
James Alvin Bell Papers: Finding Aid

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The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Manuscripts Department

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San Marino, California 91108

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Overview of the Collection

Title: James Alvin Bell Papers

Dates (inclusive): 1854-1883

Bulk dates: 1854-1863

Collection Number: mssBell, James papers

Creator: Bell, James Alvin, 1834-1863.

Extent: 475 pieces in 3 boxes

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Abstract: This collection contains correspondence between Illinois farmer and Civil war soldier James Alvin Bell (1834-1863) and his fiancée about their private life. A few letters written by other soldiers after Bell's death, depict hardships of a Civil War soldier's life.

Language: 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]. James Alvin Bell Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Purchased from G.E. Woodley, July 1964.

Biographical Note

Born c. 1834, James Alvin Bell was a farmer in Kaneville, Illinois until he enlisted in the 8th Illinois Cavalry in May, 1861 where he served until his death at Stanton Army Hospital (Washington, D.C.) in October 1863. His long engagement to Augusta Anna (Hallock) Elliott, a school teacher in rural New York, is the most prominent matter of this collection.

Scope and Content

This collection contains 135 letters written by James to Augusta during the period 1854-October, 1863, and 141 letters from Augusta to him. The content of their letters is limited to themselves and their limited social sphere. James' war letters provide little description of relevant conditions, but do afford his reactions to the hardships. Another soldier's letters to Augusta (24 in all) during the 1863-1865 period and 12 others written to her after the death of James portray the tragedy of the war. There are other miscellaneous letters, a few of Augusta and James' poems, seven photographs, and some fragments.

- [James Alvin Bell Papers Addenda](#) (Call number: mssHM 82523-82540)

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in alphabetical order by author, and then chronologically.

Indexing Terms

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

Subjects

Bell, James Alvin, 1834-1863 -- Archives.

United States. Army. Illinois Infantry Regiment, 8th (1861-1866)

Soldiers -- United States -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Correspondence.

New York (State) -- Social life and customs -- 19th century -- Sources.

Illinois -- Social life and customs -- 19th century -- Sources.

Forms/Genres

Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 19th century.

Alternate Authors

Elliott, Augusta Anna Hallock.

Box 1

Correspondence: Bell

Box 2

Correspondence: Bowdish-Elliott

Box 3

Correspondence: Elliot-Various, fragments, ephemera, photographs