

**The Filson Historical Society**

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

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for this collection, contact the Collections Department.

**Size of Collection:**  
**1 cu. ft. and 1 audiocassette**

**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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**Folder List**

- Folder 1: Correspondence, certificates; 1924 – 1959 (14 items)
- Folder 2: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1960 – 1969 (40 items)
- Folder 3: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1970 – 1972 (106 items)
- Folder 4: Correspondence, minutes, speeches; 1973 – 1976 (77 items)
- Folder 5: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1977-1978 (41 items)
- Folder 6: Correspondence, certificates; 1979 (57 items)
- Folder 7: Correspondence, certificates, 1980 (65 items)
- Folder 8: Correspondence, minutes, certificates; 1981-1982 (55 items)
- Folder 9: Correspondence; Jan. – Feb. 18, 1983 (53 items)
- Folder 10: Correspondence, certificates; Feb. 19-24, 1983 (32 items)
- Folder 11: Correspondence, certificates; Feb. 25-28, 1983 (40 items)
- Folder 12: Congratulatory cards, notes; Feb., 1983 (68 items)
- Folder 13: Correspondence, newspaper clippings; March – Dec. 1983 (68 items)
- Folder 14: Correspondence, certificates; 1984 (38 items)
- Folder 15: Correspondence, congratulatory notes, cards, certificates, newspaper clippings; 1985 (71 items)
- Folder 16: Correspondence, certificates; 1986 (71 items)
- Folder 17: Correspondence, certificates, newspaper clippings; 1987 (102 items)
- Folder 18: Correspondence, certificates, miscellaneous; 1988 (72 items)
- Folder 19: Certificates, items from Bell memorial service, miscellaneous; 1989-1998 (14 items)
- Folder 20: Undated correspondence, certificates, cards, miscellaneous (58 items)
- Folder 21: Oversize documents: certificates (16 items)
- Item 22: Audio recording of funeral led by Reverend Samson, 1998, up to 90 minutes, 1 audiocassette

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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.