

**C. J. Bell Family
Diaries, 1878-1932
MSA 608-609**

Introduction

This collection contains 55 diaries of four members of the family of Charles James (“C. J.”) Bell (1845-1909), a successful farmer from Walden, Vermont, and a governor of Vermont (1904-1906). The collection was given to the Vermont Historical Society by Susan and Ross Jarzyna, owners of *The Hardwick Gazette*, in April 2011 (ms. acc. no. 2011.1); the collection had been given to the newspaper by an unknown donor many years earlier. The collection is stored in two archival flip top boxes and consumes 1 linear foot of shelf space.

Biographical Note

Charles James Bell was born in Walden, Vermont, on March 10, 1845, the fifth child of James Dean Bell and Carolyn Warner Bell. He served in Co. B, Fifteenth Vermont Volunteers, and Company C, First Vermont Cavalry during the Civil War.

Bell held many offices in town and state, including school director, selectman, Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, and Secretary of the Cattle Commissioners. Bell ran a “progressive farm,” described by *The Vermonter* (1901) as “one of Vermont’s model farms, widely known and advertised by the excellence of its maple sugar and dairy products.” His home in Walden was known as “The Belfrey.”

Bell served as a State Representative (1882-1884) and a State Senator (1894-1896). He was active in the Grange at the local, state and national levels. Bell was governor of Vermont from 1904-1906. He is remembered for his refusal to pardon Mary Rogers who was convicted of killing her husband and was the last woman put to death by the state in Vermont (1905).

On October 4, 1870, Charles Bell married Mary Louise Perry of Cabot. They had two daughters, Adine Merritt Bell (May 1874 – August 28, 1956) and Jennifer Bell (June 1876 – April 24, 1938). Neither daughter married. Mr. Bell died on September 25, 1909, on a train in Grand Central Station, New York City; Mrs. Bell died on May 14, 1918.

Scope and Content

This collection contains 55 diaries of Charles James (“C. J.”) Bell (1845-1909), his wife, Mary Louise (“M. Louise”) Perry Bell (1849-1918), and their two daughters, Adine Merritt Bell and Jennifer Bell. These diaries were, for the most part, written while the family was living on their farm in Walden, Vermont.

The diaries of Charles James Bell document a period of his life from 1880-1898 and focus primarily on activities related to his farm in Walden, Vermont. Although Bell

was somewhat irregular in the frequency with which he wrote in his diary, topics related to the day-to-day running of the farm, including hired help, finances, livestock, and logging, are recurring throughout his 14 diaries. Bell's diaries also record information about his membership in various societies, especially regarding his attendance at meetings. Some notes related to political activities and responsibilities during Bell's terms as a State Representative (1882-1884) and a State Senator (1894-1896) also appear. In addition to the diaries, the collection also contains 3 notebooks belonging to Bell, where farming is also a predominant topic. However, these contain more formally composed notes for what may have been ideas for articles, essays or speeches.

Mary Louise Perry Bell wrote daily in her 14 diaries, which span from 1878 to 1917. These diaries include information about her daily routine, her family, particularly her husband, daughters, and father, and the weather. Social visits and interactions as well as travel are also regularly recorded. Her daughters, Adine and Jennifer Bell, began their diaries in this collection at ages 22 and 25 respectively and recorded their daily activities with great regularity. Many of their observations are similar in nature to the information recorded by their mother. A letter, 15 December 1932, to Adine and Jennifer Bell is also included in the collection.

Related Collections

The Vermont Historical Society library holds three folders of Charles Bell's papers (MSC 1:25-27), including his discharge papers from the 15th Vermont Regiment in 1863, and from the 1st Regiment of Vermont Cavalry in 1865; an appointment of Bell as census enumerator, 1880; appointment as railroad commissioner in 1894; and list of officers of the Vermont State Grange, ca. 1904.

The library also has a folder of letters sent to Governor Bell between December 1905 and March 1906 supporting his position in the Mary Rogers affair (MSA 54:2).

Inventory

I. Charles J. Bell

- MSA 608:01 Diaries, 1880, 1881, 1882
- 02 _____, 1883, 1884, 1885
- 03 _____, 1886, 1890, 1891
- 04 _____, 1892, 1893, 1894
- 05 _____, 1895, 1898
- 06 _____, 3 notebooks
- 07 Bump, C.A., paper on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the C. J. Bell Pomona Grange, 1924.

II. M. Louise Bell

- 08 Diaries, 1878, 1903, 1904, 1905
- 09 _____, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909
- 10 _____, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917

11 _____. 1911. 1913

III. Adine Merrill Bell

- MSA 609:01 ____, 1896, 1897, 1898. 1899
02 ____, 1900, 1901, 1902
03 ____, 1903, 1904, 1906
04 ____, 1907, 1908, 1909
05 Letter to Adine and Jennifer Bell, 1932

IV. Jennifer Bell

- 06 Diaries, 1901, 1902, 1903
07 ____, 1904, 1905, 1906
08 ____, 1907, 1908, 1909
09 ____, 1910, 1910, 1919

Mary F. Carnahan
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