

Guide to the George Miller Beard Papers

MS 584



Compiled by Rosalind Haworth

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 584

CREATOR: Beard, George M. (George Miller), 1839-1883

TITLE: George Miller Beard papers

DATES: 1853-1923

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence, writings, biographical material and other papers of George M. Beard, physician and specialist in the treatment of mental and nervous disorders. Included are materials relating to his work on the medical uses of electricity and his pioneering work in the definition of criminal insanity, as well as papers relating to his interest in spiritualism. Also included are a number of letters received by his daughter, Grace Alden Beard, related to a biographical study of her father.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0584>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0584>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to 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

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George Beard Walker in 1970.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by the creator(s) of this collection are in the public domain. There are no restrictions on use. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation

George Miller Beard Papers (MS 584). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

George Miller Beard, 1839-1883, was a distinguished physician and specialist in the treatment of mental and nervous disorders. He was born in Montville, Connecticut, the son of the Reverend Spencer F. Beard, a Congregational clergyman, and Lucy A. Leonard. He entered Yale College in 1858, graduated in Arts in 1862, and spent a year in the Yale Medical Department before studying at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. Qualifying in 1866, Beard immediately joined Dr. A. D. Rockwell in practice in New York, and began to specialize in the study of nervous diseases.

With A. D. Rockwell, Beard published many works on the use of electricity in medical treatment. These studies resulted in the isolation of a complaint, nervous exhaustion or neurasthenia, to which, as Beard explained in his book, *American Nervousness* (1881), Americans seemed particularly susceptible. Beard also attributed hay-fever, sea sickness, and certain sexual problems to nervous disorders.

Beard championed the rights of the insane and was instrumental in the formation of the "National Association for the Protection of the Insane and Prevention of Insanity." He worked to reform the law so that the insane could not be found guilty of crime, and was famous for vigorously defending this opinion in the case of Charles J. Guiteau, the assassin of President Garfield.

Interested in spiritualism, Beard carried out many experiments in order to prove his theory that mind reading, trances and other manifestations of spiritualism had physiological explanations. His demonstrations at medical association conferences seem to have excited considerable controversy.

Beard died at the age of 44, but during his short life he was a prolific writer and an active campaigner for medical and social causes. His works range from those with a popular appeal, such as *Our Home Physician*, to scholarly treatises, like the *Medical Use of Electricity*. Beard's attention to original and frequently unusual research opened up a field of medicine which had been generally neglected until that time. His works were written with vigor and sometimes with unpleasant bluntness, but he was praised after his death in 1883 by a colleague, William Crookes, as "one of that rare class of thinkers who dare to utter their thoughts, and who discuss matters to which the world is glad to close its eyes."

Biographical material may be found in SERIES I, folder 20; and SERIES III, folder 2.

Scope and Contents

The George Miller Beard Papers provide limited but valuable information on the life and work of Beard from 1865 to 1883. Though incomplete, they do provide a sampling of his work on nervous diseases,

electrotherapeutics, insanity, and spiritualism. Newspaper clippings, photographs, and printed biographical articles shed additional light upon Beard's career. There are also legal briefs, testimony, and newsclippings relating to Beard's views on criminal insanity, as well as material on some of the spectacular cases of the day, such as the Guiteau murder trial, the Henry Prouse Cooper case, and the Cadet Whittaker case. Of special interest is an essay by Beard's daughter, Grace A. Beard, on the upbringing of a child in the nineteenth century.

Correspondence forms a small part of the papers and gives little information upon such intriguing subjects as Beard's collaboration with Thomas Edison or his experiments in London on spiritualism. There are, however, a few letters from such notable men as Wendell Phillips, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Rev. Joseph Cooke, Thomas Edison, William Crookes, D. B. St. John Roosa, and Lester Ward. In addition, there are important letters in the correspondence of his daughter, Grace. Orphaned at the age of seven, when both of her parents died within one week of each other, she attempted to satisfy her curiosity about her father's life and works, especially his work in spiritualism, by corresponding with many of his colleagues and contemporaries. The most notable of these are: Simon E. Baldwin, Professor William Henry Brewer, Charles L. Dana, Timothy Dwight, Thomas Edison, and Alfred R. Wallace.

The George Miller Beard Papers were donated to Yale University by Mr. and Mrs. George Beard Walker in 1970. Mr. Walker is the grandson of George M. Beard and the son of Grace Alden Beard. The originals of the photo-copies were returned to Mr. and Mrs. Walker after the copies were made.

Arrangement

Arranged in three series: I. Correspondence. II. Writings. III. Subject File.

Collection Contents

Series I: CORRESPONDENCE, 1853-1923

0.5 linear feet (1 box)

CORRESPONDENCE is arranged in three subsections:

"Family Correspondence," 1854-1883, includes letters to Elizabeth Beard (his wife) before their marriage and also during and enforced separation (1880) after their marriage. The letters from his parents give some insight into the religious influences under which Beard grew up. This section is arranged alphabetically either by the name of the person to whom the letter is addressed or by the name of the writer of the letter.

"General Correspondence of George M. Beard," 1871-1883, includes letters Beard received from colleagues, patients, and others interested in his work, including those notable correspondents previously noted.

"Correspondence of Grace A. Beard," 1883-1923, contains correspondence pertaining to Beard, which Grace Beard (his daughter) planned to use in publishing the biography and complete works of her father.

Family Correspondence

b. 1, f. 1	Beard, Elizabeth (née Alden) -- from G. M. Beard	1862-1864, 1880
b. 1, f. 2	Beard, Elizabeth (née Alden) -- general	1864-1883
b. 1, f. 3	Beard, Grace A. Beard	1882
b. 1, f. 4	Beard, Lucy L. (mother)	1862-1863
b. 1, f. 5	Beard, S. F. (father)	1854-1866
b. 1, f. 6	Beard, William, -- correspondence	1863-1866
b. 1, f. 6a	Cornith, (Mrs.) S. H. (sister) -- letters	1904, 1907
b. 1, f. 7	Miscellaneous -- not involving G. M. Beard	

General Correspondence

b. 1, f. 8	Beard, G. M. -- professional	1876
b. 1, f. 9	Bastian H. Charlton	1882
b. 1, f. 9	Batsford C. C.	1878
b. 1, f. 9	Benedikt Prof. Dr.	1876
b. 1, f. 9	Blake L. D.	1874
b. 1, f. 9	Bryce, P.	1882
b. 1, f. 9	Burnside, G. L.	1879
b. 1, f. 10	Colfax, R.	1871
b. 1, f. 10	Cook, Joseph	1879
b. 1, f. 10	Crookes, William	1875

General Correspondence (continued)

b. 1, f. 10	Denslow, V?. B.	1879
b. 1, f. 11	Edison, Thomas A. (copy)	1878
b. 1, f. 11	Farnsworth, G. A.	1875
b. 1, f. 11	Holmes, Oliver Wendell (copy)	1882
b. 1, f. 11	Leavitt, William	1882
b. 1, f. 12	Phillips, Wendell	undated
b. 1, f. 12	Roosa, D. B. St. John	1882
b. 1, f. 12	Ward, Lester F.	1879
b. 1, f. 12	White, Horace	1872
b. 1, f. 13	Notes on spiritualistic manifestations; 2 letters on exposure of spiritualists	1879, undated
<u>Correspondence of Grace Alden Beard</u>		
b. 1, f. 14	Abbe, Robert	1904-1908
b. 1, f. 15	Beard, Grace A.	1910
b. 1, f. 16	Baldwin, Simeon E.	1910
b. 1, f. 16	Blydenburgh, L. N.	1909-1910
b. 1, f. 16	Brewer, Prof. William H.	1910
b. 1, f. 16	Burkes, Henry T.	1908
b. 1, f. 17	Dana, Charles L.	1907
b. 1, f. 17	Draper, Ellen Childs	1904
b. 1, f. 17	Dwight, Timothy	1909
b. 1, f. 18	Edison, Thomas (copy) -- also letters by Dyer in behalf of Edison	1908
b. 1, f. 19	Henslow, G.	1909
b. 1, f. 19	Holt, Henry	1909
b. 1, f. 19	Lindsley, C. Purdy	1910
b. 1, f. 19	Moll, Albert	1910-1923
b. 1, f. 19	Morrow, Prince A.	1909
b. 1, f. 20	Rockwell, A. D.	1883-1894
b. 1, f. 20	Roosa, D. B. St. John	1904-1907
b. 1, f. 21	Stevens, Edward L.	1909
b. 1, f. 21	Tracy, Roger S.	1905

Correspondence of Grace Alden Beard (continued)

b. 1, f. 21	Walker, Jerome	1905
b. 1, f. 21	Wallace, Alfred R.	1910
b. 1, f. 22	unidentified	1904-1908

Series II: WRITINGS, 1856-1883

WRITINGS include a diary of Beard's early life (1856-1863), lectures, articles, 18 pamphlets, and a book. The series is arranged alphabetically by category and chronologically within each category.

Although all of Beard's work is not included, there is a good sample of his work on the use of electrotherapeutics in medical treatment, nervous diseases, the insane, and spiritualism. Of special interest are Beard's notes on the lives of 400 famous men for his essay, "The Relation of Age and Work."

b. 1, f. 1	Advertisements, book notices etc.	1875-1883
b. 1, f. 2	Book, <i>American Nervousness — Its Causes and Consequences</i> (copy)	1881
b. 1, f. 3	Diary	1856-1863
b. 1, f. 4	Experiments on Hayfever	1876
b. 2, f. 5	Lectures -- annotated in <i>The Medical and Surgical Reporter</i>	1867-1870
b. 2, f. 6	Lectures and articles	
b. 2, f. 6	"Hysteria and Allied Affections," English	1872
b. 2, f. 6	"American Nervousness," English	1880
b. 2, f. 6	"Disease," English	1882
b. 2, f. 6	"Medical Education and the Medical Profession," English	1883
b. 2, f. 7	Lectures	
b. 2, f. 7	"Experiences with a Life Insurance Agent," English	undated
b. 2, f. 7	"Nervous Disease," English	undated
b. 2, f. 7	"The Relation of Age to Work" discussion of, by Grace Beard English	undated
b. 2, f. 7	Essay on Lecturing -- humorous	undated
b. 2, f. 8	Pamphlets	
b. 2, f. 8	"Cases of Gastralgia treated by Central Galvanism," English	1872
b. 2, f. 8	"A Plea for Scientific Reform," English	1872
b. 2, f. 9	Pamphlets	
b. 2, f. 9	"Atmospheric Electricity and Ozone," English	1874

Pamphlets (continued)

b. 2, f. 9	"Suggestive Cases treated by Electricity," English	1874
b. 2, f. 9	"Medical and Surgical Cases treated by Electricity," English	1874
b. 2, f. 9	"Marasmus, Whooping-Cough and Debility in Children," English	1874
b. 2, f. 9	"Treating Malignant Tumors by Electrolysing the Base," English	1874
b. 2, f. 9	"Experiments with the Alledged New Force," English	1876
b. 2, f. 9	"Practical Points in Electrolytic Treatment," English	1877
b. 2, f. 10	Pamphlets	
b. 2, f. 10	"Are Inebriates Automaton?," English	1878
b. 2, f. 10	"Neurasthenia (Nervous Exhaustion) as a Cause of Inebriety," English	1879
b. 2, f. 10	"The Dosage of Electricity," English	1879
b. 2, f. 10	"A Practical Treatise on Neurasthenia" (in German) English	1880
b. 2, f. 10	"Nervous Exhaustion, with Cases of Sexual Neurasthenia," English	1880
b. 2, f. 10	"Notes on Sexual Neurasthenia," English	1880
b. 2, f. 10	Copies of the last two pamphlets enclosed in wrapper for special distribution	1880
b. 2, f. 11	Pamphlets	
b. 2, f. 11	"How to Use Bromides," English	1881
b. 2, f. 11	"Trance and Muscle Reading," English	1882
b. 2, f. 12	Pamphlets	
b. 2, f. 12	"Herbert Spencer on American Nervousness," English	1883
b. 2, f. 12	Galley Proofs of the above pamphlet	
b. 2, f. 13	Research notes for "The Relation of Age and Work" (1) undated	
b. 3, f. 14	Research notes for "The Relation of Age and Work" (2) undated	

Series III: SUBJECT FILE, 1862–1883, 1966, undated*0.5 linear feet (1 box)*

The SUBJECT FILE is divided into two subsections, "General," and "Case Studies."

"General" contains Published biographical articles, photographs, and newspaper clippings. This section is arranged alphabetically by subject. "Case Studies" includes court testimony and briefs, newspaper clippings, and papers pertaining to Beard's interest in the defense of Guiteau, President Garfield's murderer. This section is arranged chronologically.

General Biographical Material

b. 3, f. 1	Autograph book -- Phillips Academy	1862
b. 3, f. 2	Conferences, journeys etc.	1879-1880
b. 3, f. 3	Deaths of George M. Beard and Elizabeth Beard	1883
b. 3, f. 3	Essays by Grace A. Beard	
b. 3, f. 3	Funeral address by Rev. J. L. Willard	
b. 3, f. 4	General biographical material collected by Grace Beard	1883
b. 3, f. 5	Newspaper cuttings, articles etc, collected by George M. Beard	1881-1882
b. 3, f. 6	Photographs and personal belongings	undated
b. 3, f. 7	Printed biographies	1883
b. 3, f. 8	Recent articles	1966

Special Case Studies

b. 3, f. 9	Spiritualism -- Fancher case	1878
b. 3, f. 10	Guiteau case -- newspaper cuttings	1881-1882
b. 3, f. 11	Guiteau case -- other papers	1881-1882
b. 3, f. 12	Henry Prouse Cooper case	1882
b. 3, f. 13	Cadet Whittaker case	1882

ACCESSION 1887-M-028: Additional Material

b. 3, f. 14

Letters to Jared A. Terry

1862-1866

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

Electricity
Electrotherapeutics
Hysteria
Insanity (Law)
Law
Medicine
Mental illness
Nervous system -- Diseases
Neurasthenia
Older people -- Employment
Physicians
Popular culture
Psychology, Pathological
Psychoses
Sexual disorders
Spiritualism

Names

Baldwin, Simeon E. (Simeon Eben), 1840-1927
Beard, Elizabeth Alden
Beard, George M. (George Miller), 1839-1883
Beard, Grace Alden
Beard, Lucy Leonard
Beard, Spencer F.
Brewer, William Henry, 1828-1910
Cooke, Joseph Brown, 1868-
Crookes, William, 1832-1919
Dana, Charles L. (Charles Loomis), 1852-1935
Dwight, Timothy, 1828-1916
Edison, Thomas A. (Thomas Alva), 1847-1931
Guiteau, Charles J. (Charles Julius), 1841-1882
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 1809-1894
Phillips, Wendell, 1811-1884
Roosa, D. B. St. John (Daniel Bennett St. John),
1838-1908
Wallace, Alfred Russel, 1823-1913
Ward, Lester F. (Lester Frank), 1841-1913