Collection of material by and about Mabel Hubbard Bell, Alexander Graham Bell, Alexander Melville Bell and education of the Deaf, 1872-1957

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Collection of material by and about Mabel Hubbard Bell, Alexander Graham Bell, Alexander Melville Bell and Education of the Deaf,

Date (inclusive): 1872-1957

Collection number: 274

Extent: 21 folders (1 box, 0.5 linear ft.)

Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library.Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library History and Special Collections for the Sciences

Los Angeles, California 90095-1490

Abstract: A small collection of autograph letters, typescripts, reprints, photographs, and ephemera focusing on the teaching of speech to the deaf by Alexander Graham Bell, his wife Mabel Hubbard Bell, and his father Alexander Melville Bell. Included are reminiscences written by the Bells' two daughters about their illustrious parents and grandparents, letters from Mabel Bell to her younger daughter, a facsimile of a reader prepared by Alexander Graham Bell for one of his young deaf pupils, and a postcard written in "Visible Speech" from Alexander Melville Bell to one of his granddaughters.

Physical location: Biomed History and Special Collections Cage

Language of Material: Collection materials in English

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

Cite as: [Identification of item], Collection of material by and about Mabel Hubbard Bell, Alexander Graham Bell, Alexander Melville Bell and Education of the Deaf (Manuscript collection 274). Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library History and Special Collections for the Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

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Acquisition Information


Biography

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL (1847-1922) is world-renowned as a scientist and innovator, inventor of the first practical telephone. Less attention is usually paid to his deep interest in the problem of speech acquisition for the deaf, an interest that guided his early research on hearing and speech. Bell was born in Scotland into a family -- grandfather, father, brother -- who were all involved with elocution and speech, and both his mother and wife were deaf. The Bells moved to Ontario, Canada, mostly for health reasons. In 1871 the young Bell went to Boston in his father's stead to teach at the Boston School for Deaf Mutes and subsequently at the Clarke School for the Deaf, in Northampton, Massachusetts. By the next year Alexander Graham Bell opened a School of Vocal Physiology and Mechanics of Speech in Boston; he also established a highly successful private practice teaching language to the deaf. In 1873 he became Professor of Vocal Physiology and Elocution at Boston University. Throughout this period he had continued his experiments on hearing, hearing devices, and the transmission of sound and articulate speech but, finding the time for research to be insufficient, Bell gave up the private practice in 1873 and kept only two private pupils, George Sanders and Mabel Hubbard.

The fathers of these two pupils, Thomas Sanders and Gardiner Hubbard, were both well-established, wealthy men, who offered financial backing for Bell's further research into transmission of speech. The money enabled Bell to hire Thomas Watson, an engineer with the technical knowledge that Bell lacked, and together they continued experimenting with acoustic telegraphy. By 1875 Bell was able to submit a patent application for an acoustic telegraph and shortly after the patent was awarded, a prototype of the telephone was demonstrated at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. It was an immediate world-wide success. The next year Sanders, Hubbard, and Bell formed the Bell Telephone Company.

MABEL GARDINER HUBBARD BELL (1857-1923) was the daughter of Boston lawyer, financier, and philanthropist Gardiner Hubbard, and the granddaughter of a Massachusetts Supreme Court justice. Left completely deaf by an attack of scarlet fever at age five, she learned lip-reading and articulate speech and grew up well integrated into the hearing world. Mabel
met Alexander Graham Bell at his school for the deaf in Boston, where she was his student; she also studied with him privately until Bell decided he would rather have her as a fiancé than a pupil. They were married in 1877. Mrs. Bell was well respected in her own right as a philanthropist and supporter of deaf education, carrying on the commitments her father had undertaken to aid the deaf community. She also supported her husband both intellectually and financially in his various research interests both during and after and the development of the telephone, such as constructing "a practical flying aerodrome or flying machine driven through the air by its own power and carrying a man."

ALEXANDER MELVILLE BELL (1819-1905) was a teacher and researcher of physiological phonetics, born in Scotland but later moving to Ontario, Canada. His father, Alexander Bell, under whom he studied, was an authority on phonetics and defective speech. Alexander Melville Bell lectured on elocution and philology at various universities in Scotland, England, Canada, and the Lowell Institute in Boston. In 1881 he moved to Washington, D.C., to teach deaf mutes by his "Visible Speech" method, a writing system he invented to help deaf students learn spoken language.

Visible Speech was a notation system for the sounds of speech, each of the symbols invented by Bell representing the positions and motions that the lips, tongue, mouth, etc. need to be in to articulate a particular sound. Visible Speech was independent of a particular language or dialect and was widely used to teach students how to speak with a "standard" accent. Visible Speech, also known as the Physiological Alphabet, was used in the education of the deaf for a dozen years or so, but was then found to be more cumbersome than other methods and was largely abandoned.

**Scope and Content**

This small collection includes autograph letters, typescripts, pamphlets and ephemera dealing with three generations of the Bell family. Highlights are the reminiscences of the Bell daughters about their parents and grandparents, letters from Mabel Bell to her younger daughter, Marion, and a facsimile of a reader prepared by Alexander Graham Bell for one of his pupils.

The collection is organized into the following series:
- **Series 1. Mabel Gardiner Hubbard Bell and the Clarke School for the Deaf.** six folders
- **Series 2. Alexander Graham Bell.** ten folders
- **Series 3. Alexander Melville Bell.** five folders

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

Clarke School for the Deaf
Bell, Alexander Graham, 1847-1922
Bell, Alexander Melville, 1819-1905
Bell, Mabel Gardiner Hubbard, 1857-1923
Deaf children -- Education
Deaf children -- Language
Hearing-Impaired Persons -- education

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**Series 1. Mabel Gardiner Hubbard Bell and the Clarke School for the Deaf.**

**Physical Description:** six folders

**Box 1, Folder 1**

"Mabel Hubbard Bell -- 1859-1923", a reminiscence by Caroline A. Yale. 1923

**Scope and Content Note**

four-page reprint with illustration of Dr. and Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell in the garden of their Nova Scotia home; the text includes quotes from Mabel Bell's speech of 1894 [see next entry]

**Note**

from: "The Volta Review", March, 1923
Box 1, Folder 2  
**A speech by Mabel Bell on speech-reading, presented to the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf. 1894**

- **Physical Description:** 18 p. (9 sheets)
- **Scope and Content Note**
  Mabel Bell's typescript, with editing in her own hand; she describes her own experiences, and summarizes into six propositions

Box 1, Folder 3  
**“Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell -- a reminiscence”, by Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor [nee Elsie Bell]. 13 June 1957**

- **Physical Description:** 10 p. (5 sheets)
- **Scope and Content Note**
  printed and typescript versions of a speech given at a Clarke School Alumni Association reunion
  
  **Note**
  Mrs. Grosvenor was the Bell's older daughter

Box 1, Folder 4  
**Letters from Mabel Bell to her younger daughter, Marion (Daisy). 1913-1919**

- **Scope and Content Note**
  four partial or whole letters, mostly discussing family matters; Mrs. Bell speaks at length about the grandchildren who are staying at their Nova Scotia home, their schooling, friends, etc.; there is some mention of Montessori schools

Box 1, Folder 5  
**“The Montessori Method and New York Children”. 1910**

- **Physical Description:** 15 p. booklet, 4.25 x 5.5"
- **Scope and Content Note**
  a booklet published by The Montessori Educational Association, New York chapter, outlining plans for establishing a Montessori school in the lower East Side of New York, in a 77th St. tenement
  
  **Note**
  these family members served as officers of the New York Chapter: Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell, President; Gilbert H. Grosvenor [son-in-law], Treasurer; Alexander G. Bell, Charles J. Bell and Gilbert H. Grosvenor, Trustees; Mrs. David Fairchild [daughter], Executive Committee

Box 1, Folder 6  
**Photograph of Harriet Burbank Rodgers. undated**

- **Physical Description:** 6.5 x 9.5"
- **Scope and Content Note**
  bust portrait with caption on back; Harriet B. Rogers was the first principal of the Clarke School for the Deaf, 1867-1886, a pioneer oral teacher of the deaf


- **Physical Description:** ten folders

Box 1, Folder 7  
**Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell), Washington, D.C. undated**

- **Scope and Content Note**
  typed sheet with two paragraphs on the purpose and founding of AG Bell, which includes a quote from a letter by A. Graham Bell: "Now we shall...teach speech to little deaf children...."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 8</th>
<th><strong>Letter requesting the story of the introduction of the telephone at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia 20 March 1922</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong></td>
<td>2 p. (2 sheets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td>J. Hampton Moore, Mayor of Philadelphia, requested a statement that could be used for publication in connection with the upcoming Sesqui-Centennial in 1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
<td>The story is told by Elsie Bell Grosvenor in a reminiscence of her mother - see Folder 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 9</th>
<th><strong>Printed fee schedule: &quot;Mr. A. Graham Bell's Card of Terms&quot;. 1872</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong></td>
<td>1 p., 5.5 x 6.5&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td>Rates are listed for Private Instruction, Instruction of the Deaf in Speech, and Teachers of the Deaf and Dumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
<td>A. Graham Bell opened his Boston &quot;School of Vocal Physiology and Mechanics of Speech&quot; in October 1872; one of his pupils was Helen Keller, another was Mabel Hubbard; soon much of his teaching time was taken up by five-year old George Sanders, whose wealthy father offered Bell a place in Salem, Mass. where he could live, teach and continue his experiments on the transmission of sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 10</th>
<th><strong>Facsimile of a reader prepared by Alexander Graham Bell for George Sanders. 1873-1874, 1917</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong></td>
<td>23 p., photographs mounted on heavy paper, bound; 7.75 x 8&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td>A note on the first page reads: &quot;1331 Conn. Ave., Washington, D.C. March 24, 1915. This little book of pictures, accompanied by stories, was prepared in 1873 for the use of George Sanders, then about six years of age. It represents my method of teaching written language to a very young congenitally deaf child. Alexander Graham Bell&quot;; each of the 18 handwritten stories is one page long, accompanied by an illustration, and some also have questions for the reader; a few of the illustrations are missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
<td>The facsimile copies were produced for contributors to the Volta Bureau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 11</th>
<th><strong>Printed reproduction of letter written by A. Graham Bell to Annie A. Sullivan, teacher of Helen Keller. 1892</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong></td>
<td>1 p. (1 sheet); 13 x 20 cm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td>Bell is asking for more specific details about Sullivan's methods with Keller, to help him and others understand better the process by which deaf children can learn language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
<td>Bell introduced Helen Keller to Miss Sullivan. Keller laid the cornerstone in 1893 for Bell's Volta Bureau building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 12</th>
<th><strong>Two flyers for a speech by A. Graham Bell, &quot;The Science of Speech&quot;. 1901</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong></td>
<td>4.5 x 7&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td>Two versions of an advertisement for the New York lecture announced by The Bell Visible Speech Club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 1, Folder 13  **American Genetic Association. circa 1910**  
Scope and Content Note  
pamphlet describing the American Genetic Association, of whose Council Bell was a member; also a printed "with the compliments of" slip from Bell  
Note  
Bell was interested in the question of inheritance of deafness

Box 1, Folder 14  **Business card from Japan. 1921**  
Physical Description: 3.25 x 1.75"  
Scope and Content Note  
card from Dr. med. Kozo Uchida, South Manchuria Railway Co., with the note "I am Isawa's cousin - he is dead 5 year ago"  
Note  
Isawa, whom Bell had taught in 1876, had helped in the testing of the telephone at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia

Box 1, Folder 15  **Group photograph. 29 August 1901**  
Physical Description: 8 x 10"  
Scope and Content Note  
five adults in a rural setting, including A.G. Bell and his wife Mabel

Box 1, Folder 16  **Photograph of Alexander Graham Bell. 1918**  
Physical Description: 5 x 9"  
Scope and Content Note  
full-length snapshot, with caption on back, taken by J. Reynolds Madart in front of Gilmore Gymnasium, the Clarke School, on graduation day  
Note  
Dr. Bell was President of the Clarke School Board of Corporators until 1922

Series 3. **Alexander Melville Bell.**  
Physical Description: five folders

Box 1, Folder 17  **"A Biographical Sketch of Alexander Melville Bell". 1898**  
Physical Description: 5.5 x 7"  
Scope and Content Note  
pen and ink portrait and two pages of text, from "The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography", published by James T. White and Co. as a small pamphlet

Box 1, Folder 18  **Entry tickets to "Shakesperian Readings". circa 1881-1889**  
Physical Description: 4.5 x 3"  
Scope and Content Note  
"Shakesperian Readings" printed on white cards, signed "A. Bell in ink and numbered 81 and 83  
Note  
A.M. Bell moved to Washington, D.C. in 1881 and began giving elocution lectures and and literary readings
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 19</th>
<th><strong>Tools for teaching Visible Speech to the deaf. 1892</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong> pamphlet: 16 p., 6 x 8&quot;; flash cards: 2 x 3&quot;; projection cards: 4.5 x 4.5&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instruction pamphlet titled &quot;Bell's popular shorthand or steno-phonography&quot;, American version; 15 flash cards, each with a simple drawing of an object and the object's name both in letters and in shorthand; 5 projection cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 20</th>
<th><strong>Postcard in Visible Speech. 17 October 1897</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong> 5.5 x 3.5&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a postcard written in Visible Speech from A.M. Bell (signed AMB) to his granddaughter, Marion H. Bell at Mrs. Pitt's School, Utica, New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 21</th>
<th><strong>Reminiscences by Marion H. Bell Fairchild. undated</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong> 12 p. (9 sheets)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autograph pages of memories about her Hubbard and Bell grandparents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Fairchild mentions the lessons in Visible Speech that her Grandfather Bell gave her [see previous folder]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>