
b. 8, f. 1-2b. 7, f. 14-16	Thomas W. Wilson articles, speeches, etc.	1970-1997

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.

Genres / Formats

Correspondence
Photographic prints -- 20th Century
Scrapbooks -- United States -- 20th Century

Subjects

Editors, American -- 20th Century
Journalism
Journalists, American -- 20th Century
Journalists -- United States -- Archives
Reporters and reporting
World War, 1939-1945 -- Journalists

Geographic Names

Paris (France)
Tangier (Morocco)

Names

Bird, William, 1888-1963