

**The Filson Historical Society**

**Jesse B. Bell  
Papers, 1924-1998**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for this collection, see the Curator of Special Collections, James J. Holmberg.

Size of Collection:  
1 Cubic Foot

Locator Number:  
Mss./A/B433

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Papers, 1924-1998**

**Scope and Content Note**

The collection consists of correspondence between Dr. Bell and numerous boards and organizations to which he belonged over a long medical career in Louisville, Ky. Included are letters of appreciation, appointment to various boards and hospital staffs, and congratulatory cards and letters for several local and national awards. A large collection of award certificates and a series of minutes from meetings of the Louisville Lung Association and the Louisville Memorial Hospital Board of Governors are also included. Photographs, depicting events in the life of Dr. Bell and his wife, Geneva Howard Bell, have been transferred to the photographic collection. Some of them include persons of national importance, such as Roy Wilkins and Muhammad Ali.

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**Biographical Note**

Jesse Bennett Bell was born in Tallulah, Louisiana, 20 April 1904. He received a B.S. degree from Morehouse College, Atlanta, Ga., and an M.D. degree from Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tenn., in 1931. After practicing for two years in Frankfort, Ky., he contracted tuberculosis and moved to Louisville where he could receive better care. While recovering, he decided to devote his career to public health, specializing in chest diseases. He married Geneva Howard in 1936. He worked with the Waverly Hills Sanitarium and the Health Department of Louisville. He later served as medical director of the Red Cross Hospital from 1942 to 1946. He then opened a part-time private practice in Louisville and was appointed to the medical staff of several hospitals. Dr. Bell initiated the first program in Kentucky for screening disadvantaged persons for high blood pressure. He served on several local civic boards and local and state health-related boards, including the Kentucky Heart Association and the Kentucky Health Services Advisory Council. He received two prominent national awards, appointment to the American Lung Association Hall of Fame in 1980 and the Louis B. Russell, Jr. Award from the American Heart Association for outstanding service for Minority Programs in Kentucky in 1983. Dr. Bell died 27 November 1998 in Louisville, at the age of 94.

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**List of Folders**

- Folder 1: Correspondence, certificates; 1924 – 1959
- Folder 2: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1960 – 1969
- Folder 3: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1970 – 1972
- Folder 4: Correspondence, minutes, speeches; 1973 – 1976
- Folder 5: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1977-1978
- Folder 6: Correspondence, certificates; 1979
- Folder 7: Correspondence, certificates, 1980
- Folder 8: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1981-1982
- Folder 9: Correspondence; January – February 18 1983
- Folder 10: Correspondence, certificates; February 19-24 1983
- Folder 11: Correspondence, certificates; February 25-28 1983
- Folder 12: Congratulatory cards, notes; February 1983
- Folder 13: Correspondence, newspaper clippings; March – December 1983
- Folder 14: Correspondence, certificates; 1984
- Folder 15: Correspondence, congratulatory notes, cards, certificates, newspaper clippings; 1985
- Folder 16: Correspondence, certificates; 1986
- Folder 17: Correspondence, certificates, newspaper clippings; 1987
- Folder 18: Correspondence, certificates, miscellaneous; 1988
- Folder 19: Certificates, items from Bell memorial service, miscellaneous; 1989-1998
- Folder 20: Undated correspondence, certificates, cards, miscellaneous
- Folder 21: Oversize documents: certificates

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**Subject Headings**

African American physicians – Kentucky – Louisville  
African American business enterprises – Kentucky – Louisville  
Chest – Diseases – Louisville  
Health boards – Kentucky  
Hospitals – Kentucky – Louisville  
Insurance companies – Kentucky – Louisville  
Kentucky. Commission on Higher Education  
Kentucky. Health Services Advisory Council  
Kentucky Heart Association  
Louisville Lung Association  
Louisville Memorial Hospital  
Mammoth Life and Accident Insurance Co. (Louisville, Ky.)  
Physicians – Kentucky – Louisville  
Public health – Kentucky – Louisville