THE BELL PAPERS

The Bell Papers contain 579 items in three boxes, including the correspondence and commissions of Samuel Bell (1770-1850), 216 items, the correspondence, commissions, and autograph book of Samuel Dana Bell (1798-1868), 250 items, and miscellaneous documents pertaining to other members of the Bell family, 113 items. The Bell Papers came to the New Hampshire Historical Society through the estates of various members of the Bell family. Following are biographic sketches of the two principal figures in the Bell Papers, Samuel and Samuel Dana Bell; certain biographic information on some of the Bell family members mentioned in the collection; a Bell family genealogy; and an inventory of the entire collection.

Samuel Bell (1770-1850)

Samuel Bell was born on February 8, 1770 in Londonderry, N. H., third child and second son of John Bell (1730-1825) and Mary Ann (Gilmore). Samuel attended New Ipswich Academy, studying under John Hubbard; and then returned to Londonderry in 1790 to teach school. From 1791 to 1793, Bell attended Dartmouth College, graduating in 1793. From Dartmouth, he went to Amherst, N. H., where he studied law under his future father-in-law, Samuel Dana.

Bell was admitted to the bar in 1796 and began his practice in Francistown in 1797. In that same year he married Mehitable Bowen Dana, his wife until her death in 1810. Five of their children, Samuel Dana, John, Mary Ann, James, and Luther, lived to maturity.

Bell's career progressed rapidly. Between 1797 and 1809, he practiced in Francistown, Amherst, and finally Chester. He became a Justice of the Peace of the Quorum in Hillsborough County in 1806. Also in 1806, he was appointed Attorney General of the state. From 1804 to 1806 he represented Francistown in the N. H. state legislature, where he was Speaker of the House. From 1807 to 1808, Bell was President of the State Senate, and in 1809, was appointed to the Executive Council.

Bell retired from public life in 1809, however, for reasons of ill health. From 1809 to 1816, he lived in Chester; riding frequently during the summer months, and traveling occasionally, going once to Ohio. In 1816, Bell returned to public life as an Associate Justice of the N. H. Superior Court. He held this position until 1819, when he was elected Governor. Bell served four terms as Governor, from 1819 through 1822. The most notable act of his tenure was the passage of the Toleration Act, prohibiting the collection of taxes for the support of clergy. In 1823, Bell was elected to the first of two terms in the United States Senate.

As a Senator from New Hampshire from 1823 to 1835, Bell vainly struggled against the Jacksonian Party. At one point, in 1833, Jacksonian forces in New Hampshire, led by Isaac Hill, persuaded the majority of the N. H. legislature to formally request Bell's resignation from the U. S. Senate. Ignoring this, Bell finished out his term and retired once again from public life in 1835. He lived the remainder of his life with his second wife, the former Lucy Smith. Bell died on December 23, 1850, at his home in Chester.
Samuel Dana Bell (1798-1868)

Samuel Dana Bell was born in Franconia, N. H., on October 9, 1798, the first child of Samuel Bell and Mehitable Bowen (Dana) Bell. Samuel Dana Bell graduated from Harvard College in 1816 and went on to study law in the office of George Sullivan of Exeter. In 1819, Bell was admitted to the bar, and after practicing briefly in Meredith, moved to Chester.

In 1823, Bell was commissioned Solicitor of Rockingham County. In 1825 and 1826 he served in the state legislature, and from 1827 to 1829, he was a commissioner for the revision of N. H. state laws. Also, in both 1828 and 1829, Bell was clerk of the N. H. House of Representatives. In 1828, Bell declined re-appointment as Solicitor for Rockingham County. Shortly before leaving this post, however, he prosecuted the robbers of the Exeter Bank. The president of the Exeter Bank, Jeremiah Smith, was impressed with the young prosecutor, and asked Bell to be Cashier of his bank. From 1829 until 1836, Bell lived in Exeter as Cashier of Smith's bank.

In 1836, however, Bell resumed his legal practice, this time in Concord. In 1839, he moved to Manchester, where he resided for the remainder of his life. Bell took an active part in the development of Manchester as New Hampshire's leading city, while maintaining his interest at the statewide level. In 1840, Bell, Joel Parker, and Charles J. Fox made up the three-man committee to further revise state statutes. In 1842, they issued their "Revised Statutes." In 1846, Bell was made first judge of the Police Court in Manchester. In 1848, he was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas. By 1849, he advanced to the Superior Court, and from 1859 to 1864, served as Chief Justice of the Superior Court. In 1865, for the third and last time in his life, Bell was asked to sit on another commission to revise state statutes. This commission, headed by Bell, issued the "General Statutes" in 1867.

Along with various public duties, Bell was also active in the private sector. He served as Vice President and later as President of the N. H. Historical Society. He was Vice President for N. H. of the New England Historic, Genealogical Society. Bell took an active part in developing industry in Manchester, serving as attorney for various firms and petitioning for a railroad up the Merrimack Valley to Manchester (see maps in Box 3, folder 1).

Bell died in Manchester on July 31, 1868. His wife, the former Mary H. Healey, whom he married in 1826, had died four years before her husband. Three of their six children lived to maturity, and the two sons, John James and Samuel Newell, went on to professions in law.

Other Members of the Bell Family

Samuel and Samuel Dana Bell were not the only two members of the Bell family to gain distinction in New Hampshire. Two other members of the family, John, brother of Samuel, and John's son, Charles Henry Bell, became governors of the state. In addition, Charles Henry became a successful writer. James Bell (1804-1857), son of Samuel Bell, along with John James Bell (1827-1893) and Samuel Newell Bell (1829-1889), both sons of Samuel Dana Bell, were well-known lawyers in New Hampshire. Luther Vose Bell (1806-1862) gained his reputation in the medical profession, while Louis Bell (1837-1866) distinguished himself as a colonel in the Civil War.

Following are some important events in the lives of the Bell family members mentioned above.
Gov. John Bell (1765-1836)

July 20, 1765 Born in Londonderry, N. H.

- Educated in Londonderry and became a merchant, trading primarily with Canadian firms.

1799-1800 Represented Londonderry in the state legislature.

1803 Served one term as a state senator

1803 Married Persis Thorn.

1817 Appointed to the Executive Council.

1823-1828 Sheriff of Rockingham County.

1828-1829 Governor of New Hampshire.

March 22, 1836 Died in Chester.

James Bell (1804-1857)

November 13, 1804 Born in Franestown, N. H.

- Educated at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass., and Bowdoin College (1822).

- Studies law under his brother Samuel Dana Bell in Chester, and at law school in Litchfield, Conn.

1825 Admitted to bar and began practice in Gilmanton.

1831 Moved to Exeter. Started partnership with Amos Tuck.

1846 Became agent for Winnipesaukee Land and Waterpower Company.

1846 Served in state legislature.

1850 Represented Gilford in Constitutional Convention.

1855 Elected to United States Senate.

May 26, 1857 Died in Gilford.
Luther Vose Bell (1806-1862)

December 20, 1806  Born in Franestown, N. H.
1818-1823  Attended Bowdoin College.
          -Studied medicine under his brother John in New York City.
1826  Received M.D. from Dartmouth College.
1827  Began practice in Chester.
1834  Married Frances Pinkerton.
1835-1836  Represented Chester in state legislature.
1836  Superintendent of McLean Hospital for the Insane at Charlestown, Mass.
1850  Appointed to Executive Council in Massachusetts.
1852  Delegate to Whig national convention.
          -Enlisted in Union Army during Civil War and served as General Hooker's brigade surgeon.
February 1862  Died at Budd's Ferry, Maryland.

Gov. Charles Henry Bell (1823-1893)

November 18, 1823  Born in Chester, N. H.
          -Educated at Pembroke Academy and Phillips Exeter Academy.
1844  Graduated from Dartmouth College.
          -Studied law under his cousins, James and Samuel Dana Bell.
1847  Admitted to bar. Began practice in Chester.
1849  Formed partnership with Nathaniel Wells of Somersworth.
1854  Moved to Exeter.
1856  Appointed Solicitor of Rockingham County.
1863-1864  State senator. President of the Senate in 1864.
1872-1873  Represented Exeter in state legislature.
1879    Appointed to United States Senate.
1881-1883  Governor of New Hampshire.
1889    Presided over the Constitutional Convention.
November 11, 1893  Died in Exeter.
1894    The Bench and Bar of New Hampshire published.

John James Bell (1827-1893)
October 30, 1827  Born in Chester, N. H.
1847    Graduated from Harvard Law School.
1847-1849  Practiced in Nashua and Milford.
1849    Moved to Carmel, Maine.
1864    Moved to Exeter.
1876    Appointed Judge of Police Court in Exeter.
1876    Delegate to Constitutional Convention.
1881    Married to Cora L. Kent.
1883, 85, 87, 91  Representative in the state legislature. Served on commission to establish the boundary between N. H. and Mass.
1889    Inherited his brother's fortune. Became president of several N.H. railroads, the Exeter and N. H. Boards of Trade, and the Exeter Manufacturing Company.
August 22, 1893  Died in Manchester.

Samuel Newell Bell (1829-1889)
March 25, 1829  Born in Chester, N. H.
1847    Graduated from Dartmouth College.
1850    Studied law under William C. Clarke in Manchester.
1850    Admitted to the bar.
1850-1855 Partnership with Clarke.
1871-1873 Elected to United States Congress.
1873 Resumed law practice in Meredith. Invested heavily in railroads, erected the Deer Park Hotel in North Woodstock, served as Vice President of the N.H. Fire Insurance Company, and accumulated large land holdings in Manchester.

February 8, 1889 Died in North Woodstock.

Louis Bell (1837-1864)

March 8, 1837 Born in Chester, N. H.
- Studied but took no degree at Brown University.
- Studied law under Edmund L. Cushing of Charlestown.
1857 Admitted to bar and began practice in Farmington.
1859 Judge of Police Court in Farmington.
1859 Married to Mary A. P. Bouton.
1861 Appointed Solicitor or Strafford County.
1861 Made Captain in First Regiment of N. H. Volunteers.
1861 Promoted to Lt. Colonel in Fourth Regiment of N. H. Volunteers.
1862 Promoted to Colonel of Fourth Regiment, serving under Sherman in South Carolina.
1864 Served in Virginia. Brigade commander of the Army of the James.

January 15, 1865 Died as a result of wounds in Wilmington, N. C.
INVENTORY

BOX I

Folder 1

1789-1821 (36 items) Contains numerous recommendations and commissions of Samuel Bell from his departure from New Ipswich Academy through the year 1821. Also, contains five courtesy letters from governors of other states; four letters relating to Dartmouth College, including two from Francis Brown; one letter from Henry Stark concerning the New Hampshire militia; an official notification that Bell has been awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws from Bowdoin; and several miscellaneous letters concerning Bell's law business and the settlement of his brother-in-law's estate.

Folder 2

1822-1827 (60 items) Contains mostly official correspondence to Samuel Bell during the years Bell was Governor and during his first term in the U. S. Senate. Correspondents include eventual political enemies Levi Woodbury, Isaac Hill, and Henry Hubbard, as well as political allies of Bell such as Jacob B. Moore, William Plumer, Samuel Hale, Caleb Stark, and David L. Morril. There are also two letters from Henry Clay discussing the upcoming Presidential election between J. Q. Adams and Andrew Jackson. Contained also are invitations to social functions from John Calhoun and J. Q. Adams, as well as one letter to Bell from Adams. Finally, there are letters from Bell's children, John and Mary Ann, discussing family matters.

Folder 3

1828-1830 (57 items) Contains letters to Samuel Bell from Jacob B. Moore, Joseph Low, Ezekiel Webster, William Plumer, Henry Hubbard, Samuel Hale, Richard Bartlett, Josiah Butler, and Charles Huston concerning politics in New Hampshire. Also, contains nine letters written by Bell to William Plumer giving Bell's views of the Jacksonian party, both nationally and within New Hampshire. Also contained is a letter from John McLean recommending Henry Clay as a Presidential candidate, a letter from Ichabod Bartlett discussing Portsmouth politics, a copy of a Daniel Webster letter discussing politics in New Hampshire as well as at the national level, and a letter telling Bell of the death of his son John.

Folder 4

1831-1833 (31 items) Primarily contains correspondence written to Samuel Bell, including three letters written by Joseph Low describing the activities of Isaac Hill, and also an Isaac Hill letter addressed to a Merrimack County postmaster. Other correspondents include James Wilson, Jr. and Jeremiah Mason, both discussing state and national politics. Included also is a formal request of the majority of the N. H. Legislature asking that Bell resign his Senate seat, followed by several letters from Bell's friends supporting the Senator. Also, a letter by Luther Bell telling of the death of Mary Ann (Bell) Nesmith.

Folder 5

1834-1849 (26 items) Miscellaneous correspondence, including five undated items. Includes a letter from Caleb Stark discussing the state of the nation, a letter from John McLean discussing the upcoming presidential election (1835), and a letter from Senator Samuel L. Southland of New Jersey regarding a Senate investigation of the N. H. postal system. There is also a letter describing the poor conduct of James Bell in New York City along with various invitations and acknowledgments.
Samuel Dana Bell (1798-1868)

Folder 6

1812-1826 (59 items) Contains correspondence and commissions of Samuel Dana Bell from Harvard through the early years of his law career. The correspondence includes letters from Bell's uncle, John Bell (1765-1836), George Sullivan, Jeremiah Smith, and O. W. B. Peabody. Also included in the correspondence are five notes from Isaac Hill concerning a book which Bell was having published, as well as a letter from John Kelly of the New Hampshire Historical Society informing Bell that he has been President of the Society. Commissions include admission to the bar in both Rockingham and Strafford counties, Attorney to the Superior Court, various commissions in the state militia, Solicitor of Rockingham County, Justice of the Peace in Rockingham County, and appointment to a three-man committee to revise N. H. state laws.

Folder 7

1827-1838 (68 items) Contains mostly legal and financial correspondence from Jeremiah Smith, George Sullivan, Ichabod Bartlett, John P. Hale, Joel Parker, and C. H. Atherton. Two letters discussing state politics from Jacob B. Moore and one from William Plummer, Jr., are also included along with minutes of a meeting of Whig Party leaders in Rockingham County (1834). Also contained are five drafts of open letters defending Bell's father, Samuel Bell (1770-1850) against charges made by Isaac Hill. Several official documents are included, such as Bell's election as Clerk of the N. H. House of Representatives, Bell's resignation from the state militia, and Bell's second appointment to a three-man committee to revise state laws. Finally, there is a draft of a theological treatise written by Bell for the (Exeter) Christian Journal.

Box 2

Folder 1

1839-1852 (61 items) Contains correspondence of a legal and financial nature, and numerous commissions. The correspondence consists of letters to Samuel Dana Bell from Jeremiah Smith, Joel Parker, John James Gilchrist, Ira Perley, John P. Hale, Leonard Wilcox, Andrew S. Woods, Charles H. Atherton, and Ichabod Bartlett. There are also three letters from Philip Carrigan concerning some maps he has sent Bell. Finally, the correspondence in this folder includes notification of Bell's membership in various organizations, such as the New England Historic, Genealogical Society, the American Legal Association, and the New Hampshire Agricultural Society. Commissions include appointment to the Court of Common Pleas, appointment to the Superior Court, and appointment as Justice of the Manchester Police Court.

Folder 2

1853-1866 (46 items) Contains miscellaneous correspondence and commissions, a fifteen page Samuel Dana Bell essay on the troubles in Kansas (1856), a shorter Bell article on the rights of man, and the draft of Charles Henry Bell's life of Samuel Dana Bell, later published in the New England Historic and Genealogical Register, XXIII, no. 3, (July 1867). Most of the correspondence in this folder concerns the exchange of historic and genealogical information Bell made with Dr. William Prescott, R. C. Mack, John G. Palfrey, Edward Ballard, David Pulifer, C. W. Tuttle, Benjamin Chase, and Alonzo H. Quint. There is also a letter from Jared M. Davis, of Caldwell's Brigade, stationed near Newport News, Va., discussing the war and the removal of McClellan. Finally, there is a draft of a Bell letter giving biographic information on Dr. Luther Bell. Commissions include appointment as Chief Justice of the Superior Court, and appointment to another commission to revise state laws. There are also five undated letters.
Folder 3  1826 (1 item) Contains Samuel Dana Bell's book of court regulations.

Folder 4  Undated (1 item) Contains Samuel Dana Bell's autograph book, with autographs of members of the bench and bar of New Hampshire as well as autographs, residences, occupations, and ages of the members of the state Constitutional Convention in 1850.

Folder 5  (5 items) Contains five newspaper obituaries of Samuel Dana Bell, giving biographic data.

Folder 6  Samuel Dana Bell (1798-1868) Contains twelve maps and the plans of a measuring device, all from the estate of Samuel Dana Bell. Three of the maps show railroads in southern N. H. (1845-1847), one is a map of Lawrence, Mass. (1847), two are maps showing all lighthouses and light vessels along the eastern and southern U. S. coast, five pertain to the Midwest of Far West, and one shows routes for Pacific steam navigation.

Folder 7  John Bell (1730-1825) Twelve items, including original property grant to John Bell (1678-1743) in Londonderry and the settlement of his estate among his children, the militia commissions of John Bell (1730-1825), five commissions making the younger John Bell Justice of the Peace of the Quorum, and a recruitment directive made of Bell by Brig. Gen. Moses Nichols.

Folder 7A  Charles Henry Bell (1823-1895) Copy of Bell's book The Wheelwright Deed of 1629; Was it Spurious? (1876).

Folder 8  James Bell (1804-1857) Ten items of James Bell correspondence including Bell's will, copies of two letters from Charles Sumner, two letters from Bell to Edward Cutts, one Bell letter to Amos Tuck, and a letter accompanying a petition (missing) for the cause of abolition.

Folder 8A  James Bell (1804-1857) Three deeds to land in Stratham, N. H., all showing land transactions involving James Bell.

Folder 9  Governor John Bell (1765-1836) Miscellaneous correspondence of John Bell totalling eleven items. Includes a letter from Isaac Hill concerning Samuel Bell, as well as letters from Joseph Low, George Sullivan, and Richard Jenness. Finally, includes a copy of the proclamation of John Bell, as Governor, to hold an annual Fast Day on the second day of April.
Folder 10 John James Bell (1827-1893) Three letters to Bell pertaining to the establishment of the New Hampshire-Massachusetts border.

Folder 11 Louis Bell (1837-1865) (37 items) Contains Civil War material of Colonel Louis Bell, including copies of orders sent to Bell during the Petersburg campaign and the Cape Fear River campaign, several diagrams and sets of instructions for brigade dress parades, a Code Book belonging to Bell, a small French prayer book, a captured photomap of the Richmond area, and 3 small hand-written pamphlets of Bell's concerning the construction of military forts, etc. Also included is a letter from Louis Bell to his brother George, 26 pages in length, describing the Petersburg campaign, troop casualties, the ill-fated mine explosion at Petersburg, and Bell's disenchantment with the Army.

Folder 12 Louis Bell (1837-1865) Contains twelve poems written by Bell, including "Hashish Delusions".

Folder 13 Miscellaneous (10 items) Mostly includes information about the death of Samuel Newell Bell (1829-1889), including several newspaper obituaries. There are also two letters written to Mary Ann Bell, daughter of James Bell (1804-1864), as well as a letter from Wilhelm Segerblom of Phillips Exeter Academy giving information about later members of the Bell family.

Name cards were made out for the following correspondents:

Adams, Charles Francis
Adams, John Quincy
Adams, Nathaniel
Allen, William
Anderson, John
Atherton, Charles G.
Atherton, Charles H.
Ayer, Richard H.
Badger, William
Ballard, Edward
Bartlett, Ichabod
Bartlett, Josiah
Bartlett, Richard
Belknap, Jeremy
Bell, Charles Henry
Bell, James D.
Bell, Col. John
Bell, Gov. John
Bell, Dr. John
Bell, Joseph M.
Bell, Louis
Bell, Luther Vose
Bell, Mary Ann
Bell, Samuel
Bell, Samuel Dana
Bell, Samuel Newell
Bell, William
Benjamin, W. R.
Bennet, Thomas
Bouton, Nathaniel
Boyd, William
Bradford, Ephraim P.
Bradlee, Caleb Davis
Branch, John
Brewster, Amos A.
Brooks, Rev. Charles
Brown, Francis
Burnam, John
Butler, Josiah
Calhoun, John
Cardell, W.
Carrigain, Philip
Carter, Henry
Chamberlain, Levi
Chandler, L.
Chase, Benjamin
Christie, D. M.
Claggett, William
Clark, John
Clay, Henry
Clifford, Elisabeth
Cogswell, William
Crolius, Clarkson
Crosby, N.
Quint, Alonzo H.
Randolph, Thomas Mann
Reid, Samuel
Richardson, William M.
Ripley, Phillip
Roberts, Jonathan
Robertson, George
Root, Erastus
Saltonstall, Levett
Sanborn, Moses
Sawyer, Charles H.
Segerblom, Wilhelm
Smith, Jeremiah
Smith, Jonathan
Smith, Nathan
Smith, Dr. Nathan
Smyth, Frederick
Southard, Samuel
Sparhawk, Samuel
Spoofford, N.
Sprague, Rev. William B.
Spriggs, Samuel
Stark, Caleb
Stark, Henry
Stearns, Onslow
Stevens, Boswell
Stinson, Abner, S.

Sullivan, George
Sullivan, John
Sumner, Charles
Swett, Samuel
Taylor, A. B.
Tenney, Adna or U. D.
Thom, James
Thomas, Moses O.
Tuck, Amos
Tuttle, Benjamin B.
Tuttle, C. W.
Upham, N.G.
Upham, Gen. Timothy
Ward, W.
Webster, Daniel
Webster, Ezekiel
Wheelock, John
White, Benjamin
White, Sevina
White, William M.
Wilcox, L.
Williams, George Gorham
Wilson, James Jr.
Winthrop, Robert Charles Jr.
Woodbury, Levi
Woods, Andrew S.

Subject cards were made out for the following subjects:

Abolition
Adams Female Academy
American Academy of Language and Belles Lettres
American Colonization Society
American Legal Association
Amoskeag Savings Bank
Art History
Art-Portraits
Bankruptcy Legislation
(Second) Bank of the United States
Bowdoin College
Civil War
Civil War-Petersburg
Civil War-4th N. H. Volunteers
Constitutional Convention-1850
Courts-Rules-Strafford County
Dartmouth College
Fast Day
Election of 1828
Election of 1832
Election of 1836
Election of 1848
Election of 1868
Election of 1872
Harvard University
Kansas
Manchester Antheneum
Militia, New Hampshire-3rd Brigade
Militia, New Hampshire-17th Regiment
New England Historic, Genealogical Society
New England Historical Society
New Hampshire Asylum for the Insane
New Hampshire Fire Insurance Company
New Hampshire Historical Society
New Hampshire Journal
New Hampshire State Prison
Newspapers-Christian Journal
Newspapers-New Hampshire Journal
Northern Academy of Arts and Sciences
Phi Beta Kappa (Dartmouth College)
Phillips Exeter Academy
Poetry-Louis Bell
Politics-National
Politics-New Hampshire
Post Office Department
Proclamations—New Hampshire
Railroads—Southern New Hampshire
Story Association of Harvard University
Tammany, Society of St.

Temperance Movement
Trade and Commerce—1810–1860
Travel
Valley Cemetery
Wheelwright Deed, Is it Spurious?