

Bell, Charles H.

Charles H. Bell Papers
1772-1929

Title Statement

Bell, Charles H. Guide to the Charles H. Bell Papers Mss. 65 B41

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Mss. 65 B41

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/107

Unit Date

1772-1929

Unit Date

1852-1875

Language

English

Creator

Bell, Charles Heyer, 1798-1875

Extent

2.00 Linear Feet

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Acquisition Information:

Gift

Processing Information:

Minimally processed by Carter Harris and Ellen Strong in 1985. Fully processed Matt Anthony in 2015.

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Charles H. Bell Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Administrative History:

Charles Heyer Bell was an officer in the United States Navy, who served from 1812-1868. He was born in New York on August 13, 1798. Bell began his naval career as a midshipman under Stephen Decatur during the War of 1812. He also served under Decatur during the Second Barbary War, in 1815. In 1820, Bell commanded a ship involved with the suppression of piracy in the West Indies. His ship capsized in a storm, and he clung to wreckage for 21 hours before being rescued.

During the early 1840s Bell, who held outspoken antislavery views, commanded the brig *Dolphin* to assist the suppression of the African slave trade, which had been outlawed in 1808. Bell also co-authored a report on the illegal slave trade in West Africa which influenced the antislavery provisions of the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty between the United States and Great Britain. He was given command of the second U.S.S. *Constellation* in 1855 and led the ship on a three year cruise with the Mediterranean Squadron. Bell was in command of the Mediterranean Squadron when the Civil War broke out, but was transferred to the Pacific Squadron during the war. In 1865, Bell was placed in command of the New York (Brooklyn) Navy Yard, a position which he held for three years. He was promoted to rear admiral on the retired list in 1866, and died in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 1875.

Bell was married to Elisa Smith Swartwout (1799-1890), with whom he had four children: Charles, Henrietta, Frances, and William. Bell also served as the executor for the estate of Samuel Swartwout, Elisa's uncle. In his early life, Swartwout had been involved with Aaron Burr's conspiracies in the West. He later became a fervent supporter of Andrew Jackson, and was appointed the Collector of Customs for the Port of New York by Jackson in 1829. Swartwout was notorious for allegations that he had embezzled over \$1,000,000 from the federal government during his tenure as Collector of Customs. He died in 1856.

Bell's daughter, Henrietta, was married to Israel Smith. She died in 1860, and Smith remarried Rebecca Mintern, with whom he had four children: Alice, Eliza, Edith, and Margaret. Israel Smith served as the executor for Charles Bell's estate. Smith died in 1879 in Williamsburg, VA.

Material referenced from *The Civil War Naval Encyclopedia, Volume One*, edited by Spencer Tucker & William E. White, and *Voyage to a Thousand Cares: Master's Mate Lawrence with the African Squadron, 1844-1846*, by John C. Lawrence.

Scope and Contents

The collection includes the correspondence, certificates, photographs, accounts, and journals of Rear Admiral Charles H. Bell. Naval journals cover Bell's service in the Mediterranean Sea from 1855-1858. The photographs are a mix of personal and souvenirs, which largely depict men and women from Peru. There is also material related to his role as executor for the estate of Samuel Swartwout. The collection also includes papers related to the Smith family, particularly Bell's executor and son-in-law, Israel Smith, Jr. Of particular note is a broadside of Thomas Jefferson's first inaugural address (given on March 4, 1801) printed on silk by W. Pechin Print.

Keywords

Correspondence
Diaries
Notebooks
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Williamsburg (Va.)--History--19th century
Legal documents
United States. Navy--History--19th century
Smith, Israel, Jr
Swartout, Samuel, 1804-1867

Description of Subordinate Components

Box 1

Unit ID id264000

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14227

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Record of births, marriages, and deaths of members of the Bell Family

Unit ID id264055

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14231

Unit Date 1772-1852

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Record of births, marriages, and deaths of members of the Bell family, 1772-1852, on pages of the New Testament. Including AN, notes on birth dates of children, 1794-1810.

Military Papers

Unit ID id264060

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14232

Unit Date 1812-1819

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 2 (folder)

Financial Papers

Unit ID id264065

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14233

Unit Date 1852-1862

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 3 (folder)

Scope and Contents

The folder's contents are the following items:

1852 March 20. Mortgage with "The Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company", Essex County, N.J. for \$2,000 taken out by Charles H. Bell and Eliza S. Bell.

1857. Tax statement for Orange N.J. for Charles H. Bell for 1856.

1862 July 17-1864 September 15. Account of Charles H. Bell with Robert C. Rogers, the balance being \$5,497.00.

1862 December 19. Receipt for two cases of Sonoma champagne by "my friend [Robert C.] Rogers, San Francisco", California.

Correspondence

Unit ID id264070

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14234

Unit Date 1797; 1841; 1852-1864

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 4 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Folder contents are:

1797 June 11. Alexander Ewing, Charleston, S.C., to Andrew Bell, Merchant, Maiden Lane, New York.

1841 January 5. James Kirke Paulding, U.S. Navy Department, to Commander Charles H. Bell, Commanding U.S. Brig. Dolphin, Coast of Africa.

1852 March 23. James Wilson, Clerk, New Jersey Supreme Court, certifying that he has found no judgement in the court against Charles H. Bell. Includes deeds dated 1814 May 5 and 1851 March 24 pertaining to a parcel of land in Orange, N.J., as well as a mortgage dated 1851 March 24, and a statement by John R. Weeks dated 1852 March 19.

1855 February 22. James Cochran Dobbin, Navy Department, to Captain Charles H. Bell, U.S. Navy, New York. Encloses commission of Bell as Captain in the Navy.

1861 October 21. Albert Barnes, Philadelphia, to Charles H. Bell.

1863 March 27. William Fason, Navy Department, to Commodore Charles H. Bell, U.S. Navy, Panama.

1864 February 2. Donohoe, Kelly, and Co., San Francisco, California, to Admiral Charles H. Bell, Commandant's Office, Navy Yard, New York.

Estate of Samuel Swartwout

Unit ID id264075

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14235

Unit Date 1867-1869

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 5 (folder)

Estate of Samuel Swartwout

Unit ID id264080

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14236

Unit Date 1874 April - December

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 6 (folder)

Estate of Samuel Swartwout

Unit ID id264085

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14237

Unit Date 1875 October - November

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 7 (folder)

Backing and several pages of notebook belonging to Charles H. Bell

Unit ID id264090

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14238

Unit Date 25 April [18]20

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 8 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Backing and several pages of a notebook belonging to Charles H. Bell, "presented by his young friend Augi van Amringer, N[ew] York, 25th April [18]20." 1p. MsV.

Commonplace book of Margaret Smith

Unit ID id264095

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14239

Unit Date 1829-1833

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 9 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Commonplace book of Margaret Smith, [Albany, N.Y.], containing poems and essays by her and her friends. 45pp. MsV.

"Gems of Sacred Poetry" belonging to Henrietta Smith

Unit ID id264100

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14240

Unit Date 1845

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 10 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Gems of Sacred Poetry, published by Saxton and Kelt, N.Y., 1845, given to Henrietta Smith Bell [by] her affectionate sister Fannie. 128pp. PV.

Memorandum book of Charles H. Bell

Unit ID id264105

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14241

Unit Date 1847-1850

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 11 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Memorandum book of Charles H. Bell, including notes on ships, officers and workmen, and articles left in store at the [illegible] Navy Yard, 14 June 1850. 33pp. MsV

Private journal of Charles H. Bell

Unit ID id264110

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14242

Unit Date 11 July 1855 - 30 January 1857

Mixed Materials 1 (Box)

Container 12 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Private journal of Charles H. Bell, Captain of the U.S.S. Constellation, describing vessel and navigations conditions, sightseeing and conditions ashore, and desertions and court martial on his ship and others as the vessel sailed from Norfolk, Va. to and around the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. Included on the itinerary were the Azores, Gibraltar, [La] Spezia, Messina, Mahon, Genoe, Marseilles, Cadiz, Malaga, Palma, Piraeus, Athens, Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandria, Cairo, and Geezah. 226pp. MsV.

Box 2

Unit ID id264005

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14228

Mixed Materials 2 (Box)

Private journal of Charles H. Bell**Unit ID** id264010**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14243**Unit Date** 10 January 1857 - 29 June 1858**Mixed Materials** 2 (Box)**Container** 1 (folder)**Scope and Contents**

Private journal of Charles H. Bell, Captain of the U.S.S. Constellation, describing navigation conditions, sightseeing, and conditions ashore as the vessel sailed around the Mediterranean Sea. Included on the itinerary were Alexandria, Messina, [La] Spezia, Carthage, Tunis, Mahon, Algiers, Lisbon, Cadiz, Tangier, Malaga, Cartagena, Barcelona, Marseilles, Toulon, Genoa, Naples, Caserta, Palermo, Elba, Pianosa, [unintelligible], Corsica, Gorgona, and Genoa. 143pp. MsV.

Daily Pocket Diary used as a memorandum by Charles H. Bell**Unit ID** id264015**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14244**Unit Date** 1859-1860**Mixed Materials** 2 (Box)**Container** 2 (folder)**Scope and Contents**

Daily Pocket Diary, 1859, used as a memorandum by Charles H. Bell, including list of commissioned and warrant officers and others attached to the Gosport Naval Station at Norfolk, Va., 1859; notes on the deaths of his three children, 1860; and a list of birth and death dates of Bell and Smith relatives.

Memorandum book**Unit ID** id264020**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14245**Unit Date** 1866-1874**Mixed Materials** 2 (Box)**Container** 3 (folder)**Scope and Contents**

Memorandum book containing statement of account with R.C. Rogers, San Francisco, Calif.; list of registered bonds; estate of Samuel Swartwouth (1874), 14pp. MsV.

Memorandum book**Unit ID** id264025**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14246**Unit Date** 1873-1877**Mixed Materials** 2 (Box)**Container** 4 (folder)**Scope and Contents**

Memorandum book containing private account of Israel Smith, 1873; Accounts of Charles H. Bell with National Bank of New Jersey, 1875-1877. 13 pp. MsV.

Estate of Charles H. Bell**Unit ID** id264030**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14247**Unit Date** circa 1870-1899**Mixed Materials** 2 (Box)**Container** 5 (folder)

Bound volume

Unit ID id264035

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14248

Unit Date 8 October 1883

Mixed Materials 2 (Box)

Container 6 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Notebook containing "Notes on English Literature" by Edith M. Smith. 137pp. MsV.

Smith Family Papers

Unit ID id264040

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14249

Unit Date 1900-1929

Mixed Materials 2 (Box)

Container 7 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Israel Smith was married to Charles Bell's daughter, Henrietta, who died in 1860. Smith also served as Bell's executor.

Notebook containing depictions of British naval signals

Unit ID id264045

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14250

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 2 (Box)

Container 8 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Notebook containing watercolor paintings of British naval flags and descriptions which include the appropriate salute due each flag, with W[illia]m D. Bell's name inside the front cover. 16 pp. MsV.

Ephemera

Unit ID id264050

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14251

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 2 (Box)

Container 9 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Newspaper clipping of an article copied from the Hartford Times discussing the status of the U.S. Navy under Secretary [Isaac] Toucey; German language card for the word "Fisch;" Advertisement for B.A. Fahnestock's Vermifuge for sale by H.T. Jones, Williamsburg, Va.

Postcard scrapbook

Unit ID id265505

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14252

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 2 (Box)

Container 10 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Scrapbook containing postcards of scenes in Frances, Italy, and England as well as photographs of French kings and queens, and a program of the "Celebration at Jamestown, 13 May 1897," directed to Ms. R[ebecca] M[intern] Smith, Williamsburg, Va., in an envelope with a view of the college yard. 70pp. MsV.

Box 3**Unit ID** id265125**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14229**Mixed Materials** 3 (Oversize_Box)**Certificates****Unit ID** id265370**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14253**Unit Date** 1840-1863**Mixed Materials** 3 (Oversize_Box)**Container** 1 (Oversize Folder)**Certificate of Appointment as a Commander in the U.S. Navy****Unit ID** id265140**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14255**Unit Date** 24 September 1840**Mixed Materials** 3 (Oversize_Box)**Container** 1 (Oversize Folder)**Scope and Contents**

Certificate of appointment of Charles H. Bell as a commander in the U.S. Navy. Signed by Martin Van Buren, President of the United States and [James] K[irke] Paulding, Secretary of the Navy.

Certificate of Appointment as Commander in the U.S. Navy**Unit ID** id265385**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14256**Unit Date** 5 January 1841**Mixed Materials** 3 (Oversize_Box)**Container** 1 (Oversize Folder)**Scope and Contents**

Certificate of appointment of Charles H. Bell as Commander in the United States Navy. Signed by Martin Van Buren, President of the United States and J[ames] K[irke] Paulding, Secretary of the Navy.

List of Promotions and Appointments**Unit ID** id265395**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14257**Unit Date** 13 September 1841**Mixed Materials** 3 (Oversize_Box)**Container** 1 (Oversize Folder)**Scope and Contents**

Army and Navy Chronicle Extra. List of Promotions and Appointments.

Diploma from U.S. Naval Lyceum**Unit ID** id265390**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival_objects/14258**Unit Date** 1 June 1848**Mixed Materials** 3 (Oversize_Box)**Container** 1 (Oversize Folder)**Scope and Contents**

Diploma of Charles H. Bell from U.S. Naval Lyceum, certifying his election as a Resident Member.

Certificate of Appointment as a Captain in the U.S. Navy

Unit ID id265375

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14259

Unit Date 16 February 1855

Mixed Materials 3 (Oversize_Box)

Container 1 (Oversize Folder)

Scope and Contents

Certificate of appointment of Charles H. Bell as a Captain in the U.S. Navy. Signed by Franklin Pierce, President of the United States and J[ames] C[ochran] Dobbin, Secretary of the Navy.

Certificate of Appointment as Commodore in the U.S. Navy

Unit ID id265135

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14260

Unit Date 21 February 1863

Mixed Materials 3 (Oversize_Box)

Container 1 (Oversize Folder)

Scope and Contents

Certificate of appointment of Charles H. Bell as a Commodore in the U.S. Navy, on the retired list. Signed by Abraham Lincoln and Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy.

Silk Broadside of Thomas Jefferson Inaugural Speech

Unit ID id265400

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14254

Unit Date [1801]

Mixed Materials 3 (Oversize_Box)

Container 2 (Oversize Folder)

Scope and Contents

Speech of Thomas Jefferson, delivered at his Inauguration, March 4, 1801. Printed as a broadside on silk by W[illiam] Pechin, Print., [Baltimore, MD.], 12.5" x 14.75" Image is available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/scrc/4679704532/>

Box 4

Unit ID id265425

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/14230

Mixed Materials 4 (Box)

Scope and Contents

Contains 82 photographic prints from the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Most of the prints comprise pages disbound from an album. Photographs are a mix of personal portraits and souvenir photographs, mainly from Peru. Included are photographs of African-Americans, South American indigenous peoples, and women wearing indigenous clothing and veils. Also included are photographs of men in military uniform, including a group of African-American soldiers, and engravings of ships. People identified in photographs include: Mrs. Mendes; Mrs. Jerningham; Mrs. Roborg; Mrs. Morales; Mrs. Valdivillo; Capt. Bloomfield; [Fernando] Bolivar, nephew of Gen. [Simon] Bolivar; Mrs. Ortiz; Mr. and Mrs. McKeller; Gen. Castilla of Peru; Mrs. Sartorius; Mrs. G. Low; and Governor [Frederick Ferdinand] Low. Other identifiable photographs are of [Bassett Hall, Williamsburg, VA]; the ship U.S.S. Idaho; a caricature entitled "The Reliable Gentleman" and [Lake Toxaway, NC].