
John Bell Papers

Finding aid prepared by Stephanie Clayton.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Manuscripts Department

The Huntington Library

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2191

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Descriptive Summary

Title: John Bell Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1855-1930

Bulk Dates: 1871-1918

Collection Number: mssBell, John papers

Creator: Bell, John

Extent: 3 boxes and 49 volumes.

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Abstract: This collection contains the papers of Irish immigrant John Bell (born circa 1830), who was an insurance and loan agent in Richmond, Indiana, in the 1860s-1870s and in San Jose, California, beginning in 1875-6. Includes diaries chronicling Bell's oceanic travel to Central America and his overland journey from Indiana to California, as well as documents, correspondence, ephemera, and 49 volumes related to Bell's business in both San Jose and Richmond.

Language of Material: The records are in English.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], John Bell papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Acquisition Information

Purchased from William P. Wreden, July 24, 1963.

Biographical Note

John Bell was born about 1830 in Ireland and immigrated to the United States with his father before his 21st birthday. He was an insurance and loan agent in Richmond, Indiana in the 1860s and 1870s. He moved to San Jose, California between 1875 and 1876 and continued working as an insurance and loan agent. Sometime after 1881, he married Hannah B. Cooper, John L. Cooper's widow, and helped raise her two daughters, Elizabeth P. and Anna J. Cooper. John and Hannah B. Cooper Bell had a daughter of their own named Mary Elma.

Scope and Content

The collection contains 330 items. The manuscripts and diaries are arranged alphabetically by author and consist of 13 items including John Bell's account of his ocean voyage from New York to Central America, his overland journey by train from Indiana to California and his stay in London. The correspondence is also arranged alphabetically by author and consists of 27 letters, most of which were written to either John or Hannah B. Cooper Bell. The ephemera is arranged alphabetically by type and consists of 219 items, most of which are receipts and statements for property taxes in both the states of New York and California. The ephemera includes the publications: "California Prune Surprise: 100 Recipes for Delicious Prune Dishes" published by the California Cured Fruit Association; "Divine Protection through Extraordinary Dangers, During the Irish Rebellion in 1798" by Dinah Wilson Goff who was John Bell's great-aunt; "An Appeal for the Ancient Doctrines of the Religious Society of Friends," written in 1847; "The Testimonies of Friends," written in 1860; and two insurance manuals. Other ephemera relate to John Bell's business and family life in San Jose. There are 71 items in the volume section arranged alphabetically by title and then chronologically. Forty-nine of these items are volumes relating to John Bell's business in both San Jose (Calif.) and Richmond (Ind.). The other items are notes included in the volumes.

Subjects include: Acapulco Bay, Mexico; California Cured Fruit Association; Chinese in Nevada; American Christian Poetry; London; Colón, Panama; The Geysers, California; Home economics; Insurance agents; Irish Rebellion of 1798; Ocean travel; Prunes in California; Puntarenas, Costa Rica; Quakers in California; Railroad travel; James Rolph; San Jose, California;

Society of Friends; Sierra Nevada; Tabernacle of Salt Lake City, Utah; and Women from 1870-1920.

Materials addressed to or written by Hannah B. Cooper are listed under Hannah B. Cooper Bell; materials referring to H. B. Bell are referring to Hannah B. Cooper Bell; some of the cash books include short entries regarding the Bell family.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in the following series: Documents, Diaries, Correspondence and Ephemera (Boxes 1-3); Volumes

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

Personal Names

Bell, John

Goff, Dinah W. (Dinah Wilson), 1784-1856

Rolph, James, 1869-1934

Corporate Names

California Cured Fruit Association (1900-1903)

Tabernacle (Salt Lake City, Utah)

Subjects

Chinese -- Nevada

Christian poetry, American

Home economics

Irish Americans -- Archives

Insurance agents -- California

Insurance agents -- Indiana

Ocean travel -- History -- 19th century -- Sources

Prune -- California

Railroad travel -- United States

Society of Friends

Geographic Areas

Acapulco Bay (Mexico)

California -- History -- Sources

Colón (Panama)

Geysers, The (Calif.)

Ireland -- History -- Rebellion of 1798 -- Personal narratives

London (England)

Puntarenas (Costa Rica)

San Jose (Calif.)

Sierra Nevada (Calif. and Nev.)

Genre

Business records -- United States

Diaries -- United States

Letters (correspondence) -- United States

Manuscripts -- United States

Documents, Diaries, Correspondence and Ephemera

Physical Description: Boxes 1-3

Box 1

Folder 1

Documents, Diaries and Correspondence

Bell, Hannah B. Cooper. Commonplace book (1855-1912)

2 items.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Folder 2 | Bell, John. Book of poetry (1866-1868) 1 item. |
| Folder 3 | Bell, John. Diaries (1871-1881) 4 items. |
| Folder 4 | Cooper, Anna J. Autograph album (1887-1895) 1 item. |
| Folder 5 | [Cooper, Anna J.] Diary (1894-1901) 1 item. |
| Folder 6 | Legal Documents (1881-1920) 4 items. |
| Folder 7 | Baldwin, F. B. Letter to Gilbert Sayres (1879, Dec. 2) Damaged. |
| Folder 8 | Bean, James. Six letters to John Bell (1892) |
| Folder 9 | Bean, Joel, 1825-1914. Two letters to John Bell (1892) |
| Folder 10 | Bell, Hannah B. Cooper. Letter to William Cortelyou [undated] |
| Folder 11 | Brun, Samuel. Two letters to John Bell (1882) |
| Folder 12 | Curry, Charles Forrest, 1858-1930. Letter to John Bell [between 1898 and 1910] |
| Folder 13 | Gray, George T. Letter to Hannah B. Cooper Bell (1913, Feb. 17) |
| Folder 14 | Peckham, J. A. Letter to Hannah B. Cooper Bell (1908, June 1) |
| Folder 15 | Raymond, Ray. Letter to "Dear Friend" (1930, July 30) |
| Folder 16 | Reeves, James E. Two letters to John Bell (1877) |
| Folder 17 | Travis, Charles. Four letters to Hannah B. Cooper Bell (1889-1891) |
| Folder 18 | Travis, Charles. Three letters to John Bell (1886-1889) |
| Folder 19 | Travis, Charles. Letter to William J. Worman (1883, Apr. 9) |
| Folder 20 | Watt, Rolla V. Letter to John Bell (1888, Nov. 30) |
| Box 2 | Ephemera |
| Folder 1 | Bills and Receipts (1871-1913) 39 items. |
| Folder 2 | Certificates from San Jose (Calif.) (1893-1911) 10 items. |
| Folder 3 | Ephemera: American Central Insurance Company (1890-1912) 9 items. |
| Folder 4 | Ephemera: Bell's Land, Loan and Insurance Agency (1874-[1902]) 11 items. |

- Folder 5 **Ephemera: Miscellaneous (1890-1910)**
16 items. One in oversize.
- Folder 6 **Promissory Notes (1876-1895)**
9 items.
- Folder 7 **Property Taxes of Hannah B. Cooper Bell: Jamaica (N.Y.) (1883-1896)**
11 items.
- Folder 8 **Property Taxes of Hannah B. Cooper Bell: Long Island (N.Y.) 1886, Apr. 5)**
1 item.
- Folder 9 **Property Taxes of Hannah B. Cooper Bell: New York (N.Y.) (1898-1908)**
4 items.
- Folder 10 **Property Taxes of Hannah B. Cooper Bell: San Jose (Calif.) M. O'Brien Subdivision (1900-1930)**
33 items.
- Folder 11 **Property Taxes of Hannah B. Cooper Bell: San Jose (Calif.) Montgomery Street (1911-1930)**
19 items.
- Box 3 **Ephemera**
- Folder 1 **Property Taxes of John Bell: New York (N.Y.) (1901)**
1 item.
- Folder 2 **Property Taxes of George L. Cooper: Jamaica (N.Y.) (1881-1885)**
4 items.
- Folder 3 **Property Taxes of John L. Cooper: Jamaica (N.Y.) (1871-1879)**
17 items.
- Folder 4 **Property Taxes of John L. Cooper: Long Island (N.Y.) (1873-1882)**
6 items.
- Folder 5 **Property Taxes of Joseph P. Cooper: Union (N.Y.) (1883)**
1 item.
- Folder 6 **Publications (1847-[1902])**
6 items.
- Folder 7 **Road Assessment of Hannah B. Cooper Bell: Road District No. 4 (1900-1910)**
9 items.
- Folder 8 **School District Taxes of Hannah B. Cooper Bell: Jamaica (N.Y.) (1887-1897)**
9 items.
- Folder 9 **Street Assessment Receipts: San Jose (Calif.) (1889-1890)**
4 items.

Volumes

Physical Description: 49 volumes

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Volume 1 | Balance Book (1879-1883) 1 item. |
| Volume 2 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 1 (1879-1881) 1 item. |
| Volume 3 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 4 (1881-1882) 1 item. |
| Volume 4 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 5 (1882-1883) 1 item. |
| Volume 5 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 7 (1886-1888) 1 item. Fragile. |
| Volume 6 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 8 (1888-1892) 1 item. |
| Volume 7 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 9 (1892-1897) 1 item. Fragile. |
| Volume 8 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 10 (1898-1902) 1 item. |
| Volume 9 | Cash Book of John Bell, No. 11 (1902-1913) 1 item. |
| Volume 10 | Cash Book of John Bell (1913-1914) 1 item. |
| Volume 11 | Cash Book of John Bell (1914-1916) 1 item. |
| Volume 12 | Cash Book of John Bell (1916-1918) 1 item. |
| Volume 13 | Cash Book of John Bell (1918-1919) 1 item. |
| Volume 14 | Cash Book of John Bell (1919-1920) 4 items. Includes three notes. |
| Volume 15 | Cash Book of John Bell (1921-1923) 1 item. |
| Volume 16 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 3 (1879-1880) 1 item. |
| Volume 17 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 4 (1880-1881) 1 item. |
| Volume 18 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 5 (1881-1882) 1 item. Fragile. |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Volume 19 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 6 (1882-1884) 1 item. Fragile. |
| Volume 20 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 7 (1884-1885) 1 item. Fragile. |
| Volume 21 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 8 (1885-1888) 1 item. |
| Volume 22 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 9 (1888-1889) 1 item. |
| Volume 23 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 10 (1889-1891) 1 item. |
| Volume 24 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 11 (1891-1895) 1 item. Fragile. |
| Volume 25 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 12 (1895-1897) 1 item. |
| Volume 26 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 13 (1897-1902) 16 items. Envelope in back contains 15 pieces of paper that were cut up from miscellaneous items. |
| Volume 27 | Day Book of John Bell, No. 14 (1902-1908) 1 item. Fragile. |
| Volume 28 | Day Book of John Bell, labeled "Journal" (1908-1910) 1 item. |
| Volume 29 | Day Book of John Bell (1910-1913) 1 item. |
| Volume 30 | Day Book of John Bell (1913-1915) 1 item. |
| Volume 31 | Ledger of John Bell (1871-1874) 1 item. |
| Volume 32 | Ledger of John Bell (1873-1875) 1 item. |
| Volume 33 | Ledger of John Bell, labeled "Journal" and "ACCS" (1873-1875) 1 item. |
| Volume 34 | Ledger of John Bell, No. 1 (1880-1881) 1 item. |
| Volume 35 | Ledger of John Bell, No. 2 (1881-1885) 1 item. |
| Volume 36 | Ledger of John Bell, No. 4 (1891-1897) 1 item. Fragile. |

- Volume 37 **Ledger of John Bell, No. 5 (1897-1904)**
 1 item. Fragile.
- Volume 38 **Ledger of John Bell (1904-1906)**
 1 item.
- Volume 39 **Ledger of John Bell (1906-1912)**
 2 items. Fragile and damaged. Includes loose accounting notes.
- Volume 40 **Ledger of John Bell (1916-1923)**
 1 item.
- Volume 41 **Ledger of John Bell (1923-1928)**
 4 items. Includes loose accounting notes.
- Volume 42 **Ledger of John Bell [undated]**
 1 item. Some pages cut from book.
- Volume 43 **Letter Book of John L. Cooper (1878)**
 1 item.
- Volume 44 **The Merchant and Tradesman's Remembrancer (1877-1879)**
 1 item. Fragile.
- Volume 45 **Notary's Record Book of John Bell (1880-1904)**
 1 item. Fragile.
- Volume 46 **Notes and Bills Payable (1895-1924)**
 1 item. Fragile.
- Volume 47 **Policy Register (1910-1917)**
 1 item.
- Volume 48 **Register of Policies (1901)**
 1 item. Fragile.
- Volume 49 **Watt's Combination Expiration Register of John Bell (1888-1910)**
 1 item.