

# Guide to the Samuel Rossiter Betts Autograph Collection

MS 603



compiled by Nancy L. Fappiano and Janet E. Gertz

November 1981

Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
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(203) 432-7441

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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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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 603

**CREATOR:** Betts, Samuel Rossiter, 1854-1931, collector

**TITLE:** Samuel Rossiter Betts autograph collection

**DATES:** 1704-1928

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2 linear feet (6 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Signatures of over five hundred famous Yale College graduates from the class of 1704 to the class of 1904. Also included is a small amount of Betts's personal papers including lists of his book donations to Yale University, an inventory of personal effects and other miscellaneous items. Arranged in three series.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0603>

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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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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

Samuel Rossiter Betts Autograph Collection (MS 603). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Born November 5, 1854, in New York City.

Died December 13, 1930, in New York City.

Father, George Frederic Betts (B.A. Williams 1844); studied at Harvard Law School; trustee of New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb; Lieutenant Colonel of 9th New York Volunteers; son of Samuel Rossiter Betts (B.A. Williams 1806, LL.D. 1830) and Caroline Abigail (Dewey) Betts, of New York City. Mother, Ellen (Porter) Betts; daughter of the Rev. William Augustus Porter (B.A. Williams 1818) and Mary (Noble) Porter, of Williamstown, Mass. Yale relatives include the following cousins: John A. Porter (B.A. 1842), Frederic H. Betts, '64, and his sons, Louis F. H. Betts, '91, and W. Rosseter Betts, '98, C. Wyllys Betts, '67, Charles O. Day, '72, and his son, Charles O. Day, '03, James Hillhouse, '75, Charles B. Hillhouse, '78 S., and Francis Hillhouse, '79 S., and his son, Francis B. Hillhouse, '25.

Charlier School, New York City, and Mohegan Lake School. Two first prizes in English composition Sophomore year; oration appointments Junior and Senior years; Townsend Premium and first College Premium in English composition Senior year; second prize at junior Exhibition and speaker at Commencement; winner of quarter-mile run 1874; an editor of *Yale Record* and contributor to *Yale Literary Magazine*; Class historian four years; member Kappa Sigma Epsilon, Phi Theta Psi, Delta Kappa Epsilon, and Scroll and Key; elected graduate member Elizabethan Club 1919.

LL.B. Columbia 1877 and admitted to New York Bar; in law offices of Betts, Atterbury & Betts 1877-1880 (Frederic H. Betts and Charles L. Atterbury, both '64, and C. Wyllys Betts, '67, members of firm); member of firm of Briesen & Betts 1880-1884; associated in practice with his father 1884-1887; member of firm of Betts, Atterbury, Hyde & Betts 1887-1893, Betts, Hyde & Betts 1893-1897, Betts, Betts, Sheffield & Betts (James R. Sheffield, '87, and Louis F. H. Betts, '91, also members) 1897-1905, Betts, Sheffield & Betts 1905-1906, Betts, Sheffield, Bentley & Betts (Edward M. Bentley, '80, also member) 1906-1909, and Betts, Sheffield & Betts 1909-1911; counsel for Sheffield, Bentley & Betts and its successor, Sheffield & Betts, from 1911 until retirement in 1926; had specialized in patent and trade-mark law; counsel for numerous corporations, among them General Electric Company, Westinghouse Company, Edison Company, Automobile Association, Goodyear Manufacturing Company, Colgate & Company, Union Bag & Paper Company, and Hanan & Son; United States commissioner for Southern District of New York since 1877 and master in equity and examiner in United States Circuit Court since 1886; during World War advisory counsel to Alien Property Custodian of Bureau of Law and member of local Draft Board No. 112; a director of New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb since 1898, secretary 1912-1919, vice-president 1919-1921, and president since 1921; member Republican finance committee, 25th New York Assembly District; contributed an article entitled "General Alumni Gifts to Yale" to *Book of the Yale Pageant* (1916); member Yale Bicentennial Committee and Alumni Board Committee on the University Library 1925-1930; on board of directors of Yale Alumni University Fund Association 1909-1926 (chairman 1913-1916); Alumni Fund agent for Class of 1875 since 1898; secretary of the Class since 1915; a governor of Yale Publishing Association 1922-1923; vice-chairman, New York District, Yale Endowment Campaign

1927; secretary of Yale Alumni Association of New York 1880-1883; member of council of Yale Club of New York 1903-1905 and of its library and arts committee 1902-1907 (chairman in 1904) and again since 1919; member of committee on admissions of University Club of New York 1892-1901; member American, New York State, New York County, and New York City Bar associations, American Association for the Advancement of Science, New York Academy of Sciences, Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Botanical Garden, Society of the War of 1812, Society of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Loyal Legion, the Pilgrims, and Grace Episcopal Church, New York; life member New York Zoological Society, American Museum of Natural History, Sons of the Revolution, and Society of Colonial Wars.

Married November 19, 1918, in Minneapolis, Minn., Lillias Verne Hill Armstrong, daughter of John William and Eugenie (Andros) Hill. No children. Mrs. Betts died May 31, 1929.

Death due to pneumonia. Buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York. Survived by two sisters, Mrs. T. Tileston Wells, of New York City, and Mrs. Amy B. Porter, the widow of John Addison Porter, '78. By the terms of his will his residuary estate was left to Yale University and \$50,000 each to the Yale School of Law, the Yale School of the Fine Arts, and the Yale University Library; in 1923 he gave to the School of Law his complete file of several hundred volumes of patent and trade-mark cases with which he had been connected, and also his law library.

*From Yale University Obituary Record.*

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## Scope and Contents

The Samuel R. Betts Autograph Collection contains the signatures of over five hundred famous Yale graduates, as well as those of a few people not directly connected to Yale University. The items, which include correspondence and other papers, span the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries and are arranged in three series. Series I is arranged alphabetically by author. Series II includes one box of Betts's personal papers, consisting of a small amount of correspondence, writings, and lists of his personal effects. Series III contains additional autographs not listed in Series I.

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b. 1, f. 3	Adams, William, 1827
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